

# Journey

making recovery from addiction visible

ISSUE 16

A photograph of three people standing outdoors in front of a dense green hedge. In the center is a man with glasses and a light blue button-down shirt, smiling. To his left is a woman with long brown hair and glasses, wearing a dark top. To his right is a woman with long brown hair, wearing a colorful floral patterned top. They are all looking towards the camera.

**Recovery Friendly Workplaces:  
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# Journey

making recovery from addiction visible

ISSUE 16

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*Kennebunk Savings' President and CEO, Bradford C. Paige (center), Social Responsibility Manager, Liz Torrance (left), and HR Manager, Shawna DellaMonica (right) photo by Brian Delaney*

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# Thank You!

People recover in communities and while recovery is an individual's responsibility, entire communities benefit when recovery from addiction is visible.

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## From the publisher

Times change, seasons change, and people change.

This was my message for a six-minute and 40 seconds PechaKucha (PK) presentation I did last month about my personal recovery journey and how *Journey* magazine started.

PK is a storytelling format in which a presenter shows 20 slides with 20 seconds of commentary each. The commentary is brief, clear, and typically centered around a specific theme— for this PK it was “*Times Change.*”

That theme echoes the reason we launched *Journey* —out of a desire to change the conversation about addiction by showing that we can and do recover, and go on to lead beautiful, abundant lives.

In this issue, Colleen and Beth’s personal recovery stories show we’re able to reclaim our lives, repair the damage done, and be of service to our communities.

Niki’s article, “*Making Deposits,*” reminds us that we can fix spiritual bankruptcy and come to know our value and our worth.

In “*Recovery Friendly Workplaces*” Samantha Lewandowski, assistant director of New Hampshire’s

Recovery Friendly Workplace Initiative (RFW), shines a light on the influential role businesses can have in this conversation, and the fact that employers can be the catalyst for permanent, lasting change. And this conversation is expanding beyond New Hampshire.

Kennebunk Savings recently participated in RFW, recognizing the impact the company could have on their communities by supporting their employees and their loved ones.

As non recovery-related industries make the conversation accessible and approachable, this will smash the stigma, shift public opinion, and make change happen.

Recovery is not just possible, it is probable.

With immense gratitude,

*Carolyn*



## From team member Niki Curtis

I’m part of *Journey Magazine* because I want the people in my life who struggle with addiction, or struggle watching someone else in their addiction, to know that there is hope, and that we really do recover and live amazing lives.

I’m committed to *Journey* because we will always need hope and amplifying the hope of others has an awesome backlash and amplifies my hope as well.

Being a part of *Journey* has allowed me to tap into my creative self and step into uncomfortable moments, like raising my hand at a team meeting and volunteering to write an article for the first time. It has allowed the true parts of myself to be set free.

I AM a writer, I am a valued team member. I am a strong and respected woman in recovery who can help others become their truest selves. What greater gift could I receive or give than holding space with a mission of recovery!

# visible recove

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# ry saves lives

# Take Charge of Your Financial Situation

*Three easy steps to get started on the path to financial stability*

by Annette Lease, SVP, Financial Planning, Machias Savings Bank



It comes as no surprise that often a person's financial life mirrors the ups and downs that might be reflected in their physical health. For that reason, we know that a holistic recovery includes taking charge of financial health elements to maintain stability moving forward.

## Start with an assessment of your financial health.

Begin by determining where you stand financially. You'll want to consider your income, debts, monthly bills, spending, and savings. It might be helpful to do

this by using free tools like the Financial Health Survey available at [www.machiasavings.bank](http://www.machiasavings.bank). A short questionnaire will help determine the degree to which you successfully manage your money, coming in and going out, and provide a look at whether you are financially coping, vulnerable or healthy.

## Find out your credit score.

You also need to understand your current credit score. You can access this free of charge directly from each of the three nationwide credit bureaus, download apps like

Credit Karma, or enroll in the free Savvy Money app through your financial institution. Savvy Money provides an added benefit by not only giving 24/7 access to your credit score, but it also outlines how certain behaviors affect your score. It can be helpful to see how specific actions positively or negatively affect your score so that you can adjust future financial decisions appropriately.

## Determine your financial goals and make a plan for moving forward.

Damaged credit doesn't happen overnight so rebuilding it will take a bit of time, too. Outline achievable goals such as adding a certain amount to your savings each month or paying down an existing debt. Be patient, connect with a financial coach who can provide guidance on your individual situation, and commit to working the plan.



*Recognizing the need to make financial resources available for all Mainers, Annette Lease works to scale access to financial planning services, leading to improved financial health and resilience of Machias*

*Savings Bank employees, customers, and communities around Maine.*

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# Recovery Friendly Workplaces

## Good for Employees and Good for Business

by Samantha Lewandowski, MS

"I'm always looking for good guys to hire. I got involved with the Recovery Friendly Workplace because I was that guy in recovery looking for a job," says Keith Hornberger, owner of New Hampshire-based KHH Contracting. "All I needed was an opportunity to change my life."

Launched in 2018 by Governor Chris Sununu, New Hampshire's Recovery Friendly Workplace (RFW) initiative equips employers with the knowledge and tools they need to better understand substance use disorder (SUD) and support employees who have been impacted. This includes employees who are in recovery, seeking recovery, or have a loved one with SUD.

Experience and research prove that sound employment greatly aids people in recovery by giving them structure, purpose, and financial stability. Being recovery friendly isn't just good for employees though; it's also good for business.

Research by the nonpartisan and objective research organization NORC at the University of Chicago and the National Safety Council (NSC) found that for each employee who recovers from SUD, the company that employs them saves an average of over \$8,500.

The study also found that employees in recovery miss fewer days than their colleagues. More specifically, compared to employees with an untreated SUD, employees in recovery miss 13.7 fewer days each year, and compared to an average employee, they miss 3.6 fewer days per year.



Kennebunk Savings' President and CEO, Bradford C. Paige (center), Social Responsibility Manager, Shawna DellaMonica (left), and HR Manager, Liz Torrance (right). Photo by Zac Little.

Beyond these financial benefits, is the workplace primed to effectively support an employee's recovery?

**As it turns out, it is.**

Put simply, work is one of the most influential places where we can reach people.

According to research published by the American Psychiatric Association's journal, *Psychiatric Services*, employer-initiated treatment was associated with longer treatment stays and better abstinence outcomes (compared to treatment that was not employer-initiated).

The reason for this could be that while sustaining recovery often involves external and internal motivation, the workplace provides

a compelling source of external motivation upon which internal motivation can be built.

