

# the Phoenix Spirit

Celebrating 39 years of Recovery, Renewal, & Growth

May / June 2019

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## WHAT'S INSIDE

- Calendar / 2
- Letter from the Editor / 3
- Support Groups / 4
- Rising Above After a Breakdown / 5
- Jump Sober / 7
- Retreat Directory / 8-9
- Too Much To Do / 11
- Books / 12
- Sounds of Silence / 16

## ANNUAL RETREAT ISSUE

[thephoenixspirit.com](http://thephoenixspirit.com)



by Olivia Pennelle

### WHAT IS A RETREAT?

In its most basic meaning, "retreat" means to withdraw, or draw back. A scheduled retreat can be either time alone, or as part of a community experience where ideas and reflections are shared. Retreats are often held in rural or remote locations. In essence, they allow dedicated time for reflection, prayer, pilgrimage, or meditation. And you don't need to be on a beach in Mexico to achieve this!

Retreats can have spiritual and religious meanings. For example, they are popular among Christians, who understand the purpose of a retreat to be an important part of their spiritual formation, dedicating time outside of one's normal routine to commune with God. Many Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox Christians organize retreats every year.

Spiritual retreats are an important part of many Hindu, Buddhist, and Sufi communities too. A meditative retreat is an integral practice of Sufism, the mysti-

cal path of Islam. In Buddhist traditions many retreats are held in silence, and in some advanced practices they are held in darkness. They are considered an essential part of Buddhism.

So when you actually break it down, retreats are less about the luxury destination you travel to and more about the experience you are seeking to achieve: silence, rest, and reflection. Whether you are religious or not, by dedicating this time to retreat, you make an effort to step aside from your day-to-day responsibilities and go to a quiet place where you become more mindful and conscious.

A retreat experience gives you the space to pause, and come back to you; it helps clear the dust of your mind, reorder your priorities, and ground yourself in what is important in your life. You can step back into the world feeling refreshed, with more focus. And you don't need to spend thousands of dollars to achieve that! You don't even need to leave your home.

### GETTING TO THE HEART to pg 6



snow drifts from my

house — and thus prevent the havoc that spring melts can bring. Just as I was finishing the job I stepped on the wet tarp, slipped and fell into a huge snowdrift. I flopped around like a walrus on an iceberg. I never knew tarps could be so slippery. The problem was I couldn't get up. The more I pushed to stand the deeper I sank into the snowdrift. I tried everything to get up and felt very foolish. Plus I was getting colder by the minute being on a wet snowdrift. And I had no cell phone. Momentarily I was amused and frightened by the cruel irony of freezing to death in my own back yard. Suddenly I remembered the commercial on TV where a distraught woman said, "Help! Help! I've fallen and I can't get up." I always thought this woman sounded pathetic. But there I was in the same predicament!

### AS GOOD AS IT GETS to pg 10

## As Good As It Gets

by John H. Driggs, LICSW

There are times that feel bigger than life itself. When these times happen, we may be filled with immeasurable inspiration as we escape the usual routines of ordinary living. Many of the tensions of daily stress and world turmoil disappear in the abundance of such special moments.

Some magic moments we never forget — the birth of our first born, the day our beloved parent took a last breath, the day we awoke from a coma after a bad car accident, seeing the panorama of colors of the Grand Canyon for the first time, being reunited with beloved old friends or recalling the day we first met the love of our life. We don't plan on such happenings, they just occur. These are "Wow" experiences. They get burned into our brains. Often the exhilaration of such special times is beyond compare and indescribable.

Interestingly enough, when life is

"as good as it gets" it may not be about spectacular events. It can be about ordinary times with spectacular meaning in our lives, if we are open to such other worldly moments. Otherwise, if we're not alert, many of us may walk right on by such miracles and be oblivious to their existence. We will not be grabbed by such happenings and miss the value of life. Allow me now to talk about some special "Wow" moments in my own life, not to draw attention to myself, but to see how such experiences may pertain to us all.

### GETTING SAVED TWICE IN A MINNESOTA WINTER

Probably all of us have a tale of woe about this past Minnesota winter. This is a tale of hope and forgiveness. Because there was a large amount of snow behind my house in the back yard I decided in all my cleverness to hang a tarp to block the

## CALENDAR

## UPCOMING

**St. Cloud Roundup's "Celebration of Recovery":** Saturday, May 18 at 7 pm, Moose Lodge in Waite Park, MN. Pre-registration is \$12 and \$15 at the door. More info at [www.stcloudroundup.org](http://www.stcloudroundup.org).

**Gopher State Roundup XLVI:** May 24-26 at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, Highway 100 & 494, Bloomington, MN. Cost is \$20 (ages 13+). Visit [www.gopherstateroundup.org](http://www.gopherstateroundup.org) for more information.

**Midlake Alateen Conference:** Friday, May 24-26 at Devil's Head Resort in Merrimac, WI. Hosted by Wisconsin Area. Questions, contact [alateen@area61afg.org](mailto:alateen@area61afg.org)

**Hazelfest 2019:** Saturday, August 3, 11:00 am to 8:00 pm in Center City, MN. Artists include, jeremy messersmith, Nicholas David, Chris Kroeze, Kat Perkins, Jesse Larson, Annie Mack, Dusty Heart, Lydia Liza. \$20 in advance, \$30 at the door. Children under 12 are free.

## ONGOING

**Volleyball Night:** Join Sober Corps on the Fourth Sunday of each month for Volleyball Night. 4:00-6:00 pm at the Malik Sealy Gym Of Dreams at Gethsemane Church in downtown Minneapolis. This event is free and open to the public. Light refreshments will be served. For more information contact [info@sobercorps.org](mailto:info@sobercorps.org) or call Alan at 952-212-1623.

**Dissonance: Wednesday Music Series at Capella Tower:** Every Wednesday, from May 8 to the 22nd, from 12 - 1 pm. A free lunch-hour concert will be held in the atrium of the Capella Tower in downtown Minneapolis to celebrate Mental Health Awareness Month. For more info: [www.dissonance.website/events](http://www.dissonance.website/events).

**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. Call 1-800-262-4882 or [HazeldenBettyFord.org/RenewalCenter](http://HazeldenBettyFord.org/RenewalCenter) for more info.

**May 17 at 7:00 pm**

*Saying "Yes" to a Spiritual Invitation: Steps Ten, Eleven and Twelve*

**May 24-26**

*Equine Learning and Recovery: Connecting Mind, Body and Spirit*

**May 31-June 2**

*The Bondage of Shame: How Twelve Step Recovery Helps Us Heal*

**June 7-9**

*Addicts in Recovery: Twelve Stepping Our Way to Freedom*

**June 14-16**

*Mom to Mom: Where Love and Addiction Meet*

## 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. Call 612-584-4158 for more info or go to [www.minnesotarecovery.org](http://www.minnesotarecovery.org).



## Hazelden's Second Sunday Retreats:

The second Sunday of each month everyone in recovery is invited to Hazelden in Center City, MN (Cork Center) for an inspirational day of workshops, fellowship, sharing and fun. Open to anyone 18 or older involved in a 12-Step program. \$15 if you register online, \$20 (in-person) includes a buffet lunch and information packet. 9 am to 2:30 pm.

9 am - Register at the Cork Center

9 am - Introductions and orientation

10-11 am - Lecture

10:30 -12:45 - Small group discussions

12:45 - 1:30 pm - Sunday buffet

1:45 pm - Small group discussions or

Meditation group

2:30 pm - Relaxation group

**June 9**

*Where Love and Addiction Meet*

**July 14**

*Service as a Key to Recover*

**The Recovery Church:** 253 State St., St. Paul, 55107, offers worship services on Sunday at 9:30 am with fellowship, coffee and snacks following service. The mission is to provide a spiritual community for people in search of growth, healing, and recovery. For a list of recovery meetings, visit [therecoverychurch.org](http://therecoverychurch.org) or like [recoverychurchstpaul](https://www.facebook.com/recoverychurchstpaul) on Facebook.

To place a listing, email David at [david@theophoenixspirit.com](mailto:david@theophoenixspirit.com) or call 612.298.5405.

## hazelfest 2019 - august 3 | 11:00 a - 8:00 p

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

# The Art of the Urban Retreat

by Julia Edelman

The sauna meister artfully swirled a white towel over his head, sending waves of eucalyptus scented steam to envelope us. "Try to hang in there and breathe it in," he urged those of us remaining in the room. A couple of people from the group of 22 had slipped out the door already, opting instead to breathe in the urban air at the top of the Hewing Hotel in Minneapolis.

