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Disclaimer: The model depicted in this ad is not associated with Meridian Behavioral Health and is for illustrative purposes only.

Rewild Yourself!

by Julianne Skai Arbor

We modern, industrialized humans live a tamed existence that is overly mechanized, gadgetized, sterilized, and—for the most part—segregated from the natural world. We are hungry for rich engagement with life that is ancient to our mind, heart, body, and spirit. We feel restless in our heads, hearts, and bones for reunion with our selves and with nature, as well as for freedom from the madness of the over-complicated civilized world. Let's willingly let ourselves out of our cages. Let's rewild. "Rewilding" means simply returning to a state of wildness.

One definition of "rewilding" is re-skilling with the technologies of our pre-civilized ancestors, who lived resilient, eco-literate lives, co-existing within the landscape. But rewilding is not as simple as walking barefoot, making fire, eating a tamed-down Paleo diet, wearing hand-tanned animal skins, or pooping in compost buckets (though it can include those). It must include unlearning the cultural and societal conditioning of industrial civilization, which has ultimately sought to control wild nature instead of living in concert with it.

To belong once again with wild nature is to question the artificial and managed world we are blindly dependent upon, consisting of automated buttons, touch screens, personal identification numbers, and decimal points. It means finding refuge from the fossil-fueled, built environment of light and noise pollution, chemical toxicity, and electromagnetic buzzing. Here we find sanctuary and relief from the insanity of our technology-addicted minds to return gracefully to the soul's vocabulary. Our mammalian bodies remember the wild landscape as our primal home. We crave to walk barefoot, climb trees and mountains, gather food, dig in the soil, create beautiful functional objects with our hands, and have non-verbal interactions with other life. We long to relearn the body of the landscape. In the process, we may get lost—or find ourselves—within it.

Start with These Steps:

Step One: *Undistract*. The first step in rewilding yourself is to recognize the flood of distractions that the modern world has created via the systems, institutions, corporations, and industries that want your money or that benefit from you being controlled, disempowered or distracted. Distractions such as the Internet, the media, shopping, entertainment, social obligations, and various forms of work keep us over-busy, in a cycle of stress and unconscious addictive patterning, away from what really matters.

Step Two: *Unplug*. While this is understandably challenging, it is possible! Historically, it has only been a blink of an eye since we had personal computers and cell phones (and the fossil fuels to manufacture them). We won't have an abundance of fossil-fuel resources for much longer, so why be slaves to them and the machines that run our lives? Reroute your attentions away from meaningless

electronic busyness and choose to step outside for your stimulation, information-gathering, and connection.

Step Three: *Make Contact*. Every day make some contact with the natural world with any of your five senses. Start by simply sitting or lying directly on the ground. What attracts your attention? What brings you awe? What sensations bring you pleasure? Follow your instincts and fascinations. Simply touch, smell, listen, observe, even taste something new every day. There are textures that are pleasurable to touch, colors and patterns restorative to the eyes, fragrances intoxicating to the nose, edibles delicious to taste, sounds harmonious to our ears. Engage your intuitive senses as well. These daily practices help develop new patterns, neural pathways, and relationships.

The Medicine of the Forest

Spending time in forests can help us restore our physical health and our nervous systems. Ongoing research in the field of forest medicine has proven that leisurely walks specifically in forest ecosystems can lower blood pressure, heart rate, and cortisol (stress hormone) levels while improving mood. In addition, the natural aromatherapy given off by certain trees can boost our immune system and cancer-fighting cells. Research also shows that the greater the biodiversity, the greater the health benefits. In Japan, the therapeutic modality known as "forest therapy," "forest bathing," or shinrin yoku is a pleasurable, multi-sensory walk. The walk may be taken by oneself or led by a medically trained forest therapist. This practice is gaining international recognition and popularity, as it develops to embrace ecotherapy. While it was not originally associated with rewilding, forest therapy acts as a gateway to rekindling the vital parts of ourselves that have become numbed or abandoned in the modern world.

Forest Ecotherapy

Have you ever let yourself be held in the arms of a tree? Engaging with trees is one of our most powerful and accessible paths to rewilding. Trees are accessible wild beings. Trees can offer aesthetic and sensory pleasure, wisdom, energy, and even intimacy and companionship, to help you 'get resourced' when you need it. Forest Ecotherapy, a "branch" of forest therapy, focuses on psychological and energetic healing, as well as traditional ecological knowledge, creating deeper, embodied connections with forests and trees. Getting to know landscapes and their inhabitants intimately, with respect and appreciation, is an important aspect of rewilding. The next time you are in a forest, observe and listen with presence. Who lives here? What conversations are happening? What symphonies are being sung? What stories are being told? Be part of that story.

Your Wildness Within

Rewilding can aid us in restoring our physical health, our sanity, and reconnects us to our deeper ecological selves. Wake up from the trance state; choose to turn the power switches to Off. Step out of the house, the office, the car, and your shoes. Be open to new kinds of relationships. Be open to rediscovering your wildness within.

Julianne Skai Arbor is the author of TreeGirl: Intimate Encounters with Wild Nature (Tree-Girl Studios, 2016). She is a forest ecotherapist, naturalist, certified arborist, educator and nature photographer.

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A Long Life

Living in The Blue Zone has its rewards

by Mary Lou Logsdon

A long healthy life is no accident. It begins with good genes, but it also depends on good habits. — Dan Buettner

A favorite aunt of mine turns 100 in February. She was born in 1917—the same year the U.S. entered World War I, women suffragettes fought for the vote and a first class stamp cost three cents. She’s lived through a lot, including the roaring 20s, the Great Depression, World War II, the moon landing, the turning of the millennium — times of trial and times of celebration. She remembers it all clearly.

My aunt is still in her own home with three of her five living children within six blocks. Her garden is out her backdoor. Throughout harvest season she keeps a box of excess produce on the boulevard for passers-by to carry home. This summer she canned 100 jars of tomatoes which she generously gifts to family and friends. She has always lived within a mile and a half of the farm where she was born and raised.

It is tempting to think my aunt’s great health and longevity is in her genes (and therefore mine!) However, scientists say only 20 percent of our health is due to lucky or unlucky genes, the remaining 80 percent correlates to how we eat, move, and share our lives. My aunt has lived 19 years longer than her father, 40 years longer than her mother and at least 15 years longer than any of her now deceased siblings. Getting to age 100 does not appear to be a family trait.



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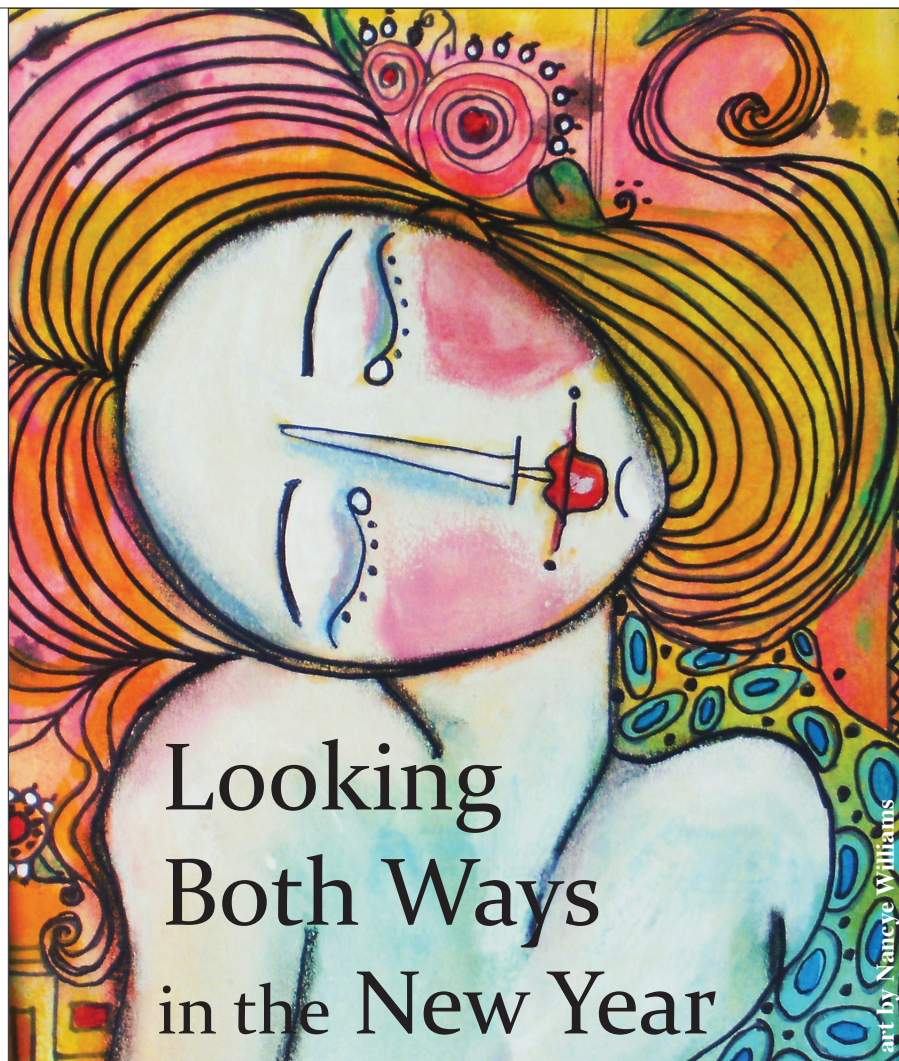
She is like the centenarians local writer and researcher Dan Buettner found in his research of Blue Zones. Blue Zones are “pockets in the world where the population lives decades longer than average” and they are living not only longer, but better — “more active, greater vitality, and more engaged in life.”

Buettner recognized several characteristics and ways of life common among these communities. I think of it like family traits. We all know families where it’s obvious they are all related. It is not that everyone has the same features, but they all have features shared by others in the clan — a particular nose, a distinct forehead, a leading chin. No one has all of them, but all of them have some; you know they belong together. So it is with the Blue Zones — they don’t all have every characteristic, but they all share a good number of them.

Buettner found nine such characteristics. He calls them the Power Nine:

Move Naturally. Blue Zone people exercise as part of their everyday activities. They walk to get places. They garden, they make bread by hand, they move every 20 minutes. Their homes are de-conve-

to page 11



Looking Both Ways in the New Year

art by Naneve Williams

by Eleanor Ann Leonard

Ah, the new year! Starting over, a clean slate, a fresh beginning wrapped up in our lists of resolutions to improve some aspect of our lives, to make the year ahead better. But better than what? The uptick in ads and commercials for fitness club memberships, diet plans and body sculpting would indicate a narrow definition of “better.” Yet the human spirit seems to innately understand that self-improvement is so much more, that some deeper wisdom longs to elevate our status above the quest for the transitory illusion of physical perfection.