Workplaces can also help normalize the recovery conversation by letting employees know about a variety of community-based, mutual-aid free recovery resources; this may help employees get connected to the support they need sooner rather than later.



Currently, RFW is working with over 280 businesses in New Hampshire representing about 70,000 employees. One of these is Maine-based

Kennebunk Savings, which has officially been designated as a Recovery Friendly Workplace. Kennebunk Savings has excelled at creating a culture of support for those impacted by SUD, both at its workplaces and in the community

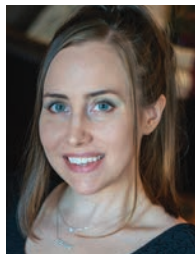
through the SUD-related programs they fund. RFW has also connected with over 20 states that are working on implementing similar initiatives, and it is bringing on additional workplaces with one or more New Hampshire locations to participate in this no-cost, stigma-challenging, and life-changing movement.

If your business is interested in becoming more recovery friendly, here are three actions you can take:

1. Become educated about Maine's SUD support by calling 2-1-1 or visiting [211maine.org](http://211maine.org).
2. Make your next work event recovery friendly by either designating it as a sober event or highlighting fun non-alcoholic options.
3. Regularly vocalize your commitment to employee health (including mental health) and well-being and name some concrete offerings in your workplace that support it.

To participate in the Recovery Friendly Workplace initiative or learn more, visit [recoveryfriendlyworkplace.com](http://recoveryfriendlyworkplace.com). RFW is currently working with businesses that have one or more New Hampshire locations, but is happy to connect non-NH-based workplaces to resources that may be helpful.

Together, we can make a difference and strengthen our workplaces in the process.



*Samantha Lewandowski, MS is the assistant director of New Hampshire's Recovery Friendly Workplace initiative. With a background in community development, she is particularly interested in showcasing how recovery-friendly efforts not only create healthier communities, but also help us build stronger workplaces in the process.*

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# Recovery is Good for Business

75% of people who struggle are employed

Employers **CAN** make a difference

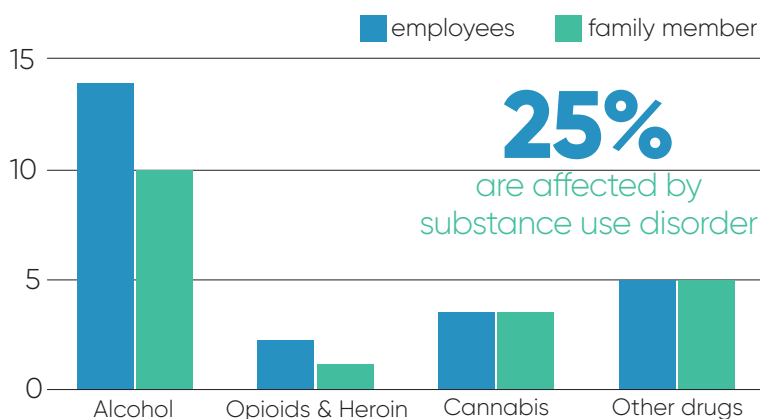
**T**he National Safety Council collaborated with an independent research institution, NORC at the University of Chicago, to update “The Real Cost of Substance Use to Employers” tool, originally developed in 2017 with national nonprofit Shatterproof.

This cost calculator is an authoritative, easy-to-use tool providing business leaders with specific information about the cost of substance use in their workplace based on size of employee base, industry and state.

Substance use disorders (SUDs) affected approximately 20.3 million people in 2018 based on results from the 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health.

Although 75% of these people are part of the workforce, most employers are unaware of the hidden costs associated with these illnesses.

## EXAMPLE: Maine construction company with 100 employees



**25%**

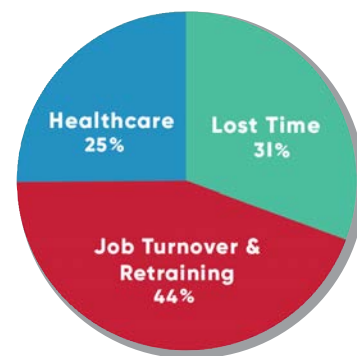
are affected by  
substance use disorder

Cost to the business is

**\$173,667**

annually.

Breakdown shown  
in pie chart.



## BUT...

When workers recover from an addiction, employers benefit; health care costs, absenteeism and turnover all return to about the same level as their peers who never had a substance use problem.

Workers in recovery miss

13.7 days  
**LESS**  
per year

than workers with an SUD

Each employee who recovers  
from a substance use disorder

**SAVES**  
a company over  
**\$8,500**

on average

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# You Don't Have to Be a Prisoner of Your Past

*Own It, Accept It and Share It*

by David Lee

Colleen Garrick describes prison as “probably one of the most beautiful experiences in my life”... not something I expected to hear in our interview.

The first thing that hit me when meeting Colleen in our initial career coaching session was her infectious smile and positivity. When she told me how she handled job interviews after being released from prison for drug trafficking in 2013, I knew I wanted to interview her.

Early in her phone interview for a position in a consulting firm, Colleen told the recruiter: “I need to disclose something. I am an addict in recovery, I just got out of prison and I don't want to waste your time, and I don't want you to waste my time.”

The interviewer thanked her for her candor and continued with the interview.

The interviewer's response was a great example of who you are NOW speaks louder than who you WERE back then.

Because of how Colleen showed up—as a positive, cheerful, person who emanated self-esteem—

rather than as someone who saw themselves as “less than” because of their past, the interviewer also saw her as a capable, worthy prospect.

A few days later, she was hired.

I was struck by how at peace and self-accepting Colleen was in disclosing this part of her past to the interviewer. Impressed and intrigued, I asked her how she got to that place.

“The only reason why I'm not a prisoner of the past is because of The Steps...the actions I take today allow me to look in the mirror again.”

This is something we would all do well to remember.



While our past mistakes can impact us today and in the future, they do not define us, nor does our past determine our future.

## It's Not What Happens To You, But How You React To It That Matters

Colleen describing prison as “probably one of the most beautiful experiences in my life” is obviously not something you would expect someone to say about being incarcerated.

It wasn't always that way, though.

By the time she was sentenced, she was in recovery, had become the house president at the sober living house where she lived, and had gotten her Alcohol and Drug Counselor certification.

When she first entered the corrections facility, she was angry and resentful. Her attitude was “I don't belong here. I've been doing the right thing.”

Then one day something shifted.

She found herself accepting the reality of her situation and reconnected with her willingness to, in her words, “live life on its terms.” She started going to meetings, taking courses, teaching yoga, and sponsoring other addicts.

With this attitude shift came true freedom and happiness in a place not particularly associated with those words.