I moved to a lower bench in the small wooden-walled sauna, and calculated in an utterly unscientific way that it was probably 10 degrees cooler on the bottom bench versus the top. But temperatures, like the time, had become difficult to determine as I pushed the limits of my comfort zone in this sweaty space I shared with other urban adventurers.

The spirit of the evening had been to go on an urban retreat with some friends. Try something different. And one of these friends was a new and enthusiastic member of the Sauna Society Outfitters, a community founded to promote the physical, mental, and social benefits of thermic bathing.

Showing no concern for time of year, the Sauna Society offers a Full Moon Steam Medley at the Hewing. The medley consists of three, 15-minute steam rounds, between which participants cool off on the hotel's rooftop. The ice bath plunge is optional. This particular night was an Aufguss Aromatherapy Session in which the sauna meister offered up three different aromatherapy scents, one during each of the 15-minute sessions.

Admittedly, I went to the Hewing on a lark. It sounded like a fun night out with friends — a chance to catch up, detoxify my body, warm up on a chilly spring evening, and get that much closer to the full moon.

But what actually happened that night is hard to describe. I remember sitting outside, poolside, in a chaise lounge after the third 15-minute sauna. I know one of my friends was next to me on her own chair, and when I could finally put words together to speak, I uttered, "I think I'm having an out of body experience." Now, I'm a pretty practical, feet-on-the-ground kind of gal, not much prone to hyperbole or drama. And it's important to note that after 27 years, I am still stone cold sober.

My friend on the chair next to me grunted in affirmation. "I don't know if I can leave this chair," she said. And it's important to note that she, too, was under the influence of nothing other than this communal sauna fest. And we sat like that, side by side, as the full moon rose over the cityscape, marveling at our extraordinary mental and physical sensations of well being.

After 15 minutes of reveling in the feelings of tranquility and oneness with the universe, we deemed it safe enough to join the

sauna meister and some of our fellow sauna mates in the pool. There, the meister laid some sauna science on us, which helped explain the relaxed and blissful state. It had to do with neurotransmitters, sweating, and the fight/flight response, and at the time it made perfect sense.

This sense of salubrity stayed with me for the good part of a week, and as often happens when we immerse ourselves back into our day-to-days, it began to fade. I noticed my edges sharpening again, the bounce leaving my step, ever so slowly, and despite my modest meditation practice. I knew it was another three weeks until the next Full Moon Steam, and although I toyed with the idea of adding a sauna to the house, it wasn't going to happen anytime soon either.

But, suppose there was something to the sauna meister's scientific explanation about the body/mind benefits to sweating in community?

Enter Modo yoga, or, Phase Two of my Urban Retreat Experiment. Modo yoga is a yoga style and philosophy that is practiced in a room heated anywhere from 95-103 degrees. Like the Sauna Society, it has a growing number of devotees, who keep coming back to the community for a daily, weekly, or monthly dose of this feels so good. And again, as with the Sauna Society, there is a purity of purpose among the people drawn to practice that is as palpable as the moisture laden air. And thus, Modo yoga got me through the month of April, during which I did my 30 in 30 — 30 hot yoga sessions in 30 days.

And now? With summer the sun draws me outside and to the many ways to find peace of mind in our urban spaces. My next adventure involves hanging between two trees — "mocking." Practiced alone or with friends, eyes open or closed, book or no book, mocking invites participants to sway in the breeze, snuggle up, take a nap, or find animals in the shapes of clouds. Hammocks can be stacked, are easily moved, and can often accommodate canines.

Other urban retreats include the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden, Lake Harriet Rose Garden, the Lyndale Park Peace Garden, Thomas Sadler Roberts Bird Sanctuary, and the Chain of Lakes. And let us not forget the back yard retreat — or front if you are seeking community. Have a garden? Plunge your hands into the soil plant some vegetables or flowers.

Ultimately these retreats have one destination in common. They are meant to bring us back to ourselves. To our sense of peace, belonging, and well-being. Sometimes we need to get out, to be able to come back in.



## the Phoenix Spirit

RECOVERY • RENEWAL • GROWTH

*Every trial, every demon, 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.*

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## SUPPORT GROUPS

## MONDAYS

**1900 Mens Alanon:** Monday 5:45-7:15pm, 12-Step meeting, step presentation and small groups, fellowship. 1900 Nicollet Ave., Plymouth Congregational Church. Tom W, 612-281-5230. Enter at parking lot.

**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:** First Thursday, every other month, 6-7:30pm. 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](http://www.emilyprogram.com) or call 651-645-5323.

**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](mailto:ffosmn@yahoo.com) or call Tracy at 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.daminnesota.org](http://www.daminnesota.org) 952-953-8438. Check website for locations and different dates and times.

**Richfield Codependents Anonymous:** 7pm, men & women Richfield Lutheran Church, 60th and Nicollet or call 952-649-9514.

## TUESDAYS

**Recovering Couples Anonymous:** 7pm. We are a 12 Step Group for couples wanting to find new ways to communicate. We provide strong couple support and model healthy couple-ship. Unity Church, 733 Portland Ave, St Paul, 55104. Enter the building through the parking lot door and take the elevator to the basement. Please check us out! Contact Dave at 651-214-5747 or Connie at 651-307-7964 for more information.

**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.daminnesota.org](http://www.daminnesota.org) 952-953-8438. Tues, 7-8 pm, 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. For more info call 952-404-1488. More locations.

**Overeaters Anonymous Roseville:** Meetings are held from 10-11am (and Saturday's from 8-9) 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 pm, Dakota Alano House, 3920 Rahn Rd, Eagan (Hwy 13 & Cedarvale Shop Ctr). 651-452-2921. [www.dasinc.org/](http://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.

## WEDNESDAYS

**AA Meeting**, 6:30 – 8:30pm St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, 2300 N. Hamline Ave., Roseville. Call 651-639-4246 for more info.

## SUPPORT GROUPS

**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](http://Reclamation-Ministries.org), 952-545-2586.

**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 -8:30pm. 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:** 7:30-9:30pm 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. TCM.org

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

**Workaholics Anonymous:** A 12-Step program of recovery for people addicted to non-stop work or continuous activity. Meetings every Wednesday, 12:30 p.m., Brooklyn United Methodist Church, Brooklyn Center. Call Pat with questions: 763-560-5199, or visit [www.workaholics-anonymous.org](http://www.workaholics-anonymous.org).

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

**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](mailto:tcAgnostic@gmail.com)

**THURSDAYS**  
**Workaholics Anonymous:** 12 step group for finding balance between work, activity and fun. Meets every Thurs. 6-7:15 p.m. Christ Presbyterian Church, 6901 Normandale Rd. Room 210 North entrance, enter door on left. Call before attending for any schedule or location updates. Liz 612-229-8930, Gretchen 615-423-9444 email: [wafindingbalance@gmail.com](mailto:wafindingbalance@gmail.com)

**New CoDa East Metro Group:** Rasmussen College, 8565 Eagle Point Circle N, Lake Elmo (exit north to Radio Dr. on I-94 E). 6:30-7:30pm. Joseph H. at 715-497-6227 or La'Tosia 651-319-2554.

**Red Book ACA/AOA:** Recovery Church, 253 State, St. Paul, 7-8:30pm. For more info call Jacob at 612.819.9370 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.

**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. 952-582-6000 or [www.ldaminnesota.org](http://www.ldaminnesota.org).

**FRIDAYS**  
**Food Addicts Anonymous:** a 12-step program dedicated to food addiction. Fridays 8-9pm, Living Table United Church of Christ, 3805 E 40th St., Mpls, 55406. LGBT friendly. For more info call Shea at 612-722-5064 or [sheahnsn@gmail.com](mailto:sheahnsn@gmail.com) or [www.foodaddictsanonymous.org](http://www.foodaddictsanonymous.org).

**Recovering Couples Anonymous:** Friday Night @ Minnehaha United Methodist Church, 3701 E 50th St, Mpls, 55417, 6:30 - 8pm. 12-Step couples group meets as couples in recovery from any addiction. The only requirement is the desire to remain committed to each other, and find better ways to communicate and develop intimacy. Call Kathy 612-545-6200 or Allan 612-309-5632.

**SATURDAYS**  
**Big Red Book ACA:** 11:15am at the Cavalier Club, 6123 Wooddale Ave., Edina, MN 55424. Call Therese S. at 952-927-6761 for more info.

