

Ask the Expert

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CELEBRATING

40

YEARS

Art Gallery / Education Guide

View art pieces from local artists and our
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Recovery,
Renewal and
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The Phoenix Spirit

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ART / EDUCATION ISSUE

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Let's say you've landed in treatment. For the first time. Or for the umpteenth time.

You can't believe you'll be stuck here for weeks, maybe months, with all these annoying people around you. You can't believe you landed here, period. Your brain is pure fuzz. Your body craves just one thing – and you can't have it anymore.

Then they say you have to go to art therapy. Are they kidding? Clay? Paint? Chalk? Not me, you're thinking. You'd rather bury your head in a grave.

Then you meet someone like Wendy Frieze or Lisa Lounsbury. Both of these Twin Cities art therapists work mostly in addiction treatment settings. Lounsbury brings to her work over three decades of personal recovery history herself. Frieze has also followed a long recovery journey within an alcoholic family.

NO "ART CRAP"

Frieze and Lounsbury are used to clients coming in who want nothing to do with this "art crap." They don't push it.

Frieze, who has started and guided several local art therapy programs for treatment centers, recalls one man who sat and read a book during group sessions at first. "He was so rebellious," she says. When Frieze inquired about what he was reading, she learned it was about the sea. She asked him if he had ever read Moby Dick and then brought him a copy of it.

"All of a sudden, I was accepted, and that got him started [doing art]," she says.

Another man, she recalls, "comes right up to me and says, 'Well, I have Parkinson's and I cannot do anything.'"

The free drawing activity she was planning for that day turned out to be especially well-suited for him. He could just let his drawing instrument move along with his hand movements, even the involuntary ones.

"He did a fantastic piece," says Frieze. "He was astounded."

It's rare that an art therapy client doesn't get lured into picking up a brush or pencil that soon whisks the person into a creative, calm state of flow through art making. For some, manipulating art materials becomes pure play. For nearly all, it becomes an avenue for self-expression that helps them to free their demons and re-route their brains onto a healing course.

ANOTHER KIND OF "HIGH"

Through artmaking, addicts are able to experience the good feelings they previously found in drugs.

"Literally, the brain activity that happens when you get high is the same pattern as when you make art," says Lounsbury. As clients practice artmaking, new neural pathways in the brain are also created, so they become more inclined to reach for a pencil or carving tool than a drink.

Art offers an easy entry point for addicts to start identifying and unraveling the tangle of their using history. Says Lounsbury, "The people who are still detoxing don't have the clear thought process to come up with what's going on with them, but they can make art and express what's happening."

Art is a safe way to express emotions, she says. "They can punch and squish clay rather than physically injuring someone else, themselves, or property."

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JOHN H. DRIGGS, LICSW

What We Can All Do to Lessen Gun Violence

He who lives by the sword, dies by the sword.

— MATTHEW 26:52

As you probably are aware, gun violence affects us all and is an epidemic in our society. It is a major problem in America much more than in other developed countries. However, most of us are overwhelmed by the daily violence, overnight murders, classroom massacres. We care a lot about all this mayhem, especially when it comes to our children and grandchildren who go off to school in the fall, but most of us remain helpless in lessening the violence, particularly when our Congress seems passive and deadlocked in its response to this crisis.

My position on this issue is not to wait for other people to solve this problem. For our own sanity, self-respect, and safety we need to do something ourselves to make our society safer and freer of gun violence. There is a lot each of us can do now to lessen gun violence even when our efforts appear to be a drop in the bucket, and seem to pay off much later than we would wish. Realize that a lot of drops in the bucket can sustain us all and that, even making the effort, no matter how long it takes, will be a major healing in itself.

Let me be clear. I am no expert on gun violence as a social malaise. I don't have all the answers on this topic. However, I do have something constructive to say about this topic based on my forty years of providing therapy for violent men, sex offenders, psychopaths, and misguided angry young men. I have been around the block a few too many times and have learned a lot from these male clients. I will do this in a question-and-answer format.

WHY DOES GUN VIOLENCE SEEM LIKE SUCH AN INTRACTABLE PROBLEM IN AMERICA?

The right to bear arms is built into our Constitution in the Second Amendment. Early Americans feared not being able to defend themselves from a foreign invasion in the early years of our Republic. Certainly, the Spanish, English, and French had their designs on the seeming wealth of our Early Republic and it made sense to arm the citizens of our Early Republic. However, what we really needed to be scared of was the violence with-

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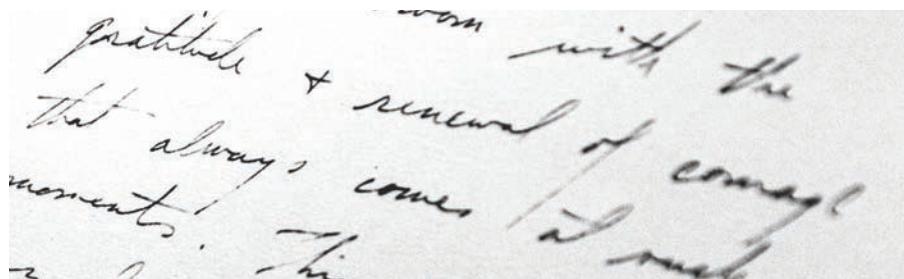


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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

The Hidden Poet

by Louise Elowen



"Poetry is language at its most distilled and most powerful."

RITA DOVE, AMERICAN POET AND ESSAYIST

Sometimes we don't know what is lurking deep inside of us until we go through a trauma that can't be expressed in tears, anger, or any of the other common physical manifestations of human response to such an occurrence. It is at that time therapies such as art, writing, and music can be used to help us process what has happened and how to move forward.

Such an event happened to me. Although a writer of non-fiction and adept at sitting down and writing and researching facts about a specific subject area, I had no calling to actually sit down and write about my emotions. I honestly didn't know that I had it in me. Until I went through specific trauma in my life.

My first poem birthed after the sudden and traumatic passing of my dog, after a period of illness. He was young and my constant companion, especially through an abusive marriage, with an addict, which I had not long gotten out of. I liked to call him my "little warrior." Unfortunately, the secret battle that he carried inside of him, from protecting me for so many years, got too much for his physical body to bear. A day after his passing I poured all my grief and heartache into a poem which is now displayed in my studio in an art piece created by a friend, a constant reminder of both his sacrifice and his unquestionable love through a dark time of my life.

I thought that was the end of my foray into poetry, not an area I had explored before or had any real desire to pursue. Until several years later, after I eventually filed for divorce from said marriage, I discovered that my ex-partner had lured someone else into his abusive trap. Feelings of rage, sadness, and despair bubbled to the surface, suppressed up to that point by one

tiny bit of hope I had left in thinking that perhaps, just perhaps, he would do the decent thing and take responsibility for his years of mistreatment. The floodgates opened.

With pen and paper in hand, the following weeks saw me pour all of my feelings into poetry. Words flowed from pen to paper as if someone else was dictating them. Words hit at the most "inconvenient" times; when I was driving from the grocery store; when I was preparing dinner; when I was walking my dog; when I should have been working on something else; and late at night, when I was trying to drift off to sleep. It was as if these words, these feelings, had to get out and find a voice, hidden away inside of me for years.

And so it was that I tentatively wrote my first poetry book. I read the poems aloud to a few carefully chosen friends who encouraged me to publish. The poems kept coming, as I worked through the final divorce process, written on scraps of paper, backs of envelopes, whatever I could grab as they came to me, and stuffed inside a manila folder. Sitting there waiting to find their voice in the world. To help someone else through the grieving process of a loss so deep that it had hidden away inside of me for years. Unable to process. Unable to describe itself. Unable to flow. Until the right artistic medium helped me to release it.

Whatever your chosen healing art, you might be surprised at what comes out, be it pen to paper, brush to paint, or note to music.

For your artistic healing,

Louise



The Phoenix Spirit

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

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Repotted

by Mary E. Berg

Mom's green thumb was legendary. In addition to a phalanx of houseplants, every April she started hundreds of vegetable seeds inside under grow lights in order to plant green sprouted seedlings. Plants in Northern Minnesota need a head start in the short, 135-day, Zone 4 growing season. As a farmer's daughter, a farmer's wife, and a self-taught horticulturalist, she regularly started all kinds of plants from seed. She cross-pollinated Christmas cactus to start new varieties. She generously gave newly potted plants to her children, sisters, in-laws, neighbors, and friends. The African violet she handed to me as my former husband, my five-year-old daughter, and I left her house after Dad's funeral, was one of them.

The violet was a reminder of home, a reminder of Dad, a sign of Mom's strength, and a symbol of growth. It bloomed on my kitchen counter for the next two years. It didn't just bloom, it bloomed profusely. The spot where it sat to get good sunlight was right under the kitchen window next to the sink and the dishwasher – a busy spot.

Not all was going well in my marriage, and somehow, the plant seemed to get some of the collateral damage. I'd bump it with the edge of a plate or pan, knock it over, and spill dirt across the counter. In fact, I knocked it over way too often. Eventually, the profusion of blossoms stopped. As I got ready to throw it out after the most recent counter spill, I looked at it closely. Two purplish pink blossoms poked their heads from within the leaves. I couldn't throw out a plant that was ready to bloom.

As I readied new potting soil, I saw that the plant had only one root that still anchored it to a core of dirt. I thought again about throwing it away. I wondered to myself: This plant is just in the way. I keep knocking it over. What use is it anyway? But when I looked at those two blossoms, Mom's penchant for growing things must have blossomed within me, too. In the early 1990's, the Internet wasn't a readily available source of information for the public. Instead, I opened up a book on houseplants to see if it would tell me how to rejuvenate African violets.