**“The only reason why I'm not a prisoner of the past is because of The Steps... the actions I take today allow me to look in the mirror again.”**

With a laugh, Colleen notes how a lot of the other prisoners didn't like her because she was so happy.

“They're like... ‘Why is this girl so happy? She's in prison.’ And, you know, it's a true testament to the

fact that The Steps work. I was able to find freedom from that mental chaos when you're in addiction, by working the steps and being connected to a loving God.”

## Hard Work, A Different You, and the Ripple Effect

Two of the most heart-warming moments of our interview for this article came when Colleen talked about the gift her recovery has been to others.

First, she recounted a letter she received from the mother of one of her sponsees, expressing gratitude for how Colleen has helped her daughter.

“Because of you, I can sleep at night,” wrote the mom.

While acknowledging that she is just a conduit, Colleen also acknowledges the unforeseen impact you can have by doing your work:

“Sometimes we don't even think about the ripple effect we can have. I wasn't thinking about how I would impact her mom. I was thinking how can I help my friend?”

And yet that ripple effect is just huge. Her mother sleeps at night and my friend's children sleep at night, and then all those people, they impact others.”

The second moment came when Colleen recounted an interaction she had in a recent job interview. When she disclosed her criminal record, the interviewer said “Thank you for your vulnerability.”

Notice the interviewer didn't simply say “Thank you for your honesty.”

She thanked Colleen for something deeper and more significant than that.

She thanked her for being authentically human, without façade or pretense, something rare in our society, especially in the world of work.

**“Sometimes we don't even think about the ripple effect we can have.”**

I can't help but wonder if it gave the interviewer a new vision of what is possible in relating to other humans, that it is possible to be authentic and real, and unabashedly you. Perhaps it might inspire her to begin to accept her past and her imperfections.

Colleen's experiences are a wonderful reminder that when you own your past, rather than let your past own you, there's no telling the good you can bring into the world.



David Lee is a career coach with Heart at Work Associates and a workplace relationship consultant. He is the author of *Dealing with a Difficult Co-Worker: The Courageous Conversations at Work Series*.

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The Aroostook Communities Opioid Response Program (ACORP) Consortium was created in 2020 to focus on lowering the morbidity and mortality of substance use disorder. Efforts include education to reduce stigma and highlight prevention, treatment and recovery resources including *GSL FMI* please visit AMHC's Facebook page or email [elamoreau@amhc.org](mailto:elamoreau@amhc.org). This project is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$200,000 with 100% funding by HRSA/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by HRSA/HHS, or the U.S. Government.

# The "B" Word Continued

*What if my bills don't match when I get paid?*

by **Rebecca Grant**

**W**e continue our discussion on spending plans. If your payday does not match when the bills are due, you may come up short. Using the steps below can help you determine how best to fill the mismatch.

- **Creating Bill Calendars** – This can help you see how your income and bills lineup each month. Make a list of all your bills. Mark the payment date for each bill on the calendar. If you mail payments, note that a mailed payment can take 7+ days to be delivered and a few more for the billing company to process.

If you make the payment online, you would want to pay it 3+ days before the due date to allow for processing. Then enter the dates you will receive income and the amount of income expected onto your calendar.

To the right is a sample of a "Bill Calendar" that you could use.

- **Choosing How to Pay Bills** – Your choice of payment methods for bills may help save time and money and avoid unnecessary fees.

- Checks are convenient, an easy way to prove payment, and can be



Creating a **Bill calendar** helps you see how income and bills line up each month

1. Select which month you're planning for and label the calendar for that month.
2. Make a list of all your bills.
3. For each bill, **mark the payment date**: 7 days before the due date for mail, 3 days before the due date for online.
4. Enter the dates you'll receive income and the amounts you expect.

Bills:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Month of: \_\_\_\_\_

Sunday      Monday      Tuesday      Wednesday      Thursday      Friday      Saturday

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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You can find CFPB's *Your Money, Your Goals Toolkit* at [www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/educator-tools/your-money-your-goals/toolkit](http://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/educator-tools/your-money-your-goals/toolkit). This particular bill calendar sheet is on page 86 of their toolkit.

mailed. But checks can get lost in the mail, and you could be charged fees if funds are not available in the checking account.

■ Paying online or through a mobile app is convenient and often saves time. You have the ability to schedule your payments, and it is easy to prove payment. However, you could be charged fees if there is not sufficient funds when payment is actually processed. Your financial info may also be vulnerable to theft if not using secure WI-FI access.

• *Prioritizing Your Bills* – If you can't pay all your bills at once or on time, think about the order you pay them in. Identify what you need to pay to protect your housing and income, i.e. you need a car to get to work. Make sure you meet any court-ordered obligations. Evaluate the risks of not paying each one, then number them in the order you want to pay them based on priority.

Try using the bill calendar for the next month and see how it goes. You may find that you need to make some adjustments such as paying a bill early, getting the due date of a bill changed, reducing your expenses or considering ways to increase your income.

.....  
*Rebecca Grant is the Financial Coaching & Savings Coordinator at MaineStream Finance, a Penquis CAP subsidiary. She manages the Maine Family Development Account (FDA) Program, helping Mainers save and meet financial goals.*

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# Alcoholics Anonymous

by Mary Atwood

*“Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of people who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.*

*The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization, or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.”*



Most Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings open with a reading of this passage, commonly known as “The AA Preamble.”

These few sentences speak volumes about what AA is and what it is not.

Founded in 1935 in Akron, Ohio, AA came into existence when Bill W., a man who had found a long-term solution to his alcoholism, discovered a way to pass along his solution to another man, Dr. Bob S., who then stayed sober himself.

Before the advent of this new approach to recovery from alcoholism, the occasional alcoholic might recover through other methods, but such successes were rare and not easy to transmit to another.

Bill W. and Dr. Bob found the first successful, repeatable approach to recovery that had a lasting impact on those who participated.

From their initial work with each other and then with other alcoholics in the Akron area, AA has grown into a fellowship of an estimated 2.1 million individuals worldwide.

In AA meetings, or over coffee with a fellow AA member, these recovering alcoholics have found a solution that enables them to refrain from taking a drink of alcohol.

AA teaches that alcoholics have a three-fold disease (spirit, mind and body):

- **a spiritual malady**, which appears as restlessness, irritability and discontentment which is unbearable, and without another solution, will lead to
- **an obsession of mind**, or craving, to alcohol and a compulsion that insists that the alcoholic take a drink, which kicks off a
- **a physical allergy**, which sets off an undeniable craving that ensures the alcoholic will continue drinking

With this understanding, it is easy to see why alcoholism is “cunning, baffling, and powerful.”

