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CELEBRATING

40

YEARS

## Provider Directory

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Recovery,  
Renewal and  
Growth

# The Phoenix Spirit

September  
October  
2024

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RECOVERY MONTH + PROVIDERS ISSUE

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INTERVIEW WITH JOHN MAGNUSON

## Founder Envisions Minnesota's First Recovery Ranch

by Mary Berg

*The Phoenix Spirit talked with John Magnuson, the visionary founder of Relevant Recovery, a new Recovery Community Organization (RCO), designed to train and mentor Family Life Recovery Coaches at Minnesota's first Recovery Ranch – a space and place where individuals, families and organizations can “experience” recovery as they build greater wellbeing.*

John's life story, his national network of friends, and the power of spiritual recovery culminated in this big vision. As a young boy, John felt firsthand the traumatic and devastating impact of active addiction on the family, as his own sister was in and out of treatment centers for substance use disorders. John promised his parents he would never use drugs or alcohol. But this all changed as adolescent peer pressure introduced John to the chaotic world of drugs and alcohol, leading to daily use and two DWIs before graduating from Wayzata High School.

John masked and moderated his escalating drinking and drug use by over-achievement: as Executive Director of the Youth Leadership Development Center and as a Goodwill Ambassador to the former Soviet Union. He interned with State Senator Jim Ramstad, served as his staffer when Jim became U.S. Representative Ramstad, and became a consultant to Fortune 100 CEOs, national trade associations leaders, and global non-profits. John first admitted his alcoholism to Jim Ramstad, who cleared his

FIRST RECOVERY RANCH to pg 6



### SPOTLIGHT ON RECOVERY

## University of MN Neurobiology Research in Support of Addiction Recovery

Dr. Mark Thomas from the University of Minnesota is conducting invaluable research which will most likely change the current landscape of addiction recovery.

Read the article on page 10

JOHN H. DRIGGS, LICSW

## Where Is My Special Someone?

Like no other time of the year; the Christmas holidays bring out our yearnings for love and prompts many of us to ask, “Where is my special someone?” Implied in our questions are feelings of discouragement and resignation since our particular special someone has simply not showed up. If you are in this fix, realize you are not alone. In fact, over the holidays, many of us lose our sobriety and otherwise medicate our feelings, in a desperate attempt to hide our own misgivings over relationships. Some of us in coupled relationships might despair more during the holidays since what we already receive from our partners is less than fulfilling or authentic. If you choose to be single, realize there is nothing wrong with who you are simply by being single. At least going solo holds the promise of meeting someone special. You're already off to a good start by acknowledging you want more out of life.

However, let's be smart. Change involves more than yearning. It involves motivation, a paradigm shift, and follow-up behaviors. It is an active process with no room for pity or helplessness. In fact, it's never too late to seek that special someone. Loving partners exist for each of us throughout our lifetimes if we choose to find them. Indeed, each of us can considerably benefit from the process of seeking a caring partner. And who knows? By next Christmas you might even succeed at finding that special someone! What pains you now can lead you to bigger and better things if you have the courage to face yourself more authentically. After all, what do you really have to lose by risking more for love?

### MOTIVATION

Single people make two kinds of mistakes when it comes to finding a loving partner: They either say they really don't care about finding someone special when they really do, or they overtly claim to want a partner when they really don't. So many of us deceive ourselves when it comes to love. Katie, a semi-retired nurse, kept telling herself and all her friends that she is happy being single, that men are only trouble, and that she doesn't need a man to be happy. While all of that is well and good, Katie's actions were saying something quite different. She

SPECIAL SOMEONE to pg 12



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

# A Journey of Circles

by Sharon Chapman

*"The whole universe is based on rhythms. Everything happens in circles, in spirals."*  
JOHN HARTFORD, AMERICAN COMPOSER AND MUSICIAN



Life is not a straight line. Societal expectations usually dictate that we study hard, get good grades in school, get a good career, get married, have a family, live a nice life in a house in the city or country, and then retire. But life is messy. And I mean, sometimes really messy. We might have the intention of doing everything "right," but life has other ideas. How many of us can say that we've done everything the way that society pressurizes us to do so?

We might not do things in the "correct order." We might do things more than once. Or we might opt out of doing all of the "right things" in favor of something less conventional. I am "guilty" on all accounts.

And sometimes something trips us up that wasn't on our to-do list while here on Earth. In my case, it was being diagnosed with auto-immune issues at the age of forty-seven. I wasn't ready for the constant fatigue and pain that my life had now become. I was determined that I was going to overcome this and get back to "being normal." However, it wasn't that simple. Yes, I'd get "better," and feel like a "normal" person should for a while, but then I'd push the boundaries too far, and "bam!" I was right back where I'd started from. It has taken me years to figure out what my limits are and how to navigate this "new world."

A life in recovery is very similar. It is not a straight line. It is a messy journey of ups and downs, circles, corners, and a lot of zigzags. But it *is* moving forward. You might not be the same person that you were before the illness and/or addiction hit you, but you are also not that person stuck in the middle of the crisis. You've found a path to move forward and, although at times it feels like a very big hill to climb, you *are* making progress. Just don't expect it to be that straight line. Or that "normal" life or that standard of a life that society expects. And, after all, what does being normal even mean? What would life be like without a little bit of quirkiness, a little bit of creativeness, a little bit of *you*. As long as you are making progress in managing your life in recovery does the rest even matter?

Know that you are supported on this journey to recovery, whatever your situation is. I've always been one to take the scenic route, even if it wasn't my original plan. It turns out that it's a much prettier journey. Enjoy it while you're considering the next circle, corner, or zigzag.

Moving forward in circles,

*Sharon*



## The Phoenix Spirit

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*Every trial, and every issue we find and face holds within it the seeds of healing, health, wisdom, growth and prosperity. We hope you find a seed in every issue.*

The Phoenix Spirit is a bi-monthly publication for people actively working on their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being. We are committed to providing articles, advertising, and information about recovery, renewal, and personal growth to help people experience life in a balanced, meaningful way.

The opinions and facts presented in this publication are intended to be diverse and represent those of the writers and/or contributors, and are not necessarily those of The Phoenix Spirit. We seek writers and interview subjects who are willing to gift you with their honestly held convictions and insights. We seek to attract advertisers who offer products and services of integrity. But we urge our readers to research, and trust their instincts.

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## SPOTLIGHT ON MENTAL HEALTH

# An Honest Test of Cadre: The Stigma Free Social Media That Will Surprise and Challenge You

by Seth Perry



Cadre's COO Shannon Stauff and Founder, Luke Wentland / Photo by Cadre

Living with a mental health diagnosis can put you at risk of getting tangled in a maze of social media apps. Persistent and practically addictive features such as “likes,” impressions, and notifications have defined the last two decades of online media. If you feel empty amidst all of this, you are certainly not alone.

While video content, livestreams, and social media interactions offer many benefits, they also come with a massive downside. However, whether you're interested in recovery education, peer support, professional development, spiritual care, or personal growth, there's still a wealth of therapeutic content available to explore. Unfortunately, most social networks operate with limited fact checking and creator quality assurance.

In my line of work as a spiritual caregiver, I've noticed that people are seeking new and more intentional solutions when they interact with their devices. It was only a matter of time before a company

was formed to fill the numerous gaps in our society when it comes to mental health. Since 2021, a Saint Paul-based tech company named Cadre has been intentionally developing a vision for “a stigma-free community.”

Here's where my mind went the moment I heard about Cadre: I was immediately reminded of better and more altruistic days on social media. In 2015, I had the pleasure of posting on a short-lived social media app created by YouTuber Casey Neistat called BEME. This simple app used the proximity sensor in your phone to capture authentic moments when you pressed your device up against a wall and talked directly into the camera. There was an 8-second time limit for each segment of your “BEME,” and the app would stitch them all together into a larger video. BEME's content was candid and intentionally centered around authenticity by the creative team. When I got into the rhythm of Cadre, I started to feel that invitation to authenticity return.

At first glance, Cadre has some parallels to Neistat's initial vision.

However, Cadre is distinct because it takes authenticity and puts it in the hands of vetted professionals, caregivers, and folks with lived experience.