How do we honor that longing? How do we even find it and give it space to blossom? Perhaps we have a clue in the very name for this first month of the year. January comes from Janus, the two-faced god of Roman mythology. Not to be misguided, in this case “two-faced” has a good connotation. Janus looks both to the past and the future and represents transitions, gateways, bridges, arches — all significant symbols we have come to associate with change and renewal in our lives. A statue of Janus has been standing on the Ponte Fabricio Bridge across the Tiber River in Rome since the time of Julius Caesar in 62 BC. To this day, people crossing the bridge touch the head of Janus hoping to invoke good fortune.

Bridges have represented transition throughout many cultures, mythologies and spiritualities. It is important to note that a bridge carries travelers two ways, something those early Romans apparently understood. But so much of popular sentiment instructs us to not look back, that the past is over, it’s done and cannot be

undone, that we must always forge ahead and have no regrets.

But if we never look back, how can we assess where we are in the here and now and how do we move forward in any meaningful way? It’s a sort of life triangulation — navigating successfully toward an unknown future point requires the known points of our present location and how we arrived here. And that, in turn, calls for reflection and self-examination which can — even should — include regrets.

And there’s the sticking point. While we applaud learning from our mistakes, we embrace a faux nobility when stating that we have no regrets about anything in our past as if we humans are perfect, saintly beings who just couldn’t possibly do anything wrong or hurtful. No wonder then that when an individual, a culture or a nation asks for an apology for harm

caused, those three words — “I am sorry” — seem to stick in our collective throat. I was in my mid-forties when I saw the Frances Ford Coppola movie, *Apocalypse Now*. To be sure, the movie has some powerful memorable scenes. But the one that punched me in the gut was a quiet, low-key moment when a mail pouch arrives onboard the boat carrying the soldiers upriver. There was no mistaking the joyful pleasure of each soldier as he was handed a letter or package from home. As I watched, I remembered that 20 years earlier when two brothers were stationed in Thailand during the Vietnam war, I had been so preoccupied with my own life that I had seldom written to them. I cried. This was a regret worthy of being acknowledged. To this day, similar scenes evoke an ache that will probably



to page 9

Horse Sense

By Heather Jeffrey

The snow swirled around the eight figures. They stood, shaking their heads, arms crossed, and shoulders hunched against the cold. They’d been standing there about ten minutes, staring at the PVC pipe that was raised a foot off the ground and at the herd of horses that seemed unconcerned. The predominating sense amongst the group was that these horses were not going to go over this obstacle.

“Come on, let’s just go,” one of the group members called out, gesturing back toward the building, and one by one they walked into the arena and stood out of the wind and snow, trying to warm up. They



looked out at the horses, the two facilitators, and the one peer who had not followed.

Standing inside the wind-sheltered arena, one of them glanced under their coat sleeve at their watch. “We still have 45 minutes left.” Several of them sighed, their breath billowing out in a foggy cloud.

Today’s session activity had been to move at least one horse over the PVC pipe obstacle — the obstacle was to represent what gets in their way of reaching their treatment goals in recovery. There it was... only a foot off the ground... and yet the horses wouldn’t go over it.

The consensus of the group was that none of the horses were doing what they were supposed to do! They all stood out in the snowstorm mildly munching hay, tails towards the wind. Didn’t they have the sense to get out of the storm? Didn’t they know what they were supposed to do?

Watching from the relative comfort to page 6

What’s inside?

Books p. 5

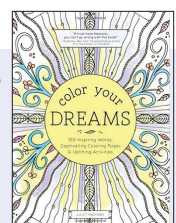
On Managing Stress in an Impaired Culture

p. 4

Lighten Up with Step Six

p. 11

Creating a Food Philosophy p. 8



Calendar

Upcoming



Steve Rummeler Hope Foundation's Night of Music, January 15, 5-10pm. Join the Steve Rummeler Hope Foundation for another terrific Night of Music and help raise awareness and funds to fight the opioid epidemic! Music by The Gooneybirds, Medium Rustic and Frogleg! Family friendly! 651-308-8122 for more info.

The Retreat Breakfast Club: January 19, 7am - 8:30am, University Club, 420 Summit Ave, St. Paul. Come for breakfast & start your day with an inspiring recovery.

Second Chance Day on the Hill, Thursday, February 9, 10am. Join over 60 Minnesota organizations on the hill at the Minnesota State Capitol Rotunda. This is the greatest way to show our law makers that Second Chances are important for ALL Minnesotans! Visit <http://www.mn-secondchancecoalition.org/about-us.php> to sign up and learn more about how you can help effect change.

February 4, 11:30 am - 1:30 pm
An Artful Recovery Sober Fellowship Group: "An Artful Recovery" is a group of people in recovery who meet regularly for fellowship, sharing creativity and talents in art and handmade crafts. People from any recovery program are welcome to join. The group's purpose is to socialize, meet sober people, and work on art/

craft projects; there is no affiliation with any specific recovery program. Meeting the FIRST Sat. of the month at Spyhouse Coffee Shop, 2451 Nicollet Ave, Mpls. Limited art supplies available free of charge. Will help teach newcomers, offer inspiration and support, and learn together! Some activities may include: knit/crochet and make hats to donate to Hats for the Homeless; Create a Scrapbook/Journal; Explore the Mindfulness of Coloring. Contact Heather Kamps-call/text 920-809-3552, Email: Kampshm@gmail.com

The Dan Anderson Renewal Center, Hazelden, Center City, MN. 12-Step-inspired weekend retreats focus on common issues faced in recovery: forgiveness, spirituality, healthy relationships, grief, and loss.
Jan 20-22; Winter Heart: Serenity, Courage, and Wisdom
Jan 27-29; Grief and Recovery
Feb 3-5; The Wisdom of Emmet Fox in the 12-Step Design for Living
Feb 10-12; Living in the "Fourth Dimension"
Feb 17-19; Buddhism and the 12-Steps
Feb 24-26; LGBTQ in Recovery: Celebrating Our Whole Selves
Feb 28-Mar 2; 12-Step retreat for members of the military & veterans in recovery
Mar 3-5; Preventing Relapse
Mar 10-12; Spiritual Audacity
Call 1-800-262-4882 for more info.

Ongoing

All Recovery Meetings: Minnesota Recovery Connection is hosting All Recovery meetings throughout the Twin Cities.

These meetings honor all pathways to recovery, acknowledging that each person's path is unique. The meetings are an opportunity for social support focusing on the hope and healing found in recovery and to connect with others who are initiating and maintaining a recovery lifestyle. Come, socialize, share - friends and family members welcome. Call 612-584-4158 for more info or go to <https://minnesotarecovery.org>.

Women's 12-Step Program

Wednesdays at 7pm, Peace Presbyterian Church, 7624 Cedar Lake Rd, St Louis Park. For women of all ages who find any part of life chaotic or out of control. The chaos can be caused by addiction, eating disorders, relationship problems or self esteem issues. We use, *A Woman's Way through the Twelve Steps* by Stephanie S. Covington. Peace Presbyterian Church has a community dinner at 6pm on Wednesdays and we provide free supervised childcare for 12-Step participants. Reclamation-Ministries.org or call 612-879-9642.

Hazelden's Second Sunday Retreats

The second Sunday of each month everyone in recovery is invited to Hazelden in Center City, MN for an inspirational day of workshops, fellowship, sharing and fun. Open to anyone 18 or older involved in a 12-Step program. \$20/person includes a buffet lunch and information packet.
9 a.m. - Register at the Cork Center
9 a.m. - Introductions and orientation
10-11 a.m. - Lecture
10:30 -12:45 - Small group discussions
12:45 - 1:30 p.m. - Sunday buffet
1:45 p.m. - Small group discussions or Meditation group
2:55 p.m. - Relaxation group
800-257-7810; Plymouth alum welcome.

Pancake Breakfast: 3rd Sunday of each month, 10am-12:30pm; The Recovery Church, 253 State Street, St. Paul, MN, www.therecoverychurch.org. Pancakes, sausage, juice and coffee (free refills on pancakes and coffee). \$5 per person/10 and under \$2.50 at the door (No one turned away due to lack of funds!)

The Recovery Church offers worship services Sun. at 9 & 11am., 253 State St., St. Paul, 55107. Fellowship between services. Devoted to expanding spirituality & the 12-Step experience. All invited. 651-291-1371 or www.therecoverychurch.org.

To place a listing, email phoenix@thephoenixspirit.com or call 612-805-1959.

Recovery Rings
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blue zones from page 1

nienced, which means they have no main floor laundry, no leaf-blowers, no electric garage door openers. They don't go to the gym – they move throughout their day – and they keep moving as they age.

Purpose.

Their life has purpose. Elders are respected and valued for their wisdom. They care for children, share their harvest, participate in the broader family. They know why they

wake up in the morning. Their lives have meaning beyond work.

Downshift. It is not that people who live in the Blue Zones don't have stress, but they have tools to manage their stress. Many take naps, they pray, some remember their ancestors. They are grateful.

The 80 Percent Rule. Blue Zone people stop eating before they are full. They eat their smallest meal in the late afternoon or early evening and do not eat again before bed. They are rarely overweight.

Plant Slant. Blue Zoners eat a plant based diet, supported by their gardens. They eat nuts daily. They eat beans – the type varies by location: soy, black, lentil, fava. Grains are unprocessed. They eat fermented foods. Meat is a condiment.

for life. Children are valued and nurtured.

Many of these Power Nine principles have been a part of my aunt's life since I was a little girl. Though we lived only 11 miles away, her life and her family's



Ikaria, Greece

were much different from ours. There was always a flurry of activity. My widowed grandfather, who lived nearby, was often there. Food was home-cooked in a big kitchen, healthy and bountiful, but never pushed. There was always room to squeeze in an extra place when someone showed up. Everyone supported the household by gardening, cooking and cleaning. We always spent time outside, no matter the season. We biked or walked everywhere – to the library, the skating rink or the corner grocer for an extra bottle of milk. When I went to church there, I was surrounded by cousins. My uncle's blacksmith shop was on the same block as the house. There was a non-stop buzz. I loved it!



Okinawa, Japan

Wine at 5. Wine is a part of the normal life for many Blue Zone people. They drink in moderation, 1-2 glasses of local wine per day, lingering over shared meals. (While many of us cannot drink, we can gather together to share and savor our day's story with family or friends.)

Right Tribe. Blue Zone inhabitants were born into or chose to live in social circles that support healthy behavior – activity, diet, pace of life. We tend to eat and live like the people we hang out with. Healthy habits are contagious. So are unhealthy ones.