So many alcoholics want to stop drinking and find they cannot of their own volition.

So how does AA work to disrupt this pattern?

It offers a spiritual solution derived from a specific program of action, called the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. And it offers fellowship and shared experiences that let alcoholics know they are not alone and that there is help.

The first step toward recovery is for the alcoholic to admit powerlessness over alcohol. Left on one’s own, that is hard to do because of the mental compulsion and physical craving.

**So many alcoholics want to stop drinking and find they cannot.**

However, when the still-drinking alcoholic goes to an AA meeting and hears the recovery stories of people who once were trapped like them, it fosters hope and a willingness to try what worked for others.

AA suggests that members ask another member to sponsor them through the program of recovery.

A sponsor in AA is someone who has experience with a daily reprieve from having to drink alcohol. The sponsor passes on to the newer

member what worked for them. There are no “musts” in a sponsor relationship; rather, the sponsor offers the power of example and suggestions about what actions they took to recover. Many sponsors have completed the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, found in the society’s basic text, also called Alcoholics Anonymous, and pass along that experience to the newer members.

A common misunderstanding about AA is that it is a religious organization.

It is not.

Early on in its history, AA members learned from some religious organizations. However, they realized quickly that alcoholics who really needed help might not want the solution if it was based on religion. Besides, any specific religious affiliation would automatically exclude potential members who subscribe to other religions.

AA’s founders wanted AA to be as inclusive and unrestrictive as possible.

So, AA members are encouraged to develop a spiritual life through the 12 Steps, but that spirituality is not affiliated in any way with a religious organization or philosophy.

The 12 Steps provide a program of action for the individual to recover from alcoholism.

As the fellowship grew, its early members realized that the organization itself needed guidelines to help individual groups serve the next alcoholic who needed help.

In April, 1946, Bill W. published the first version of what became known as the 12 Traditions.

Originally called “Twelve Suggested Points for A.A. Tradition,” these

guidelines help AA groups understand where they are autonomous and how to participate in the society as a whole.

AA offers other tools and resources that are helpful to the alcoholic who wants to quit drinking.

If you are interested in attending an AA meeting, here are a few things to consider:

- If you have a desire to stop drinking, you are welcome to attend any AA meeting. Use a search engine to locate a meeting near you. In Maine, call the Central Service Office at (800) 737-6237 for hotline assistance.
- If you want to learn more about AA, visit AA.org or attend an “open” meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. Open meetings welcome anyone to attend while “closed” meetings are limited to those with a desire to stop drinking.

“I’ve gained a lot of strength and a lot of great friends and a lot of life experience that I would have never had the courage to face without my own recovery story.”

– Margo Walsh

## Examples of Traditions

- **The 3rd Tradition** which invites anyone with a desire to stop drinking to become a member of AA. There are no other requirements for membership.
- **The 4th Tradition** which conveys that every AA group is autonomous except in matters that would affect another group or AA as a whole. This tradition enables group members to run their meetings however they want, provided their actions do not impact other AA entities.
- **The 7th Tradition** which ensures that each AA group is fully self-supporting. This tradition means that the group members themselves ensure that any group expenses, such as rent for the meeting space, get paid through their own voluntary contributions.

**Refer to AA.org to learn more about the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions.**



Mary Atwood is a learning & development professional in long-term recovery and a member of the Journey team.

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# Alcoholics Anonymous

## *12 Steps, 12 Traditions, Millions of Lives Saved*

by Amy Paradysz

**F**ictional scenes of Alcoholics Anonymous meetings make regular appearances in television shows and movies. And the “12 steps” have entered our common language. But, what are the 12 steps? and the 12 traditions? And “The Big Book”?

Four Mainers in recovery answer these questions and more.

### Who is A.A. for?

The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking. That’s it!

### Who leads the meetings?

Members do!

“A.A. brings a message of hope that’s passed from one alcoholic to another,” says Sylvie M. of Westbrook. “As people who are former problem drinkers, we are uniquely qualified to help someone looking for a solution.”

### Why is it anonymous?

“For my own privacy,” says Courtney A. of Midcoast Maine. “I don’t need people to know about my recovery unless I want them to know. Also, no one speaks for A.A. It’s peer leadership—and shared leadership. That’s one of my favorite things about A.A.”

### My grandma says there are hooligans in A.A.

“Well, people are flawed,” says Zoe R. of Yarmouth. “But there’s something in the collective power that’s just divine.”

### Are people going to tell me what to do?

“You don’t get advice at A.A., you get support,” says Russ M. of

western Maine. “No one wants unsolicited advice. Support is people saying, ‘This is what worked for me.’”

### What if I fall ‘off the wagon’?

You get back on.

A.A. is for people in *pursuing* recovery.

“I have fallen off the wagon and come back,” says Courtney A. “No one judged me. Everyone was so welcoming. Really, no one gets more applause than someone getting a white chip, which is for someone new or coming back. This one woman said to me, ‘You’re free. You don’t have to lie anymore.’”

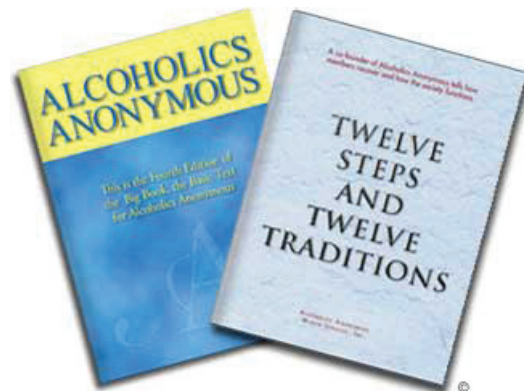
Courtney now has two-and-a-half years of continuous sobriety.

### How many meetings should I go to?

That’s up to you! Some people feel they need to attend an A.A. meeting every day. Some go once a week. Some go occasionally, when they need an extra boost of encouragement in staying sober. On average, members attend two or three meetings a week.

“When I first got sober, I’d go to five or six meetings a week,” says Russ M., who has been in recovery four-and-a-half years. “Now my sweet spot is three a week, but it’s different for everybody. It gets easier over time, but you also face new challenges over time.”

Sylvie M., who has been in recovery for 33 years, has dropped down to two meetings a week. “But,” she says, “If I don’t take some kind of



action with the 12 steps every day, I’ll forget and eventually I’ll pick up a drink again. I’m a full believer in the 12 steps. They are the only thing that has worked for me.”

Once you find a weekly meeting you really connect with, it might be a good idea to commit to that—in addition to whatever other meetings you’re able to attend.