When Casey Neistat and Matt Hackett's promising app BEME was sold to CNN in 2016 and shut down a year later, I witnessed a major shift in tech. The sandbox of social media became more like a cage match. Today, everyone from your grandmother to my nephew knows about “the algo,” and quite frankly, it is affecting our spiritual and mental well-being. Everywhere I go, I hear about people deleting apps, turning off notifications, digital detoxes, emergency online therapy sessions with the EAP (Employee Assistance Program), and numerous other ubiquitous side effects of doomscrolling. Luckily, I have faith that the team behind Cadre has an ethical vision rooted in honest community-building for a truly diverse audience.

Cadre founder Luke Wentland believes that the future of tech has room for bona fide and trusted mental health recovery contributions. He should know; he cobbled together his personal wellness solutions on his own. Reflecting on his life when he was seeking solutions for anxiety, Luke says, “I think that I lived my life on Google.” Wentland's upbringing didn't foster open emotional sharing. “I grew up with two farmers... that really didn't talk a whole lot about feelings.” Luke joined the millions of curious individuals who took to the anonymity of search engines, blogs, podcasts, and social media to seek answers to their deepest problems. He ran into a confusing cacophony of opinions and content as he patiently walked the path of recovery.

Luke's personal journey led him to create an online community with a screening process for content creators, who at Cadre are called “contributors.” If you explore the platform, which is dubbed “The Cadresphere,” you'll notice it is devoid of politics, harassment, and charlatans. When I interviewed Luke on Zoom between meetings, this is what he shared: “We started to put up guardrails around political, topical areas, considerations that we know are polarizing. We have to make sure that there are guardrails up, and there's honest, relatable conversation around it. And sometimes the answer is, ‘Not now.’ And sometimes the answer is, ‘This topical area of con-

sideration, we're just not there yet.’ Or ‘This isn't a conversation that Cadre is ready to have.’” This is what sets Cadre apart. In order to become a contributor, you need to be interviewed, researched, referenced, and proven to be reliable. In the Cadresphere, there are no fake accounts, trolls, or clickbait. Luke and his team have created a space where personal growth is valued more than the platform's growth rate.


If you are looking for a tight-knit online community that is slowly discovering itself, this is what you can expect with Cadre. Folks can open the app and find meaningful, casual, and candid livestreams, posts, and videos. Shannon Stauff, COO of Cadre, explains the level of authenticity to expect in the Cadresphere: “The coolest thing about Cadre is that it's so genuine, and by that, I mean, like, people show up to their lives. They're not trying to be polished. They're not trying to be perfect. Two days ago, a doorbell rang during a woman's livestream. She's like, ‘Hey, friends, I gotta go check this.’” As a user, I've learned to expect natural flaws and imperfections that make peer and professional support truly meaningful. Quite frankly, it takes some getting used to because most online content I consume is staged or fake. Cadre, on the other hand, features contributors who cry while going live, log into a livestream in the middle of parenting, shift focus mid-livestream, and genuinely make themselves laugh.

If Cadre were just a bunch of creators thrown onto a platform, it would be a disorganized mess. The user would wonder why a comedian, counselor, former Mayor of Minneapolis, doctor, and nutritionist are all in one place. The Cadre team obviously values community over commerce, which is why one of Cadre's strongest features is how the livestreamed contributions in the Cadresphere are programmed like a radio station or streaming service. Shannon explains how things are organized: “We have topics on days of the week—Monday, professional development; Tuesday, community; Wednesday, mental well-being, etc.” To go live on Cadre, contributors are first interviewed by the director of programming and then situated in the lineup with their colleagues. Each day and each time slot are congruent and consistent. As the platform

HONEST TEST OF CADRE to pg 13



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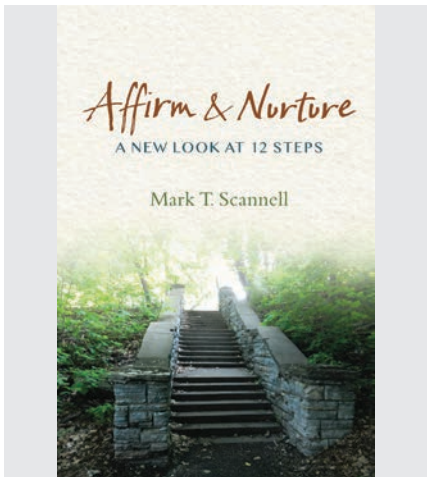
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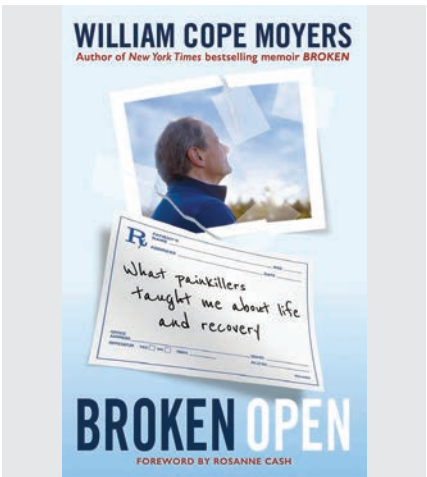


## Affirm & Nurture

A New Look at 12 Steps

By Mark T. Scannell  
GASSCANN PUBLISHERS

In *Affirm & Nurture: A New Look at 12 Steps*, Mark Scannell, an avid 12 Stepper, endeavors to present a more positive presentation of the 12 Steps. Mark sees the Steps emphasizing experiences such as taking inventory of the wrongs we have done and when we are wrong promptly admit it as well as making amends to people we have harmed. Mark sees this as one part of the recovery experience and even important for people new to recovery. It is also important to see the value in looking at our strengths and gifts as well as the good things we have done for others and for ourselves. Mark seeks to present a more balanced approach to the Steps that includes not only the mistakes we have done but also the good we have done and are doing. Recovery involves learning to live in balance, and *Affirm & Nurture* is an attempt to provide people in recovery that kind of a balanced way to live.



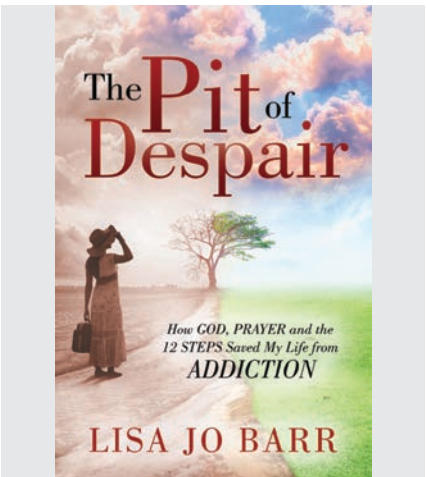
## Broken Open

What Painkillers Taught Me About Life and Recovery

By William Cope Moyers  
HAZELDEN PUBLISHING

William Cope Moyers was a model of sober success. As his inspiring story of overcoming addiction was on its way to becoming a *New York Times* bestseller, everyone thought he had finally achieved the redemption promised by recovery—including him. But the perfect story that helped Moyers become a famous face of the recovery movement was already unraveling, revealing a yet-to-be healed chasm between his public persona and conflicted inner life. A follow-up to his 2006 memoir *Broken: My Story of Addiction and Redemption*, this is Moyers's story of the ups and downs of life beyond the bright moments of early sobriety and what happened when a new crisis invaded what once seemed like a steady and secure recovery.

With brutal honesty and introspection, William shares what happened after sobriety—after he'd published his candid and shocking memoir, *Broken*, in 2006. While he no longer frequented or passed out on the floor of crack houses, his life of sobriety wasn't perfect. But his recovery was strong, or so he thought. Unfortunately, the opioid epidemic was stronger. It broke him.