Community. Blue Zone people belong to faith-based communities. The specific faith doesn't matter, the gathering weekly to participate in a ritual with others does.

Loved Ones First. The aged live with family. Extended family members care for each other. Elders belong. People marry

Buettner's Power Nine isn't a prescription for a long life, rather it is a description of an environment that grows long-lived healthy and happy people. We Americans search for a secret remedy, a personally tailored plan, a way to beat the

odds. Blue Zone people don't work at it, they live it. And the environment supports it. It is much easier to live healthy when the whole community does. Unhappiness, obesity and apathy are contagious. So are buoyancy, fitness and serenity.

I look forward to celebrating my aunt's 100th birthday. No doubt, she will shrug off all the attention; it's just another day. I cannot imagine a world without her familiar lilt, her exuberance, her curiosity. This long life is a great blessing, not only for her but for all of us who have had her these many, many years.

For more information on Blue Zones go to bluezones.com. Mary Lou Logsdon provides spiritual direction and gives retreats in the Twin Cities. She can be reached at logsdon.marylou@gmail.com.

the phoenix spirit

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The Phoenix Newspaper

is a 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. 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.

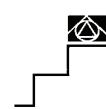
Letters to the editor, stories

and pictures are welcomed. phoenix@thephoenixspirit.com

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Quotables

Support Groups

MONDAYS

Mindfulness and the 12 Steps at Clouds In Water Zen Center, St. Paul. Near University and Western – 445 Farrington Street, St. Paul, MN 55103. Mondays, 7-8:15pm. Meditation and one step/month. Ongoing. Open to all.

Overeaters Anonymous: Monday mornings, 10-11am. 3rd floor, handicapped accessible. Minnehaha United Methodist Church 3701 50th St Mpls 55407. For more info call Ana 651-592-7510

Understanding Eating Disorders, Treatment, and Recovery: Second Monday of each month, 6-8:30 p.m. The Emily Program staff provides answers to common questions and concerns of families and friends “new” to eating disorders, treatment and recovery. 2265 Como Ave, St. Paul, 55108. Free, drop in. Visit www.emilyprogram.com or call 651.645.5323.

Eating Disorders Anonymous: second and fourth Monday of every month, 6:7:30pm in Little Falls at St Gabriel Hospital in the Rose Room, 3rd. St. entrance. JoAnn at 320.232.9576, or edalittlefalls@hotmail.com

Friends and Families of Suicide: a place of support and comfort where those that have lost a loved one to suicide will be comfortable talking about their own loss as well as hearing about the losses of others. Meets the 3rd Monday of every month 7-9pm, Twin Cities Friends Meeting, 1725 Grand Ave., St Paul, 55105. For info email ffosmn@yahoo.com or call Tracy @ 651.587.8006.

Debtors Anonymous: a group of men and women who use the 12-Step program to solve problems with debt and other money issues.; www.daminnnesota.org 952-953-8438. Monday, 7-8:30 p.m., St. Mary’s Greek Orthodox Church, 3450 Irving Ave. S., Mpls, 55408. (from the south parking lot use the door next to the flag)

Bloomington Codependents Anonymous: 7p.m., men & women at Unity South Church, corner of 1st Ave. and American Blvd. For more info go to: <http://www.unitysouth.org/calendar.aspx> or call 952.469.3303

Support group for married and divorced fathers. Parenting, partnering, and anger management issues. Mondays, 7 to 9 p.m. in Hopkins. Call Kip 763.783.4938.

Nicotine Anonymous: 7-8pm, 1655 Beam Ave. Maplewood. Maplewood Professional Bldg. St Johns Watson Education Center, 2nd Floor, #20, Room 4. 952.404.1488 or 800.234.81MN.

Eating Disorders Anonymous: St. Paul, MN, Mondays @ 6:45:7:30 PM at Hamline Midway Library, 1558 W. Minnehaha Ave., St. Paul, MN 55104. Venita Johnson 612.964.2387 or eda.diverse@gmail.com for more information.

TUESDAYS

Families Anonymous (FA): First and third Tuesday evening of each month, 7pm. Support group for families and friends of those dealing with drug, alcohol or other behavioral issues. Is someone you love destroying family harmony by using drugs or alcohol? Free help exists! Join us at St. Timothy Lutheran Church: 1465 N. Victoria Street, St. Paul, MN 55117, or contact Dave E: 612-701-5575.

Debtors Anonymous: a group of men and women who use the 12-Step program to solve problems with debt and other money issues.; www.daminnnesota.org 952-953-8438. Tues, 7-8 p.m., Dayton Ave. Presbyterian Church, 217 Mackubin St., St. Paul, 55102. (1 block n. of Selby and 2 blocks e. of Dale. Meets in the parlor.

Recovery International Meeting at Mary Mother of the Church, 3333 Cliff Road, Burnsville, rm 9 at 3pm. It is a proven self help method to deal with mental illness including depression, anxiety, anger, mood

disorders and fears using cognitive behavior therapy. Contact Rita at 952-890-7623.

Emotions Anonymous - For those dealing with emotional stress, depression, etc. 7:30pm at Christ the King Lutheran Church, Room 106, 8600 Fremont Ave., Bloomington. Take Penn Ave. south to 86th. Turn left and go to Fremont, just east of 35W. Brian at 952-888-6029.

Nicotine Anonymous: 7-8pm at St. Columbia Church/School, 1330 Blair Ave., St. Paul, 55104. Sherry for more info at 651-644-8682.

Overeaters Anonymous Roseville: Meetings are held from 9:45 – 10:45 a.m. at St. Christopher’s Episcopal Church, 2300 N. Hamline Ave., Roseville, Room 218 Call Janie 651.639.4246 for more info.

A.C.A., 5:30-7 p.m., Dakota Alano House, 3920 Rahn Rd, Eagan (Hwy 13 & Cedarvale Shop Ctr). 651.452.2921.www.dasinc.org/

A.C.A. 7pm, Saint Michael’s Lutheran Church 1660 W City Rd B (at Fry). Roseville. Open to all. Step and Traditions meeting.

Get a Fresh Start! 12-Step AA group, open meeting Tues., 7pm, at Kingswill Church, 1264 109th Ave NE, Blaine. Denny, 763.757.6512.

Eating Disorders Anonymous: 6:30-7:30pm, Zimmerman Evangelical Church, 25620 4th St. W, Zimmerman, 55398. Jodi A.: 763.244.6803 or eda.zimmerman@gmail.com for more info.

WEDNESDAYS

Al-Anon Evening Meditation Meeting, 7-8 pm., Pentagon Office Park, 4570 West 77th St., Suite 255, Edina, MN 55435.

Women’s 12-Step Program: 7pm, Peace Presbyterian Church, 7624 Cedar Lake Road, St Louis Park. For women of all ages who find any part of life chaotic or out of control. Through reading *A Woman’s Way through the Twelve Steps* by Stephanie S. Covington, members explore how the Steps help us overcome addictions and work to heal ourselves. Peace Presbyterian Church has a community dinner at 6pm on Wednesdays and provides free supervised childcare for 12-Step participants. Reclamation-Ministries.org, 612-879-9642

Eating Disorders Family & Friends Support Group: Open to the public, 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month, 5:45 p.m. – 7:15 p.m. at The Emily Program, 2265 Como Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55108. 8.5

Overeaters Anonymous: St. Paul Midway: Wednesdays 7–8 PM, Hamline United Methodist Church. Two blocks east of Snelling & Minnehaha. Park in south parking lot, use south entrance to education building. Press buzzer. For more info contact Susan at 651.295.7854.

Adult Children of Alcoholics: Wednesdays @ 7 pm. St. Mary’s Episcopal Church, 1895 Laurel Ave, St. Paul. Meets downstairs, sign in the lobby. For more information call Mary at 612.747.0709.

Transitions: 7:30:9:30p.m. Support to men and women who are transitioning from incarceration to living in the community. Trained facilitators and peers provide emotional support in a safe, openly honest environment to discuss discouragements, frustrations, temptations. One of the trained facilitators is a woman. The Men’s Center, 3249 Hennepin Ave. S. Minneapolis, 612.822.5892. tcmc@freenet.msp.mn.us

Women’s CoDA Group: Women’s Only Co.Dependents Anonymous Group. Meets every Wednesday at noon at Colonial Church of Edina, 6200 Colonial Way (Fireside room, S. end of bldng). For more information, call Valerie at 612.741.5281

Workaholics Anonymous: for people who are chronically preoccupied with work. Meets every Wedn. 12–1pm in the east bldg at Fairview Riverside Hospital, 2450 Riverside Ave. Mpls. Take elevator inside main hospital entrance to level B, follow signs to east build-

ing and dining room E. - 952.985.1368.

Marijuana Anonymous, Bloomington, 6-7 pm, Minnesota Valley Unitarian Universalist Church 10715 Zenith Ave S. (2 Blocks south of Old Shakopee Rd, on the East side of Zenith) Contact: bloomingtonma@hotmail.com

AA Meeting: 6:30 – 8:30pm St. Christopher’s Episcopal Church, 2300 N. Hamline Ave., Roseville. Call 651.639.4246 for more info.

Atheist/Agnostic Alcoholics Anonymous, 3249 Hennepin Ave S., #55 (Men’s Center, in the basement) Mpls, 7 . 8 pm., Open to Men and Women. For more info write tcAgnostic@gmail.com

THURSDAYS

Workaholics Anonymous: 12 step group for finding balance between work, activity and fun. Meets every Thur. 7-8:15 pm. Christ Presbyterian Church, 6901 Normandale Rd. Room 305 - North entrance, enter door on left and up stairwell on your left. Call before attending for any schedule or location updates Jeff 952-465-4928, Liz 612-229-8930, email: wafindingbalance@gmail.com

Downtown women only non-smoking Alanon Step Group. Noon, 2nd floor First Baptist Church on 10th St. and Harmon Place. Parking and entry in back. Ring office buzzer for entry. Andrea, 612-868-9982.

Red Book ACA/ACOA: Recovery Church, 253 State, St. Paul, 7:30-9pm. For more info call Deb @ 651.291.1371 or Bruce at 651.407.6336.

Recovery International Meeting, St Phillip Lutheran Church, 6180 Highway 65 N, Fridley at 7pm. It is a proven self help method to deal with mental illness including depression, anxiety, anger, mood disorders and fears using cognitive behavior Therapy. Ken, 763-571-5199.