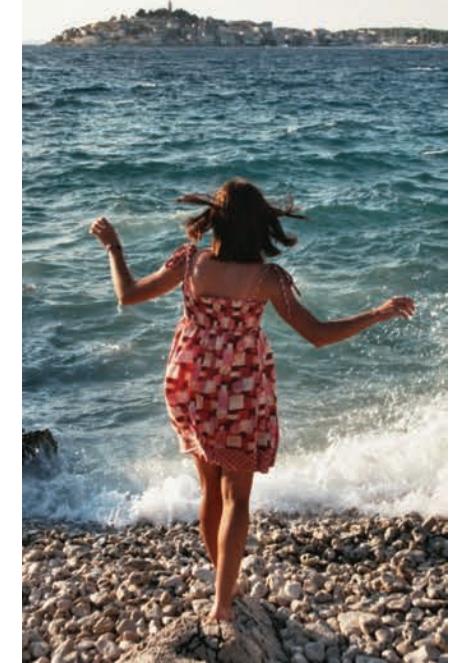
**Calix Society:** A group of Catholic Recovering Alcoholics and their family/significant others who desire to strengthen their spiritual growth, meets the 3rd Sun. of the month at Cathedral of St. Paul. Mass at 8am., breakfast/speaker meeting at 9am. 651-773-3117.

## ABOUT THE LISTINGS

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the support groups on this page. However, we recommend that you contact the group before attending. If you have a listing and need to make a change OR you would like your group included (and on our website), please reach out to us at [phoenix@thephoenixspirit.com](mailto:phoenix@thephoenixspirit.com). Thank you.

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ALBERT CAMUS



# Rising Above After a Breakdown

by **Kerry R.**

When I had a nervous breakdown, I was in a bad way. The world I thought I knew had fallen apart. I was supposed to be something else, someone else. Life had passed me by and gradually the world seemed strange and unfamiliar. I had spent my whole life gearing towards an acting career but it never happened. Instead, at 40, I found myself doing nothing of what I wanted to do. I was eking out an existence in menial jobs, I was economically struggling, and had achieved so much less than I had dreamed of for myself. In my eyes, I was a complete failure. I had to seek new definition outside of the world I had tried to create for myself and I was terrified. However, while in the throws of despair and on the verge of suicide, little did I know, I was undergoing a complete metamorphosis.

## RETREAT AS IN ABSTAIN

I see breakdown as a warning of failing biochemistry. Retreating or abstaining from biochemical compromise is paramount. Without basic and healthy bodily functioning, everything else falls by the wayside. It's weird. Many people focus on illicit drugs and alcohol as conduits for poor brain chemistry. However, my addictions were cloaked in social acceptance.

At one point, I was consuming up to eight coffees a day. Caffeine is responsible for depleting dopamine, one of many brain chemicals that stabilize mood. Even on antidepressants, I had no motivation, either physically or attitudinally – a sign of lower dopamine levels.

I had been on a wealth of medications throughout my life, experiencing a host of ghastly side effects or no response at all. I honestly believed I was medication resistant. A breakdown forced me to investigate better medication but abstain from relying on it solely. Serotonin based medications (SSRIs) had made me angry, excessively happy, extremely hyperactive, and caused hunger cravings that saw me reach a size 16. Serotonin norepinephrine Reuptake Inhibitors (SNRIs), which target both noradrenaline and serotonin, had virtually no side effects for me. As I began to feel better, I prepared to do the work on other aspects of a healthy lifestyle – abstain from physical idleness, decrease caffeine consumption, decrease junk food, and face my emotional legacies.

## RETREAT OR BACK AWAY FROM SOCIALLY TOXIC TRANSACTIONS

Negative social interactions seemed to haunt me. I had numerous poor social experiences growing up — in school, workplaces, in public, where I lived, and sometimes with judgmental or opinionated mental health professionals. As a budding performance artist, there are even famous people with whom I have had toxic interactions. For whatever reason — unsupportive parents, loneliness, isolation, guilt about my own mental illness — I allowed these people into my life. During my breakdown I kept ruminating



about why I had done this, feeling utmost guilt and shame. Eventually I saw it as an instinctive warning to protect myself. Regret hasn't gone entirely. The feeling of enmity does sometimes feel universal, especially as some people I know have achieved fame. However, a permanent lesson has been etched in my mind, to not engage with people on this level again. This is the legacy of giving too much of yourself away.

## CREATE A RETREAT OR SANCTUARY FOR THE MIND

Even with biochemistry and interpersonal transactions in focus, I had to create a sanctuary for my mind. For me, the overarching catalyst for anxiety is feeling unsuccessful. In 2004, Alain de Botton, British-Swiss philosopher, penned the book *Status Anxiety*. In western society, people's happiness has become measured by other people's success and respective status. Such external instability has created an incremental rise in body dysmorphia, cosmetic surgery, excessive consumerism, depression, superficial social interactions, and the breakdown of social cohesion. The best advice de Botton gives is to stop making comparisons, practice both economic restraint and small indulgences, and exercise gratefulness. I have begun to practice these things constantly.

Todd Patkin, author and writer of the online article, "15 Things I Learned From My Nervous Breakdown, and They Can Help you Live your Best Life," comments that his breakdown made him re-evaluate the ethics of television. For Patkin, excessive television viewing creates a distortion of humanity through celebrity and advertising, making us more cynical, depressed, narcissistic and socially isolated. I limit how much television I watch or anything that produces an extremely negative mindset.

## THE PHOENIX

In my breakdown, I have found a grain of wisdom or truth that also makes me stronger. I have discarded more and more of the things that are no good for me. I refuse to feel shame anymore. This is wisdom in motion. It is not easy. It takes courage to become the person life has in store for you. Am I an actor? No. I'm a writer, mental health educator, and sole proprietor.

A breakdown is the ashes of your former life weighing on your wings. With each flap of the wing, you dust yourself off, get up again, you rise better than ever.

*Please send your 1st Person story to [phoenix@thephoenixspirit.com](mailto:phoenix@thephoenixspirit.com). We'll connect with you if we choose to publish your piece in a future issue. Thank you.*

# 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 heals eating disorders for all genders and ages. Our experienced team offers specialty programming for those struggling with an eating disorder and substance use disorder – whether they are in recovery or treatment. Melrose Center has 5 metro area locations. Visit [melroseheals.com](http://melroseheals.com) or call 952-993-6200.

## Drugs and Alcohol Treatment

### 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)

## Narcotics Anonymous Helpline

Drug Problem? We Can Help! Call Now 24-hour 877-767-7676. Also, check out [www.namiminnesota.org](http://www.namiminnesota.org) For a complete listing of meetings, upcoming events, camp-outs, and service opportunities.

## Workaholics Anonymous Meeting

Burning out? Workaholics Anonymous provides steps and tools to break free from non-stop work and activity — or work avoidance. Meetings are every Wednesday, 12:30 p.m., Brooklyn United Methodist Church, Brooklyn Center. Newcomers welcome. Learn more: 763-560-5199 or [workaholics-anonymous.org](http://workaholics-anonymous.org).

*To place a Resource Directory listing call David at 612-298-5405 or email at [david@thephoenixspirit.com](mailto:david@thephoenixspirit.com)*



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# Getting to the Heart of Retreats

from page 1

## ALTERNATIVE RETREAT IDEAS

Whether you're traveling away from home or not, there are many ways for you to retreat within your budget.

### Retreat ideas at home

Find a new hiking trail. Take a picnic, and spend 30 minutes to destress by meditating.

- **Go skiing/snowboarding.** If you are lucky enough to live near a mountain, go snowboarding. Take the opportunity to be completely in the moment. This will give you a fresh perspective when you return to life off the mountain.

- **At-home sanctuary.** Create an oasis at home: block out an evening on your calendar. Set aside a couple of hours where you turn off the TV and your phone, pull the curtains closed, play some meditation or easy-listening music, light some candles and put your favorite essential oils in a diffuser, and breathe. 10 long deep inhales and exhales before meditating for a short while. Try to imagine you're on a beach, by a river, or in any other setting that you may find relaxing. Afterwards, write some reflections in your journal and revisit your goals for the year. I try to practice this most days, and it's a really great way to center yourself for the day.

- **Sharing circle.** Visit a local park with a group of close friends and a picnic. Create a sharing circle where you check in with how you feel, what you've enjoyed about the year so far, and anything that you're struggling with. Try not to offer suggestions or to "fix" others problems. Instead, create a space where your friends can feel heard and supported.

- **Organized adventures.** Try an escape room activity or an obstacle course. They're a great way to keep you in the present and focus your mind, as well as giving you the benefits of a physical workout!

## Inexpensive retreats away from home

While these do cost money, they are relatively inexpensive compared to yoga and other wellness retreats around the world. The list ranges from as little as \$6 per night to \$620 for a week away (not including the plane fare).