## The Pit of Despair

How God, Prayer and the 12 Steps Saved My Life From Addiction

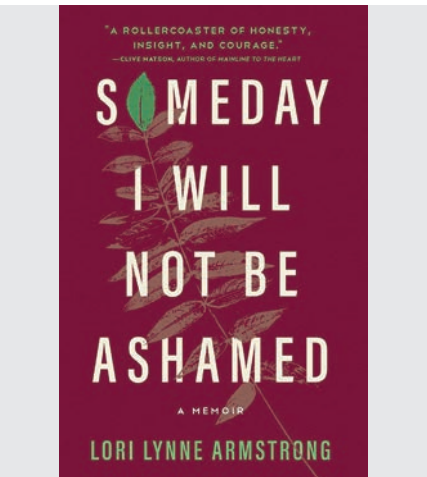
By Lisa Jo Barr  
MORGAN JAMES FAITH

*The Pit of Despair* is a raw and riveting account of one woman's triumphant journey from the abyss of addiction through the hope-filled world of recovery.

Lisa Jo B. intimately guides the audience through her struggles with sex, cocaine, and food addiction, her near-fatal relapse, and her ultimate redemption through a conscious connection with God via a 12-step program.

Beautiful, heartfelt prayers punctuate each chapter, designed for individual or group recitation, offering an interactive dimension to her story. Lisa Jo's vivid, emotional storytelling captures the devastating depths of addiction and the transformative joy of recovery, acting as a beacon of hope for those entangled in the thorny brambles of addiction.

Her candid approach dismantles societal stigma around addiction, by reframing it as a disease rather than a moral failing, aiding in the release of those struggling with toxic shame. She further empowers her audience by teaching them how to craft powerful prayers, fostering a closer relationship with Jesus Christ.



## Someday I Will Not Be Ashamed

A Memoir


By Lori Lynne Armstrong  
WINTERHAND BOOKS

An inspirational and searingly authentic woman's story that blends raw honesty with clinical knowledge as she battles addictions, mental illness, and self-destructive shame.

Lori Lynne Armstrong's plan was simple: be beautiful, brilliant, and successful enough to drown the inexplicable sense of worthlessness she carried. Mental illness, eating disorders, chronic pain, and a deadly addiction to painkillers were not part of the plan. How can she build a sense of self that isn't based on being "good enough?" The reader follows her from the corridors of M.I.T. to the halls of the psychiatric ward, from therapist-in-training to a therapist's problem patient, and, at last, beyond shame to an unexpected self-acceptance.



Many of the book descriptions are taken from the publishers or promotional releases. If you have a book you'd like featured or have an old favorite you'd like to share with others, please contact us at [phoenix@thephoenixspirit.com](mailto:phoenix@thephoenixspirit.com) and we may include it in an upcoming issue.



## Broken Open: What Painkillers Taught Me about Life and Recovery


A Raw and Honest Recovery Memoir

William C. Moyers had been sober from his addiction to alcohol and other drugs for decades. But when prescribed painkillers after a dental procedure, his journey was suddenly in jeopardy. In **Broken Open**, Moyers courageously shares his lived experiences through years of struggle and reclaiming his recovery from the opioid epidemic—and what it took for him to begin a new chapter of healing and hope.

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"Twenty years after I left a crack house for the last time, addiction found me in the pharmacy."

—William C. Moyers



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from page 1

busy schedule, and personally walked John into treatment at St. Mary's Hospital/now Fairview Recovery Services, the same treatment facility Jim attended.

By working with a sponsor and being mentored by many, John acquired a decade of sobriety in 1998. (He's now celebrated 26 years!) He accepted a position as Vice President at the Johnson Institute and moved to Washington DC. He then served the federal government as a consultant with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), was Vice President for the National Council for Alcohol and Drug Dependence (NCADD), and helped the Center for Aging Care Services Technologies (CAST), build national coalitions of scientists, medical staff, hospitals, nursing homes, and others to help reinvent America's approach to aging care. In doing so, John began to see parallels between aging care and addiction care, especially when it came to coaching. While at the National Institutes of Health, John heard the leadership of a new genetics company (23 and Me), describe how they utilized coaches to help patients interpret gathered data. This intrigued John, who had recently been introduced to health coaches working in other areas of health management.

Shortly after John moved back to Minnesota, one of John's daughters experienced a serious mental health issue that required hospitalization. Despite his deep knowledge of the issues and resources available, John and his family felt lost and imploded on the stress of the situation. John wondered, "How do families with no experience, training or resources survive?" After some soul searching, he resigned from his position as Executive Director of the Minnesota Association of Resources for Recovery and Chemical Health (MARRCH) and dedicated himself to serving families as a Life Recovery Coach.

Fast forward to the early days of the pandemic, one day, as John drove out of town, he felt his tension lowering. He realized that he could work from anywhere, so why not buy a small hobby farm to work and entertain family and friends. In that instant... Relevant Recovery was born! John describes Relevant Recovery (RR) as a combination of three things: "First, it's a Recovery Community Organization in the original form before peer supports were added to RCOs. Second, it's a membership organization like



## Relevant Recovery's top priority is to launch a physical Recovery Ranch. This ranch will offer Minnesotans a space and place where families can be coached, leaders can be trained, and people can retreat, relax, and find connection.

AARP that advocates for and gives its members benefits. While AARP is an affinity organization dealing with retirement, Relevant Recovery's affinity is recovery. Third, it's a space and place like the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum where people can "experience" recovery, stroll the grounds, take classes, enjoy events, and have a lovely day."

"Relevant Recovery is currently canvassing to identify key leaders who will move our mission forward in 2025," said Magnuson. "Our mission has 5 key components; 1) to connect community, 2) to create spaces, places, and programs, 3) to equip and coach families, 4) to train and mentor leaders, and 5) to entertain and educate."

Relevant Recovery's Board met on May 6th, Jim Ramstad's birthday, to form the organization that will offer interventions, coaching, and retreats as their primary services. They agreed to host a

soft launch for the public on July 31. The date was chosen to honor Jim Ramstad's sobriety date and recognize his leadership. The soft launch this year included speeches by U.S. Rep. Patrick Kennedy via video and David Wellstone in person who spoke to what remains undone 16 years after the passage of The Mental Health and Addiction Parity law. Relevant Recovery plans to continue hosting Annual Innovation Addresses on July 31 as an ongoing tribute to Jim Ramstad and his legacy work to help families dealing with addiction and mental health issues.

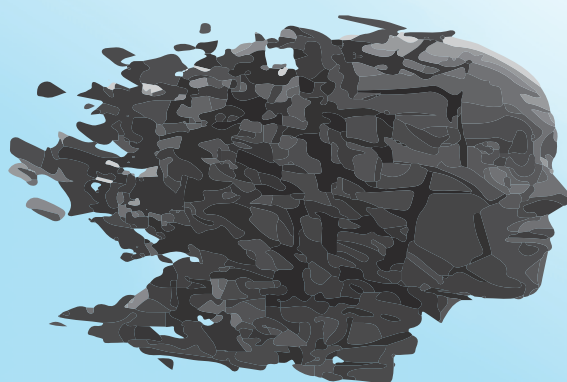
In addition, Relevant Recovery's Board of Advisors, co-chaired by Robert Lindsey (Betty Ford Center/NCADD) and Michael Frisch (Cronin Home/MARRCH) has announced they are seeking interested parties to serve on their Board of Advisors. The 2025 inaugural year calendar of events includes a Great Goal Set, several days to recog-

nize love and service, days to honor family, a Global Sojourn or retreat/mission trip to Italy, on-going Leadership Training sessions for both the public and professionals, and an annual Gratitude Gala featuring scholarships.

Besides being the umbrella organization that offers family coaching services and a full year of programming and events, Relevant Recovery's top priority is to launch a physical Recovery Ranch. This ranch will offer Minnesotans a space and place where families can be coached, leaders can be trained, and people can retreat, relax, and find connection. Therefore, having a large, non-clinical space and place to "experience" recovery is vital. Their site selection committee has identified a 30 to 45 minute 'Goldilocks Zone' around the 494/694 beltway of the Minneapolis/St. Paul Metro area. Within this area they plan to acquire an existing farm or build from scratch.