CoDA Group: Co-Dependents Anonymous 12-Step Support. 6-7:30pm at Unity North Church, 11499 Martin Street NW., Coon Rapids, MN 55433. SW corner of US Hwy 10 and Hanson Blvd. Call Chris @ 763.438.3583 for more info. Also check www.coda.org

Adults with ADHD Support Groups: (first time free) Every Thursday morning 10am . noon and every Thursday evening (except last Thurs of the month) 7pm 8:30pm. LDA Minnesota, 6100 Golden Valley Road, Golden Valley, MN 55422. Tel. 952.922.8374 or www.ldaminnnesota.org

Eating Disorders Family & Friends Support Group: Open to the public, 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month from 5:45 p.m. – 7:15 p.m. at The Emily Program, 5354 Parkdale Drive, 2nd Floor, St. Louis Park, 55416.

A.C.A.: 6:30pm Prince of Peace Lutheran Church 200 Nicollet Blvd #E Burnsville. Step meeting, open to all.

FRIDAYS

Recovery International Meeting at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 4100 Lyndale Ave S., Mpls at 7pm. It is a proven self help method to deal with mental illness including depression, anxiety, anger, mood disorders and fears using cognitive behavior therapy. Ruth 612-825-4779

Eating Disorders Anonymous: 5:45-6:45pm, Grace University Lutheran Church, 324 Harvard St SE, Mpls on U of M East Bank Campus. Free parking in Lot AA across street. Open. edaminneapolis@gmail.com, 612.305.8367

Women’s AA Meeting. TGIF Meeting. 6:15pm at Epworth United Methodist Church, 3207 37th Ave. S., Mpls. Handicapped accessible. Meeting consists of lesbian, bi, and straight women, many of whom have maintained long term sobriety. Chris A. 612.722.1936.

SATURDAYS

Nicotine Anonymous meeting on Sat. morning, 10am at Linden Hills Congregational Church, 4200 Upton Ave South, Mpls. Enter at the back door. 952-404-1488.

Spenders Anonymous: Our purpose is to stop spending compulsively and work toward serenity in our relationship with money. 1-2 pm at Bethany Lutheran Church, 2511 East Franklin Avenue, Minneapolis, MN 55406; street parking or in the church lot; enter through the gate on Franklin and ring the bell; <http://www.spenders.org>

Northeast Minneapolis CoDependents Anonymous (CoDA) Group: East Side Neighborhood Services, 1700 2nd Street NE, Mpls, 55413 (corner of 2nd Street NE & 17th Ave NE). Park in lot behind building, use rear entry door. Saturdays: 1-2pm. Contact Ralph W. at rwink@aol.com or 612-382-0674.

CoDA Group: Shoreview, Shepherd of the Hills, 3920 North Victoria Street, 1 blk north of 694. Please enter from the back/north side of building off of Gramsie. Door “G”. Follow signs to room #265. 9-10am. Dana, Shoreviewcoda@gmail

Overeaters Anonymous Newcomer Meeting: Third Saturday of the month, 1pm.2pm. Sumner Library, 611 Van White Memorial Blvd., Mpls, 55411. For more info contact Allison @ 612.499.0280, Gene @ 952.835.0789 or visit www.overeaters.org.

Overeaters Anonymous Courage to Change Meeting: Saturday mornings 8-9a.m. at St Christopher’s Episcopal Church, 2300 Hamline Ave N. Roseville. Contact Donna with questions at 651.633.3144.

Clutterer’s Anonymous: St. Christopher’s Episcopal Church, 2300 N. Hamline Ave., (Hwy 36) room 220, Roseville. 12 step support group meets the first, third and fifth Sat. of the month, 10–11:15am. www.clutterersanonymous.net

Debtors Anonymous: a group of men and women using the 12-Steps to solve problems with debt and other money issues.; www.daminnnesota.org 952-953-8438. 9-10am, Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church, 4120 17th Ave. S., Mpls, 55407 (meeting rooms 7 & 8. Enter sliding glass door facing parking lot.)

Guided Himalayan Meditation: Step 11: Learn to relax, learn to control your thinking and emotions, improve your sleep, acquire peace, serenity, improve ADD and PTSD. For people in recovery. \$1. New Brighton Alano. 2284, County Rd I, Mounds View. Saturdays, 9:29.10:29. Call Roger @ 763.350.0629

Overeater’s Anonymous: 8-9 a.m., Falcon Heights Community Church, 1795 Holton Street, Falcon Hgts. Lisa 651.428.3484.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder Support Group: 1st and 3rd Sat. of the month, 11am -1pm Central Community Center, 6300 Walker St., rm. 215, St. Louis Park, MN. Call Burt at 612.722.1504.

Choosing Healthy Sexual Boundaries, Saturdays 10am-noon. Concerns about your sexual behavior? Receiving negative feedback about your sexual choices? Safe, non-judgemental place to talk with other men re healthy sexual boundaries. The Men’s Center, 3249 Hennepin Ave. S., Mpls.

Adult Children of Alcoholics & Dysfunctional Families: Saturday, 10a.m., ACA Club Fridley, Moon Plaza, Boardroom in the lower level of Unity Hospital, 550 Osborne Road, Fridley. Please see www.acafridley.com for additional information.

Men’s & Women’s Support Group: Meetings every Saturday (including holidays) at 8:30a.m. Prince of Peace Church, 7217 W. Broadway, Brooklyn Park. (north entrance.) Informal, safe place to share experiences of joy and concerns. We promote growth & positive change to meet the challenges of our lives. Call 763.443.4290.

Debtors Anonymous: Using the 12-Steps to solve problems with debt and other money issues.; www.daminnnesota.org 952-953-8438. 10:30-noon, Wooddale Church, 6630 Shady Oak Rd., Eden Prairie, 55344. (enter front door #1, lower level rm. 147)

op-ed

By Brittney Smith

Recently considering the often used phrase, “Your health is your wealth,” I was forced to ask myself some tough questions:

If wealth can’t buy happiness can it buy health? Can you be healthy and flat-ass broke? How is it remotely possible that we link ‘health’ and ‘wealth’ together when they are more than light years apart?

My overall stance on that statement, considering their literal definitions, is that unfortunately health does not actually equate to wealth. Being free from illness and/or injury is not the same as having an abundance of material objects or money. On the contrary, health is a factor in accumulating wealth, whereas health is absolutely freedom. You see, it is very well possible to be an individual with kidney cancer and \$32 million in the bank. At the same time you can be 86-years-old, have a -\$189 balance and be as pure as a nun.

In this country health is truly exploited due to America generating a good majority of its wealth from minorities and those in poor health. You can’t turn on the television or enter a store without being bombarded with advertisements telling you to “Get Fit!”

The question, then, is at what costs do we strive to be healthy? Are we willing to spend all of our so-called “wealth” on ridiculously dangerous surgeries, inflating healthcare premiums and crash diets/supplements? You’ll spend every dime to your name to stay alive but are you healthy in terms of your physical, mental and social well-being? Chances are, probably not. How can we as a society obtain health when we don’t follow a whole-foods, plant based diet? Inhale too much pollution? Set the planet’s temperature to broil?

Minorities - as well as poor (which is the new “middle class”) white Americans foolishly give away their hard-earned wealth to those who subject them and their health to severe manipulation. At this stage in the game doctors can do nothing but write prescriptions these days — which is why I choose to never see them. If “health is wealth” why isn’t my physician referring me to professionals who can attend to my specific needs instead of a “one pill fits all” hustle? Another thought is, if my health takes a turn for the worse aren’t I the first person to notice and the only one who can ultimately fix it?

You can never be free without health — thus health is freedom! Having the power to act, think and speak as one chooses without restraint, the threat of imprisonment or tyranny due to a lack of suffering caused by any critical illnesses or injuries. Health.

Send your letters to the editor to phoenix@thephoenixspirit.com.

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from the publisher

Julia Jergensen Edelman



Hold onto your earmuffs, readers, for this issue of *The Phoenix Spirit* will appeal to a wide and colorful swath of tastes and interests. For the tree-huggers and otherwise environmentally minded, flip to the back cover and read how you, too, can *ReWild* yourself. 2017 may be the Year of Forest Ecotherapy for you and yours.

Have a penchant for horses? See Heather Jeffrey’s article about the therapeutic equine work being done at Acres For Life in Chisago City, MN. These gentle giants are muzzling their way into therapeutic plans across the country as treatment centers recognize that horses have something to teach us if we’ll only listen.

“You’re not bound by the past; that is who you used to be. You’re reminded that your feelings are not who you are, but how you felt at that moment. Your bad choices defined you yesterday, but they are not who you are today. Your future doesn’t have to travel the same path with the same people. You can start over. You don’t have to apologize to people that won’t listen. You don’t have to justify your feelings or actions, during a difficult time in your life. You don’t have to put up with people that are insecure and want you to fail. All you have to do is walk forward with a positive outlook, and trust that God has a plan that is greater than the sorrow you left behind. The people of quality that were meant to be in your life won’t need you to explain the beauty of your heart. They already understand what being human is — a roller coaster ride of emotions during rainstorms and sunshine, sprinkled with moments when you can almost reach the stars.” — Shannon L. Alder

Upon embracing sobriety and reclaiming their lives, some of the clients who experienced equine therapy may then follow their bliss in one of Steve Buettner’s designated Blue Zones. Mary Lou Logsdon’s article, *A Long Life*, is about these zones of longevity and happiness as specified by Mr. Buettner. Her words will awaken the most ardent armchair traveller’s sense of spirit and adventure, compelling either a trip to the bookstore to buy one of Buettner’s books, or a visit to kayak.com to check airfares.

As if all this isn’t enough to get your blood warming, previous *Phoenix Spirit* editor Pat Samples takes a candid yet amusing look workaholicism and Step Six on page 7. Nutritionist Raina Goldstein Bunnag offers us to think about food. *Think* about food as in — what’s your food deal? Organic? Vegan? *Creating your Food Philosophy* invites us to look at our values, and maybe do a little

research around what we fuel our bodies with and why. She provides the websites.

John Driggs, long-time *Phoenix* writer and social worker in St. Paul gives readers insights on managing stress. John provides anecdotes to make his articles real and personable, then sprinkles in his philosophy and suggestions for how to apply his theories to life.

Books of note are highlighted on page 5 by our illustrious book editor Barbara Kummer. Until reading this month’s column, I’ll admit I had never heard of an “expectation hangover” before. Who knew?

Lastly, *Looking Both Ways in the New Year* by Eleanor Ann Leonard is an inspirational piece about reflection, mindfulness, and oh, so much more. Enjoy.

Be good to yourselves, your loved ones, and a few foes this year. It’s the only 2017 you’ll ever have!