The book described how to cover a bowl of water with aluminum foil, punch holes in the foil, and put roots through the holes. The foil would hold up the plant as it grew new, stronger roots. Leaves poking through the foil could also start roots to eventually become plants. I followed the instructions. I covered a bowl of water with aluminum foil, punched it with holes, plucked off extra leaves on the current plant, and put each leaf through a hole. A few months later, when Mom came to visit for a weekend, each of those leaves had between one and three new plants starting from their stems. The core plant, the one that

1st Person

had just one root at the time I thrust it through the foil, was healthy and had a ton of roots.

Well, it was sort of healthy. We noticed that some of the leaves were slightly deformed. We speculated, my mother and I, that this had happened when the plant was being abused – knocked over on a regular basis – and when it was only connected to the soil by one root. The new leaves that sprang up from the center during the rejuvenating months were healthy and whole.

As we repotted the plant, Mom said, "Maybe we should pluck those sickly leaves off and plant it deeper into the soil."

No, those leaves give the plant character. It's been through life and survived.

"No, those leaves give the plant character. It's been through life and survived." I immediately saw the plant as a symbol of recovery. The stubborn character flaws that I despised over and worried that I'd never get rid of were part of my survival. As I lived with active addiction, I got bruised and knocked around, not physically in my case, but emotionally. My metaphorical leaves got bruised, didn't get enough nourishment, weren't properly connected to the right kind of soil. Some of the actions that I took to protect myself became deformed characteristics. I wasn't perfect, no one is.

However, I was able to rejuvenate. Recovery groups and a woman's therapy group gave me a second chance. I'd been given a fresh bowl of water, sunshine, a new group of friends. Just like the aluminum foil, those friends held me up and urged me to grow new roots. When I went back to college to get recertified as a teacher, a license I'd let lapse, it was as if I'd been given a pot filled with new potting soil to feed my talents. When I took the fresh opportunities offered to me, I found that my core plant was still okay. I didn't throw myself away.

By the time Mom left for home the following Monday, fourteen repotted African violets had risen from that one battered violet plant. I gave one to each member of my therapy group, as well as to six other friends. It's only appropriate that we pass on the gifts we've received from a rejuvenated personality. The plant that Mom handed to me after Dad's funeral was a gift that multiplied. Thirty years later, I found the story in my journal and once again, the plant will keep on giving.

Please send your 1st Person story to phoenix@thephoenixspirit.com. If we decide to publish the article, we will send a note of acceptance. Thank you.



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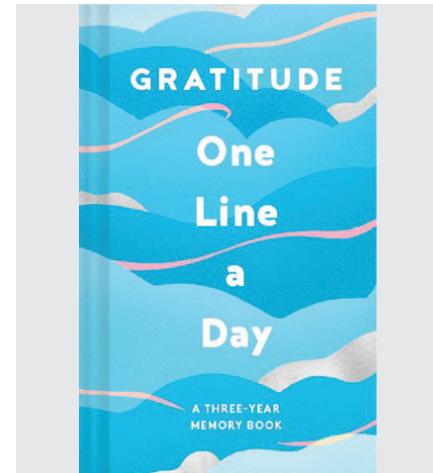
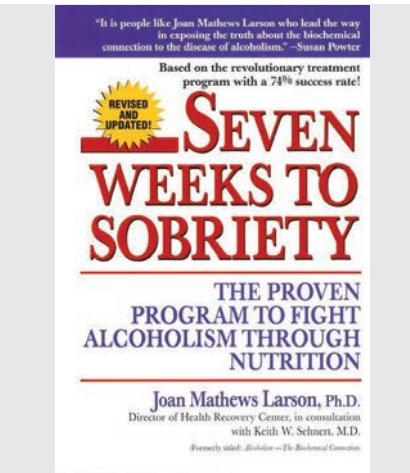
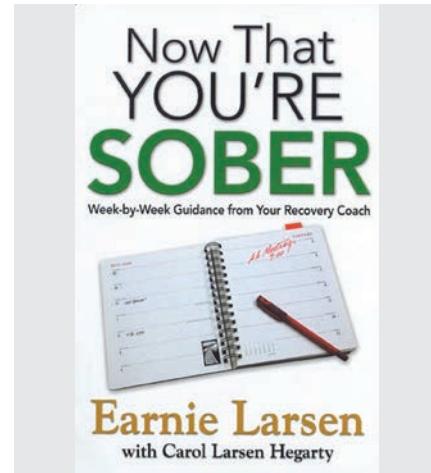
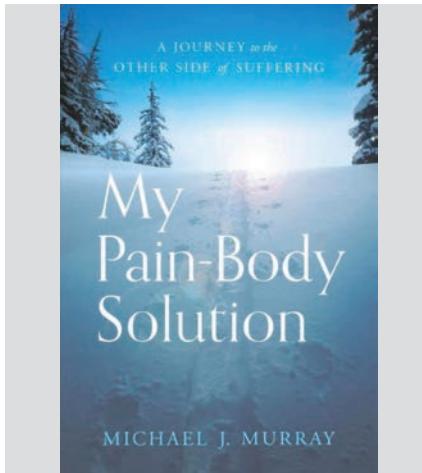
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Books



My Pain-Body Solution

A Journey to the Other Side of Suffering

By Michael J. Murray
RIVER GROVE BOOKS

Michael J. Murray's powerful memoir chronicles his difficult battle to conquer his undiagnosed pain. Murray confides his emotional torment and near collapse as numerous doctors—most of whom don't actually take the time to truly listen to their desperate patient—promise relief but only deliver ineffective treatments, contradicting diagnoses, and often dispassionate care.

Now That You're Sober

Week-by-Week Guidance
From Your Recovery Coach

By Earnie Larsen, Carol Larsen Hegarty
HAZELDEN PUBLISHING

Written a decade before coronavirus pushed in-person meetings online and kept us home, this portable and practical workbook for the newly sober is a perfect coach for the present moment.

In this portable recovery aftercare program, Earnie Larsen coaches readers through one full year of sobriety with personal, practical, actionable steps to help them refocus on the core concepts that are essential to sober living.

Seven Weeks to Sobriety

The Proven Program to Fight Alcoholism Through Nutrition

By Joan Mathews Larson
BALLANTINE BOOKS

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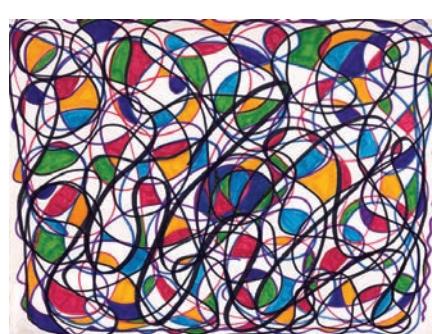
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from page 1

Trauma and grief have a ready outlet as clients give physical expression to their inner life.

Photos from top, clockwise:
Art Lab Rx's mobile art therapy studio "Maggie"; Client artwork from Wendy Frieze (four pieces shown); Artists inside Maggie. Photos courtesy of Art Lab Rx (Lisa Lounsbury) and Wendy Frieze.



"They can also safely process emotions with art materials. Once they can look at this 2D or 3D thing that they created, it gives them a place where they're removed from it being inside them. They can see it, and once they see it, they can't not see it anymore."

Lounsbury also points out that the part of the brain where language exists, the frontal cortex, is in a different location from the emotional center of the brain, the limbic system. That can make it tricky to find the right words to express feelings.

Artmaking, however, originates in the limbic system, right where the flood of emotions camps out. Trauma and grief have a ready outlet as clients give physical expression to their inner life.

FREEWHEELING AND REVEALING

Art therapy provides plenty of autonomy, as clients choose their own materials and tools for their creative work and freely express themselves.

The art therapist provides some structure, often in the form of a theme, such

as: What's getting in the way of you moving forward?

In response, a client might paint or draw a broken bridge. Using her training as an art therapist, Lounsbury might recognize this image as a clue that the person doesn't have a clear destination or clear coping strategies to get across or doesn't know how to fix the bridge. She may ask questions to stimulate the client's discovery about what's broken "and then maybe what are possibilities for repair and what are the tools that you might need for repair," she says.

In some cases, Lounsbury starts her work with a client by doing an art therapy assessment. If working with a couple, for example, she may lay a piece of paper at an angle in front of the two of them and ask them to create an image of a home, but they are not to use any words while doing so. Her training has prepared her to learn a great deal about their relationship by observing how they carry out this activity together. She will watch for which person adjusts the paper, how they communicate, who takes initiative, and even

whether the image includes windows, bushes, or a chimney. In addition to her art therapy background, Lounsbury draws on her skills as a licensed marriage and family therapist.

In one case while working with a couple, she says one partner created one side of the house, and the other partner drew the other side. "There wasn't any like overlap at all. I could tell they struggle communicating, they have struggles with their sex life. It's as if they're roommates and they live two separate lives."

HOUSE CALLS WITH MAGGIE

Lounsbury, who operates her business as Art Lab Rx, has literally taken her art therapy work on the road. A few years ago, she purchased and outfitted a bus with eight art stations and materials for working with individuals and groups. Weather-controlled and equipped with a wheelchair lift and other adaptive equipment, "Maggie" makes regular house calls at treatment centers and other locations. Lounsbury, and several other art therapists trained in her approach, serve

a wide-ranging clientele in this traveling studio, and even hold art shows there.

Maggie was "God's idea," she says. She had been making plans to open a healing arts center. One day she stopped to question herself deeply about what would be best for her clients, and she says she literally heard these words, "Put it on a bus." So, she followed this clear prompt.

CONSTRUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

Frieze uses traveling in a different way. She takes her clients to MIA to see specific pieces of art. A museum visit may be a first for some clientele whose lives have been spent on the streets and in prison. They are asked to carry notebooks and do drawings in response to the artwork they see. They meet afterwards in a circle to talk about their discoveries and reactions.

For a show of Leonardo da Vinci's paintings, "They begged me to go three times," she says. "They found it fascinating. They were getting in their hearts, into their creative spirits."

CREATIVE PATH TO RECOVERY to pg 7

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from page 6



Art therapy is all about construction and reconstruction.



"There's another project that I've created," says Frieze, "in which I teach the guys to sew – running stitches – and they make their own pillows." Referring to one of her groups, she says, "I have never seen such a prouder bunch of guys." They started bringing in torn pants, worn shoes, whatever needed mending. "They're doing the repairs. They're reconstructing."

Art therapy is all about construction and reconstruction, says Frieze. "They are learning new habits."

She will ask clients to bring in their own music to play while they're creating art. In one project, she has them create 12 folds in a piece of paper, so it has 12 square spaces on the page. For each piece of music that they listen to, they draw a picture in one of the squares. "Then we go through everybody's paper," she says, "and they talk about what how they felt about it, and it brings up what that they needed to talk about."

Or they'll pass a piece of 12-fold paper around, and each person draws in one of the squares. Then there are group projects, such as creating a poster together on a group-chosen topic, which give them

fun experiences with planning and teamwork. Frieze is writing a book about all the different "sensorial" projects she has developed in working with addicts.

A CALL TO SERVE

For Frieze, offering art therapy to people with substance use disorders is a calling. "I love sharing everything about creativity and art therapy and addiction."

The same is true for Lounsbury, who has designed and taught a course at the Adler Graduate School on addiction and art therapy. She calls her career "the hardest work I have ever loved," adding, "I can't imagine doing anything else for the rest of my life."

Pat Samples is a Twin Cities writing coach and somatic coach. Her website is patsamples.com.

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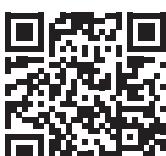
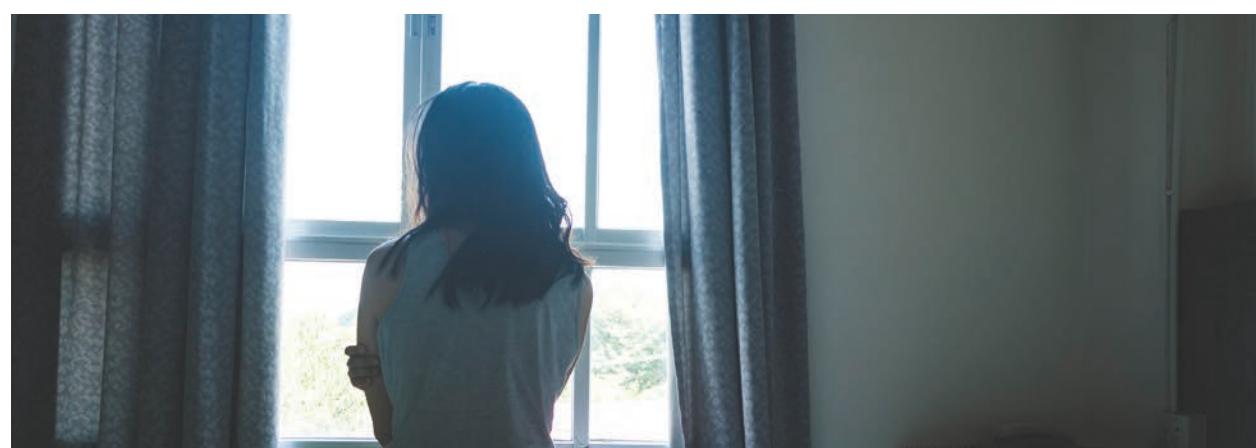
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EDUCATION SPOTLIGHT

Is a Career in Addiction Studies Right for You?

by Mary E. Berg

Photos courtesy of Jamison / Clark



Jamison



Clark

Perhaps you've wondered whether a career in addiction counseling would be a good fit for you. You're sober, or have recovered from an eating disorder, gambling addiction, or substance abuse. You've cleaned up your life, helped a few others change theirs, and now you feel you could do more. You'd like a job that supports others struggling with addiction. It turns out that you're not alone. According to Dr. Jorja Jamison, Associate Professor of Addiction Studies

at Hazelden Betty Ford Graduate School, one-third to two-thirds of students might identify as a person in recovery. "I don't think that I've ever met a single student in the ten years I've been here who wasn't touched by addiction in some way. Either having a loved one with a substance abuse disorder, having dealt with one themselves, or seeing it in the community. Everyone gets touched by addiction to get into this field."

Sandra Clark, Adjunct Faculty Mem-

ber in Addiction Studies, sees a similar pattern at Minneapolis Hennepin Technical College. "A number of students in my classes are in recovery, have a co-occurring substance abuse, or have a family member with substance abuse or a mental health issue. Others simply have a passion for helping people. Any addiction counseling program will have this make-up."

Hazelden offers two degrees, one completed online and the other on campus in Center City and St. Paul. Both degrees allow students to get dual licensure – as alcohol and drug counselors and as a master's level mental health practitioner – meaning licensed to work with all of the co-occurring mental health concerns, from depression and anxiety to trauma. According to Dr. Jamison, 80% of substance abuse clients have a co-occurring disorder. Hazelden graduates are equipped to deal with that entire range of concerns.

These two programs provide a good study in comparison for selecting an addiction studies school. At Hazelden Betty Ford, the programs offered are master's degree programs. A previous college degree of any kind is required, along with an application, letters of reference, an essay, and the typical things you'd see required for college admission. Minneapolis College also offers two programs, however, the associate degree in Addiction Studies is one that students can enter straight from high school. Ms. Clark followed that model in her path to becoming a Licensed Professional Counselor. She completed her associate degree at Inver Hills Com-

munity College and transferred to Metro State University to earn her bachelor's and master's degrees. She said, "When I graduated from high school, I was looking for a smaller school. I didn't want to get lost in the numbers. It [a bigger college] was intimidating. I was looking for a community college, a place where I could get acclimated and then move to a 4-year college."

The second program at Minneapolis College, the 36-credit diploma program, is designed for students with any previous college degree to meet Minnesota's requirements to apply for licensure in addictions counseling.

Hazelden Betty Ford gets students from diverse backgrounds and their online program attracts people from around the world. The average age is 43; much higher than most graduate programs. These students have had careers such as lawyers, doctors, or administrators. "In the old days of addiction counseling," Dr. Jamison noted, "it used to be that the only qualification needed was that you were a person in recovery. This is a new generation. It's considered a field of counseling, a specialty that uses all that we know in terms of research and in terms of helping people improve their lives."

"In the past, society didn't really know how to treat mental health disorders," she said. "Instead, people were cordoned off and institutionalized. People with substance abuse disorders weren't getting better because they weren't getting the

CAREER IN ADDICTION STUDIES to pg 9



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Elk River, MN	19230 Evans St NW #203	612-454-2011
Litchfield, MN	114 North Holcombe	320-693-2461
Olivia, MN	104 So. 4th Street	320-400-0001
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from page 8

help they needed, especially if they had a co-occurring mental health problem. Now the field of addiction studies is moving towards an evidence-based practice; which means that students are taught how to understand and use research data. They're taught which theories and techniques have been shown to be successful and how to use them."

The primary trait that addiction studies students have in common is a passion for the work. Dr. Jamison said, "The work is really challenging. It has the potential to be incredibly rewarding. But there are definite setbacks when dealing with substance abuse disorders. Having a passion for the overarching mission helps counter that. It's an under-resourced field. We don't have enough counselors; we don't have enough treatment centers. Everyone gets stretched really thin. Being able to take care of yourself in that environment is really critical."

Because of these demands, Hazelden Betty Ford Graduate School encourages students to have a dedicated, practice of self-care: Physically, psychologically, and socially. People can't be effective counselors and helpers if they're not taking care of themselves. Jamison noted that students who embrace self-care have longevity in the field. At Minneapolis College, self-care is encouraged through campus organizations such as The Collegiate Recovery Program and the Addiction Counseling Club, a student-run club and drop-in center where students can network and gain support.

Successful students, according to Ms. Clarke, are committed to learning and being flexible, especially because of all the changes going on in the state. As of July 1st, Minnesotans can choose their treatment center. Previously, they needed to go through an access point to be assessed. The assessment process could take up to 30 days. Now, they can use their own insurance, use Medical Assistance, or use the newly created Behavioral Health Fund set up by the Department of Human Services. This change in statute was designed to increase access to treatment.

Both Dr. Jamison and Ms. Clark maintain private practices. In addition to helping their individual patients, they both chose to be counselor educators because they can then also affect every patient that their students will counsel during their ca-

reers, multiplying their counseling power.

Dr. Jamison said, "I find it incredibly rewarding to work as a counselor educator. I really love the challenge and spirit it takes to work with people who are grappling with the disease of addiction. It's a challenging field, but it also has some of the greatest rewards that you can possibly imagine; seeing people recover, seeing people get their lives back, and seeing them overcome the shame of losing jobs, losing families, and coming out on the other end of that journey with a deep understanding of how they work in the world. I get to see people make peace with life in a way that other careers don't."

Ms. Clark said, "The meaning of my name Sandra is 'helper.' I'm meant to be a helper. I joke with clients and students, if we weren't meant to help each other we'd all have our own planet. We're all on this planet together and we're supposed to be helping each other."

Mary Berg is a retired associate professor of clinical education, a resume writer, published author, and poet. Her website is www.marybergresumewriter.com. See page 11 for a list of schools offering addiction studies.