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from page 6



Previous page: Farmland in Minnesota (iStock) / Current page: John Magnuson gives a talk (Photo provided by Magnuson)

“We’ve currently identified a potential site,” shared Magnuson. “It’s a 120-acre farm west of Minneapolis that has all our key elements; a large home that will serve as a Welcome Center/Family Retreat Center, a 20-acre organic garden with a greenhouse, a 20-acre patch of woods/trails, and some barns that will host six skills labs or learning labs. When people give up addictions, they have a bunch of time. Food is important, so we’ll offer culinary classes with recipes that don’t feature alcohol. People work things out through art, so we’ll have art, music, woodworking, leatherworking, and ironworking classes.”

Part of the “experience” they hope to create on the Recovery Ranch is connection. When people arrive at the Welcome Center, they’ll learn a little about addiction, mental health, and behavioral health issues. However, the Ranch isn’t a treatment center. It will be a 3-to-5-hour experience that isn’t clinical. If treatment is an overnight camp, the Ranch is a day camp. It will be a space where families and individuals can connect with self, community and the earth. “Community is so important to recovery,” Magnuson said, “I’m a big believer that healing takes place in community and we should be careful not to clinicalize everything in mental health and substance use disorder. One, we don’t have the professional work-

force to handle the current volume of cases. And two, we can’t afford it across a lifetime continuum of care. Therefore, we should teach resilience, connection, and provide opportunities for community support through organizations such as Relevant Recovery when appropriate.”

John’s friends who have known him for over 30 years said, “Magnuson, you’re doing so awesome as a Life Recovery Coach. This is a huge project. Why do this?” John replied, “This vision is way bigger than me and I’m confident we are connected to the true power.”

It helps that most of John’s career has involved professional fundraising because this project is estimated to cost \$8 million for the property, facilities, staffing, and programs. John concluded, “I’ve worked with many resource-building groups across the country with a strong reach into the recovery community. Even so, \$8 million is a huge goal. Since funding is what I’ve worked on most of my career, I’m ready to go!”

**Mary Berg** is a retired associate professor of clinical education, a resume writer, published author, and poet. Her first poetry collection, *A Mystic in the Mystery: Poems of Spirit, Seasons, and Self* was released in February 2024. Her website is: [marybergresumewriter.com](http://marybergresumewriter.com).

## Learn more

Relevant Recovery upcoming events and meetings:

### January

“Great Goal Set” for the public

### February

“National Day of Love”  
“Leadership Training”

### March

“Great Goal Re-Set”

### May

“Honor Your Mothers Brunch”

### June

“Honor Your Fathers BBQ”

### August:

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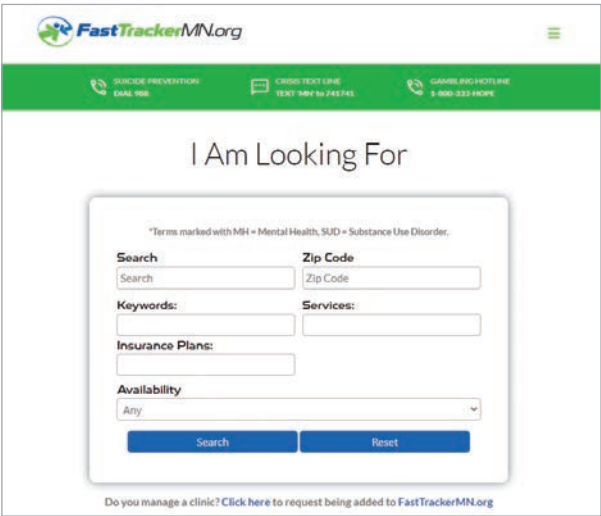


# Treatment Providers

The following directory consists of some of the substance use disorder programs/mental health providers in Minnesota that have listed their services on FastTracker (as of September 2024).

It's easy to find a list of those who offer these services by going to the SUD side search page at [fastrackermn.org](https://fastrackermn.org). Search using city, name, county, zip code, service or by keyword.

FastTracker is a virtual connection resource funded by the Minnesota Department of Human Services Behavioral Health Division and the State Opioid Response grant. FastTracker connects providers, care coordinators, and consumers with a real-time, searchable directory of mental and substance use disorder resources & their availability.



- Abria Recovery**  
Burnsville  
952-406-8105
- Alliance Wellness Center**  
Bloomington  
952-562-3740
- Alluma**  
Crookston  
218-281-3940
- Amazing Grace Recovery Services**  
St. Francis  
763-753-6639
- Avivo Outpatient**  
Minneapolis  
612-752-8074
- Burkwood Treatment Center**  
Hudson (WI)  
715-690-3212
- Canvas Health**  
Multiple locations  
651-777-5222
- CenterLife Counseling**  
Multiple locations  
651-289-3111
- CentraCare**  
Saint Cloud  
320-229-3760

- Club Recovery**  
Edina  
952-926-2526
- Conceptual Counseling**  
St. Paul  
651-221-0334
- Cornerstone Therapy and Recovery Center**  
St. Paul  
651-645-0980
- CREATE, Inc.**  
Multiple locations  
612-874-9811
- Divine Hope Counseling**  
Willmar  
320-231-9763
- Effective Living**  
Saint Cloud  
320-259-5381
- Elite Recovery**  
St. Paul  
612-719-4137
- Ethos Recovery Clinic**  
Spring Lake Park  
763-298-9100
- Fairview**  
Multiple locations  
612-672-2736

- Freedom Center**  
Multiple locations  
763-308-0006
- Gateway Recovery Center**  
Inver Grove Heights  
833-338-6980
- Grace Counseling Services**  
East Bethel  
763-413-8838
- Haven Chemical Health**  
Multiple locations  
651-734-9633
- Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation**  
Multiple locations  
800-257-7800
- Hope House of Itasca County, Inc.**  
Multiple locations  
218-326-1443
- Inspire Services**  
Multiple locations  
507-364-5312
- Lake Country Associates**  
Multiple locations  
218-564-9229

- Lakeplace**  
Bovey  
218-245-1395
- Lakeside Academy**  
Buffalo  
844-768-8336 (TEEN)
- Lakeview Behavioral Health**  
Multiple locations  
1-866-327-5253
- Life Transformations**  
Breckenridge  
701-640-8915
- Living Free Recovery**  
Brooklyn Park  
763-315-7170
- Mental Health Resources**  
St. Paul  
651-659-2900
- Meridian Behavioral Health**  
Multiple Locations  
952-843-4149
- Minnesota Adult & Teen Challenge**  
Multiple locations  
612-373-3366
- Minnesota Alcohol/Drug Assessments**  
Menahga  
218-640-6133
- Missions Inc. Programs**  
Plymouth  
763-559-1883
- Native American Community Clinic**  
Minneapolis  
612-843-5980
- New Beginnings**  
Multiple locations  
1-855-653-1775
- New Freedom Inc.**  
Princeton  
763-220-5483

- New Life Treatment**  
Worthington  
507-777-4321
- Newport Healthcare**  
Various  
844-603-0484
- North Homes Children and Family Services**  
Multiple locations  
218-751-0282
- Northern Pines Mental Health Center**  
Little Falls  
320-639-2025
- Northland Recovery**  
Multiple locations  
218-327-1105
- Northstar Behavioral**  
Multiple locations  
651-487-4987
- NorthStar Regional**  
Multiple locations  
1-833-677-4673
- Nowology**  
Multiple locations  
651-505-3273
- NUWAY**  
Multiple locations  
651-404-2000
- Nystrom Treatment**  
Multiple locations  
651-529-8479
- Omada Behavioral Health Services**  
Northfield  
507-664-9407
- Overcoming Addictions**  
Minnetonka  
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Minneapolis  
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## SPOTLIGHT ON RECOVERY

# University of Minnesota Neurobiology Research in Support of Addiction Recovery

by Sharon Chapman



Photo illustration / iStock

The arguments surrounding the root cause of addiction have raged for decades. Addiction is often viewed as a societal or moral failing rather than a biological one. Many people believe that it is a choice to continue to drink or use vs. an illness. But is this really the situation?

I recently sat down with Dr. Mark Thomas of the Department of Neuroscience at the University of Minnesota who is conducting research into therapeutic brain stimulation. He talked with me at length about how it might affect those with addiction issues. To sum it up: This invaluable research will most likely change the current landscape of addiction recovery.

“To me, it will be a big leap forward when we convince more people that this is a biological failing and that by understanding the biology, we can reduce stigma and leverage that for new therapies,” Dr. Thomas stated.