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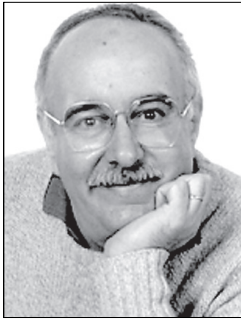
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Managing Stress in an Impaired Culture *John Driggs, LICSW*

"You are not entirely your circumstances. Work on your own life and happiness. Never give up. For starters, embrace the miracle of love, love strong enough to guide or drive one into the great estate of maturity, or, to put it another way, into the apprehension and acceptance of one's own identity. Do this with everyone you meet, where possible and with cautious respect where impossible. Your worries will be birds that take flight and unburden your shoulders."
Adapted from a quote by James Baldwin, 1964

In case you haven't noticed it already, we've just had a very traumatizing presidential election. As if you could really miss it! In my eyes, the worst part of it was how it exposed the divisions in our country and the menacing anger of at least half of our citizenry. Due to its incivility, prejudice and threatening disregard of basic human dignity, many of us feel scared and insecure about our future. The bedrock of our personal safety relies on culture for its aspects of basic human decency and regard for each of us. Now, that bedrock has been shattered. As a result we become tense — much like being in an earthquake. The tension is not due to our psychological problems or disappointment with the outcome of this election; it is due to the earthquake. We don't know where to turn. America may be the land of the free

but it is certainly no longer the land of the secure.

Unfortunately, many of us are showing signs of trauma due to this shattering. Some of us may act cool-headed but are underneath quite uneasy about our future and get easily argumentative when challenged. Many others of us are losing sleep due to worry, can't get this election out of our heads, live with a newly found hyper-vigilance, are continually agitated for no apparent reason, use alcohol or food to medicate and now live with a sense of diminished future. Particularly hard hit are people with prior trauma that involves betrayals of trust like family abuse, emotional abandonment and a history of scapegoating. All the past has come back to haunt too many of us. Indeed it's shocking to realize that the real terrorists are the very people of our own country.

What makes all of this worse is the diminished health of our country prior to this election. We may say that America is the greatest country in the world and we may have good reason to believe that on many fronts. But the truth of the matter is that America has been one of the least healthy nations among industrialized countries. *The Huffington Post* in 2016 reported on research of 17 indicators of why America is faltering: no paid sick leave for mothers, no required sick leave coverage by businesses, most spending on education with minimal improvement, most spending on a military, most exportation of weapons to foreign countries, most guns per capita, most consumption of calories and sweeteners, least

bang-for-the-buck on health care expenditure (about the same as Cuba) greatest costs on prescription meds, more stillborn births than any other industrialized country, and highest rate of income inequality in the industrialized world. On top of this, 2 out of 5 of us are clinically obese and we have one of the lowest rates of happiness among industrialized countries (Denmark has the highest rate). The purpose to knowing this information is not to be pessimistic about our country but to realize that there is a lot of room for improvement and that we are not superior to others just because we are Americans. Our health and well-being is very much affected by our culture. However, we cannot improve what we do not see.

To be clear, I am not saying that the sky is falling and that we ought to all give up on America or ourselves. Quite the contrary! I believe that America has the strengths to be the great country it is capable of being, as we as individuals are too. To do so we all need to have the courage to get through this past election, to heal and use it to grow and learn beyond where we are now. Let's get started!

First unhook yourself from the 24/7 news media that constantly keeps you in a state of trauma and hysteria. Turn off or minimize the TV and computer news and get your news from a newspaper; stay in control of how much angst you receive. Realize that much media news is exaggerated or downright inaccurate. Get enough news to stay informed but overall reduce your exposure to bad news and suffering, especially around bedtime. Often the news we get is not for your benefit anyway and it can skew your views to keep you in a continual state of agitation and pessimism. Most of the world is not as bad as what we see on TV and is often a lot more wholesome than we've ever imagined. There are a lot more good people in this world than bad and even the bad people are not all bad.

Second, let us realize we have to do something to lessen our stress. We can't just sit on the couch and expect our stress to lessen. Even the smallest acts can make a world of difference. Work on your own happiness and well-being. Be in touch with the good stuff that is happening in the present. Go to the library and read that great novel you've always wanted to read. I can suggest *Grayson* by Lynne Cox (Harcourt Books, 2006) about the power of compassion. Visit a garden center and get an exotic plant you can nurture all winter. Take that dance class at the community center. Do something positive and small for yourself and have a blast. You will become less threatened by bad things happening in our culture even while you're aware of them. A short way of saying this is: "Get a life that matters." If your mental health is not in the best shape get help from a trusted counselor that has an ongoing and challenging relationship with you. Caring for yourself is a socially conscious act.

Third, do get involved in some form of community political action to stand up for social justice. Just do small efforts at first. You may attend a community meeting on a local justice issue. You may write letters to your congress people or local newspaper. Getting involved in a nonviolent peace march may also help you feel less alone. Perhaps the most empowering thing you can do is to listen to people you disagree with on social justice issues and find common areas of agreement. Small acts of seemingly inconsequential action may pack a whollop of hope as you begin to feel safer and more connected. Above all else, resist the urge to

blame or scapegoat any group of people as a whole as you only condemn yourself in the process. We are each parts of each other.

Fourth, embrace the meaning and power of human love in relationships. Expand your horizons and get involved in real life. I'll give you two examples from my own life.

My wife recently asked me to volunteer with her at a choral performance of people with Alzheimer's disease and their caregivers. My initial reaction was that it did not sound very exciting, but I did it; we sold tickets for the group and then listened to the performance. Something magical happened. The renditions of old love melodies by people with memory problems was awesome! Such folks maybe didn't know what day of the week it was, yet they were totally on top of songs that had touched their hearts. It was as if the group was saying, "Our brains may not figure out crossword puzzles but we can sure remind you of what is most important in life." Coupled with these gifts were the testimonies of their caregivers saying how long they have been married to their loved ones. Some for 50 to 60 years! Tears were flowing throughout the performance as many of us realized that people we saw as impaired actually had much to teach us about life and ourselves. My hesitation in attending the concert was more about my own impairment which needed to be healed.

I've done some volunteer work at a local soup kitchen for homeless people. Working there was initially quite depressing despite offering a good meal to hungry indigent people. Seeing mothers with little ones in tow having to go out into the cold with no assured roof over their head was almost more than I could bear. I even thought about discontinuing my volunteer work as the experience was quite demoralizing. After all, wasn't it a drop in the bucket to give people a good meal and send them on their way?! Yet as I continued with the work a different realization began to sink in. Homeless people going through the food lines thanked us abundantly saying, "Thanks for doing this, you really are taking time out of your day to be with us." I kept asking myself, *What's the deal? Is our food really that good?* I thought it was only average. Then it slowly dawned on me that the homeless people were not thanking us for the food. They were thanking us for looking at them, smiling, and welcoming them to our meal. In other words, we were treating them like human beings that deserved attention. Later I learned that there were many places they could get free food, but they came to us more to be seen and heard than to eat our food. We helpers were particularly good at getting to know the regulars and making a big fuss over our guests. We realized that we should be thanking our guests at least as much as they were thanking us. And we often did.

Clearly, upon reflection of these life-changing experiences, I doubt that any of us were thinking much about the outcome of the recent election. We'll likely consider and remember these experiences and opportunities forever. When you are touched by the profound euphoria of human compassion you really don't worry too much about anything. You're just glad for the love in your life and the love in your own heart. It's as good as it gets!

John H. Driggs, L.I.C.S.W., is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in private practice in St. Paul and co-author of Intimacy Between Men (Penguin Books, 1990). Contact John at 651-699-4573.

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Looking Both Ways *from page 1*

never go away and that’s a good thing. While I don’t wallow in my regret or beat myself up, each reminder nudges me to pay attention to the souls in my life.

So a candid assessment of the past, regrets as well as the triumphs, is crucial to successfully crossing the bridge of any transition in our lives. Like Janus, we need to look both ways, to reflect upon the past as well as anticipate the future, to not be afraid to shine light on actions and beliefs, to distinguish between what is a realistic dream and what is fantasy.

It should come as no surprise that there is more to reinventing ourselves than repeating an inspirational mantra. We know because we’ve tried it and we know others who have tried it; we fill our home and work space with post-it reminders, quotes and hints taped to the bathroom mirror, the coffee pot, the steering wheel, the computer – anywhere we’ll see it 50 or 100 times a day. We’ve been told this will bring about our desired change. But there we are the following year, doing it all over again.

The bridge between the conscious mind and the subconscious or transcendental self can be tricky, in part, because we humans are experts (perhaps stubbornly so) at adjusting reality to suit our personal convictions. Rather than rush headlong to the other side of the bridge, then, it is helpful to pause at some point in the crossing, to look back and see not only where we’ve come from, but how far we’ve come. Every single one of us has a unique “success” story but we miss it because we buy into the hype and hysteria of the commonly-held view of success: feats that rock the headlines, bestow awards and fame, and gather followers on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.

For some people, simply swinging their legs over the side of the bed and getting up in the morning takes more courage and tenacity than many of us can possibly fathom; yet these people are never recognized and don’t make any “year’s best” lists in any category. On the other hand, the person who easily springs out of bed and breezes effortlessly through dozens of events during a 16-hour workday is held in high esteem, receives recognition, bonuses, fame and repeatedly appears on any number of “best of” lists. If we could reframe our mind-set to meet each individual where they are – rather than compare them to others and see them as better than or less than – perhaps we could come around to an acknowledgment of the dignity and reverence each of us desires and deserves.

The enduring popularity of the movie *It’s A Wonderful Life* speaks to at least a desire to appreciate the “simple life.” We attribute a cloak of nobility to George Bailey, the Jimmy Stewart character who, through a series of small day-to-day choices and decisions, benefits the lives of many in his community, all of whom are living out lives that would, by any measure, be considered “ordinary.” George himself is caught up in the misconception of “success” and it takes the appearance of Clarence, his trainee guardian angel, to point out all the good things that had escaped George’s attention. He, and we the viewers, recalibrate our thinking and by the end of the movie join in honoring George’s integrity, steadfastness and sincerity.

And then we spend significant amounts of time, energy and money on what’s popular, trendy or fashionable, making our lives more complicated in the process. A Chinese proverb states: “One dog barks at something and a hundred dogs bark at the bark.” Today, with all the media sources, the barking has become so intensified that we get caught up and lost in the cacophony. At the same time, any one of us will tell you how individualistic we are. Therein lies the paradox.

Clint Eastwood said: “There’s a rebel lying deep in my soul. Anytime anybody tells me the trend is such and such, I go the opposite direction. I hate the idea of trends. I hate imitation; I have a reverence for individuality.” Biographies of successful and famous people are dominated by examples of turning away from the popular, the trendy, going against the grain, ignoring what they “should” or “must” do and instead striking out on what they believe at a deep, cellular level is the right course for them.