### What keeps you coming back?

“I think at first it was the humanity, the connection with people, the openness,” says Zoe R. “You connect and can laugh about things that are painful. My using had made my life and my world really small, and I didn’t know there was another way. A.A. slowly broke the isolation. My world got bigger.”

### What are the 12 steps and the 12 traditions?

“The 12 steps are the roadmap to sobriety—how we stay sober,” says Courtney A. “The 12 traditions describe how our groups are supposed to run and how the program keeps going.” The first step is to admit to being powerless over alcohol.

### What does that mean, being ‘powerless’?

“To me personally, it means that I’m

never going to be able to use drugs or alcohol recreationally or safely,” says Courtney A. “I’m so grateful that I was able to let go of the belief that I could somehow drink without burning my life to the ground. Once I did, I was able to ask, ‘Is there a way to live sober?’ And there is, and it’s way better.”

### What is ‘The Big Book’?

Don’t be scared!

What members often call the “Big Book”—Alcoholics Anonymous is a tool used to go through the 12 steps. Some people read it cover to cover, if that’s their style. Others read a passage when they meet with their sponsor or sponsee. Or you might go to a “Big Book” meeting which is an hour dedicated to reading and studying passages in the Big Book.

### Do you have to be religious to be in A.A.?

No. A.A. does not demand that anybody believe anything. But you will hear people talk about their “higher power”—or “God,” if that’s the word they use to describe their higher power.

“The longer I’m in the fellowship, the more I realize it’s a process of developing a spiritual life,” says Russ M. “The crux of A.A. is putting yourself into the hands of a higher power.”

Sylvie M. describes herself as spiritual but not religious. “I started accepting ideas that sounded a little hokey, to be truthful,” she says. “And stuff started changing, and my life started improving.”

### Why does A.A. work?

“It’s not a requirement that I understand how it works,” says Courtney A. “I show up, I do the 12 steps, I stay sober and my life gets better.”

Russ M. says, “It’s the support and encouragement you get in living a sober life. Every time I go to a

meeting, I can relate to something that’s said.”

### How can I find a meeting?

Call 800-839-1686 or go to [alcoholicsanonymous.com/aa-meetings/maine/](http://alcoholicsanonymous.com/aa-meetings/maine/)

Before the pandemic, meetings were just about everywhere—including in 200 communities in Maine.

Now, with some virtual and hybrid meetings added into the mix, you can

attend a meeting anywhere, anytime. About 80 meetings a week are based in the Portland alone, and there are meetings in every county in the state.

Whether you choose to connect online or “in real life,” what’s important is that you connect.



Amy Paradysz is a freelance writer from Scarborough and part of the Journey team; she can be reached at [amyparadysz@gmail.com](mailto:amyparadysz@gmail.com).



Meeting Guide 12+  
A.A. World Services  
Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.



Brought to you by Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., Meeting Guide is a free of charge meeting finder app for iOS and Android that provides meeting information from A.A. service entities in an easy-to-access format.

Meeting Guide syncs with area, district, intergroup/central offices and international General Service Office websites (some of which are listed on A.A. Near You), relaying meeting information from more than 300 A.A. service entities directly to you. Over 100,000 weekly meetings are currently listed, and the information is refreshed twice daily.

## The Twelve Steps

**Step 1:** We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.

**Step 2:** Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

**Step 3:** Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

**Step 4:** Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

**Step 5:** Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

**Step 6:** Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

**Step 7:** Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

**Step 8:** Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

**Step 9:** Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

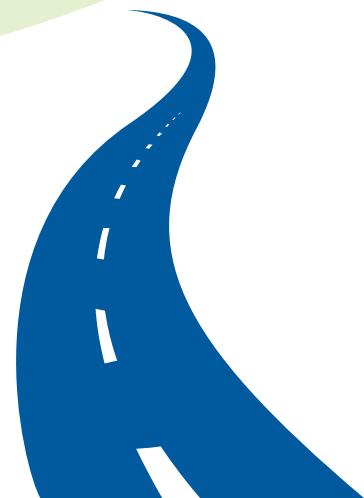
**Step 10:** Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

**Step 11:** Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

**Step 12:** Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

# The Anonymous Path

*Beth M.*



**B**eth's decision to share her story is motivated by the hope that one person will read this, relate and find some help and happiness for themselves in AA.

*Doing this anonymously allows her to do it while respecting the 12th tradition of Alcoholics Anonymous.*

Beth M's Christmas holiday involves doing the same things every year: eating homemade lobster stew and popovers and attending Christmas Eve service at church with her family.

The year that Beth realized she was also *saying* the same things over and over is when she finally decided she was done with her alcohol addiction.

"My niece said to me about three times, 'Auntie, you said that last night. Auntie, we talked about those boots last night,'" said Beth. "I was so tired of not remembering

that I was sick and tired of being sick and tired.

"My other niece had asked my brother, 'If drinking is causing Auntie so many problems, why can't she stop?'"

Her intention was to be the best Auntie that she could be and she was not.

"And then [on] Christmas Day 2018, I quit."

Beth struggled with self-confidence from childhood throughout her school years due to learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder (ADD) and anxiety.

She had friends and a great sense of humor and shared, "now realize I hid behind that humor," Beth said. "The outside seemed normal, but the inside was in pain."

"Being brought up in a family with alcoholism on both sides,

I believe alcoholism is a genetic disease and have come to accept that as part of my story."

The first substance that allowed Beth to feel relief was marijuana, and it was her first addiction.

**"Being brought up in a family with alcoholism on both sides, I believe alcoholism is a genetic disease..."**

She worked as a bartender at a young age in a family business and saw "what it did to people," so she didn't think she really liked alcohol and didn't like the effect that it had on people.

"Sometimes people think of an alcoholic as somebody who would drink anything and everything, and that's just not the case for me. For a while, my vices were the two "P"s: "pot and Pinot Grigio."

Beth's drinking became problematic when she couldn't remember what had happened the next day. It began to affect family, romantic relationships and her longtime friendships.

Her alcoholism led to showing up late, canceling plans and being distracted about milestones for people that she cared about.

That led to disappointing herself and others and not being the daughter, sister, friend and auntie that she really wanted to be.

She attended her first AA meeting in 1990 in Brookline, Massachusetts, after reaching out for help from her bar manager, who recently celebrated 30 years of sobriety and remains a strong supporter of Beth to this day.

Beth bounced in and out of Alcoholics Anonymous for years.

"Every time I came back, I was going to do things differently so I could stop drinking but all that would start 'tomorrow'."

Eventually, Beth was getting older—and so was drinking.