It was apparent to me during this interview that Dr. Thomas is extremely knowledgeable and has had a lifelong dedication to the area of neurobiology. The unique research that he and his team are undertaking most likely will change both how we view addiction in the future and how we address the recovery journey around it. But how did he get here?

## WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

Dr. Thomas was studying a basic biology undergrad class at UCLA back in the 90s when he was drawn into the world of neurobiology. Through this class he learned that “the brain changes with experience, memories are stored in a way we don’t yet still understand and last for a lifetime and laid down in physical changes and biochemical changes.” From there his journey culminated in a PhD in neuroscience and progressed further with two post doctorates in psychiatry and psychology. He moved around the States a bit before finding his place back in his home state of Minnesota in 2003 studying neurosciences.

In 2014, he became part of the Medical Discovery Team on Addiction, a research program funded by the state. The purpose of this research was to “examine how addictive drugs alter the brain and how these changes can lead to compulsive drug use.” Dr. Thomas is now director of the team and his team’s research is focused on ways to disrupt relapse in addiction.

The work that Dr. Thomas and his team is doing goes beyond the usual academic parameters. From the very beginning, he was out in the community giving

talks and connecting with various groups on the goals of the project. Dr. Thomas explained that “[The goal of the research is] to get synergy between different research areas from biochemistry and genetics all the way up to human brain imaging and into the clinic.” Their goal is to work together in finding some tools that can be used directly with the people who can benefit the most.

“The memories laid down by the brain are not just beneficial changes but maladaptive changes that can disrupt normal functioning, for example PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), [as well as] substance use disorder,” Dr. Thomas told me. This means that the brains of those suffering from addiction are working against them in some areas.

Dopamine, the well popularized “pleasure molecule,” is viewed differently in the world of neuroscience these days. Dr. Thomas explains “This is not trivial. The way that we think of it now is that it is a ‘do it again’ molecule. It has developed over time in order for organisms to pursue the mechanisms for their own survival.” What this means is that dopamine is greatly enhanced when drugs that can be misused enter the body’s system. Basically, dopamine puts the body into survival mode, and it “instructs” the body to “do this again.”

Dr. Thomas presents a sobering thought: “This is a very different take. It’s a critical piece of this story. Once you think of it that way...even though it’s not a conscious thing, even though you’ve been repeatedly exposed to something, your brain is saying, ‘Go get some more of that stuff. That’s going to help us survive!’...that’s a different way of looking at it.”

## REAL LIFE RESEARCH

The University of Minnesota has one of the world’s best brain imaging centers. University of Minnesota’s director of the Center for Magnetic Resonance Research (CMRR), Dr. Kamil Ugurbil, has done research into magnetic resonance imaging; this has put the University of Minnesota on the world map in regard to neuroscience. All positive support for further research in the area of the brain in the state of Minnesota. Some of these previous monitoring modalities were also used in Dr. Thomas’ own research work.

One of the challenges presented by research work is working with animal models. Dr. Thomas explains that although working with animal models can be more cost and time effective than



Dr. Mark Thomas / Photo provided by Thomas

working with people, you have to then look to see if those principles hold in human brains. That makes translating the work into clinical practice more difficult.

However, the team has been working directly with human brains in clinical research. So, how does that work?

## NON-INVASIVE THERAPEUTIC BRAIN STIMULATION

The therapeutic brain stimulation research carried out by the Medical Discovery Team on Addiction is not invasive like past models of therapeutic brain stimulation. The brain is “an electrical organ” and it is not the first time that it has been used in therapeutic applications. Dr. Thomas gives an example. “Brain surgery that implants electrodes into motor areas for intractable Parkinson’s disease, and other motor disorders, has been used for a couple of decades.” It may not be the first line of approach but if drugs designed to help with the disease don’t work then this method of therapeutic brain stimulation reaches areas of the brain to disrupt motor control that causes rigidity and tremors.

Other less invasive but targeted motor stimulation therapies include transcranial magnetic stimulation and transcranial direct current stimulation.

Neuroscience stimulation carried out by the Medical Discovery Team on Addiction is still targeted but very mild. “It is a cap that goes over the skull, has electrodes on it, some are configured to measure electrical information from the brain and EEG [electroencephalogram] recordings or configured to direct electrical stimulation across the scalp and

U OF MN NEUROBIOLOGY RESEARCH to pg 11



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skull and into the brain regions affected during different psychiatric conditions including addiction,” Dr. Thomas said. “We think this is a new way forward, to steal a phrase, to really get at the key issue. With drugs you are going to have side effects. We may have side effects with this, but we think that the chances of having side effects are lower because we are actually targeting the specific brain region that we need to address.”

Patients are given transcranial direct current stimulation at the same time that they are performing cognitive tasks. These might be difficult cognitive games played on the computer, for example. Dr. Thomas expanded: “The two together, the thinking goes, is what provides real specificity of the stimulation. The electrical stimulation by itself is kind of so mild and not as able to be targeted as we’d like but when the brain’s own activity is layered on top of it, that gives enough efficacy and enough specificity that we’re really hitting the targets that we want to hit.” As with all research studies, sham treatments are also given in the study program where patients are set up with the cap but are not given the stimulation treatment.

Treatments are carried out daily. Much of this work has been done by team members Dr. Jazmin Camchong and Dr. Kelvin Lim of the psychiatry department. They follow the patient for a couple of weeks following release from the program, or even up to three months afterward.

And the results? Research shows that there has been a two-thirds lower relapse rate than normal. “There have been some really impressive efficacies for alcohol

use disorder,” Dr. Thomas added. He is optimistic that the research program is on the right track, and they just have to keep working on it and refining it.

Research on addiction from various focus groups from around the world (not just at the University of Minnesota neuroscience department) has shown that there are quite a number of things in common between different addictive substances in how the brain responds and changes. They are also seeing things that are different between them, but the focus has been on finding the commonalities and using that information. It’s hard to compare like for like as separate groups and studies carry out the research work and these could be experimental variabilities or the drugs themselves. Lab research also doesn’t take into account that people often take or use more than one drug at a time; this approach is too complicated to assess. By focusing on commonalities, it is hoped that something “broadly useful” might be found.

#### THE FUTURE OF NEUROSCIENCE RESEARCH FOR THE RECOVERY COMMUNITY

Dr. Thomas is very optimistic about recovery treatment for addiction. He said he hopes that “Some forms of neurostimulation treatment will be widely available within, let’s say, ten years but there are individual to individual differences.” He believes that finding things that will be useful for subpopulations of people is going to be easier than finding something that will be a broadly useful tool. He added that a lot of refining needs to take place for it to be broadly useful.

He speculated that in the future,

“There could potentially be temporary drug treatments that could be used in conjunction with brain stimulation in conjunction with cognitive training or other kinds of psycho-social training and finding those good combinations I imagine is going to take us a while.”

Dr. Thomas reiterated that “There is a lot of stigma surrounding addiction and if it is a brain disease or not. There is a clear biological component to it and the more that we understand about it and the more that we disseminate that understanding I think that it leads to an easier path to compassion for those who are suffering.” He also stated that it allows people to help them use this information for better treatment. All of this leads to leverage for new therapies.

#### SUPPORT FROM THE RECOVERY COMMUNITY

Back to the recovery community at large, where the initial word about the research program was spread. Dr. Thomas closed out with: “One thing that is important as a team is that we are in contact with people in our community who are working on the same issue from different angles. It is a bit unique for an academic team of neurobiologists to be out in the community in the way that we are, which is a pretty significant way of working with community partners and recovery organizations and with partners in our state government as well. It means a lot to us to interface with people outside of our academic silo.”

There is a lot of work ahead, but the future looks a little brighter for the recovery community with the addition of a potentially more significant and power-

ful tool to help in the healing journey. It won’t eliminate the need for the support and care already in place but will bring new tools to the table.

In closing, Dr. Thomas philosophized: “Our basic philosophy is that addiction is not a moral failing, it is a biological failing...by trying to understand that we can leverage that information for new therapies that will be new tools in the toolbox for clinicians and therapists to use.”