Friedrich Nietzsche wrote “You have your way. I have my way. As for the right, the correct way, and the only way, it does not exist.” Each of us is the cartographer of our own life map. Hindsight is valuable because it gives us the information to chart the reefs and deep waters of our life journey. Acknowledging regretful actions or unrelenting and unproductive behavior as well as giving ourselves credit for simply being alive and present, can provide markers that get us to make a pivotal course adjustment.

Most of us can surely use the help of a navigator, a guide or teacher. One of the best in the past 30 years has been Dr. Wayne W. Dyer, often seen during PBS television pledge drives. He died in 2015 but the benefits of his wisdom via podcasts, writings, videos, lectures and daily inspirations continue to be available through the magnanimous gift of his website which is still maintained. He worked closely with another inspirational navigator/teacher, Louise Hay, founder of Hay House, whose website also continues to carry much of his work including a feature, *The Forever Wisdom of Dr. Wayne W. Dyer*. For the new year, they offered an excerpt from Wayne’s book, *The Power of Intention*, that included one of his lists of helpful reminders. Here are 3 of them:

- Take time to be mindful of everything around you. Begin to look at your entire surroundings in a new light. Observe every detail on every face, every building and every object. If you do this often enough it will become a habit that will facilitate your being alive in every moment of the year.
- Rid yourself of mundane chores that are not really that important. Spend more time making your life a pleasure.
- Feel good about yourself. You are a magnificent human being. Always feel good about that self that you are always with.

These are some things to carry with you as you cross the bridge, whichever direction you are headed. Maybe you’ll get to the other side, maybe not. So follow the unexpected; make it part of your journey. After all, the Dalai Lama tells us, “Remember that not getting what you want is sometimes a wonderful stroke of luck.”

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(Citizens Council)
612.340.5400

A

AA.Alcoholics Anonymous
(Mpls)
www.aaminnea.polis.org
952.922.0880
Northeast.
763.781.5102
AA.Alcoholics Anonymous
www.aastpaul.org
St. Paul.
651.227.5502

AA Alternative (listing of non.
AA
chemical health support
groups)
952.922.3392

Abuse Hot Line.
1.800.799.SAFE;
TDD
1.800.787.3224

ACA Intergroup.Adult
Children
of Alcoholics
763.574.0903

Access to counseling.com
952.322.2111

**Access Works: Harm
Reduction Ctr.**
612.870.1830

**ACSR .Adult Children in
Sexual Recovery**
Scott; 612.850.7299
Val; 612.879.9642

Adoptive Families of America
(formerly “OURS”)
1.800.372.3300

**African American Sexual
Violence Program**
651.527.3133; 651.265.6177.

Al.Anon (information services)
952.920.3961
Intergroup St. Paul
651.771.2208

Anxiety Support Network.
763.383.1720
www.anxietsupportnetwork.
org

**ARIA .Adults Recovering From
Incest (women only)**
763.591.5916

B

Buddhism and 12 Steps
651.208.0749

C

Chemical Dependency
We Care Counseling
651.777.4233
Chemical Injury Resource
Ass’n of MN.CIRA.
651.647.0944

Child Sexual Abuse:
StopItNow
www.stopitnow.org.
1.888.773.8368
Chrysalis Center for Women
612.871.0118

CLUES .Chicanos Latinos
Unidos en Servicio
612.871.0200
Cocaine Anonymous; Coc.
Anon
612.323.3350

**Concerned United Birth
Parents**
952.930.9058
CoDependents Anonymous
.CoDA
612.872.0336

Contraceptive Hotline
800.584.9911
COSA.Codependents of Sex
Addicts Anonymous
763.537.6904

D
**Deaf Adult Children
Anonymous**
TTY
952.920.4830
Telecom Relay Services
711
Debtors Anonymous.
952.953.8438

E

Eating Disorders Anonymous
..... **651.246.5935**
Emotions Anonymous
651.647.9712

F

Families Anonymous
800.736.9805

G

Problem Gambling
800.333.4673
Gamblers Anonymous
1.888.GA.HELPS
www.minnesotaGA.org
Gam.Anon.
1.888.424.3577
Gambler’s Alternatives
612.929.6115
Grief, Loss & Transition
651.641.0177

H

Health Realization Group
612.338.3664

J

Jewish Recovery Network.
763.544.4446

L

Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers
651.646.5590
www.mnlcl.org
Lesbian Survivors of Abuse
www.geocities.com/rainbow.
hope2000/

M

MA–Marijuana Anonymous . .
www.marijuana.anonymous.org
Men’s Center (support & anger
management groups)
612.822.5892
Men’s Line, The
612.379.6367
**Mental Health Consumer
Survivor**
Network of MN
651.637.2800
Minnesotans for Safe Driving
952.238.0970
**Model Cities Home.Based
Outpatient**
Treatment Program
651.221.4442

N

Nar.Anon.
612.379.4253
Narcotics Anonymous
metro
952.939.3939
statewide
1.877.767.7676
Nicotine Anonymous
952.404.1488

O

OCD Support Groups;
612.722.1504
Open Door (agoraphobia and
panic disorder support)
St. Paul, 952.818.7343 or
612.229.1863; St. Louis Park,

612.998.6160
Overeaters Anonymous
612.377.1600/888.540.1212

P

PFLAG.Parents, Families and
Friends of Lesbians and Gays
612.825.1660
Poison Control Centers
1.800.222.1222

Q

QUITPLANSM Helpline free
stop.smoking services.
1.888.354.PLAN (7526)

R

REACH (for families of
people with mental illness)
612.331.6840
Recovery, Inc. (facilitated, self-
help mental health groups)
612.824.5773
**Recovering Couples
Anonymous**
612.869.3866
**Resource Ctr. for Fathers/
Families**
(parenting, stepparenting, anger
mgmt.) 763.783.4938

S

SAA.Sex Addicts Anonymous
651.646.1970
Senior Link AGE LINE.
800.333.2433
Sexaholics Anonymous.
952.985.1016
Shoplifters Anonymous
763.544.8288
**16 Step Sobriety Support
Group**
612.866.4550
SOS.Secular Organization for
Sobriety/Save Our Selves
www.sossobriety.org.
612.720.4683
**Spiritual Community and
Center**
612.922.4272
Healing circle.
612.922.4272
Drumming circle
612.922.4272
Stuttering Association
national; 800.364.1677
**Survivors of Incest
Anonymous.**SLA; www.slawso.
org
Spenders Anonymous
http://www.spenders.org

T

**ToughLove Parent Support
Groups;** 763.391.2630
**12 Steps for Christian Living
Groups;** 763.593.1791
Tubman Family Alliance
651.770.8544

U

United Way 2.1.1
1.800.543.7709

W

**Women’s Cancer Resource
Center**
612.729.0491
Women For Sobriety.
651.224.0328
Work Addicts Anonymous
763.786.2723

Creating Your Food Philosophy

by Raina Goldstein Bunnag

It's the beginning of the year again. A time of snow days, hot chocolate and for many of us, resolutions. If you're like millions of Americans, some of these resolutions revolve around healthier food choices.

Media is full of recommendations to guide us in the right path. We are bombarded with articles about paleo diets, vegan lifestyles, detox cleanses, blah, blah, blah. Much of this information is well-meaning, but it is often biased and may not be right for you.

I work with people who get caught up in this advice and decide it's time for a diet overhaul. Honestly, I sometimes feel this way too. Yet, these big changes often don't last long, because they do not fit our own lifestyles. Before making a change, I suggest you take a step back to understand your food priorities.

Food is at the core of our entire life – our culture, family, beliefs – not just our weight. What we eat also has an impact on our bodies, animals, the environment, and other humans. I challenge you to think about how your lifestyle and values intersect with the food you choose to eat or not eat. This is called your food philosophy.

While a personal philosophy may be defined as your approach to life, a food philosophy is your approach to eating. This is different than a diet. A diet implies a rigid set of rules. This is often unsustainable, boring and may even leave you missing out on important nutrients.

On the other hand, a food philosophy allows you to think through the effects of your food purchases and what you put in

your body. Once you've determined these basics, you'll be much better equipped to plod through those diet articles and pick out the pieces that work for you.

Are you ready to start? Grab a cup of coffee and a journal, it's time to get real with yourself. I've outlined some of the essentials to think about when creating your own food path. This list is by no means exhaustive, but it will get you headed in the right direction to become your own nutrition detective and food philosopher. I've also included resources to help you fine-tune your new food approach.

Taste: First things first. Food should taste good and be enjoyable, always! If this is not the case with your current diet, something needs to change. With very few exceptions, there are always delicious alternatives to meet your dietary needs. Do you hate oatmeal, but eat it every morning to help lower cholesterol? Instead, try incorporating other foods high in soluble fiber like beans, lentils, pears and oranges.

Check it out: The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics offers a wealth of solid nutrition guidance and recipes at <http://www.eatright.org/>

Health. "Let food be thy medicine," Hippocrates had it right thousands of years ago. The most important role of food is creating healthy and strong bodies. There are a few non-negotiables here. First, we all need to eat vegetables and fruits (5-8 cups per day), there's no getting around the need for these nutrition superstars. Second, we need a variety of foods in our diet to make sure we're covering all our nutrient bases. Third, if you have a specific medical condition like diabetes, renal disease or a food allergy, then please follow trust-

worthy medical advice to stay healthy.

Other than those basics, there's a whole world of delicious and nutritious food out there. Do your research to find out what fits best with your health goals and lifestyle.

Check it out: The World's Healthiest Foods offers a tremendous website and book with in-depth food facts and research at <http://www.whfoods.com/>

Budget. We can all learn to eat healthy on a budget. Many nutritious whole foods are less expensive than their processed counterparts. There are also tons of smart ways to shop frugally by implementing meal planning, couponing, and cooking in bulk.

Yet, some foods just cost more than others. Diets centered on meat are more expensive than veggie-centric meal plans. Eating an entirely organic diet is an expensive endeavor, even if that's where your heart is. Be real about what you can afford and take baby steps toward new diet goals.

Check it out: Take a peek at the Environmental Working Group's dirty dozen list to learn which produce items to prioritize buying organic at https://www.ewg.org/foodnews/dirty_dozen_list.php

Time. How much time do you currently spend shopping for and preparing your food? It's likely that you won't be able to invest much more time than this, at least right away.

If you rely mostly on prepared foods now and are transitioning to cooking your own food, it's going to take time,



and that's ok! You'll be eating your whole life, no need for an abrupt one-eighty. Start by cooking one or two more meals each week. This will help you build confidence so you're motivated to keep this awesome change going!

Check it out: The blog 100 Days of Real Food has great simple cooking tips, recipes and meal plans at <http://www.100daysofrealfood.com/real-food-resources/>

Flexibility. Your food philosophy isn't a research project, it's a way of living. What we know about food and nutrition is constantly changing and our food system is just as fluid. If a diet plan suggests a drastic or restrictive change, this is a red flag that it might not be right for you. Commit to knowing and understanding your food, not adhering to rigid set of rules.