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FROM THE STATE OF MINNESOTA

Changes to Allow More Choice for Those Getting Treatment

by Neerja Singh

D rug and alcohol addictions are life-altering conditions with severe ramifications. With over half a million Minnesotans battling a substance use disorder, timely access to effective treatment remains crucial.

In 2021, less than half the people in the state with a substance use disorder received treatment. Reasons for not getting treatment vary from person to person, but one of the key determinants is access. The process for securing quality care can be challenging depending on an individual's financial situation. Fortunately, a novel approach to treatment access is being implemented across Minnesota to help people navigate a path to recovery.

Direct Access is a health care model that grants individuals with a substance use disorder full autonomy by allowing them to choose their service provider. Previously, when an individual was seeking care but did not have funds to cover the cost, they would need to get an assessment from a county or tribe. Assessment results were then used to select treatment duration and place individuals with treatment providers. But now, through Direct Access, people can go directly to the provider of their choice to get a comprehensive assessment, talk with the provider about their recommendations and choose the level of care that best meets their needs. This new process empowers the individual by emphasizing a person-centered approach.

On July 1, Direct Access became the sole process for getting publicly funded substance use disorder treatment in Minnesota. Direct Access is a collaborative effort, and the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) has partnered with individuals, tribes, counties, providers, and other organizations to develop this new model of person-centered care. DHS also supports culturally specific Direct Access programs, which link BIPOC and members of the LGBTQIA+ community with service providers and professionals who share their identities.

This shift marks a milestone in the state's substance use disorder treatment history. By returning the power of choice to the individual, they can make decisions best suited for their unique needs. Direct Access acknowledges a person's personhood. It gives them the confidence that they can be the ones to write their own success story.

An additional benefit of implementing this model of treatment is reduced paperwork and wait times. Previous models presented barriers by extending the treatment-approval process. Research indicates that roadblocks in accessing treatment are likely to deter an individual from seeking it altogether. Through Direct Access, the process is streamlined, and people can directly enter treatment after an assessment from a provider of their choice. By removing lengthy processes and procedures, we can accelerate a person's recovery journey.

No treatment model is a magic bullet, but Direct Access will yield positive outcomes as more people begin to seek care who otherwise would not have. By continuing to develop this model, we invest in peoples' futures by prioritizing a value that we often take for granted: Self-governance.

Neerja Singh is the clinical director of the Behavioral Health, Housing and Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Administration at the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

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A special thanks to Artability / People Incorporated and Missions, Inc.'s Hart House for providing these wonderful pieces of artwork to share with readers.



Watercolor by Jessica Shao / Artability



Mixed media by Davida Kilgore / Artability



Painting by Eric Weber / Artability



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Painting by Carol M.



Artwork by Saber DeMare / Artability



Crochet bean bag chair by Jessica E.



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Education Directory

The following is a complete list of recovery high schools in Minnesota and a partial list of the higher education institutions offering addiction studies.

RECOVERY HIGH SCHOOLS

APEX Recovery School
Rochester, MN
507-328-3999
www.alc.rochesterschools.org/academic-programs/apex-recovery-school

APEX Recovery School offers a school community of support for students in recovery from substance use and co-occurring disorders up to age 21. Not all of our students are in recovery, we also support students with familial ties to recovery.

Central Freedom School
Mankato, MN
507-387-3047
www.chs.isd77.org

Central Freedom School exists for adolescents returning to the community from recognized substance abuse treatment centers and/or has been identified by support services. Students must be committed to obtaining high school credits in a safe and supportive, chemical-free environment.

Insight Recovery School
White Bear Lake, MN
651-773-6400
www.alc.isd624.org/academics/insightrecoveryschool-clone

The Insight program is a school within a school which operates within the ALC building, partnering with ALC teaching staff. We seek to support the student in an individual recovery plan

The Lakes Recovery School
Detroit Lakes, MN
218-844-5687
www.alc.dlschools.net/student-services/recovery-school

The Lakes Recovery School is open to students that have successfully completed a residential or outpatient Chemical Dependency program and have a desire to remain sober. The Recovery School offers daily CD groups with a Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor to help students navigate their recovery journey as they complete state education requirements to earn their High School Diploma.

RECOVERY HIGH SCHOOLS

McKinley ALC Recovery School
Waite Park, MN
320-370-6823
www.isd742.org

A school-within-a-school, creating a supportive classroom setting for youth in recovery to continue their education. Credit is earned daily toward math, language arts, social studies and science, as well as daily recovery group. Credit recovery also offered for students as needed.

P.E.A.S.E. Academy
Minneapolis, MN
612-378-1377
www.peaseacademy.org

P.E.A.S.E. Academy is here to serve high school aged students, grades 8-12 who are seeking to engage in recovery from substance use and misuse. We offer unique supports and provide a great education to place students on a pathway of lifelong success and founded in 1989, P.E.A.S.E. is the oldest recovery school in the nation.

COLLEGE / GRADUATE SCHOOLS

Bemidji State University
Bemidji, MN
218-755-2058
www.bemidjistate.edu

Offers an Addictions Certificate program to become a Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor (LADC) and a minor in Substance and Behavior Addictions to enhance a student's practice in social work or human services.

Century College
White Bear Lake, MN
651-773-1700
www.century.edu/programs/addiction-counseling

The Addiction Counseling program is designed for career opportunities in entry-level positions in the field of chemical dependency counseling

Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College
Cloquet, MN
218-879-0808
www.fdltcc.edu/degrees-certificates/certificates-diplomas/chemical-dependency-counselor/

COLLEGE / GRADUATE SCHOOLS

Hazelden Betty Ford Graduate School of Addiction Studies
Center City, MN
1-855-929-6242
www.hazeldenbettyford.org/education/graduate-school-addiction-studies

Masters degree in addiction counseling programs are based in addiction studies and the treatment of substance use disorders, but also include intensive coursework and emphases on mental health and co-occurring disorders.

Metropolitan State University
Minneapolis / Saint Paul, MN
651-793-1302
www.metrostate.edu/academics/programs/alcohol-and-drug-counseling-bs

Prepare for a career as an alcohol and drug counselor. Help save and enrich the lives of people struggling with addiction by studying on campus in Saint Paul to earn a bachelor's degree in Alcohol and Drug Counseling

Minneapolis Community & Technical College
Minneapolis, MN
612-659-6000
www.minneapolis.edu/academics/school-education-and-public-and-human-service/addiction-counseling

This program prepares students for Minnesota Alcohol and Drug Counselor licensure.

COLLEGE / GRADUATE SCHOOLS

St. Cloud State University
St. Cloud, MN
320-308-0121
www.stcloudstate.edu/programs/addictions-counseling

Classes and field work experiences introduce you to the best ways to help those with alcohol, tobacco, drug, gambling and other process addictions.

University of Minnesota
St. Paul, MN
612-301-6127
www.ccaps.umn.edu/master-professional-studies-addictions-counseling

Master's in addiction counseling program prepares students to treat clients with substance use disorders by providing strong theoretical and practical foundations in evidence-based treatment modalities, clinical skills, professional and ethical responsibilities, and client advocacy.

Winona State University
Winona, MN
507-535-2551
www.winona.edu/counseloreducation/addictionscounseling.asp

The Addiction Counseling Certificate Program (ACCP) course sequence is intended to prepare graduates for credentialing as a Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor (LADC) in Minnesota.

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Michael Durchslag

is the Director of P.E.A.S.E. Academy (Peers Enjoying a Sober Education), the longest running recovery high school in the United States. He began working for P.E.A.S.E. in November, 1995 as the Social Studies teacher. Michael became the school's Director in January, 2007. He is a licensed 7-12 social studies teacher and earned his Masters of Arts in Teaching from the University of St. Thomas in 2002. Michael also holds a B.A. in Religious Studies from Beloit College (1991). His commitment to recovery schools goes beyond P.E.A.S.E. Academy as he also serves as a part of Minneapolis College's Advisory Board for their Collegiate Recovery Community and Program, founded the state's first Alternative Peer Group, is an advisor on the Coalition of Recovery Investments (CORI), is the Vice Chairperson of the Association of Recovery Schools (ARS), and is a part of the ARS Executive Council.

Q What is a recovery high school, and how is it different from a traditional high school?

According to the Association of Recovery Schools, founded in 2002, the primary purpose of a recovery high school is to educate students in recovery from substance use or co-occurring disorders. The intention of a recovery high school is for students enrolled to be in recovery and working a program of recovery from substance use or co-occurring disorders as determined by the student and the school. Each school meets state requirements for awarding a secondary school diploma. Recovery high schools are also available to any student in recovery who meets state or district eligibility requirements for attendance, which means students do not have to go through a particular treatment program to enroll, and the schools are not simply the academic component of a primary or extended-care treatment facility or therapeutic boarding school.

How a recovery school differs from a traditional high school is significant. First and foremost, all of the students who are enrolled at a recovery high school are committed to staying engaged in abstinence-based recovery. In other words, they are committed to not using substances and to do so, they are looking to create new peer groups with other like-minded youth. This is not the case in a traditional public school. In fact, the

RECOVERY HIGH SCHOOLS

Ask the Expert

We feature an expert in the mental health and/or substance use disorder fields to answer questions

National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) did a study that showed that over 97% of high school students who return to their traditional high school after completing a treatment program are offered drugs their first day back. Furthermore, to support the students in their recovery, recovery high schools employ chemical health specialists and provide specific training for all the staff to be able to effectively work with young people who have been diagnosed with a substance use disorder. Licensure requirements in education do NOT require any specific training in substance misuse, addiction, or recovery. Lastly, recovery high schools recognize that a re-occurrence and/or return to use are a potential symptom of a substance use disorder. Therefore, the schools have created specific procedures and support systems to intervene more quickly and do so effectively helping the young person more quickly stabilize without having to experience the horrors which this disease frequently presents.