- **Eco Venao retreat.** Located on the Azuero Peninsula, Playa Venao, Panama. For just \$6 per night, you can stay at this eco-friendly hostel located within a reforestation project. They have low-impact accommodations to suit everyone's needs and budgets. You can take part in activities like horseback riding, fishing, trekking, snorkeling, kayaking, or just unwinding on the beach.

- **Sivananda Ashram Yoga retreat.** Located on Paradise Island in the Bahamas, this low-cost retreat has prices as low as \$69 per night for camping. You can join this ashram for 6 a.m. meditations followed by hours of yoga, or simply relax in the retreat's tropical gardens.

- **Caveland Hostel.** Located in Santorini, Greece, this retreat is super affordable at just \$18 per night. Choose from same-gender caves, spacious dorms, or historic apartments — there is something to meet your needs and your budget. Activities include movie nights, volcano and hot springs tours, and organized trips to sample the local cuisine. Prices start around \$22 for shared dorms.

- **Black Mountain Retreat Center.** Located in northern California, this center has a range of offerings including a silent retreat, qi-gong and tai chi class-

es, and an energetic outdoor workshop. They welcome people in recovery and offer 12-step workshops. Prices start at \$59 per night.

- **Gratitude Cruises.** These fellowship-centered sober cruises are the ideal way of taking a vacation with the support of a traveling convention.

You'll find 24-hour fellowship stations, AA and Al-Anon meetings, group excursions, and keynote speakers.

There are two or three cruises to pick from each year, and you can expect to cruise around Asia, the Bahamas, Europe, and the Caribbean.

- **The Meditation Lodge Retreat.** Nestled among the countryside, hills, and mountains near Alicante, Spain, this retreat center offers a quiet place for people in recovery to come and decompress. They provide guided meditations, visualizations, tai chi, yoga, and a range of other holistic treatments. Prices start around \$615 for five nights and six days, excluding travel.

- **Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health.** Located on the East Coast, Kripalu is a retreat that offers group stays or solo do-it-yourself retreats. Choose from hiking, yoga classes, or resting by the private lakefront beach. Prices start at \$85 per day, including three meals.

- **SHE RECOVERS Creating Connection Tours.** Dedicated to providing

retreats for women, SHE RECOVERS has created more accessible tours in North America throughout 2019. Host cities have included Chicago, Toronto, Nashville, Vancouver, NYC, Seattle, and San Diego. Tickets are available on a sliding scale pricing from \$60 to \$80 for the day-long event. Attendees also have the option to contribute toward helping those who can't afford the full price.

Having been on a range of retreats throughout my recovery — from SHE RECOVERS events, to writing retreats in Canada — I can attest to how revitalizing retreats are. Not only do you get some much-needed rest, but you gain a fresh perspective which is restorative for the mind and body. I almost always return home feeling energized, and with lots of new ideas for creative projects. If you want to enhance your experiences in recovery, seek to retreat.

*Note: Unless otherwise stated, some of these retreats are not geared specifically toward people in recovery, but instead are focused on overall wellness. That means that there may be people there who are dedicated to achieving wellness, but may not be in recovery and may drink, or that alcohol may be available.*

**Olivia Pennelle** is the founder of *Liv's Recovery Kitchen*, a site dedicated to helping people flourish in their recovery. *Liv* is passionate about challenging limiting mentalities and empowering others to direct their own lives, health, and recovery.

St. Paul native, Nick Diffatte, has won multiple national awards for both magic and comedy. At only 23, he's already headlined on the Las Vegas strip, at the famous Magic Castle in LA, and on the Late Late Show with James Corden

Nick views the world through his Spectacle Shoppe glasses.  
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## Jump Sober

by Catherine Maggard



The author spoke of his earlier self, describing how he so desperately wanted to bring good things into his life to attract the wealth, health and happiness he had always craved. He eagerly and often lined his shelves with tons of books about all things spiritual. This fascinated me, here was someone writing about wanting the same things I did and didn't start with sterile how-to's. I was also intrigued with our similar desire for answers — and, I too had shelves filled to the brim with such books.

He went on to describe the "ah-ha's" each book he read would bring him but that the elation would not last — maybe only as long as while he was reading it. Ok, that got my attention because that was always my issue! I have been disappointed so many times with a book I thought would be the one to help me turn the corner and understand how to manifest my dreams, only to find that none of them did. Countless times I'd ask myself why I wasn't grasping this Law of Attraction thing. Why did I not feel more settled and happier in my life?

He said his life was full of anxiety and his work was crazy and chaotic. Constantly worried, he was always afraid and felt pressured from all sides. The more overloaded he felt, the more avid his search for answers. That hit me right between the eyes. Could it be — someone else was on a treadmill leading to nowhere, too? Holy crap, he was describing me. Never had I been so absorbed and open to receive a message in my life. They say when you know, you know, and I knew with every fiber of my being that I was about to learn something that would be profoundly true for me. These may have been his words, but he was telling my story ...

I'm not even sure when the frantic pace began but my reality became one hellish week of deadlines, fear and worry after another. It felt like I had to fight and struggle with everything. I was successfully climbing that corporate ladder and making lots of money, but it cost me dearly. If there was one word that described my working persona, it would be panic. Two words would be PANIC & FRIGHT. How could this stranger, whose book was reaching me so profoundly, be describing my life to a 'T'?

Predictably, my coping mechanism for all the chaos, turmoil, frantic and treacherous worry of my days was alcohol. The perfect "go to" antidote for my panic and fear. I'd give myself a sober dry-out session most weekends, trying to soften the alcoholic assault by reading as many spiritual books as I could but during the week, it was drink till you drop to blot out the stupid insane crazy pace of the day so that I could shut my brain down and go to sleep. And then, of course, each morning, I'd have to make that floppy hung over mess presentable enough to do it all over again.

Unhappy and afraid all the time, there was only room for reaction, things just moved too fast. My poor little weekends; Saturday was spent trying to unwind as I read my feel-good books, and Sunday was full of dodging the dread for the week to come. So much of what I read was lost because the book didn't have my full attention. I desperately wanted change but couldn't see my way to it.

So, to then come to his revelation, the answer, the how and why — I have to admit, the simplicity caught me by surprise and felt a little anticlimactic, and my first thought was, "Damn, was this going to be another one of 'those' books?" Thankfully, it was not. In fact, I was about to have an "ah-ha" moment. My excitement was intense. This writer made sense and woke me up — like a bucket of ice cubes!

Simply put, my negativity counterbalanced all the good in my life. All that chaos and disorder I was experiencing was sabotaging any and all of my many efforts to bring peace and harmony into my life. Allowing in all that worry and stress stifled the positive.

You're probably saying to yourself, "well this seems pretty obvious." I would agree. But, let's say you were driving 90 mph (or faster), how clearly could you see out the window? How keen would your senses be, having to focus on the fast-moving bullet you were moving in? Not to mention the alcoholic haze that saturated my reality. This figurative analogy illustrates my point precisely so, yeah, now I get it but back then, the whole thing was a blur. And, sometimes a teacher or a lesson will appear at a vital time because something in us wants to learn or is ready to advance. For all I know, I may have

*"So much of what I read was lost because the book didn't have my full attention. I desperately wanted change but couldn't see my way to it."*

read this same simple answer in the umpteen dozen books I'd read previously but for whatever reason, it did not resonate. This illumination, this "ah-ha" was me finally realizing I'd been in control of this madness the whole time and could literally stop it at any moment because I was in charge — mind blowing.

Regrettably, I can't remember the name of the book or the author of this very impactful material but I'm sure there will come a day I can pay my respects. He has my deepest appreciation for helping to empower me and launch me into actions that began the purge for all things insane and frantic that made me want to flee. I can still remember that moment; knowing I was going to walk away from a six-figure, well-worn career of close to 40 years. On my own. I didn't get fired, I didn't storm out. I made a plan, gave my employer a month's notice and stepped off.

Finally, I was awake and began to think enough of myself to prevent further deterioration. And I do mean that. I was disintegrating. I literally could not have taken another month or season or day of the hysteria. Thankfully, guided by my subconscious — my higher self, I listened and didn't resist. I gave ME my life back. Oddly enough, up until that point, I hadn't considered that I had that power, I was so busy following other people's rules and obliging everyone else, jumping

from one scary thing to the other that it did not occur to me to take matters into my own hands — for my own happiness and wellbeing. And so, finally giving myself permission to stop compromising MY life for the sake of others, I made an epic change and took my first intentional steps toward moderation and sober living.

It has been a few years now, since this bold step-off move of mine. A lot has happened to me — some good and some not so good but one thing is abundantly clear — I am more alive and happier than ever before. I no longer feel the need to hide or escape and even though I still have work to do, that's ok, I'm worth it.