*Sharon Chapman is a published author and editor with over fifteen years’ experience. She is the published author of Authentic Aromatherapy (New York: Skyhorse Publishing) and editor in chief for various US publications. Learn more about her freelance writing, editing, and publishing services at [sedonaaromatics.com/product-category/writing-editing-and-publishing](http://sedonaaromatics.com/product-category/writing-editing-and-publishing).*

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Driggs from page 1

regularly asked her friends about their single male acquaintances, she surfed the net for suitable dating services, and she always warmed up to her male friends and their buddies. Somehow fearing heartbreak again, Katie maintained a passive stance in dating men by telling herself she really isn't interested in guys. If she were really honest with herself she'd have to take the risk of getting closer to men and dealing with her lifetime of heartache. While the risk of emotional intimacy is considerable, it might be less than losing our dreams. To have loved and lost is often better than never to have loved at all.

On the other hand, some of us are constantly in unstable relationships and we make no headway in being with that special someone. We might tell ourselves and everybody we are ready for Mr. or Ms. Right, but in fact we consistently pick Mr. or Ms. Wrong. Phil, a rather wealthy computer analyst, decided to be scientific about picking a mate. He bewildered his friends by designing a questionnaire that he gave to every new woman he seriously dated. Of course the women who were more interested in Phil's success answered the questionnaire to his liking and he soon had many unsatisfying relationship experiences. Little did he know that his method of screening dates might in itself give the wrong message and inadvertently turn off loving women who could value Phil for who he really is. So many of us claim to be eager for love, but our actions say otherwise.

Certainly we make legitimate life choices when we choose to be single or coupled. However, it's best if we do so with less self-deception.

**PARADIGM SHIFT**

Most of us single people who wish to be partnered tell ourselves, "I just haven't met the right person." The reality is that we have not allowed the right person to meet us. The ones who have the most to offer us are exactly the ones we run away from the fastest. Most of us aren't aware of how we unconsciously sabotage real love from finding us. In fact, there are many people out there who can love us. Probably many already have but we were either too asleep at the wheel or we shut them out from caring for us. It's not other people who are holding up love in our lives. It's ourselves. Indeed, to meet that special someone, we need to take an

honest look at ourselves in a mirror and ask, "Am I really ready for love?"

If the answer is no, pat yourself on the shoulder. At least you're being honest with yourself. Relationships are not for everybody. There are many ways to be happy in life besides being coupled. You can always change your mind later.

If the answer is yes, take heed. Although you have much to gain from being authentically loved by another human being, you are staring into the eyes of the dragon. Many of us gain from actively seeking a lifemate. But in the courting process we must also endure considerable repressed grief over past relationship efforts. The bad always comes with the good. After years of being chosen by less-than-desirable men, Maria finally had had enough. She decided to introduce herself to a warmhearted and attractive man, Sammy, who sang in her church choir. After several special dates with Sammy, Maria always found herself crying and wanting to run away when Sammy held her in his arms. She felt like a wreck until she realized her own father had never held her and all the men she settled for were very much like him. She and Sammy changed each other's worlds forever but first she had to endure old heartache. It's the old heartache, not the new love possibilities, that causes many of us to stay single.

If your answer is, "I am not sure," ask yourself the following questions: Are you willing to admit your part in pushing available partners away or not challenging yourself by meeting people who already have much to offer you? Have you made a decision to stop settling for undesirable partners who might be exciting but have little to offer you in the long run? Are you willing to regularly put yourself in respectful situations for meeting suitable partners and take the risk of being rejected? Your answers to these questions will tell you how you really feel. Most of us are ambivalent about meeting available partners. We like the benefits but are afraid of the risks.

**FOLLOW-UP BEHAVIORS**

The real key to being loved by that special someone is for you to be open to people loving you. Authentic romance occurs in the context of allowing many people to become important to you. As you open your heart to friends, trusted relatives, caring neighbors and good-hearted people, you become a different

*The ones who have the most to offer us are exactly the ones we run away from the fastest. Most of us aren't aware of how we unconsciously sabotage real love from finding us.*

person and give off the message to a potential real lover that you're ready for business. In fact, no special someone can fill the gap of what you haven't already done about accepting love in your life. We meet who we are ready to meet.

Alas, wisdom is required for meeting your special someone. Probably the best love choices are people who have warm hearts, a strong sense of personal responsibility, and you're attracted to. If you get scared being around such people, you're likely making good choices as you're being challenged. It's best to not get overly excited just because you're getting the attention of someone who appears ideal. Indeed, to really know what a person is made of, you have to go through many ordeals and disagreements with him or her. Often this process takes more than a year. Don't assume someone is really interested in you just because you're really committed to that person. It's best to be yourself and see how your partners handles your rough edges. Don't make it easy for him or her. The best time to let someone take your breath away is after a long and careful courtship, but most of us never do it that way. If you're continually stuck in a rut of making bad love choices, consult a professional helper and receive the care and wisdom of that relationship.

Also, effort is required. God helps those who help themselves. You will need to find ways of regularly putting yourself out there for available people to meet. Give yourself forever to meet the right person, as it will feel like it takes forever. Don't waste your time with dead-beats. Read, *Keeping the Love You Find* (Atria Books) by Harville Hendrix, Ph.D. for making informed choices. Consider joining a singles social organization or a singles volunteer group. Get involved in

whatever way that suits your style. Joining is a way of admitting need and makes you a bigger person. Just do it!

Finally, realize that simply allowing yourself to seek more in your life with enable you to discover hidden strengths in yourself and ultimately you will meet that special someone — yourself. You can't go wrong with that!

*John H. Driggs, LICSW, is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in private practice in St. Paul and co-author of *Intimacy Between Men*.*

This article first appeared in the December 2004 issue of *The Phoenix Spirit*. John Driggs is taking a break this issue and will resume writing in the November / December issue.

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from page 4

grows, it will be interesting to see how this unique feature develops.

My big questions about Cadre are: Why haven't I deleted Cadre from my phone? Why do I intentionally open the app and engage with it? How can one eight-minute, unscripted livestream cause me to reflect on a regular basis for the next month? Why do I walk away from broadcasting a livestream without worrying about how the algorithm has responded to my post? Why can I go about my day without stressing over impressions or comments?

Here's a clue as to why: Cadre contributors have good intentions. There are no followers or subscriber counts. I've never once seen someone talk about clout. Snake oil, manipulation, and relentless calls to action are absent from Cadre by design. This means that when I open Cadre, I witness contributors bringing their passion for wellness directly to the user. This is why Cadre is a perfect addition to my app screen.

**Seth Perry** (he/him/his), an ELCA Pastor, devotional blogger, and mental health recovery educator, embraces his journey of living well with Bipolar Type 1. He works to reduce stigma where faith, mental health, and personal growth intertwine. Pastor Seth currently serves Elim Lutheran Church in Scandia, MN. His website is: [www.ourstigma.com](http://www.ourstigma.com).

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FROM THE STATE OF MINNESOTA

# Helping People Achieve Recovery – However They Define It

by Jen Sather

Recovery from substance use disorders is an incredibly challenging journey, but it's also one of the most rewarding paths a person can take. Every individual in recovery deserves to be celebrated, no matter what their recovery looks like or how they define it.

This September, during Recovery Month, the Minnesota Department of Human Services is honoring all Minnesotans who are making strides toward a better life, wherever they are on their journey.

For many, recovery means full abstinence from all mood-altering substances. They believe that any use of intoxicants could risk a return to the struggles they've worked so hard to overcome. Fortunately, there are numerous treatment programs and support systems designed to help people achieve this type of recovery, offering hope and strength to those who seek it.

But as in most aspects of life, recovery is not always black and white. Some people may quit their drug of abuse, but still need some sort of medication to manage a chronic pain condition. Some people have had trouble quitting due to severe withdrawals and decide to re-

main on medication-assisted treatment like suboxone. Some people may decide that alcohol is harming their career or relationships, but that low-dose cannabis has minimal negative impacts for them personally while reducing their urge to drink. And for some, simply quitting intravenous drug use is a major victory.