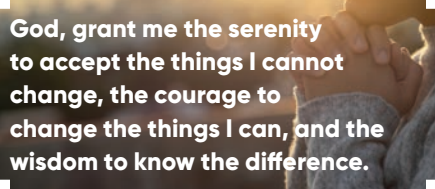
"Through my 30s, 40s and 50s I was still trying to get sober with little success."

She found a therapist for alcohol addiction who suggested an inpatient 30-day, AA-based rehab in Connecticut.

"That was an unbelievable experience for me. I learned a lot, I saw a lot. I feel very grateful. I'm proud of that time."

"My sponsor walked me through the 12-steps, and as part of that step work, I've made some amends which have helped to heal some relationships and bring closure to others."

Beth has been able to move on and find peace and the serenity prayer has helped to accept the things that she cannot change.



**God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.**

What helps her today is a principle that comes from her 12-step program: acceptance.

"When I am disturbed, it is because I find some person, place, thing or situation... unacceptable to me, and I can find no serenity until I accept that person, place, thing or situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment," Beth recited. "I need to concentrate, not so much on what needs to be changed in the world as on what needs to be changed in me and in my attitudes."

.....  
*As told to a Journey team member.*

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# Making Deposits

## *A way to fix spiritual bankruptcy*

by Niki Curtis

**W**hen something is missing inside of you, there is nothing in the world that you want more than to fill that sense of emptiness.

That is how I describe what I felt like for a majority of my young life.

I lived in a world of “if only.”

If only I were popular, I wouldn’t feel lonely.

If only I were smart enough, people would see that I had value.

If only I was prettier or thinner, I would be seen as worthy of your love and attention.

These “if onlys” led to a desperate search to fill the void where enoughness, fulfillment, self worth, and self love should have been.

One “if only” led to another.

I turned to men, food, alcohol, drugs, and performance as ways to fill that empty space within me, and it wasn’t until I had broken myself completely and entered recovery through a rehab that I finally learned that what I was experiencing was a spiritual void.

Spirituality is a sense of connectedness to something

bigger than ourselves that is loving and caring, and is not a person, place or thing. In the rooms of 12-step meetings, I learned about a Higher Power that would be loving and caring and have my best interests at heart.

I hadn’t had my own best interests at heart for 40 years and wondered how this could change.

**Spirituality is a sense of connectedness to something bigger than ourselves that is loving and caring.**

Where I had no self esteem, I wanted to learn how to get it.

Where self love was a foreign concept, I wanted to bridge the space from my head to my heart and learn my own language of love.

There have been many attempts at building what is my own personal spirituality, some of them more uplifting than others.

One way that I have found great joy and fulfillment is by doing esteemable things. I’ve left random cards with personal and uplifting messages for strangers

to find, trusting that my Higher Power would find the exact person needing it.

I walk through Portland, offering hugs to strangers and delighting in the shocked looks on their faces as they were given the thing that they might need most that day.

I’ve listened to people without judgement or advice, holding space for their pain, sharing my own. I’ve celebrated all of the little successes and even celebrated failures, trusting that just trying was the real win.

I’ve built my spirituality through many avenues including Kirtan, a devotional chanting experience where the leader will sing the chant and the audience will sing the chant back to the leader.

I’ve felt my heart open and love flood in when I have spent time in prayer for others and their needs. I’ve joined communities that mirror my core values and connected with others in solidarity to make lives better.

The emptiness inside started filling and it was all from things I did with a pure heart and clear mind—spiritual deposits, so to speak.

The most important thing that I must be aware of at all times is that it is MY spiritual bank, which means that I am responsible for all of the deposits and withdrawals.

Protecting myself from spiritual thieves is part of that responsibility, and in learning how to do that I have learned that “No” is a complete sentence. I have learned that I do not have to say “yes” to every single request in my life, and that one-way friendships are depleting when you are the only one giving.

**I know that depleting myself for others is no longer a mark of my self worth.**

Checking in with myself, I can decide what will reflect back to my inner value. I know that depleting myself for others is no longer a mark of my self worth.

Most of the time, I feel full and complete but, being human, I have days where it still feels that something is missing and the simple solution that I can rely on, again and again, is to turn from any “if only” and turn toward making a deposit into my spiritual bank.

Staying connected to my own choice of spiritual practice keeps me on track and alerts me to any feelings of emptiness I might be feeling.

Today, I know my value, I know my worth and my heart is full.



*Niki Curtis of Portland is a woman in long-term recovery whose passion is to help others and spread positivity. She loves to find creative ways to do that, including writing for Journey.*




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# Couples in Recovery on a Spiritual Path

by Elaine Shamos, MPH & Glenn J. Simpson, LMSW-cc, CADC

**F**or individuals in recovery, spirituality is an important personal practice. For couples in recovery, how can spirituality play a part in the relationship? Is there a spiritual path couples can walk together?

Here are some thoughts from our research and experience as a couple in recovery.

## Religion vs. Spirituality in Recovery

Religion and spirituality are not the same things.

Religions typically have specific beliefs and organized practices, usually shared with a group or community.

Spirituality is an individual practice that is focused on examining our sense of the divine and how we relate to the world around us. Spiritual practices may vary in orientation, but all share a goal of feeling interconnected or “one” with everyone and everything. One can still belong to a religious group and be spiritual and vice versa.

Learning how to let go, live in the moment, and become mindful of our impact on others and the environment is perhaps the most elusive, yet the most helpful to our recovery.

## The Role Spirituality Plays for Couples

It can be a challenge to the relationship when one person is basking in resentment, sadness and hopelessness. This situation can develop into various unhealthy responses in the couple: the other



wanting to fix their partner’s “condition,” an increasing lack of communication and intimacy; anger, mistrust, and finally isolation and an inability to build a connection. Some have called this “being spiritually sick.” These periods are normal and when they happen, they can suck the happiness right out of the relationship. Unresolved, they can trigger a recurrence of symptoms.

**Some believe that spirituality is critical to recovery and without it, a loss of hope and recurrence is much more likely.**

While spiritual practices may vary, evolve, wax and wane, it is your partner’s own business to work, not yours. However, that does not

mean that spirituality is a taboo topic. On the contrary, talking about your spiritual practices and beliefs increases intimacy and an opportunity to “practice spirituality” together. Cultivating empathy and compassion is most often “experimented” on with each other, so we believe discussing the effects on the relationship can be a rewarding experience.

## Bringing Spirituality into Your Relationship

How can you bring spirituality into your individual life and your relationship? Here are a few suggestions, any of which you could share with your partner:

- **Gratitude:** Gratitude lists, bedtime discussions, spontaneous acts of gratitude, and daily readers, are all ways to remind yourself of why you’re in recovery. Daily

gratitude has been shown to bolster loving kindness towards yourself and others. Sharing your list with your partner and seeing the overlap can be very enlightening!