I strongly believe our lives are meant to be lived intentionally, every day and in the direction that serves us best. I am who I am because of my experiences. We come here to learn and to grow. My life purpose has become wonderfully clear to me, and whether it be through my art or books and stories I write, I will make it my mission to help others realize their personal power to create the life of their dreams and to step out from under the haze that clouds their existence and prevents them from being who they really are. I know what it feels like to hide and I know what it feels like to finally stop hiding. All that we could ever want, we already have available to us.

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## RETREAT FOCUS by Aaron Shepherd

# The Dan Anderson Renewal Center

On the shores of Center Lake in Center City, MN, sits a sprawling campus that welcomes and hosts familiar guests, and others who are just beginning their journey of recovery.

"Upon your arrival at the Dan Anderson Renewal Center, I think you will be struck by the beauty of the campus, and the peacefulness of the surroundings," says Paul Anderson (no relation to the Renewal Center's namesake), Manager of Programs and Spiritual Care. "The hallmark of life at Hazelden Betty Ford is the graciousness of our staff and how we welcome guests."

Built in 1984 under the guidance of Reverend Jerry Dollard, the Renewal Center started as a Twelve Step retreat facility and continues today, in its 35th year, to offer a daily Twelve Step immersion program that is open 7-days-a-week, 365-days a year to those living in recovery. Guests can stay for a few days or a few weeks, and can customize their time with help from the experienced staff.

"We follow evidence-based practices within our continuing care model, focusing on providing renewal and rejuvenation to those who are going through treatment as well as to our alumni and others who are just looking to strengthen their Twelve Step work," says Anderson.

Named after Dan Anderson, Ph.D., the father of the Minnesota Model (now the Hazelden Betty Ford Model) and the president of Hazelden from 1971 to 1986, construction of the Renewal Center was funded in part with generous gifts from alumni. With a goal to serve as a place of rest and renewal for those who had been treated at Hazelden, the Renewal Center provided a safe place to reflect on that very transformative time in a person's

new life in recovery.

"The words we hear most often about the Renewal Center are 'magical' and 'rejuvenation,'" says Anderson. "Many come in with a lot of fears, but their time here helps them face and conquer those fears."

Anderson expresses gratitude for the way in which the Renewal Center staff continually provides care and supportive guidance to guests. "The respect and care our guests receive in itself creates a transformative experience for people going through treatment or who are already living in recovery," he offers. "I often receive letters from people sharing about their time with us and how instrumental the Renewal Center is in their life."

### A DAY IN THE LIFE AT THE RENEWAL CENTER

7:00	<b><i>Yoga</i></b>
8:00	<b><i>Breakfast</i></b>
8:30	<b><i>Optional Lecture</i></b>
10:30	<b><i>Group</i></b>
12:00	<b><i>Lunch</i></b>
1:00p	<b><i>Optional Lecture</i></b>
2:15	<b><i>Group</i></b>
4:00	<b><i>Personal Time</i></b>
5:00	<b><i>Afternoon Reflection</i></b>
5:30	<b><i>Dinner</i></b>
7:00	<b><i>Optional Lecture</i></b>
7:30	<b><i>Personal Time</i></b>



And many of these guests return to the Renewal Center time and again. "There is a couple from Canada that makes a regular pilgrimage to stay with us. Newcomers often become repeat guests because of the amazing experience they have with us – and sign-up for their next visit before leaving campus," Anderson says.

Anderson began his career at Hazelden Betty Ford working with youth in recovery at its Plymouth location, and he has served in various capacities before his current role at the Renewal Center.

"Our retreats address topics that can be helpful for all people, not only people in Twelve Step recovery. Their time on campus allows guests to step back from their busy lives for focused reflection," explains Anderson. "It is a time to regroup and assess what is going well and what areas we would like to improve. It is a time for finding and expressing gratitude and deepening our sense of connection to ourselves, to others and to the God of our understanding."

The Renewal Center serves more than 100 people each month with its daily Twelve Step immersion program as well as its popular weekend retreats.

"It's such a privilege to hear peoples' stories and to see the transformative work taking place in their lives," adds Anderson.

**Aaron Shepherd** is Co-publisher of *The Phoenix Spirit*.

Guests of the Renewal Center have the opportunity to enjoy some of the following activities on the Center City campus:

*Yoga classes, hiking trails and an outdoor exercise course, use of campus fitness center (pool, jogging track and basketball), use of the Lavinia Neill Meditation Center, time to browse Serenity Corner bookstore, evening alumni lectures,*

Visit [HazeldenBettyFord.org/RenewalCenter](http://HazeldenBettyFord.org/RenewalCenter) for a list of upcoming retreats and more information on its daily Twelve Step immersion program

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from page 1

## As Good As It Gets

So I swallowed my pride and did the "Help! Help!" routine. As I reflected on how nice some people can be, I let myself be open to being saved. After 40 minutes a dear woman came by to assist me. She had two small children in tow, who were amused by the situation. The mother said she would bring her kids to the day care center down the street, and get the help of another woman to help me up as she couldn't do it herself. I blessed her many times over. These two robust maternal women did the job and got me up! I realized that no matter how flawed our current world is there are still many caring people all around us, including perfect strangers. I was in heaven with my new freedom and my more hopeful attitude toward the world in general. I thanked them profusely.

But my salvation didn't last long. As I ran away from my snowdrift I realized that my car keys were likely buried in the snowdrift. So I did the inconceivable. I returned to the snowdrift and wet tarp. As I was poking around for my keys I told myself, "There is no way I am going down again in this drift." But I inadvertently stepped on the edge of the tarp and down I went. I felt incredibly more foolish in my misery. So I did my usual 30-minute routine of "Help! Help" and the impossible happened. To my utter surprise my dreaded next-door neighbor who never talks to me came along. He is the neighbor who has been at odds with me since Day One. I was so uncomfortable having him help me. He never says hello to me even when I try to engage him. He never liked the fact that I painted my house a lime green color and grew wild grasses in the yard. His yard is always perfectly manicured; mine is a lot wilder.

When he heard my cries for help he yelled out in his inimical way, "Oh, be quiet John. I'm coming to get you." Realizing there is karma in life I accepted his help warmly. He got me up and left. Obviously there was a message in all of this. I realized that even people I am alienated from can have a generous side and that the bad guys are not always as bad as we make them to be. The next day I wrote my neighbor a card of thanks and an apology for not always being the best neighbor to him. I promised to always say hello to him no matter what. I'm not so sure that it will matter to our relationship but it will matter to me to be more forgiving to people I dislike and perhaps more forgiving to the parts of myself that I dislike.

### WHEN THE SHOE IS ON THE OTHER FOOT

Naturally for the rest of the day I felt awed and grateful for what had just happened. So I went to a coffee shop by myself and mused on what all of this meant. Out of the blue a troubled young man came up to me and asked, "Are you a friend of Bill W.?" I said, "No, I'm not." I wondered why he approached a total stranger like me. Perhaps he is dealing with sobriety issues. I could tell from his body movements that he was in trouble and looking to be connected. Since most of communication is non-verbal I decided to trust my instincts, not brush him off and ask, "Are you looking for your sponsor?" He said, "Yes, I was supposed to meet him here. It's been half an hour and he hasn't shown up." Seeing his facial expressions I felt awful for him and offered to sit with him for 15 minutes before I had to go to work. After all, I had gotten a ton of support that morning.

The least I could do is listen to him. The shoe was on the other foot. He welcomed my attention. Well, the 15 minutes turned into an hour and a half. This lovely young man explained to me through glassy eyes that nothing means anything to him and he has no feelings towards anyone, including me. He had only a few hours of sobriety and had cravings to use. He had just lost his job as a teacher due to his drinking. He talked to me like a living dead person. I listened with compassion, said I respected his honesty and bravery for coming up to me. I said a lot of peo-

and he was invited in. Before I left him he thanked me and asked for one more favor — "Would you please write this story in *The Phoenix*? I want to know this really happened." I told him would, as his story is about all of us. I gave him a hug and we parted. Once again I wondered how this could be happening to me as this young man had given me a great gift out of nowhere, as he gave himself the gift of self-care. I was left in an emotional tizzy caught between the karmic forces of what happened to me in the morning and in the afternoon with this young man. Clearly my Higher Power was working double duty. I was overjoyed with both experiences. It was incredibly meaningful.