Unfortunately, people in recovery that is not based on complete abstinence have often felt stigmatized by others in the recovery community. Let me be clear: All types of recovery are valid. If you feel healthy and present in your family and community, and you are living the life you want to live, you should feel proud. You should not be made to feel like your recovery is less valuable than anyone else's.

We understand that people advocating for abstinence-only recovery are doing so because they believe it's the best way to save lives. But we also know that someone cannot achieve abstinence if they're no longer here. If we can help them to quit or greatly reduce their use of the drug that has the highest chance of killing them, we've bought more time so they can continue working towards a safer, healthier future.

Ultimately, DHS as an agency respects individual choice. And we know that recovery is far more likely to stick if a person is making the choice to get help, and choosing precisely what type of help they want.

- If you are considering making a change, visit [mn.gov/dhs/sud-get-help](http://mn.gov/dhs/sud-get-help) to learn about the process for getting a substance use disorder diagnostic assessment.
- If you are in recovery and could use additional support, visit [FastTrackerMN.org](http://FastTrackerMN.org) to find peer recovery services near you.
- If you are still using, but are open to harm reduction information, visit [knowthedangers.com/harm-reduction](http://knowthedangers.com/harm-reduction).

At DHS, we understand that it is not the role of a government agency to define what recovery means for you. It is our role to provide supports and ensure a robust system of care so that people can live a life that is meaningful to them, and so that people can be fully engaged with their families and communities. Recovery is very personal, and Minnesota's substance use disorder system of supports has many options to help you live the life you want to live. You just need to take that first step – even if it seems small.

**Jen Sather** is the deputy director of substance use disorder services at the Minnesota Department of Human Services' Behavioral Health Administration.

## Resource Directory

### Counseling

#### Lehmann Counseling

Help for individuals and families dealing with addiction. Kate Lehmann is an experienced professional offering client-centered substance use counseling. Discrete, flexible, private pay. [www.katelehmann.com](http://www.katelehmann.com) for more information.

### Eating Disorders

#### Melrose Center

Melrose's experienced team provides specialized care for those struggling with an eating disorder and substance use disorder – whether currently in treatment or recovery. Melrose Center has five Twin City metro locations. Visit [melroseheals.com](http://melroseheals.com) or call 952-993-6200.

### Seniors

#### Silver Sobriety "Rebuilding Lives, One Senior at a Time!"

Silver Sobriety is a treatment facility specifically for seniors over age 55. Getting sober with a group of peers you can relate to is a better treatment option. Based on the twelve step Program, we focus on strategies to handle issues facing seniors, along with abstinence from alcohol and drugs. Contact us for a free confidential conversation. [www.silversobriety.org](http://www.silversobriety.org) info@silversobriety.org. 651-431-8308.

### Substance Use Disorders

#### Minnesota Teen Challenge

If you or a loved one is struggling with drugs or alcohol, we're here to help. In addition to our effective and affordable residential Licensed Treatment, faith-based Long-Term Recovery and convenient Outpatient program, we have extensive prevention and transitional/aftercare services. Freedom from addiction starts here. 612-FREEDOM or [mntc.org](http://mntc.org)

### Workaholics Anonymous Meeting

Burning out? Workaholics Anonymous provides steps and tools to break free from non-stop work and activity — or work avoidance. Meeting is currently online via Zoom. Call Pat for link to the meeting or questions: 763-560-5199. [www.workaholics-anonymous.org](http://www.workaholics-anonymous.org).

Put Your Passion in

# ACTION»

Help Others in Recovery

[MinnesotaRecoveryCorps.org](http://MinnesotaRecoveryCorps.org)









***Lakeplace Guest House and Cabins for AA, NA, Alanon and Associated Couples***

**Courtesy of:**

***The Lakeplace Foundation Inc.***

*For Current Use*



Imagine you and your friends from your own group being able to share your own strengths, hopes and experiences here in this highly spiritual, north-woods community.

With these three cabins and Guest House, your group can choose from several activities for fellowship, while being provided several areas for your meetings.

**Please consider these many benefits:**

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- On-Site 24/7 Staff for your convenience test
- Use of Lakeplace Amenities
- Summer or Winter Fishing
- Several Meeting and Community Areas
- Stunning "12-Step Wilderness Walk"
- Provided Without Cost (*guest donations appreciated*)

*In the future, exclusive use of the Lakeplace Retreat Center campus may be provided by the Lakeplace Foundation for Alano Societies and independent AA, NA, Alano groups and their associated couples.*

*To review this possible contingency, along with its video presentation, please enter the address indicated below on your search bar:*

**Lakeplace Foundation  
Website**

[www.lakeplacefoundation.org](http://www.lakeplacefoundation.org)

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*We believe this offer by Lakeplace Foundation is consistent with our AA "Traditions" #6 and #7:*

*We are an independent corporation, seek no endorsement from AA, NA, Alanon or their financial support.*

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218 910-0800**



TECHLESS WISEPHONE REVIEW

# Take Back Your Life With the Dumb Smart Phone

by Dave Osborn



Photo provided by Techless

If you are like most Americans, you own some type of smartphone. It might be in your hand right now as you read this article. Take a glance at it and consider how it has changed your life. It has been a tool to capture memories, stay informed, and keep in touch with friends and loved ones. For many of us, its capabilities have improved our health, made us more efficient, given access to endless reading material, and organized vital information.

The smartphone is an amazing device. But not unlike other good things, it can take an improper place in our lives.

### ALWAYS AT HAND

I know that I am not alone in admitting that my smartphone came to play a very prominent role in my life. I made sure that it was always nearby. Upon turning in at night, it was on my nightstand, inches away in case of an emergency. It became a trusty alarm clock and a source of bedtime reading. If awakened, I would naturally reach for it to learn how much of the night remained. It was there for me during insomnia until I was ready to give sleep another try.

Though I knew better, it was hard not to start the day with the smartphone as well. In hand to check the time, that text received overnight was a thumb tap away. Another tap to learn what had

happened in the news over the last eight hours. Anything interesting in my email inbox? Did the Twins win their game on the west coast? Tap, tap.

The smartphone was there for me at other times, too. Its endless offerings are a faithful and effective ally in procrastination. Its bright and fast-moving screen gives adrenaline when my eyes get heavy. Are there emotions that I don't want to face? Don't have to, at least not now, with the smartphone in hand.

In an honest conversation over lunch, I told a friend that my smartphone was shrinking my soul. This admission was a milepost in radically reassessing the role of the device in my life. *Was I addicted to my smartphone?* It was a question that I didn't want to ask, because I knew the answer. It meant too much to me. It was the answer to too many things. It sopped up too much time. It was too convenient of an escape. It was an avenue of temptation to view whatever images the internet had to offer. I came to believe that I had to make change, regardless of the cost.

### ALTERNATIVES

Addressing my dependence on my smartphone was a daunting thought. How could I live without ... (fill in the blank)? But I was ready to sacrifice, knowing that the health of my soul was at stake.

I considered the radical "cold turkey" route. That would entail trading the smartphone for what is (wrongly) called a dumbphone. In a few minutes, I could cut the smartphone out of my life. But after hearing accounts of the radical route resulting in a return to the smartphone days later, I decided on a more nuanced approach. What's more, there were certain apps that were *required* at my workplace and to enter certain buildings. No, I needed a more gradual plan of action that would produce a lasting lifestyle change, not a temporary one.

Were this a tech publication and I a tech writer, many paragraphs would follow about the options available to those pursuing less tech, but this isn't and I'm not. I did my homework, however, and landed on a phone that was a good tool for what I was trying to accomplish.

The Wisephone is a product of a company called Techless. I tested its current model over a period of weeks. The Wisephone II is currently in development and expected to be released in late 2024. It strikes the right balance between tech and no tech, offering these simple capabilities:

- Clock
- Calculator
- Camera
- Maps
- Music
- Notes
- Photos
- Phone
- Messages

Much can be said about the technical specifications of the phone, along with the functions of each of the features listed above. Readers can learn more about the Wisephone at Techless.com and from reviewers who spend their lives in technology matters. But if you visit Techless.com, make sure that you spend some time reviewing their mission statement, their vision for the product, and the *Techless Manifesto*. These guys get it:

*Flashing screens feed dopamine highs. Instant gratification destroys discipline. A thousand shades of explicit content enslave our brains (and, often, the helpless victims involved). And the very device meant to delight and support us has taken us captive. It screams for more, and we oblige.*

A 2021 Report revealed that 84% of pornography use was from a mobile de-

*The smartphone is an amazing device. But not unlike other good things, it can take an improper place in our lives.*

vice. No surprise there. Always at your fingertips and completely private, the smartphone can be an easy pipeline for harmful explicit content. Guarding our hearts (and the hearts of our teenagers) is reason enough to consider alternatives.