• **Meditation/Mindfulness:** Group meditation, guided meditation apps, watching YouTube videos, reading mindfulness books, and listening to podcasts can help you learn various techniques. Research has shown great physical and mental benefits when you become present in your body and mindful of your internal dialogues.

• **Nature, Music, and Art:** Communing by taking a walk, appreciating or creating art, and listening to calming music are all spiritual practices. Beauty has always worked to bring people closer to the divine if observed mindfully and without labels.

• **Serving Others:** Serving is an active way to express your gratitude and get out of your “self” by volunteering, donating, spontaneously helping others, advocating for causes, and sponsoring people in recovery programs.

• **Yoga:** Attending a class, or an online course, focusing on the breath and the body, and going on a yoga retreat can help your mental, physical, and spiritual health.

• **Connection:** Attending recovery meetings, sitting with a good

friend, and meeting with a sponsor can be a boost to your spiritual need for deep connection.

• **Prayer:** Prayer can help you focus, be grateful, ask for help, connect with your higher power, and encourage surrender and hope. Prayer can be a simple word, a learned prayer that speaks to you, a spontaneous conversation, or a group prayer.

**While spiritual practices may vary, evolve, wax and wane, it is your partner's own business to work, not yours.**

Some believe that spirituality is critical to recovery and without it, a loss of hope and recurrence is much more likely.

We see spiritual practice as the search for meaning and purpose.

This process ultimately creates connection, the opposite of addiction.

Sharing your spiritual recovery with your partner can bring deep intimacy and help you embark on a spiritual journey together.



Elaine Shamos, MPH & Glenn J. Simpson, LMSW-cc, CADC, from Portland can be reached at [facebook.com/CouplesinRecovery](https://www.facebook.com/CouplesinRecovery).

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# Life on Life's Terms

by Tyler Hall

When I was in active addiction, the problems I faced were not only mostly self-inflicted, but I did everything I could to avoid them, and run from them at all costs. The self-centered nature of my disease put me at the center of my own universe, and there was no problem that more drugs couldn't fix.

All I was concerned with was the getting and using and finding ways and means to get more, and didn't care what I had to do in order to get my next fix. I lived my life in this vicious cycle for 20, miserable, cold, and dark years, but everything changed when I became willing to do something about my disease.

Upon coming into recovery in 2019, not only did my problems change, but my perspective changed. People kept telling me, "The greatest thing you get to do is feel, but the hardest thing you get to do is feel," and that couldn't be a more accurate statement when it comes to the problems that a lot of us face in early recovery.

After taking away the drugs, my brain existed on a very "adolescent" level, everything I faced seemed to be this immovable mountain, because I'd never really dealt with anything the proper way.

After writing on some steps, and working closely with my sponsor, I came to a new level of acceptance and surrender when facing adversity in my life, because each moment wasn't a problem, it was a learning experience.

We learn the most about ourselves when we face problems of any



kind; it's when we get to call upon everything that we've learned, and stand on principles, chances we don't get when everything is going smoothly.

Through this new perspective, I was able to navigate some of the most difficult conditions I had ever faced in my life: divorce, financial crisis, death, and being diagnosed with terminal cancer in August of 2020.

Each of these moments were defining moments of my life, they developed my character, my perseverance, and showed me just how strong of a person I had become.

Not during any of these moments did I find myself even thinking about using drugs, or attempting to escape the conditions of my circumstances. I only found myself embracing them as times of personal growth: instead of getting bitter, I got better.

Today, I get to enjoy all the fruits of my labor when it comes to recovery.

I'm married to the love of my life and I have four amazing kids. But

do I still face problems in my life? Absolutely.

My cancer had become metastatic in January, it continues to take a toll on me and my family, but the age old saying is extremely accurate: "What doesn't kill you, makes you stronger."

I'm grateful for the problems I have had over the past few decades, because they have made me into the man that I am today. If I had to go through everything I endured all over again, to be exactly where I am today, I would do it in a heartbeat.

So if you're experiencing problems in your life today, which we all are, don't try to change what you're going through; allow yourself to change, to grow, so you can face those things head on, and come out the other side, better than you were before.



Tyler Hall, from Augusta, is a freelance writer in recovery and a new contributor to the Journey editorial team.

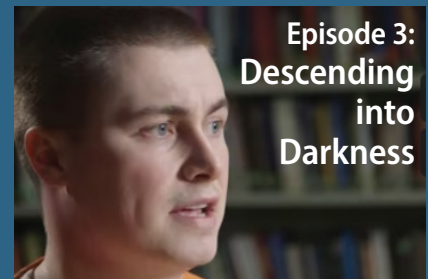
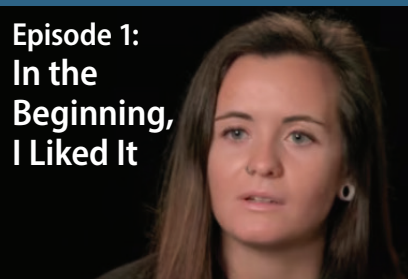
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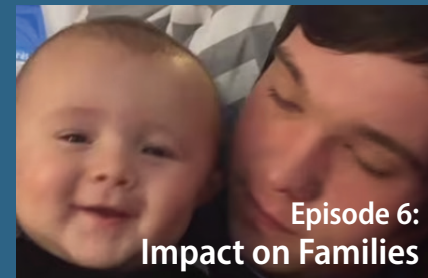
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# A Woman's Way Through The Twelve Steps

by Stephanie S. Covington, Ph.D.

(Hazelden Publishing, September 1994)

Review by Lisa Twombly

**A** *Woman's Way Through the Twelve Steps* follows the original twelve steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, and as the author suggests, can be used alongside AA's Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions publication. Written by a woman in recovery, for women in recovery from all manner of addictions, Dr. Covington includes their stories, their experiences as women in active addiction and their experiences as women in recovery.

The first time I picked up this book, I felt connected, seen, included, and empowered in my recovery—in language, in personal and professional experiences, in family and societal roles and as a mother.

Dr. Covington wrote *A Woman's Way* in response to the need for a gender-specific recovery approach, one that recognizes that both the foundational causes and conditions for addiction for women and men differ, but also that the approaches to recovery that women respond to need to be different than those for men.