There are many different ways to interpret these experiences. Clearly, there is a special chemistry between people to have remarkable events occur. Surely, to be saved I had to humble myself and choose love over my personal ego. I had to feel deserving of love, especially when my difficult neighbor was not being gracious in his giving. Also I had to believe that there is a remarkable unseen force between people who want to help others, even to unknown strangers. I had to believe there is value in not being in control of my destiny and that we can receive good things even when we're not sure how or why they happened. I also had to have my heart open to such happenings and be alert to when they are occurring. Too often I can be asleep in life and not see when someone is trying to care for me or needs care from me. Caribou Coffee has an apt saying: "Life is short. Stay awake for it."

Correspondingly, we are also called to be there for others in the larger world. After all the most important human need is the need to attach. Love was in the air in all of these experiences. Some of us shun caring for others. We don't want to be bothered. Actually we are afraid to love. We fear losing ourselves in another or we fear our caring is not good enough for another and we will be rejected. Let us be bold in our acts of compassion and gratitude.

You can learn about the science of human love from the book, *A General Theory of Love* by Thomas Levin, M.D. et alia, New York: Vintage Books, 2000. The need to have a purpose in life and give of ourselves to others is indispensable for human happiness. This message is in sharp contrast to the "me, me, me" values of our materialistic society as it drowns itself in epidemic anxiety and depression. Receiving and giving a helping hand is as meaningful and as good as it gets.

**John H. Driggs, LICSW, is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in private practice in St. Paul and co-author of *Intimacy Between Men* (Penguin Books, 1990). He can be reached at 651-699-4573.**

*Actually we are afraid to love. We fear losing ourselves in another or we fear our caring is not good enough for another and we will be rejected. Let us be bold in our acts of compassion and gratitude.*

ple in the early stages of recovery feel the way he does. He looked at me with longing and warmth. We had established a good beginning.

Next I wondered how much of a danger he was to himself. You have to be ready for the unthinkable when you meet troubled people. He said he really didn't want to harm himself. I asked what kept him from doing so. His eyes teared up and said his mother is what keeps him alive. He was raised in a Scandinavian family where no feelings were ever allowed. But his mother always accepted him. I pointed out how he is not so cold as he thinks he is, as his mother brings out the best in him even now. His face softened.

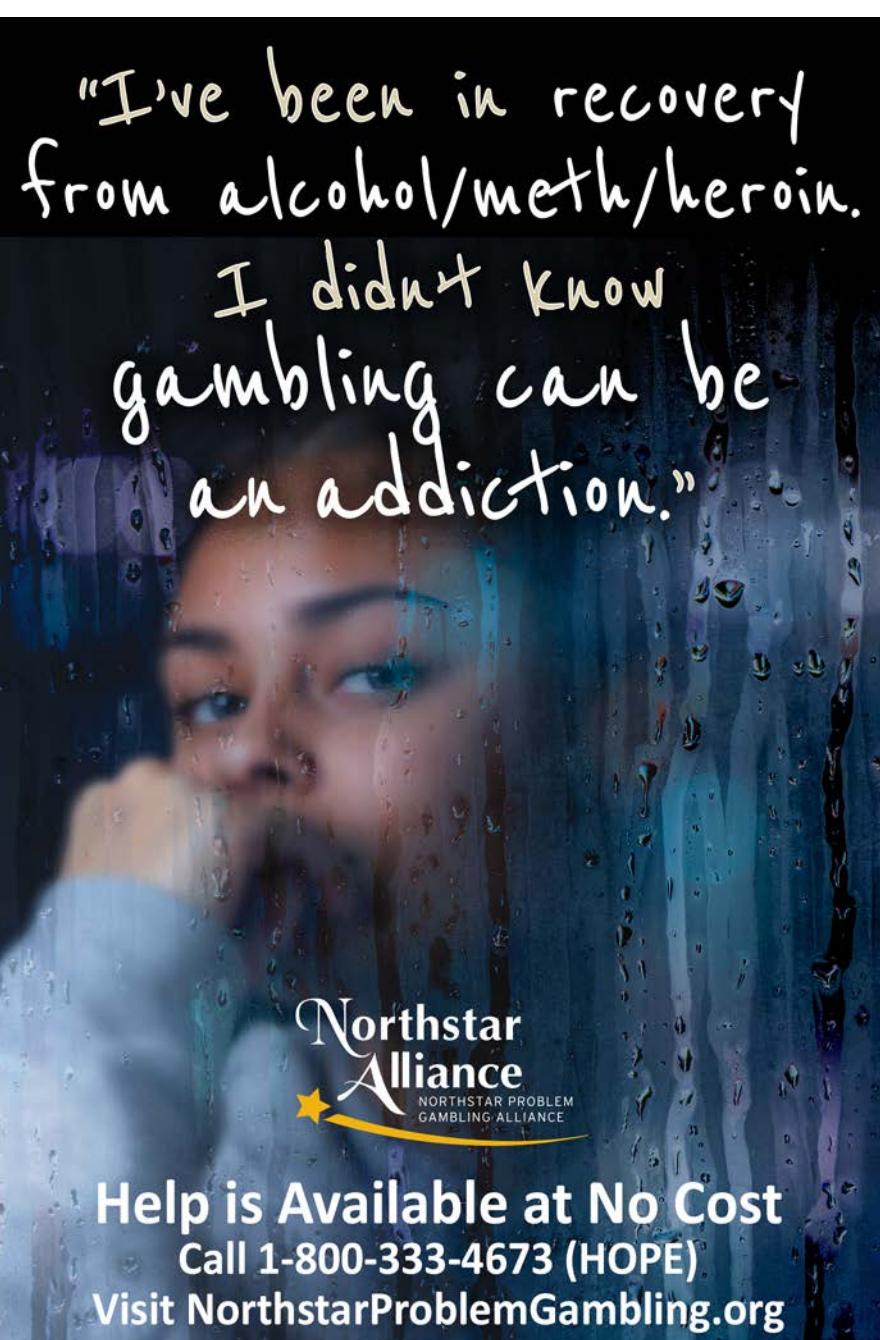
I remarked that I have been a counselor for 40 years, have worked with recovering persons for a long time who have taught me what I know and that I write for a local recovery paper, *The Phoenix Spirit*. He asked me what he should do to lessen his cravings for alcohol. I talked about the amazing discovery of Bill W. who found that when a group of alcoholics get together and get supportively honest with one another, their cravings for alcohol get substantially reduced.

I said you need some brothers in AA and a reliable sponsor that can track with you. I proposed that he go to an AA meeting today and immediately connect with guys in a local half-way house in the neighborhood as they know the scoop on what he is going through.

He welcomed the resource and looked for the address on his cell phone. A house member welcomed him over the phone to come to their house. I offered to drive him to the halfway house and stay with him until he can get help from the recovering men there. He said he was beginning to feel less tense and thaw out. He wanted my help in the worst way. I gave him my card and said, "Could you wait for me to get my car as it is several blocks away?" He said, "Sure." As I walked away from the coffee shop he followed in my footsteps and asked if he could come with. I said, "Yes." Clearly he was worried that I would not come back.

We motored over to the halfway house

"I've been in recovery from alcohol/meth/heroin. I didn't know gambling can be an addiction."



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I am relaxed when I stop at the library, having dissolved a truckload of tension on a massage table. The library, not far from the spa, seems like a good place to kill some time before my next appointment. Good chance to pick up a novel and maybe a movie.

Oh, here's a good movie. Looks like it anyway. I'd better get another one just in case. Well, here are two that both sound promising. I'll just take all three. Maybe I can get to all of them this week.

The CDs catch my eye.

Oh, good thing I came in. I've been wanting to get some fresh music to play. Let's see, how about world music? African sounds, maybe? Sure. These three all look like good possibilities. And Celtic music! I'd like to try a couple of those. OK, let me also snap up a little Latin music. Gospel music too.

By now, I've collected a sizeable stack of take-home items. I head for the fiction section, where a similar scene plays out.

Oh, a new Anne Tyler book. I always like what she writes. And here's that memoir I've been hearing about. Gosh, I hadn't realized that Byron Katie has a new book (Now I've moved to non-fiction, having quickly loaded up with Tyler and a few other fiction authors I favor). Katie's writings and a couple more books are added to my pile.

My time is almost up, so now it's grab anything that's remotely interesting. Soon, past my time to leave, I repeatedly press the wrong buttons on the automated checkout machine as I try to hurry. I race toward the door, dropping things more than once, then scrambling to scoop them up.

Once I disarm myself of my stash in the back seat of my car, I get behind the wheel. I am tense, very tense. The benefits of my pricey massage have been wiped out thanks to this mad adrenaline rush – my addiction to do, do, and do more. I've got to have it all and do it all, and I can't stop myself. Truly, I'm not acting sanely. I'm taking way more material with me than I can possibly get to before the due dates. I've damaged materials by dropping them. I've made myself late. I'm deeply discontent. Relapse.