Check it out: The Harvard School of Public Health Nutrition Source is an excellent website for accessible information at <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutrition-source/>

Values. Whether we think about it or not, our diet has an enormous impact on the environment, animals and other humans. You likely already have strong opinions about these values in other parts of your life. Take the time to find out how your food choices affect the rest of the world. Below are three (of the many) important values to consider:

1. Human Labor - The impact our food has on human lives may be the most important of all, yet it's often ignored. Agriculture is one of the most hazardous industries due to exposure to pesticides, heavy machinery, and low wages. Learn about the human cost of food and how to make ethical decisions with your food dollar.

Check it out: The Fair World Project has a great resource to understand some of the fair trade labels on your food at <https://fairworldproject.org/about/movements/fair-trade/certifiers-membership-orgs/>

2. Animal Welfare - There are humane ways to produce meat and animal products. However, often in our industrial food system, these methods are sacrificed in favor of efficiency and profit. When buying animal products, it's important to research and ask questions about how the animals were treated.

Check it out: The Sustainable Table offers a good overview of animal welfare issues at <http://www.sustainabletable.org/274/animal-welfare>

3. Environment: Everything we eat has an impact on the environment. These effects are not written on our food labels, so we have to do some digging. Think about important issues such as air and water pollution and wasting of natural resources like water and land.

Check it out: The Eat Low Carbon website is a great tool to learn how your food choices affect the environment at <http://www.eatlowcarbon.org/>

There you go! Create your personal food philosophy so you can make the best diet decisions for your healthiest body and soul.

Raina Goldstein Bunnag is a registered dietitian with a Masters degree in Public Health. Through her writing she teaches people simple, approachable methods to lead healthier lives.

Resource Directory

A DIFFERENT KIND OF GRIEF

Individual coaching & on-going groups for those who have a family member/friend who has died from addiction. Contact: gloria@recoveringu.com /612-866-1056 for time, day, fee, and location.

BETTORS ANONYMOUS

Bettors Anonymous now meeting in MN. Men and women using AA's spiritual solution to recover from gambling addictions. www.bettorsanonymous.org. 612.298.8593.

COACHING SUPPORT FOR FAMILY/ FRIENDS OF THOSE WHO ABUSE OPIOIDS, DRUGS & ALCOHOL

Individual coaching & on-going coaching group for those who have family or friend addicted to heroin, Rx opioids, illicit drugs or alcohol. Contact: gloria@recoveringu.com /612-866-1056 for time, day, fee, and location.

DEBT MANAGEMENT PLANS AND FINANCIAL COUNSELING

LSS Financial Counseling – Conquer Your Debt™ offers debt management plans to consolidate your debts into one monthly payment, with a lower interest rate and good credit outcomes --and free financial counseling to help you gain financial confidence. LSS provides tools and guidance to put you on the path to a debt-free future. Call 1-888-577-2227 or www.ConquerYourDebt.org

COUNSELING

Maple Grove Therapy and Wellness is a collaborative of therapists working to serve primarily adolescents and young adults struggling with chemical and mental health issues. 612-460-0427, www.maplegrovetherapyandwellness.com

Amethyst Counseling Services - 651.633.4532

EATING DISORDERS

Melrose Center- Melrose heals eating disorders for both males and females of all ages. Our experienced team offers specialty programming for those struggling with an eating disorder and substance abuse - whether they are in recovery, treatment or still struggling with substance abuse. Locations in St. Louis Park, St. Paul and Maple Grove. Visit melroseheals.com or call 952-993-6200.

The Emily Program offers a wide range of eating disorder treatment services to individuals concerned about their relationship with food and/or body. Our caring and experienced staff develop personalized treatment plans to help individuals recognize and

change unhealthy behaviors and restore hope for the future. Six locations. www.emilyprogram.com or 651-645-5323.

RECOVERY WORSHIP

Recovery Worship is open service of evening prayer that includes recovery resources like the Twelve Steps and the Serenity Prayer. We meet at 6:45pm on Wednesday evenings at Zion Lutheran Church in Minneapolis. For more information, visit www.zionchurchmpls.org/recovery or call (612) 824-1017.

JEWISH RECOVERY NETWORK

A group of addicted people in recovery or in need of recovery, as well as their families and friends Open meetings second Sunday of the month - 763-544-4446

NAROTICS ANONYMOUS HELPLINE

Drug Problem? We Can Help! Call Now 24-hour (877)767-6767. Also, check out www.NAMINNESOTA.ORG For a complete listing of meetings, upcoming events campouts, and service opportunities.

SOBER SCHOOLS

Pease Academy, "Peers Enjoying A Sober Education" is the oldest recovery high school in the U.S.; 612.378.1377

SOUL READINGS/CLASSES

Soul Readings/Psychic Development Classes: beginning, advanced, and workshops. **Cindy Lehman**; 612.669.1861; www.cindylehman.com; or email cindy@cindylehman.com

SPIRITUALITY

Sacred Ground Center for Spirituality 651.696.2798; www.sacredgroundspirit.org. Explore your spiritual journey with the help of a spiritual director familiar with the 12-Steps.

SUFI HEALING

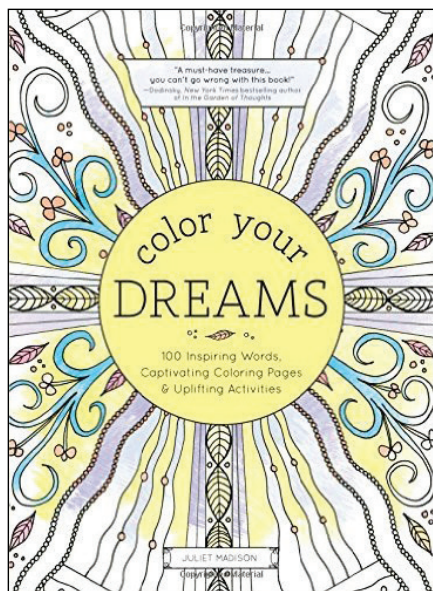
Four Layers of the Heart; Learn to Live in the Divine Love, Call Jess Fauchier; 763.537.4907, fauchier@goldengate.net or www.suficenternm.org

WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Amethyst Counseling Services - 651.633.4532

To place a Resource Directory listing call Julia at 612.805.1959 or write phoenix@thephoenixspirit.com

Books by Barbara Kummer



Color Your Dreams: 100 Inspiring Words, Captivating Coloring Images & Uplifting Activities

By Juliet Madison
Sourcebooks, Inc.

Do you love to color? Many are finding this pastime to be soothing and relaxing. Want to add a meditative component to this practice? A self-taught artist, Madison created the drawings for this adult coloring book. They are meant to encourage meditation and reflection while the colorer is focused on the simplicity of the moment.

With 100 inspiring words to choose from, you will find a picture for you. Each word includes a coloring tip, an affirmation, and a mini meditation. For example, the coloring tip for "Imagination" is that as you color, think like a child, be creative! One of its three affirmations is "If I can imagine it, I can achieve it."

For "Cherish" the coloring tip suggests that as you color, think about the things in your life that you cherish and give thanks for them. That's something we can all do whether we are coloring or not.

If you have a book you'd like reviewed or have an old favorite you'd like to share with others, please contact barbara.kummerreviews@gmail.com



Expectation Hangover: Free Yourself from Your Past, Change Your Present and Get What You Really Want

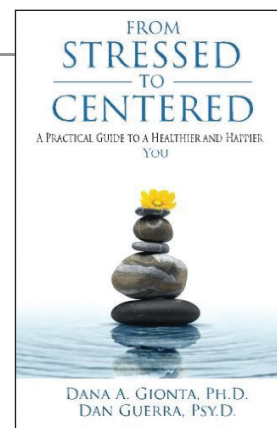
By Christine Hassler
New World Library

Have you ever had things not turn out the way you thought, planned, or wanted them to? We suffer when our reality doesn't match the expectations we are attached to. Hassler states, "Expectation hangovers are doorways to tremendous opportunities to heal issues from our past, change how we are living in the present, and create a future based on who we truly are rather than who we are expected to be." These may be situational, interpersonal, or self-imposed expectations. They are generally similar to what one experiences with a hangover from too much alcohol.

She offers readers a multi-dimensional approach to guide them out of suffering from expectation hangovers and into transforming disappointment. Using practical tools such as an Expectation Hangover Assessment and self-help techniques such as journal writing and roleplaying, readers are provided step-by-step guide for learning from disappointment.

When one understands the components of an expectation hangover and experiences disappointment, Hassler states, "You will know how to move through it in a faster, more uplifting way." And the timespan between expectation hangovers will increase. She includes stories of individuals who have experienced expectation hangovers and how they managed afterwards. So, the next time your expectations aren't met, ask yourself, "What am I learning?"

There are guided visualizations available on Hassler's website which readers may find helpful.

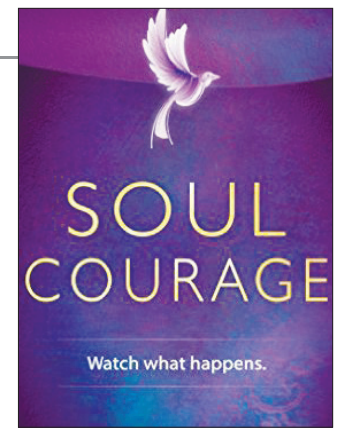


From Stressed to Centered: A Practical Guide to a Healthier and Happier You

By Dana A. Gionta, Ph.D. and Dan Guerra, Psy.D.
Sea Hill Press, Inc.

Both authors are psychologists who share their personal stories and experiences. They describe their paths to self-care, whether it was initiated as a stress reducer or a coping mechanism for dealing with trauma. Gionta and Guerra provide a step-by-step guide to help readers practice good stress management and self-care which will generate long term health and well-being.

The book includes a questionnaire to help readers evaluate their stressors and determine their stress levels. Determining an individual's stress level, and how it shows up in one's life, is valuable knowledge. The decisions we make every day, consciously or unconsciously, can be evaluated and acted upon, leading to a balanced and harmonious life. Using their process, goals can be set as well as identifying actions such as breathing exercises and relaxation techniques to eliminate or reduce stress.



Soul Courage

By Tara-Jenelle Walsch
Rainbow Ridge Books

Do you believe that everything you desire to know is already inside of you, in your soul? Walsch does and she wants readers to "live through the magnificence of your Soul Courage." Soul courage is defined as daring to be and own all of you without shame, judgment, or excuses.