### CHARTING MY COURSE

I'm still charting my course, but one thing is certain: The smartphone is gone from my nightstand, never to return. Rather than interacting with a dazzling device, I am more likely to read a (paper) book or peacefully reflect on the day before I turn off the nightstand lamp. I wake to thoughts of what the new day might hold in store.

My current plan is to use the Wisephone II for daily use, and to keep a smartphone in the desk drawer for travel and indispensable needs. Browser and email have been disabled from my smartphone, and I haven't missed either. I am retreating from technology use with things like a wristwatch, pen and paper, and printed magazines. Using two phones is of course a hit to my budget, but a worthwhile one. The bottom line for me is ultimately not financial, for what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

So, if you are feeling like your smartphone is taking too much from you, or even harming you, take heart. Technology does not have to overwhelm you. There is a course of action that you can take to limit its reach into your life. Many of us have chosen this path. Yes, it is less traveled, but it may not be for long.

*Dave Osborn is a retired non-profit accountant residing in Denver, CO.*

To learn more visit the following link. *The Phoenix Spirit* readers can receive \$25 off the purchase of a Wisephone II.

[the phoenixspirit.com/go/techless](https://the phoenixspirit.com/go/techless)

RECOVERY MONTH '24

Presented by MINNESOTA RECOVERY CONNECTION

MINNESOTA RECOVERY CONNECTION'S

# WALK FOR RECOVERY

Recovery Is Everywhere!

## Saturday, September 21

10 a.m. - 3 p.m. • Minnesota State Capitol grounds in St. Paul

[minnesotarecovery.org/walk](https://minnesotarecovery.org/walk)

### RECOVERY MONTH TWINS GAME

## Tuesday, September 10

6:40 p.m.

Target Field, Minneapolis, MN

Put your baseball cap on and rally for recovery at a sober sporting event!

Purchase individual or group tickets now at

[minnesotarecovery.org/twins](https://minnesotarecovery.org/twins)

# Gratitude breakfast

## Monday, September 30

7:30 a.m.

Hoversten Chapel, Foss Center, Augsburg University, Minneapolis, MN

Wrap up Recovery Month with a morning of reflection, gratitude and networking.

Keynote Speaker—

Michael Durchslag, Director of P.E.A.S.E. Academy

Purchase tickets at

[minnesotarecovery.org/gratitude-breakfast](https://minnesotarecovery.org/gratitude-breakfast)



# Reclaiming Joy

by **Mary Lou Logsdon**



*"Joy is the simplest form of gratitude."* — KARL BARTH

I have been remembering joy—the exuberance of youth, the thrill of nature's beauty, the energy of feeling connected. I have missed joy, her delight with both the spectacular and the ordinary. Anxiety, fear, and doom have permeated the last several years. They roll in like a morning fog refusing to lift. Wars. Storms. Floods. Pandemic. Deep divisions. It saps a sense of joy.

Brené Brown describes joy as "an intense feeling of deep spiritual connection, pleasure and appreciation." It is the intensity that allows us to relive the joy as we remember the experience. The spiritual connection, while not tangible, is very real. We recall and return to that place and time. Happiness and joy are related, but happiness is more of a state of being rather than a feeling, and doesn't carry the exhilaration that marks the intensity of joy.

I experienced the aliveness of joy at two recent reunions. The first was my college reunion, gathering friends who knew me when I was young and fresh and full of promise. We look back and recall adventures, each of us carrying our own details to add to the stew of memories. One person can still sing the songs of our sophomore skit, another remembers the nickname we had for a saintly professor. We recalled our rule-breaking antics, hours of playing bridge, late night scrambling to assist our procrastinator with her rough-edged term paper. We came together to relive the joy

of our shared experience.

The next reunion was the first ever gathering of first and second cousins. My grandmother and her brother emigrated from Germany in the early 1900s. They left a large family and a country with few opportunities to sail to a land of promise and prosperity. She worked as a maid for a St. Paul family. He worked as a farmhand in Iowa, both for room, board, and meager wages.

They learned English and made their way in the world, marrying and creating their own families. Our reunion gathered the children of those children.

We met, 85 of us, in a small-town community center. I knew my first cousins and delighted in re-connecting with them. Many I had not seen in decades. I also knew a handful of second cousins. Family resemblances allowed me to sort several into appropriate groupings.

Each of the offspring of the brother/sister emigres had a table for family artifacts. There were 12 tables, six for him and six for her. Old wedding pictures, family albums, worn work boots, an early milking machine, a journal with delicate script were displayed for browsing.

We talked. We hugged. We laughed. We commiserated over losses and exclaimed in amazement that we were all here, the result of two brave young people who had no idea of what they were getting into.

I wondered, as we gathered grandchild-

dren of this brave brother and sister team, how they would see us. What would gratify them, surprise them, honor their lives and their sacrifice in leaving country and family? Surely the love, care, and curiosity we shared would have delighted them.

A third source of joy was the Paris Olympics. Shared joy crossed international time zones. We were thrilled to see young athletes excel as their family, friends, and an exuberant world cheered. I was especially touched as we celebrated Simone Biles's return after her pause for self-care. Her Gold medal felt like a win for all of us. Similarly, our Minnesota Suni Lee dared to return to the mat after her own health issues, winning another Olympic medal. In a gracious demonstration of sportsmanship, fellow Olympians celebrated the winners even when they didn't get a medal themselves.

The opposite of joy is fear. Fear steals our joy. It, too, is an intense feeling. Brown describes fear as "a negative, short-lasting, high-alert emotion in response to a perceived threat." Both joy and fear grab us here and now. It is hard to feel joy when I am afraid, even if the fear is ill defined and distant.

We might think the opposite of joy is sorrow, but sorrow and joy can co-exist. At a funeral I feel the sorrow of loss as I remember a dear friend. At the same time, I experience the joy with laughter and delight as I recall our time together. Tears of sadness mix with tears of joy.

I planted two white pines last fall. One is doing very well, reaching to the sun, healthy and vigorous. The other drooping, needles hanging more than reaching. I called a horticulturist who suggested watering it, which I did. It seemed odd, the two trees were only ten feet apart. We

have had bountiful rain this summer, why would one thrive and the other not? When we dug up the ailing tree, we found that its roots were entangled, growing inward, into a small mass, rather than outward into the open space. Since it had been held in a pot, it needed to be stretched when it was planted. Even with all the watering and rain, the roots were dry. There was no room for the water to enter the snarled mass. We spread the roots and replanted it. Now the water can seep in and nourish the tree. The roots have space enough to spread and take the moisture in.

Fear is like those entangled roots. When I dwell in fear, my world gets smaller. Rather than reaching out, I reach in, blocking the flow of life. I am entangled with my own thoughts and imagination that cut off joy rather than welcome it. Joy is the water that cannot find its way in.

Whereas joy and fear cannot co-exist, joy and gratitude are entwined. They feed each other. When I am joyful, I am grateful. When I am grateful, I am open to joy. They move in an upward spiral, supporting each other. Fear and anxiety have a downward spiral. Fear reinforces our anxiety which leads to a sharper focus on fear.

Joy is most enjoyable with others. Celebrating together, sharing memories together, imagining together, appreciating together, playing together. I am not willing to give up my joy, even when life is hard and fear pounds at the door. I choose joy.

Will you join me in reclaiming joy?

*Mary Lou Logsdon is a Spiritual Director in the Twin Cities. She teaches in the Sacred Ground Spiritual Direction Formation Program. She can be reached at [logsdon.marylou@gmail.com](mailto:logsdon.marylou@gmail.com).*

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