I stop. I breathe. I say the Serenity Prayer. My cell phone rings. It's

my scheduled call from a Workaholics Anonymous sponsee. I pause, then pick up. I can't do much for her until I admit to her the insane scenario that has just played out in the library. I am powerless over my addiction to work and continuous activity, I tell her. I'm glad we had this call scheduled, I say. It's helping me come clean and once again turn my life over to my Higher Power. She receives my words with understanding and compassion. I am not alone. Together we proceed to work on our recovery.

It's been like this for 10 years, recovering day by day from workaholism. In recovery, I have come to relish getting direction for my daily activities from the God of my understanding, a commitment I live out imperfectly. Rarely are work and continuous activity the gods that dictate my behavior anymore. When I do catch myself sliding into adrenalized behavior, as I did at the library, I don't stumble for long. A prayer, a sponsee call, a spot-check inventory, and a

host of other step and tool resources have become my habitual reboots to recovery.

I've created healthy new preferences — a new way of living so attractive that I don't want to lose it. No way am I going to let an unmanageable armload of library materials or work projects or even fun activities return me for long to the self-destructive den of insanity I experienced for decades.

*"Rarely are work and continuous activity the gods that dictate my behavior anymore"*

I acknowledge the setback and surrender my will to my Higher Power again, resuming my recovery walk. I return most of the borrowed materials, with gratitude for the quick resumption of sanity.

Later, at home, I relax. I wait until after dinner and start reading just one book leisurely, even though my workaholic tendency would insist I should start several or dash through one ASAP so I can get to the next one and the next one.

I don't put on the new music until the next day, though my addictive drive would like to lure me into "saving time" by listening while I read. My workaholic mottos: How many things can I do

at once? And, how fast can I do them? Add to that: If I get them all done today, then I will be able to get a lot more done tomorrow.

Another workaholic motto is always lingering, I should get to work. And behind that one, I have so much work to do. Living is not to be enjoyed but to be worked at. Life is all about getting things done.

Not today. I remind myself of some of the many sane Workaholics Anonymous (W.A.) slogans I've come to depend on:

*You can't run your life on empty.  
Good enough is still good.  
Don't succumb to production seduction.  
You aren't livin' if you're driven.  
Know when to quit.*

I enjoy the book I'm reading for a while. I stop before I'm overtired. I complete my nightly inventory and go bed. Another good enough day in W.A. recovery.

**Pat S.** is recovering from work addiction in Workaholics Anonymous. Learn more about W.A. at [www.workaholics-anonymous.org](http://www.workaholics-anonymous.org).

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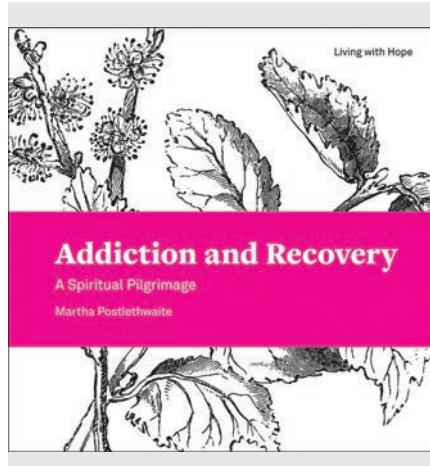
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# Books



## Addiction and Recovery

A Spiritual Pilgrimage  
By Martha Postlethwaite  
FORTRESS PRESS

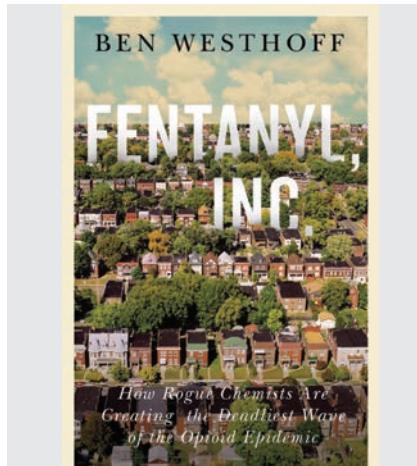
In *Addiction and Recovery: A Spiritual Pilgrimage*, Martha Postlethwaite – pastor and a person in recovery – reflects on her pilgrimage of healing through valleys of despair and vistas of resurrection.

*Addiction and Recovery* is not just Postlethwaite's story, though. She also draws on the wisdom of pilgrims who have walked other paths to explore themes such as surrender, truth telling, shame, powerlessness, grace, forgiveness, and resurrection.

Together, these chronicles bring hope to people who struggle with the disease of addiction and to those who love them.

Each chapter ends with questions to reflect on with conversation partners or in a journal, and a spiritual practice. The spiritual practices are related to the chapter themes and serve as samplers, but they can be woven into the reader's own pilgrimage.

Readers will recognize themselves in these stories and reflections, learn that they are not alone, and find reasons to hope, as they make their own pilgrimage.

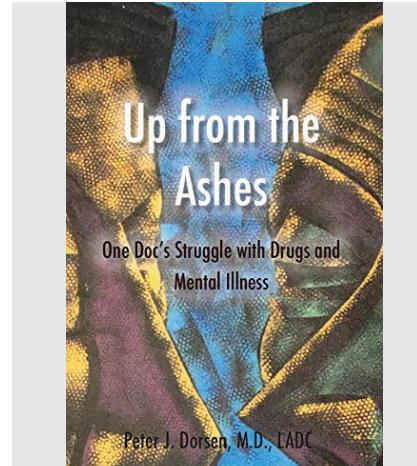


## Fentanyl, Inc.

How Rogue Chemists Are Creating the Deadliest Wave of the Opioid Epidemic  
By Ben Westhoff  
FRONTLIST

A remarkable four-year investigation into the dangerous world of synthetic drugs—from black market drug factories in China to users and dealers on the streets of the U.S. to harm reduction activists in Europe—which reveals for the first time the next wave of the opioid epidemic.

A deeply human story, *Fentanyl, Inc.* is the first deep-dive investigation of a hazardous and illicit industry that has created a worldwide epidemic, ravaging communities and overwhelming and confounding government agencies that are challenged to combat it. “A whole new crop of chemicals is radically changing the recreational drug landscape,” writes Ben Westhoff. “These are known as Novel Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and they include replacements for known drugs like heroin, cocaine, ecstasy, and marijuana. They are synthetic, made in a laboratory, and are much more potent than traditional drugs”—and all-too-often tragically lethal.



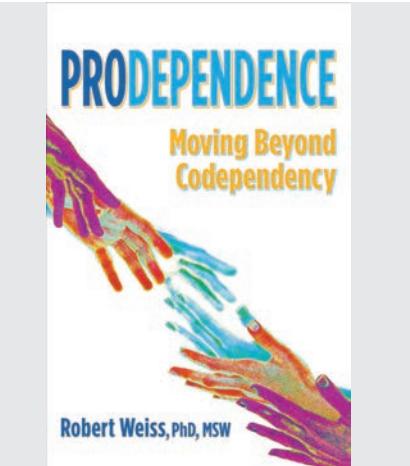
## Up From the Ashes

One Doc's Struggle With Drugs and Mental Illness  
By Peter J. Dorsen, M.D., LADC  
SELF-PUBLISHED

Dorsen, M.D., graduated from Dartmouth College and the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. He completed a residency in Internal Medicine at Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center in Baltimore and Hennepin County Medical Center in Minneapolis. As well as practicing internal medicine for over 30 years, Dorsen has written extensively about sports medicine and men's health.

Retired from medical practice and addiction counseling, *Up From the Ashes* is his story about struggles with drugs and mental illness – specifically his battle with bipolar disorder.

This is an updated version of what was previously published in paperback as *Crazy Doctor: Mixing Drugs and Mental Illness*.



## Prodependence

Moving Beyond Codependency  
By Robert Weiss, PhD, MSW  
HEALTH COMMUNICATIONS INC

In *Prodependence*, Weiss presents a research-based social and psychological understanding of human interdependence, accepting and even celebrating human connection in ways that are healthy and life affirming for each person. In this way, prodependence presents a new paradigm for useful and healthy support, offering an evolved prism through which they can examine, evaluate, and improve not just relationships affected by addiction, but relationships in general.

*If you have a book you'd like reviewed or have an old favorite you'd like to share with others, please contact us at phoenix@thephoenixspirit.com.*



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# Social Integration Will Add Years to Your Life

by Terrilyn Renella

**S**mile and say hello to a random stranger today — social integration and personal relationships lead to longevity. Face-to-face connection releases a whole cascade of neurotransmitters that reduces stress, including dopamine, a neurotransmitter that helps give you a natural high and may relieve pain.