Q What are some of the unique needs and challenges of students who enroll at a recovery high school?

There are several challenges that students face. Stigma and minimizing the significance of substance use is frequent. Too often, former schools, parents, loved ones, and even the students themselves, want to believe that it'll now be as simple as "just say no" once treatment is completed. Creating new peer groups that are supportive of a life free from drugs including alcohol is incredibly difficult. Other challenges include: Transportation, most students who are in need of a recovery school must travel great distance to get to one; credit deficiency, substance use disorder and mental health robs people of making adequate progress towards graduation; gaps in education, many young people have gone to multiple treatments and have tried several schools before getting to a recovery high school.

Q What are the resources and support that a student receives?

Most recovery high schools are small in nature; therefore, the chemical health specialists and counselors are able to provide the students with the time that they need. The small size also means significantly smaller class sizes which allows the teachers to really meet students where they are academically and provide the scaffolding needed for the student to be successful. Recovery high schools also really emphasize "relationship-based education." Students are seen as whole people and staff take the time to get to know them while also providing students with opportunities to know their teachers. Through relationships, real learning can take place as students are more willing to take those healthy academic risks in an environment where

they know and trust the people around them. But the best support that students receive are the students themselves. They are able to go to school with people who want the same thing they want: To stay engaged in their recovery and get a good education while doing so. They go to outside meetings together, they socialize and fellowship together, they create lifelong bonds with peers who sincerely provide love and support.

Q Can you describe why recovery high schools are successful?

Recovery schools are successful because they provide the necessary supports in the continuum of care that are essential in a young person's life after treatment. They teach students how to hold each other accountable in a loving and caring manner. They also recognize that a person in recovery needs additional supports in place to be successful and are committed in providing those supports. Equally as important is the fact that the schools provide a high-quality education that prepares students to be successful at the next phase that comes after a high school diploma, and they spend a good amount of time helping students prepare for that transition.

Q What might success look like for an individual student?

Every day not using is a success. But it doesn't end there. Success can mean a lot of different things depending on the individual. However, some commonalities include improved relations at home, successful employment, meaningful and caring peer relations, improved attendance and grades, successful completion of high school, applying to and starting a post-secondary institution whether it is a 2-year college, a specific job training program, a 4-year college or university, or enlisting in one of our branches of the military.

Q P.E.A.S.E. Academy was a pioneer in the field and is the oldest recovery high school in the United States. Please share more about the history?

P.E.A.S.E. Academy first opened in January 1989. The original name was The Holos School, named after the non-profit board that started us, The Holos Foundation. The three founding members were Barb Schmidt, the visionary for the school, Ken Simon, the educational expert, and his friend Joe Mailman, who

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from page 12

was in long-term recovery and who provided much of the initial start-up funds. In March of 1989, the name was officially changed to Peers Enjoying A Sober Education, P.E.A.S.E. Academy, after one of our first students, Joannie Hannigan, came up with the acronym while trying to find a name that captured the peace that the students felt by attending the school. It was the first time in many years that any of them had felt at peace and so from there our name was born. In fall 1989 we moved into our current location, renting space from the University Lutheran Church of Hope in SE Minneapolis or Dinkytown. P.E.A.S.E. Academy was a contract alternative school with Minneapolis Public Schools until 2003, when the Board made the decision to become a separate charter school. In the interim, we partnered with MN Transitions Charter School (MTCS) and when Michael Durchslag became the Director in January of 2007, he solidified the relationship with MTCS and we've been partnering with them ever since. From our humble beginnings of 7 original students, we grew to 35 students by 1995. By 2000 we had close to 75 students enrolled at any one time. However, due to market changes, including rules regarding how education must be delivered to those still in treatment, our enrollment dropped to its current number of 35-40. Since 2007, P.E.A.S.E. Academy has seen close

to 85% of all their graduates enroll in a post-secondary program for the following fall and over 75% of all students served stay engaged with their recovery.

Q How can someone enroll in a recovery high school?

Most recovery high schools both in Minnesota and nationally are publicly funded schools that anyone who wants to enroll (and who is able to physically get to the school) can openly enroll at the school. In some states, the administration of the school needs to work with the district that the student is coming from to receive payment for educational services, but in Minnesota, because of the open-enrollment laws, that process is very simple and requires no work on behalf of the family or school beyond reporting that all schools follow. Almost all schools have a fairly lengthy Informational Meeting with the prospective students and their family in order to make sure that the student understands the rules and expectations of the school. No recovery high school wants to set up a student for failure, so great care is given to make sure students want to be at the school and parents support that decision. My suggestion is to call the school and set up an Informational/Enrollment Meeting. It's really that simple.

Q What other resources can you pass along to our readers?

There are 6 recovery high schools in Minnesota: Lakes Recovery School (Detroit Lakes), McKinley ALC Recovery School (Waite Park), P.E.A.S.E. Academy (Minneapolis, Insight (White Bear Lake)), Central Freedom (Mankato) and APEX (Rochester). There are also 40 other recovery high schools in a variety of different places around the country. A great resource for finding those and/or support in trying to open one in your area is the Association of Recovery Schools (ARS). ARS works closely with the Association of Recovery in Higher Education (ARHE) as there are over 150 Collegiate Recovery Programs (CRP) across the country, including several in Minnesota. Going from a recovery high school to a collegiate recovery program allows young people to find a peer group in college and get additional supports.

Another great resource is the Alternative Peer Groups (APGs). APGs have been running in Texas for over 45 years and provide professional, Peer Recovery Specialists, who provide programming for youth and their families after school hours. APGs have been growing in the United States, and the

P.E.A.S.E. Community Foundation opened Minnesota's first APG in Summer, 2021, the *P.E.A.S.E. Community After-School Program*.

A newly launched website, *All Sober*, is a phenomenal resource for all things recovery. It helps people find available resources such as different treatment options, recovery high school, collegiate recovery programs, recovery housing, as well as different recreational opportunities that are made up of recovering people. For example, there are sober sports leagues, and if you live in the Twin Cities and love music, there is a wonderful organization, *Dissonance*, which supports musicians in recovery.

A relatively new online recovery community for youth, parents, and adults in recovery is *Recovery Club of America*. All support is done virtually as well as providing online forums.

If you have a question for the experts, or you are an expert interested in being featured, please email phoenix@thephoenixspirit.com. Experts have not been compensated for their advice.

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RECOVERY SPOTLIGHT

Connections Between The Four Agreements and the Road to Recovery

by **Mark T. Scannell**

Recently I found myself returning to a book I had read many years ago – *The Four Agreements: A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom* by Don Miguel Ruiz (Amber and Allen Publishing, San Rafael, CA, 1997). As I reflected on his thoughts about these “Four Agreements,” I began to see connections with our efforts to achieve and maintain sobriety – whatever our addictions might be. In this article, I hope to show you some of these connections. I am always open to your feedback and suggestions because I truly believe that learning happens best in dialogue.

So that we might all be on the same page, Ruiz’s Four Agreements are:

1. Be impeccable with your word
2. Don’t take things personally
3. Don’t make assumptions
4. Always do your best.

BE IMPECCABLE WITH YOUR WORD

Impeccable speaks to me of speaking honestly to others as well as to oneself. My experience has been that if I am not honest with myself, how can I be honest with others? As I look back upon

my years of growing up, I learned that there were certain things I could speak comfortably about – the weather, baseball scores – and there were other topics that would be better not spoken of – sexual experiences and fantasies, events that caused me to feel embarrassed and ashamed – amid others. As a result of this, there were experiences that I put into a kind of dark box within me not to be opened or talked about. Sound familiar? This could often lead to living a double life – one life for others to see and another that we only knew about and kept secret. Such splits often lead us into addictive thinking and behaving.

I see one of the goals in continuing to work our recovery is overcoming these kinds of splits. One of the ways we can do this is being able to open this inner box of experiences and to begin to share some of these experiences with others – especially those experiences which reveal our mistakes and imperfections. In sharing these vulnerable experiences with others, I have learned a couple of ground rules. The first comes from Brene Brown, a heroine of mine, who has written much about shame and its impact

upon us. One of her caveats is beginning to share shameful events with only a few people we trust. Don’t begin by announcing these to the world?! Announcing to the world could be its own kind of grandiosity! The second is to go slow and get feedback before saying more. Are they with us? The third concerns with whom we share. I have learned, in walking with others as a sponsor where they have shared these kinds of experiences with their partner or a significant other, that it can be too much for the other to handle. Take it slow and seek to be aware of what our sharing of these experiences might do to the other person.

So, I agree with Ruiz in the importance of our word being impeccable. At the same time, it is important to be discerning about what we are saying and how much to say to others. I believe the place to begin is seeking to be impeccably honest with what we tell ourselves. That is a very important place to begin, especially as we seek to be impeccable with what we say to others.

DON'T TAKE ANYTHING PERSONALLY

For me, this is probably the most difficult of the Four Agreements. When something happens that I feel is less than perfect – that can happen often – I quickly react and take what I did or didn’t do very personally. I can get stuck in a place where I interpret everything that is happening is about me and never consider that it might also involve the other or others that are involved.

I have found two practices that have helped me slowdown from that reaction that this is all about me. First, when I ex-

perience moving into that reacting place where I am taking things personally, I try to remind myself to breathe, take a couple of deep breaths, and in this, remind myself to try to become less defensive. The second is being able to share with a trusted friend, or possibly a sponsor, or the 12 Step group what has taken place and request some help in trying to become less defensive. Asking and receiving support – as well as giving support – are always a very good practice.