She says that everyone already has Soul Courage and her process makes it accessible. Readers are given a formula to facilitate getting in touch with their True Self. Then, using the components of Feeling, Expressing, and Connecting to do that, supported by stories and self-reflective questions to help understand oneself more clearly, readers are able to identify and understand their Soul Mission.

Walsch is the founder of Soulebrate, a greeting card company, and Soulcialize, a personal development program which increases emotional awareness using willingness, vulnerability, and gratitude, among other things.



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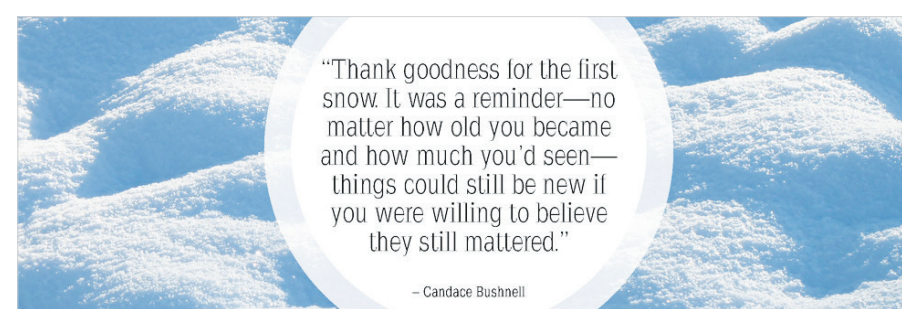
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— Candace Bushnell

HorseSense from page 1

of the wind-sheltered arena they saw the peer that had stayed outside walk further into the pasture toward the far fence where one of the horses was hunkered against the wind. Reaching the horse, the peer stepped onto the leeward side and stayed, his arm coming up around the horse's neck.

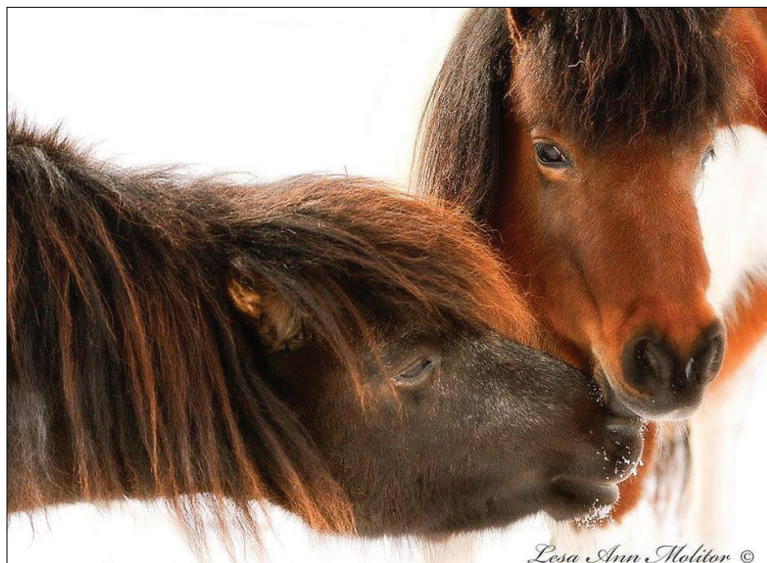
They stood that way for several minutes, and then slowly began walking together back towards the arena, their heads both bowed and turned slightly to the side, the horse's ears slanted back, trying to keep out the driven snow.

The rest of the group stood in the arena and watched as they approached together. Amazingly the horse walked all the way up to the PVC pipe obstacle and sniffed it. They stood at the pipe — their peer and the horse. Then the peer stepped over the obstacle, turning back toward the horse who stood on the other side of the small obstacle, blinking slowly. The peer encouraged him — patting his thigh, calling to the horse, clucking. The horse didn't move.

"Come here and help me!" he yelled toward the arena, where the rest of their peers watched and waited. Somewhat reluctantly they all filed out and went to stand with their peer, looking across the obstacle towards the horse that stood there, the wind at their backs. The horse didn't move.

One by one they began gesturing, clapping, calling, clucking and trying to invite the horse to step over. The horse stood and looked at them, its head slightly to the side, again trying to keep the wind-driven snow out of its ears.

"This isn't working!" one of them



Lesa Ann Molitor ©

called over the wind. A feeling of futility began to descend over the group again.

"Wait, you guys. Look, we are standing right where it would need to go to get over. Let's try getting out of his way." As a unit, all of them stepped back and aside from the obstacle and waited.

Just like that the horse stepped over the obstacle, kicking it down with his last foot as he stepped over. The group's voices rose in celebration until the horse's hoof clipped the pipe and it fell to the ground, "Ooooh, man! He knocked it over!"

Gathering together then, around the horse — patting him, one of the peers said, "do we need to do it again since he knocked it over?"

"Come on! Let's go talk out of the wind," another called.

Everyone headed over to the arena, with the horse following. There they met

with the facilitators and began to discuss what had just happened, everyone talking at once, their voices rising animatedly...

"Does it count? He knocked it over!"

"Who is to say that what we need in our recovery can't knock down our obstacles and make them easier to clear!"

"Did you see how we just needed to get out of his way!"

"That horse to me represented my higher power — we had to get out of the way of higher power!"

A pause in the excited processing. And then a voice ventured forth, "I realize what my obstacle was..." said one of the peers who had gone into the arena and watched and waited until the end to come back out.

"What?"

"It was me." They shook their head. "My obstacle was me. I shut down. I didn't want to be uncomfortable..." Several group members nodded, feeling the familiarity of that statement and seeing it in themselves and their behaviors and reaction. "I am the biggest obstacle to my own recovery!"

"But then you led the way," a peer said to the person who had walked back with the horse. "You didn't give up! How come you stayed out there when the rest of us went in?"

"That was my higher power out there, I knew I had to remember my higher power."

"Then you and your higher power walked back together..."

"And we had to surrender and give it room..."

"And then it went over, making the obstacle smaller than it was before!"

"And now we're together — with the horse!"

"We can't give up!"

"And we need each other..."

"Fellowship!"

Patting the horse, they headed into the warm group room with a knowing of what it felt like to block their own recovery, and what it took to get out of it. They left the farm that day with a new appreciation that their addiction didn't stop or take a break when the weather got bad, and their recovery couldn't either.

Heather Jeffrey is the Program Director at Acres for Life, Therapy & Wellness Center in Chisago City, MN.



What's Eagala?

EAGALA is an acronym for the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association, an international non-profit organization that was founded in 1999.

In pastures and arenas all over the world, people are finding EAGALA Model Equine Assisted Psychotherapy and it is helping them discover more about themselves and learn how to lead healthier and happier lives. Founded in 1999, EAGALA is the gold standard when it comes to equine assisted psychotherapy and is known for its main tenets of: strong code of ethics, requiring a team approach of a qualified mental health professional and an equine specialist, the work is done 100% on the ground, and it is solution oriented.

This is therapy with a twist, bringing the learning to life! An experiential therapy that is about doing and experiencing, rather than keeping it at the level of talking, the EAGALA Model helps people discover new insight and perspectives on blocks and struggles. Children, adolescents, and adults find solutions, skills, and strengths in the pasture that are then translated to behaviors outside of the pasture. Providing help in the areas of mental health and wellness, addictions recovery, and military, family, and community support services; individuals and groups are finding hope and healing through the powerful experience of working with horses.

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Lighten Up with Step Six

By Pat S.

"Lighten up" is my mantra for 2017. I tend to take life – and myself – pretty seriously. These days, though, I'm finding myself pretty amused by my imperfections, also known as character defects, thanks to engaging in Step 6. I'm especially humored by how many activities I thought required my involvement which seem to turn out just fine – or good enough -- without me. But I'm the only one who knows how these things should be done. Hah! Apparently not.

At first glance, Step 6 sounds painful: "Became entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character." It's easy to imagine God ripping away my long-cherished ways of behaving and leaving bloody scars behind. Yet, as I become more willing I become to let go of "my way," I instead feel lighter – even before I complete the remaining Steps. Also, I'm noticing that God has gotten a head start on taking these defects away – without pain!

I'm so smart

Being self-centered is one of my major defects. I want to be noticed and applauded. I want to impress those around me by how smart, accomplished, and wise I am. Impressing people with how hard and fast and brilliantly I work is paramount.

If my ego had its way, I'd have my own little mountaintop holy place where people would come to me for advice, in awe over my elevated state of being. I would gladly tell them how to live their lives (with dedication and hard work done to perfection, as any accomplished workaholic would agree). In addition, I would be happy to take charge of most everything and everyone within range of me.

Do you see why I'm amused? This pretending-to-be-God routine is ridiculous. The closer I examine this self-centeredness while working Step 6, the more bemused I become.

Just answer the questions

In working Step 6, I answered the questions in Workaholics Anonymous Book of Discovery. This book is a companion to Workaholics Anonymous Book of Recovery.

What does this defect do for me? Being self-centered gives me the illusion, and sometimes the reality, of being in control. It soothes my ego with feelings of pride, and I savor the admiration I receive. My take-charge mode also makes things easier and more efficient – sometimes.

What does this defect do to me? Well, it annoys and distances others. In fact, when I get lost in stroking my ego, I tend to ignore or hurt people, then dislike myself for this selfish behavior. I miss out on a lot -- the gifts, beauty, and ideas of others. I miss out on the joy of loving. I also live in an illusion; I'm not God, and never will be. Living outside of reality and trying to be God – no wonder I'm exhausted and always feel like I'm falling short.

Like the Wizard of Oz, my self-centered behaviors are all smoke and mirrors. I'm not being authentic. (That's another character defect I get to look at more closely in Step 6.)

What would serenity look like if my self-centeredness were gone? Not exhibiting and proclaiming brilliance from a mountaintop, that's for sure. But how about acting with kindness and thoughtfulness, a readiness to learn from and appreciate others, and a relaxed intimacy with people around me? These behaviors are definitely less work than my God impersonation, and they promise a sweeter experience of life.

Am I now ready to have this defect removed? Yes. I wrote, "I am ready to open my heart and mind to the magnificence of others and free my ego from its desperate clinging."

Listen and let others shine

I got of taste of this change already happening at a party I attended. I for-

My take-charge mode also makes things easier and more efficient – sometimes.

got my hearing aids, which was a good thing. I had to lean in and listen more attentively. I also made a choice to let someone else

have center stage in the conversation, not me. I came to know a beauty and tenderness in this woman, whom I had previously held in disdain. I'm glad God gave me this opportunity to try out

a new behavior. My heart gained warmth and my ego got a rest.

Now, on to exploring my inauthenticity with the workbook questions. Could I actually show up just as I am? Maybe I'll actually have a few laughs as I quit pretending and start playing my real self.

For more information on Workaholics Anonymous and its local meetings, contact Pat S. at 763-560-5199.

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