It's been found through various long-term studies that the top two predictors of living a long life are social integration and close relationships. Social Integration means interacting with everyone you come into contact with such as the barista, grocery clerk, a stranger, and people in your neighborhood. Close relationships

may be the people that you can call if you need a ride or a shoulder to cry on. And your family.

Online interaction does not produce the same results in your body. I was isolated for a long time during my cancer journey, as I wasn't open to receiving help. This isolation lasted for nearly a year. I am now discovering how detrimental it was to my health to not ask for help — but also to not be open and receptive to love.

The following came out of my loneliness: We all need someone in our life. I believe people who say you should want someone but never "need" them have it all wrong. This attitude is keeping us, especial-

ly single people, isolated and disconnected.

We all need someone, a partner or teammate, someone who is in our corner. Someone who will always have our back no matter what life throws at us.

We all need people who will wholeheartedly accept us exactly as we are, warts and all. And that means every inch of us, the good, the bad, the crazy at times, the silly, and the whole unique person we are.

We all need people who will love us unconditionally and not feel the need to change us. People who will give their all to us, allowing us to give our all and best to them.

We all need epic, messy, crazy, laugh until your belly hurts, cry through the beautiful and rough moments...love. We all need people with whom to hold hands, love and pray, and stand united through thick and thin.

We all need to feel a sense of belonging, even if it's just with one person. We all need people who make us feel authentic, safe, vulnerable, loved, passionate, free, cherished, respected and alive.

We all need people, because love conquers all.

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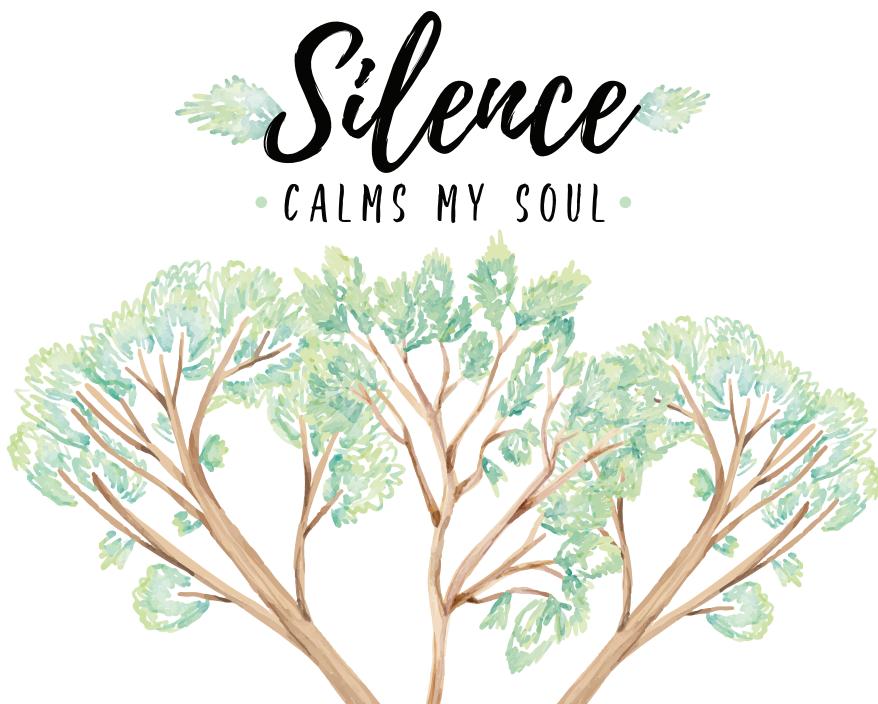
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## Sounds of Silence

by **Mary Lou Logsdon**



*"I've begun to realize that you can listen to silence and learn from it. It has a quality and a dimension all its own." CHAIM POTOK, The Chosen*

I retreated to Tucson in January for my annual days of silence. It was luxurious to leave Minnesota in the depths of winter. The low desert sun warmed my stay. I had another engagement in Arizona, leading me to wander the web to see what might be available for retreat. There were several. I chose the Desert House of Prayer, which borders Saguaro National Park, providing access to acres of open land and miles of trails for exploration. Most importantly, it gave me several days of silence.

How quiet is a silent retreat? Not that quiet as it turns out! There is much to listen to.

The first morning I awaken in a dark room with no familiar cues as to what time it might be. I listen. Little by little I hear cars traveling down the highway that passes the retreat house. As their frequency increases I assume morning is near. The clock confirms it. I ready myself for 6:30 a.m. meditation.

Once in the chapel, I settle in and close my eyes. I hear a gentle rustling as fellow retreatants remove jackets and shoes. A large brass bowl is tapped by a wooden mallet and the chapel reverberates with its deep lingering gong. Particularly the first days, my mind gathers all the tidbits of tasks and reminders lurking in its recesses. One by one I let go of the intruding thoughts until my mind quiets to the rhythm of my breath. Twenty minutes later the closing gong jolts me back to the chapel. By now dawn's light has broken through the darkness.

I stay for morning prayer. We recite today's psalms aloud using a slow, steady cadence in an antiphonal back and forth, passing voice from one side of the chapel to the other. At the close of prayer we leave in silence. I walk the short distance to breakfast, gravel crunching under my feet. I turn my head at the whirr of a hummingbird hovering midair six inches from my face. I realize I am between her and the feeder. She ignores me as I move out of her path.

About a dozen of us are at various stages of our morning meal, sharing a long table in the kitchen. I hear sounds I rarely notice at home — the click of the toaster lever as the bread descends and minutes later pops back up. The ping of my spoon against the cereal bowl, the gurgle of fresh coffee dripping into the carafe. We sit without speaking.

Not yet ready for full silence, I walk to the library in search of voices of wisdom. I find well stocked shelves with familiar authors and new writers to explore. I carry a hefty stack of spiritual books to my simple, cement-floored room. Clearly I have not yet left my productive self behind. I wander through a few of the books as the cool morning gives way to a pleasant warmth.

Lunch is similar to breakfast as we once more gather around the long kitchen table in silence with a simple meal. Instrumental music plays in the background. Eyes are mostly averted, looking just beyond the face. Occasionally we make eye contact and smile before returning to the distant gaze.

After lunch I venture on a longer walk into the desert. A Gilla woodpecker

screeches overhead, moving to the top of a Saguaro Cactus. Tap, tap, tap. I catch a glimpse of a stealth coyote, quiet as a retreatant. Cacti grow hither and thither, appearing in maze-like patterns, implying trails that are not there. I focus on where I have been in order to return.

Tucson is home to Air Force, Army and Marine bases. Sleek military jets roar in the distance. Hovering helicopters hang and hum in the open blue sky. This retreat center is but a small island of tranquility in an otherwise active, noisy world.

Not all the sounds of silence are external. Memories come to visit. Unresolved issues surface for deeper examination. My usual escape route through busyness and activity doesn't work here. Pieces of my history emerge from what I thought were dormant roots, now watered by spacious stillness. I replay old conversations. Dreams interrupt dark nights. Here, too, trails lead back to where I have been.

I return to the chapel for late afternoon's double meditation, two 20-minute sits connected by a 10-minute walking meditation circling the perimeter of the chapel. The second sit is quieter. I am surprised by how soon the gong sounds.

Each retreat house has its own rules around silence. At The Desert House of Prayer the evening meal is accompanied by conversation. We gather at round tables of six. I meet people who live as close as an hour away, and as far as Vermont and British Columbia. Some come for a few days, others for months. We share stories of our ramblings here and elsewhere.

Back in my room and silence, I open my journal to converse with the many spirits who visited during the day. Who are these spirit visitors? Among the most persistent is my intrusive inner critic. She loves to fill the silences with her own repetitive commentary. I banish her — again and again.

There is the recently deceased one who came in a dream to say good-bye. I thank him. There is a visit from my inner child who feels shamed by a long ago interaction. We chat about it. I offer self compassion and a willing ear. The ghost of mistakes made long ago knocks at my door but I decide it is time to claim my space and refuse him entry. Tonight's listening session is ended.

My Higher Power is present for all of this, quietly awaiting my attention. Eventually I get there. I gather in a litany of my blessings, like a long chain of prayer beads, giving thanks for each one. I acknowledge my missteps and consider my amends. I ask for help for myself, and all those for whom I have promised to pray.

I fall asleep in the rich and deep, dark silence of the night, grateful for this sacred time away.

**Mary Lou Logsdon**, provides spiritual direction and leads retreats in the Twin Cities. She can be reached at [logson.marylou@gmail.com](mailto:logson.marylou@gmail.com).