DON'T MAKE ASSUMPTIONS

Again, I find it relatively easy – especially in situations where I am not understanding what is happening – to begin to make assumptions about what is happening or what another person is saying. I have learned that it is often much easier to ask the other person what they mean or ask others what they are doing and possibly trying to accomplish. One time, I asked a friend what his motivation was in doing what he was doing. That gave him a chance to explain to me what he was doing. That helped me. I believe my openness in asking him to share was helpful to him and really a sign of a respect for him by asking.

I believe this Agreement recognizes that there are many perspectives from which to look at a situation or from which to act. It is only by asking the other that we possibly learn the perspective from which they are coming. This also can help us enlarge our perspectives as we discover perspectives what we had not previously seen.

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN to pg 17



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 Meadow Creek - Pine City, MN
 New Beginnings - Waverly, MN
 New Beginnings IOP - 8 Locations
 Oakridge - Rochester, MN
 Tapestry - St. Paul, MN
 Twin Town - St. Paul, MN

from page 1

in our own country and how guns could be used to undermine our own safety and security. Guns were seen as a symbol of our masculinity in protecting the homeland, asserting our dominance and carrying out genocide against our Native People, and as a quick fix in settling domestic disputes. The idealization of guns has been going on since time immemorial in America and persists to this day. One only has to watch the endless gunfights, gratuitous gun violence, and police overreaction on TV to control crime to get some idea how much we are all in love with guns in this country. Other countries may like their guns for hunting; we Americans like our guns as shortcuts to settle interpersonal conflicts. Other countries have sensible gun regulation and almost no mass killings. Unfortunately, aside from protecting ourselves from intruders, guns only make our problems worse and make our lives less safe. The social causes of gun violence are very complex and require thoughtful intervention.

ISN'T MENTAL ILLNESS THE ROOT CAUSE OF GUN VIOLENCE?

Most mentally ill people are the victims, not the perpetrators, of gun violence. Most gun violence is due to a Behavioral or Personality disorder in the killer and is not the result of delusions, hallucinations, or breaks from reality. Most violence is due to a lack of emotional regulation, impulsivity, black and white thinking, traumatic hyper arousal, and deficits in empathy for others. It is generally a learned response to early childhood violence either as a witness or perpetrator of violence. Most perpetrators see violence as a solution to inner demons and are out of touch with how their behaviors affect others. Some killers are aware of their violence but simply are indifferent or they are physically aroused by hurting others. Generally, they lack the ability to think before they act and feel entitled to act the way they do.

Interestingly, many violent people have a side to them that is pro social and kindly. Their use of violence is a cry for help in a life otherwise full of despair and social dismissal. It is important to treat violent offenders with basic human respect, with a willingness to learn from their experiences and world view and maintain a savvy caution with how dangerous they can become no matter how improved they seem. Dostoyevsky once said that the quality of a civilization can be known by how well it treats its criminals.

WHAT ARE SOME SIMPLE STEPS TO LESSEN GUN VIOLENCE?

Before buying a gun, you ought to ask yourself if you really need one and if you're fully capable of using a gun. Having secure deadbolts on your house will likely keep you safer than getting into a gun battle with an intruder. Guns require training to use properly, and you should certainly take gun safety classes before owning a gun. You may be more prone to shoot a beloved family member by mistake if you lack training. Also, you need to be truly honest with yourself if you can kill another person with a gun while defending yourself. Many people who use guns get just as traumatized as those who get victimized by guns. If you can't use a gun to defend yourself from an intruder, you're probably better off

not owning one. You ought to consider who has access to your gun. If someone has suicidal tendencies in your house it is certainly not wise to own a gun that they might have access to. All guns in your house should be under lock and key at all times so that you are the only person who can fire the gun. If you have threatening or dangerous persons in your house, the last thing you need is a gun to protect yourself from them. You might be safer to get training in conflict resolution or counseling to learn non-violent safety planning if you live with difficult people. It is a myth that you can overcome the threats of a disturbed person by overpowering them. Most disturbed people are more skilled at aggression than you are and have less to lose by being violent. It is almost always safer, better, and more manly to walk away from a dangerous person than it is to try to control that person. Trained non-abusive police are more qualified to handle violence than you are. So let them do their job even if you dislike police

WHY DO SCHOOL SHOOTINGS HAPPEN?

School shootings happen for a variety of reasons. Media worshiping of guns as ways of settling scores or handling disputes, proliferation of weapons of war in the home while not under lock and key, gang violence, copycat learning from the media, poor role modeling in the home by adult males in handling frustration, inability to handle the complexity of a changing world, over reliance on the "quick-fix" mentality of handling complex human problems and the lessening of higher brain functioning and empathetic social bonding in our increasingly narcissistic culture all contribute to gun violence in schools.

In the old days it wouldn't occur to students to shoot other students because it was against the law and you would be caught, you would not want to harm other students and get haunted by your conscience, and there were other less violent ways of settling the score to handle disputes. A good schoolyard brawl was worth its weight in gold to let others know how I am the boss or not let others mess with me. The real courage it took to face adversaries without killing them made a man out of you. The cowardice and inhumanity of current gun violence do so much less for your masculinity. Gone are the days of physical rivals settling the score with each other and living to become good and respected friends in the long run. The lessening of healthy aggression and weakening of real masculinity has made gun violence more attractive. Also, more students have mental health issues related to parental neglect these days in that it causes major problems with jealousy, insecurity, holding grudges, and emptiness in students. Children who are giving everything they wish by their parents, have no responsibilities at home, are used as objects of parental success or companionship will likely develop strong feelings of entitlement and be emotionally fragile to handle life challenges. The explosions in children are both a cry for help and an expression of despair since how they have been raised has not prepared them for adulthood and stable human bonding. Many violent youths feel their lives have been over for many years long before their gun

violence. Their violence are acts of murder/suicide than aggression alone. Many times, their parents have bent over backwards to be loving caregivers and don't know where they went wrong.

The character development in children that derives from strong bonds with fathers in this country is very much missing. When the moral teachings of fathers are not part of a child's life his ability to empathize with others is reduced and makes him more prone to use guns to handle his emotional life with no regard for others. There is a profound isolation between children and parents these days so that children are left to fend for themselves. Parents would be shocked how their children lead separate lives from themselves. Such gaps promote despair in their children and despair is the fodder of gun violence.

HOW CAN WE HELP REDUCE GUN VIOLENCE?

Here are some practical things we can do to lessen gun violence:

1. Learn to control your language and temper when expressing anger. There is a big difference between wanting to blow someone's head off, making threats of violence, swearing at someone, and getting even with somebody compared to saying you are pissed, and need to be taken seriously. There is absolutely no reason to dehumanize another human being when you are angry and doing so makes your anger less effective. Often you are part of why someone else makes you mad and don't want to see your part. It's better to be specific and respectful when you are angry. Your children will witness what a real man does with his anger and do the same themselves. Grabbing a gun announces to the world that you are not skilled enough based on your own merits to be taken seriously. It's the coward's way to express yourself. Use language, not bullets!

2. Support sensible gun control legislation. Enough research has shown that sensible gun control lessens all forms of gun violence. When this country legislated against selling assault rifles the rates of mass shootings declined and then increased later when the legislation had expired. All advanced countries have considerably fewer mass shootings than the USA due to their gun control statutes. Our neighbor to the North, Canada, which

There is a profound isolation between children and parents these days so that children are left to fend for themselves.

allows guns but not assault rifles, has no incidences of school shootings.

3. If you do own guns, keep them under lock and key at all times. Attend gun safety classes to know when and how to use guns. Don't own guns if someone in your household is suicidal or homicidal. Don't own guns to prop up your masculinity, get respect from others, or teach someone a lesson. Realize that guns ought to be the choice of last resort and use the lowest caliber arms to defend yourself. Running away from dangerous situations and putting secure locks on your doors are often far better than guns in protecting yourself.

4. Avoid holding grudges and getting even as a way of managing your emotions. Confucius once said, "Before you set out to avenge a wrong done to you, dig two graves."

5. Get to know your children in very personal ways, even when it seems a little intrusive. Avoid criticizing your kids or being judgmental towards them as that shuts down communication. Don't live through your kids but enable them to have their own identity. Ask your kids if they feel that you are approachable for anything that they might want to say to you. Apologize and make corrections as necessary. Explore any areas where their lives are in danger and be as calmly intrusive as possible. Kids want you to ask them hard questions regarding their safety even when they accuse you of being nosy. Be a kindly authority to them, not a friend. Your children may say what you don't want to hear. Thank them for their candor.

LESSEN GUN VIOLENCE to pg 19

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RECOVERY SPOTLIGHT

How to Present Your Employment History Through Your Resume With a Justice Involved History

by Guy Brown

This article instructs and suggests styles and methods of creating a resume with gaps in employment due to a justice involved history, which then results in absence of employment/and educational history.

This information has been collated and recorded through several years of working inside our state facilities, as well as in the community setting with service providers, and other vendors providing supportive/life changing treatment, and supportive employment models. It is important that we begin by changing the language and cultural approach when discussing working with justice involved individuals.

When we start using different language to describe your legal history, we begin changing stereotypes, and we gain insights to normalize the past with the description of a mistake that has been appropriately corrected, and the follow up services to maintain stabilization for future performance.

The two models that we suggest in resume writing are identified as “functional and chronological style.”

The definition of a functional resume: The resume should begin with your name, city, email, and phone number. It's not necessary to give your detailed address until they decide to hire you. This structure should start with an *objective/summary statement*, which informs them that you are sending your employment and educational history for review for interest in the position of _____. The functional structure speaks directly to the task and locations of the employment without employment dates.

The definition of a chronological resume: Use the same structure at the beginning of the resume that you do for the functional resume, including contact information as well as an objective/summary statement. In the chronological structure list:

Your present education/training with detailed descriptions and dates of completion. Present your employment history, with a short description of daily tasks, and provide employment dates.

The objective/summary statement: This statement immediately targets your resume for every position that you apply for. It makes it clear to the recruiter what you are applying for. Finish the statement with: “I look forward to hearing from you when you begin your hiring process.”

The functional structure speaks directly to the task and location of the position, without dates of employment.

Remember that the more you target each resume, the more that you can focus on the tasks and daily functions without

employment dates and history. This approach presents your work history, skills, and abilities right away. This helps set you up for your “PAAR statement” to the employer during the verbal interview.

The PAAR statement is a prepared statement and explanation in a short/non detailed version of what happens. It is mostly focused on the positive outcomes since the past, such as clearing up any fines, treatment that you attended to address life choices that may have led to a justice involved history. It also includes any self-development improvement, educational, and community supportive services that you took advantage of to increase the quality of your life.

I hope that this article is helpful to you in this process.

Guy Brown is an offender specialist with the State of Minnesota.

PAAR Statement Example

P

Mr. Smith, when you check my background, you are going to see some things that I am not very proud of. There was a time in my life, 5 years ago, when I was being careless and using poor judgment. I thought that the fast life was the way to go.

A

As a result, I was in possession of a controlled substance.

A

I've since been through rehabilitation. During this time, I completed several positive programs such as work readiness, Thinking 4 a Change, Life Skills, etc. Also, I obtained my GED, a certificate in cabinet making, and a certificate in painting and decorating.

R

I've learned that an honest living is the best way to go. Now I am living with a set of core beliefs and values that begin with integrity and end with community.

James E. Jobseeker

111 Main Street
Anytown, MN 55555

612-555-1111
James.Jobseeker@yahoo.com

CAREER OBJECTIVE

Production Line Operator or related position with a progressive company seeking a motivated, creative, and goal-oriented professional with the following skills:

- Sharp, quick learner; willing to get involved
- Effective working alone and as a cooperative team member
- Strength in analyzing, organizing, and problem solving
- Reliable and thorough in completing projects

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

LINE OPERATOR

- Attach identification-labels to finished packaged items, such as lot numbers or shipping destinations.
- Clean packaging containers and assemble cartons to prepare for product packaging.
- Regulate and monitor machine flow, process speed and temperature to ensure product meets customer requirements.
- Secure finished packaged items by hand tying, gluing, stapling, or attached fastener.

JANITOR

- Clean and restore building interiors using commercial cleaning equipment.
- Clean building floors by sweeping, mopping, scrubbing, or vacuuming them.
- Clean windows, glass partitions, and mirrors, using soapy water or other cleaners, sponges, and squeegees.
- Advise managers concerning the need for major repairs or additions to building operating systems.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

WEST HIGH SCHOOL

- General studies

SPECIALIZED COURSEWORK

- Lean manufacturing course
- Forklift certified
- Industrial safety training

WORK EXPERIENCE

- PRODUCTION LINE OPERATOR, Minncor Industries-MCF, Faribault, MN
 - JANITOR, MCF-SCF, Bayport, MN
 - ROOFER, Top Notch Roofing, Edina, MN
 - CONSTRUCTION, Doe Construction Inc.

CREATIVE THINKER – DEPENDABLE AND A TEAM PLAYER – ABLE TO WORK EFFECTIVELY WITH OTHERS

Combination resume example. This resume is good for gaps in employment. It lists skills and qualifications first, followed by work history. Example provided by Guy Brown.

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www.MinnesotaGA.com

Insanity

by Louise Elowen

Sex, drink, drugs,
Girls, boys, thugs,
On and on it goes,
Forever in the flow.

Oh, can't you see,
What you do to me?
My face wears the lines
Of all of your crimes.

Boxed deep inside,
Eyes open wide,
Why can't I shout
And let it all out?

Your botched jobs,
Hodge, podge,
So much craziness,
So much haziness.

Such is the life,
Of an abused wife.
But no more,
I was broken to the core.

Finally, I flee,
And leave you be
To your world of insanity
And of profanity.

Now at peace,
Oh, the release!
A life reclaimed,
And no more pain.

from page 14

Over the years, I have found this happening in the 12 Step meeting I have been attending for over 27 years. Asking for clarification from another, often leads me to see aspects I hadn't seen. I believe recovery involves coming to see dimensions that can complete parts of ourselves that we had blocked or hadn't seen. An example of this is coming to see how one's Higher Power can be other than just simply a God-like figure. People spoke of how they saw the group or their sponsor or even a value as their Higher Power and how that really worked for them, whereas a God-like figure didn't. Their sharing changed the assumptions about Higher Power that I had. I feel I am much richer from what was shared with me.

Another example for me has been engaging others in dialogue – that is, I am not trying to convert the other to my views. I want to engage in a conversation about what is important as well as to learn from them. The proverbial 2-way street! Those kinds of conversations can often shift my assumptions and help me to see what I hadn't seen before. Such conversations can often lead people to find common ground with others that they didn't know they had. Letting go of our assumptions, then, can be very helpful in learning not only about others but about ourselves.

ALWAYS DO YOUR BEST

I would immediately distinguish between trying to do our best and seeking to do everything perfectly. I can be a perfectionist, and when I fail to do things perfectly, I can become upset and embarrassed. As I have struggled with my own perfectionism, I have come to the conclusion that really perfection doesn't exist! And when I am on a perfectionist track, I often make assumptions, speak less than honestly, and take things personally – basically working against the other Agreements.

So, if I desire to let go of my perfectionist track – and I do – and travel the path of trying to do my best, how will I know if I am actually doing my best? A challenging question for me! In regard to this question, I have learned a number of practices that have helped. The first involves the First Agreement, that is, being honest with myself about what I tried to do and what I did. I believe if we are trying to be honest with ourselves, we will know whether we gave it our best shot. Second, is a willingness to be patient with ourselves, especially if we are in the process of learning and trying something new or something we hadn't done before. The usual ways of learning of doing something different involves making mistakes. So, trying to do our best doesn't mean we won't make mistakes. It is important to accept this and also try to learn from them so that we don't continue to make the same mistakes. Third, is a willingness to be accountable to others about our plans and what we are trying to do. In being accountable to others, we are not living in the shadows of life but in the light. Others who know us and to whom we are accountable can help us to see our perfectionism at work and help us to change. I see being accountable as an important part of a recovery plan and practice. I see addiction flourishing in isolation while recovery flourishes in community.

CONCLUSION

This brings to a close my reflections on the connections between the Four Agreements and our journeys toward recovery and sobriety. I see the Four Agreements as a very good companion to the 12 Steps. Some of these are: Surrendering to the wisdom of a Higher Power or Higher Powers, working with our shortcomings and character defects, continuing to take inventory and admitting how we are doing, as well as sharing with others. Reading such a book and talking about its contents with others – as well as other contemporary books and podcasts – can only add to our understanding and practice of the 12 Steps. And as I said at the beginning, I am always open to your feedback, suggestions, and ideas. We can all grow through this kind of a dialogue.

Mark T. Scannell is a veteran 12 Stepper who believes that communities or Villages are essential in helping people recover from our addictions. His most recent book – *The Village It Takes: The Power To Affirm* – explores this theme.

Tomorrow is the
most important
thing in life; it
comes to us at
midnight very
clean. It's
perfect when it
arrives, and it
puts itself in our
hands. It hopes
we've learned
something from
yesterday.

JOHN WAYNE



SUPPORT GROUPS / SOME MAY BE NOT BE MEETING DUE TO COVID-19**MONDAYS**

1900 Mens Al-anon: 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.

CHOW – Culinary Hospitality Outreach and Wellness: Monday (also Tuesday & Wednesdays) at 7pm CST. CHOW is an organization led by culinary and hospitality peers. We believe in a future where our community never loses another person to addiction, burnout, or mental health concerns. We create safe and supportive opportunities for the industry to connect and discuss problems they're facing with others who "get it." Working in the hospitality industry is tough. Let's talk about it. Meetings are currently in virtual format via Zoom. Please visit our website or Facebook page for codes to join in or contact: outreach@chowco.org.

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

Online Gamers Anonymous and Olganon: Mondays at 6:30 at the Cavalier Club, 7179 Washington Ave. South, Edina. Cavalier Club is located on the corner of Valley View and HWY 169. Plenty of free parking! If video games or other excessive tech use is making your life unmanageable or if someone you care about is gaming excessively, we'd love to meet you. More info on this emerging 12 Step Movement at www.olganon.org

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 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 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.damnnesota.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.damnnesota.org 952-953-8438. Tues, 7-8 pm, Unity Church Unitarian (H), 732 Holly Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55104.

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. Columba 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/

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.

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.

Living Proof MN: Eating disorder online support group. 5:30-6:30pm CST, every Wednesday. Virtual with Zoom app, email for link: info@livingproofmn.com.

Transitions: 7:30 to 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. Meeting is currently online via Zoom. Call Pat for link to the meeting or questions: 763-560-5199. www.workaholics-anonymous.org

Marijuana Anonymous, Bloomington, 6-7pm, 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

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

Co-dependents Anonymous (CoDA): Thursdays pm, Crown of Glory Church 1141 Cardinal St. Chaska 55318. Open to men and women. For more info contact Rita 952-334-9206; www.MinnCoDA.org

Co-dependents Anonymous (CoDA): Thursdays 7pm, Immanuel Lutheran Church 16515 Luther Way, Eden Prairie 55346. Open to men and women. For more info contact Judy M 612-400-2323; www.MinnCoDA.org

Co-dependents Anonymous (CoDA): Thursdays 7pm, NE Recovery Room at 520 NE Lowry Ave., Mpls 55418. Open to men and women. For more info contact Deirdre 612-619-7595; www.MinnCoDA.org

Workaholics Anonymous: 12 step group for finding balance between work, activity and fun. Meets every Thur. 6-7:15 pm. We are currently meeting by Zoom. Contact us for link and any schedule updates: Gretchen 615-423-9444, Liz 612-229-8930, email: 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/ACOA: 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.

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.

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

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 or 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

Overeaters Anonymous Meeting: 9am at Macalester-Plymouth United Church, St. Paul. For those still suffering from compulsive overeating, bulimia and anorexia.

Nicotine Anonymous: Sat. 10am at Linden Hills Congregational Church, 4200 Upton Ave South, Mpls. Enter at the back door. 952-404-1488. Call for locations.

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; 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 rwwink@aol.com or 612-382-0674.

CoDA Group: Saturdays 12pm-1:30pm, Suburban North Alano at 15486 Territorial Rd. Maple Grove 55369. Open to men and women. For more info contact Janine 763-458-0812; <http://www.MinnCoDA.org>

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 8-9am at St Christopher's Episcopal Church, 2300 Hamline Ave N. Roseville. Contact Donna with questions at 651-633-3144.

Clutterers 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.org

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

Overeaters Anonymous: 8-9 am, Falcon Heights Community Church, 1795 Holton Street, Falcon Heights. Lisa 651-428-3484.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder Support Group: 1st and 3rd Sat. of the month, 11am -1pm at Faith Mennonite Church, 2720 E. 22nd St, Minneapolis. Website: tinyurl.com/tcocdsg. Call before coming for direction. Burt at 612-547-6388.

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

Men's & Women's Support Group: Meetings every Saturday (including holidays) at 9am. 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.

South Side Men's Group: Saturdays, 8:20 to 10am Support for men working toward positive personal change. Creekside Community Center, 9801 Penn Ave. S. Bloomington. Visit www.southsidemensgroup.org.

SUNDAYS

Co-dependents Anonymous (CoDA): Sundays 6pm-7:30pm. Located at Unity Hospital 550 Osborne Rd. Fridley 55432. Held in the Boardroom on the lower level. Enter through main doors and take the West elevator down one floor. Open to men and women. For more info contact Aaron 763-670-4894; www.MinnCoDA.org

Adult Children of Alcoholic/ Dysfunctional Families (ACA)-Big Red Book: 11:15am-12:45pm at the Cavalier Club. 7179 Washington Ave S., Edina, MN 55439, voicemail: 507- 312-9423, aca1115sunday@gmail.com

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. Call Jim B. at 651-779-6828.

Deep-Healing Prayer Group: Discover how God provides healing of memories, emotions, and the body at St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Sundays, 7-9:30pm, www.Door2Hope.org. 612-874-1033.

Eating Disorders Anonymous: 5-6:30pm in Eden Prairie at Wooddale Church, 6630 Shady Oak Road, 55344. Room 291. Contact Nikki nikkihaven@gmail.com or call 612-227-4079.

Opiates Anonymous: Sunday Evenings at 7 pm at Unity of the Valley Spiritual Center, 4011 West Hwy 13, Savage, MN. OA is the first 12-step-based group in the state of Minnesota offering help and support for anyone with a desire to stop using opiates and all other mind altering substances. If you think that you may have a problem with opiates or other mind altering substances, attending one of our meetings may help you decide if you are an addict. If you want to tap into help and support from people and a program with proven success, this is the place for you. No sign up or registration is needed. Just show up at 7 pm on Sunday evenings. If questions contact Ron Benner at 952-657-9119

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. Thank you.



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6. This is the most effective way to reduce gun violence according to social research: Work on having strong social ties where people are concerned about and get to know their neighbor, like to volunteer and vote, and agree to cooperate with each other even when they have strong differences with each other. A community where being right has less importance than what you

have in common with others creates a more trustful and safer world. This concept is called having high social capital. Communities with high social capital have better health, higher levels of education and considerably less gun violence. When you get to know your neighbors and see them as human beings much like yourself you are less likely to resort to gun violence

to settle conflicts. You can read about this well-researched topic in *Bowling Alone* by Robert Putnam, Simon and Shuster, 2000.

Building emotional community with your neighbors may seem like an idealistic solution to gun violence. However, it really works to reduce violence, racism, and mental health disorders. Having

worked in mental health for the last 40 years and being a child of the 60's (the highest social capital period) I can attest to its validity. Make love, not war, man!

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

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Freedom from addiction starts here.

Brain Health

by **Mary Lou Logsdon**

Where did I leave my keys? Why did I come into this room? What was it that I wanted at the grocery store? I have a slip of memory and I soon diagnose myself with one or another form of memory loss, abandoning hope in favor of fear. This is only heightened by a family history of dementia.

After I described our family pattern, my doctor recommended the book *Keep Sharp: Build a Better Brain at Any Age* by Sanjay Gupta, MD. I learned a lot. He dispels many myths about aging brains and whether we continue to learn new things as we grow older. I love learning, formally and informally. I don't want to lose that as I collect another year's experience.

Here are three myths he debunks: *Older people are doomed to forget things.* While some cognitive skills decline with age, others, like building vocabulary and judging character improve over time.

Older people can't learn new things. We can learn new things at any age, even people diagnosed with cognitive decline or Alzheimer's disease can learn. Our brains build new neurons all our lives.

Dementia is an inevitable consequence to old age. Gupta says dementia is a disease and not normal aging. We can slow down age related changes and reduce our risk for dementia.

How might we slow those predictable brain changes and reduce our risk for disease? Gupta gives us five pillars of a healthy brain: **Move, discover, relax, nourish, connect.**

Let's begin with **Move.** The most important thing to do to enhance brain function is to develop a regular practice of exercise. Movement is not only good for the body, it is good for the brain, too. He says physical exertion has thus far been the *only* thing scientifically documented to improve brain health and function. Movement strengthens brain power by helping increase, repair, and maintain brain cells. I know that when I am bored or mentally fatigued, going for a walk wakes up my brain and my body.

Besides convincing data on the benefits of exercise for the brain, physical inactivity has been cited as the most significant risk factor in cognitive decline and development of dementia.

Exercise can act as a "first aid kit" for damaged brain cells, speeding up recovery after injury, stroke, or significant emotional stress. After my surgery for a slow growing, benign brain tumor four years ago, the doctor's only prescription was to exercise regularly and have an annual brain scan.

Aerobic exercise is best, the kind that raises your heartbeat. We have a wide range of choices: Vigorous walking, swimming, dancing, biking, running. We can all find a form of exercise that works for us. My favorite is brisk walking. I can walk anywhere—it's free and I need no special equipment other than good shoes. An added value is getting me outside with all its additional benefits.

The second pillar is **Discover.** Engage in life, never stop learning, solve problems. Keep thinking. Use it or lose it!

Gupta warns us not to retire too early. Work presents new learning opportunities, keeps us physically and mentally active, and provides people-to-people connections, the 5th pillar of a healthy brain. When we do retire it's important to find activities that stimulate and engage us.



By exploring new ideas and solving fresh problems we build what Gupta calls cognitive reserve. We find alternative ways to think about things, take a fresh look at a situation, discover a way around what appears to be a barrier. It's like having a road closure in our neighborhood and knowing two or three substitute routes. When I cannot remember how to do a task or a word escapes me, I call upon my cognitive reserve to discover another way to proceed or express myself to get through the impasse.

When we do learn something new, it is important that it has complexity. Creating new brain cells and neuron connections requires complexity or we just go down the same old neural networks. Like cutting across the neighbor's yard on a well-worn path, it is easy but doesn't allow for grass to grow or new pathways to form.

A strong sense of purpose is also important. Purpose keeps us engaged. When I retired, I wrote a mission statement for my next chapter of life. I wanted to be intentional about where I was headed.

Relax is the third pillar. Seven to eight hours of sleep is essential for a healthy brain. Chronic sleeplessness puts us at higher risk for depression and mood disorders as well as dementia. During sleep the brain sorts through the activities of the day. It consolidates, files, and discards. This process gets rid of things we don't need as well as organizes things for recall later. It is decluttering for the brain.

Sleep isn't the only way to relax. Gupta recommends meditation as well. Like so many of these healthy brain recommendations, this is also good for our spiritual and physical wellbeing. We can practice periodic deep breathing, wander in nature, or laugh. After a good, hardy laugh, I feel a lightness in my mind and body.

Don't multitask. That is hard to let go. We think we can get so much more done by doing several things at the same time. What really happens is we keep interrupting our focus from one activity to another, none getting our full attention.

Speaking of focus, when you want to remember something, focus on it. Attend to it. It makes it much more likely that you will remember.

The fourth pillar is **Nourish.** Once again, what is good for the body is good for the brain. Gupta encourages a plant-based diet rich in a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains and fish over red meat. This supports other pillars. For instance, we move our bodies when we grow fresh vegetables. A visit to the local farmer's market allows us to connect with growers. Sharing our harvest with friends over a healthy meal and good conversation is fun and brain engaging.

The final pillar is **Connect.** We can grow relationships all our life. Our year (or more) of isolation with COVID-19 reminded us how important relationships are. Engaging socially in larger groups around challenging activities is an investment in our future brain health.

No matter our age, we can choose habits that support a healthy brain and provide a full, engaging, and dynamic life. It is not too early nor too late to build a better brain.

Mary Lou Logsdon is a Spiritual Director and Retreat Leader. She can be reached at logsdon.marylou@gmail.com.