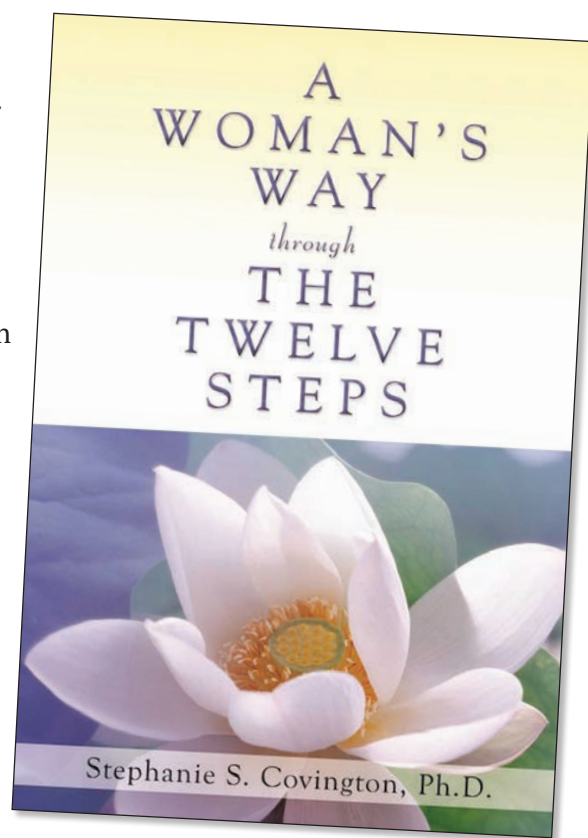
As a woman in recovery, I find this to be true. I feel much safer and open about my past experiences before and during the time I was drinking, as well as going through the process of step work, when

using *A Woman's Way* to work the steps of recovery.

By using personal experiences to frame a woman's story in each step, I felt welcomed and relieved to see the steps through the eyes of women who had lived, loved, lost, and learned in a world I, too, live in. Much of the language of the steps is made clearly linked to our lives by providing a description of how each woman came to understand the concept of the step in words that she could work with.

In step three, for example, many women may feel that "turning our will and our lives over to the care of God" suggests that "we'll be rescued by a male authority who will take care of us as long as we are well-behaved."

The author goes on to suggest that rather than seeing this as submissiveness to a dominating father figure, we can see it as a surrender of our need to control (alcohol, other peoples' behavior), that we can receive support from our recovery group and our own



Higher Power, and that we can nurture our relationship with our Higher Power as "an active process of dedicating or committing or surrendering myself to something bigger than my individual self." How this can show up is by speaking up for ourselves or by taking risks.

In discussing later steps, Dr. Covington touches on honesty in relationships and that frequently,

as women, we are not honest with our true feelings for fear of hurting someone else's feelings or upsetting them. This was true for me. I believed that if I told someone how I felt, thinking they were not going to like it, I was being a bad wife, mother, daughter, or sister.

As I came to understand from the book, the idea that it was unfair to the other person for me to hide my true feelings, and that it was dishonest as well as damaging to our relationship, took time for me to understand. I am still working on this. This line especially rang true to me: "the disturbance lives inside of us until we find a way to honor our feelings."

Particularly women who have experienced trauma have learned to survive and navigate these situations and relationships by taking more than our share of responsibility. This reality, interwoven in many of our lives, and shared by women in *A Woman's Way*, acknowledges the pain and difficulty of trauma. One way to do this is through including ourselves in our amends.

*A Woman's Way Through the Twelve Steps*, while not AA, is aligned with and based on the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Women's groups that read and discuss the steps using *A Woman's Way* can be found online and among some AA women's groups.

I found such a group and deeply appreciate and learn from these women who share their wise womanhood in recovery, making each of us and the entire recovery community stronger.



*Lisa Twombly is a Holistic Health Practitioner who is creating an online program and community, called Better Off Sober Sisterhood, for women seeking a healthy sober life.*

## MILESTONE RECOVERY

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The HOME Team is here to help you. We are compassionate, non-judgmental, and specialize in helping persons dealing with substance use, mental health, and homelessness in Portland.

Our Team can help with basic needs like clothing, food, local transportation to appointments, and access to Narcan and detox programs.

If you or someone you know needs help, please reach out.



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An Angel's Wing is devoted to ensuring that each individual has every opportunity to live, learn and recover from substance use disorder

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# Put Wind in Your Sails

by Carole Fontaine

**W**ish you could sail away from your financial commitments? I lived on a sailboat for 20 years and quickly became an expert at simplifying all aspects of my life. I don't like numbers nor do I enjoy managing money, but one thing I love is the freedom to live life on my terms. Here are a few things that filled my sails and helped steer me towards a stable future.

The following is an excerpt from *S.A.I.L. ABOVE THE CLOUDS—How to SIMPLIFY your Life*

**LESSON** Take a good look at your finances. Always know your numbers, what you owe, and what you receive. And always give yourself some leeway for the unexpected. Knowing where your money is, what you can commit to, what you can borrow, and what your credit score is at all times, will help you feel in charge.

Never sit down to pay bills or organize your finances when you are stressed. Enter your money space with a calm mind and a peaceful heart. Make financial decisions after doing a short meditation or a few calming breathing exercises if necessary.

There are no bad numbers. There is just your judgment around numbers. Numbers have no feelings; they are simply numbers. If you don't like the numbers you

see, you can work on changing them. Take charge of your finances; don't hide away from them. Organize your paperwork, buy a planner, keep a monthly budget, get your credit report once a year, keep track of what you owe, and regularly save—even if you have debt. Simplifying your finances can make the difference between happily managing your money and dreading the chore.

Taking charge of your money shows the universe that you care, respect life's currency, and are ready to live in the flow. It surrounds you with an attitude and energy of prosperity, and that is the first step toward receiving it.

Whatever your dream is, if the numbers don't quite reach your goal, and you are truly committed to your heart's purpose, have faith that the universe will collaborate to make it happen. I hope you'll take a chance on yourself. I'm betting on you!

**QUESTION** If money were a person, write a letter telling them what kind of relationship you would like to have.

**ACTION** Write down the following Money Mantra (or make up your own) on a card and keep the card with your checkbook. When you write out checks or pay bills online, repeat it to yourself

and use it to connect with your creditors expressing sincere gratitude for offering you their services, and connect with the money in your bank for allowing you to support your dreams.

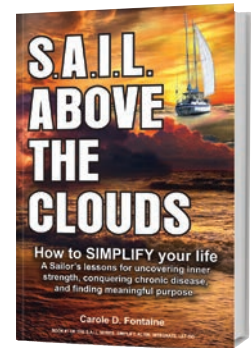
*“Thank you to my creditors. I send you this money with gratitude. Thank you for this abundance. Money always flows. I save some and I spend some. I am a magnet for money. May it come back a thousandfold in expected and unexpected ways. And so it is.”*

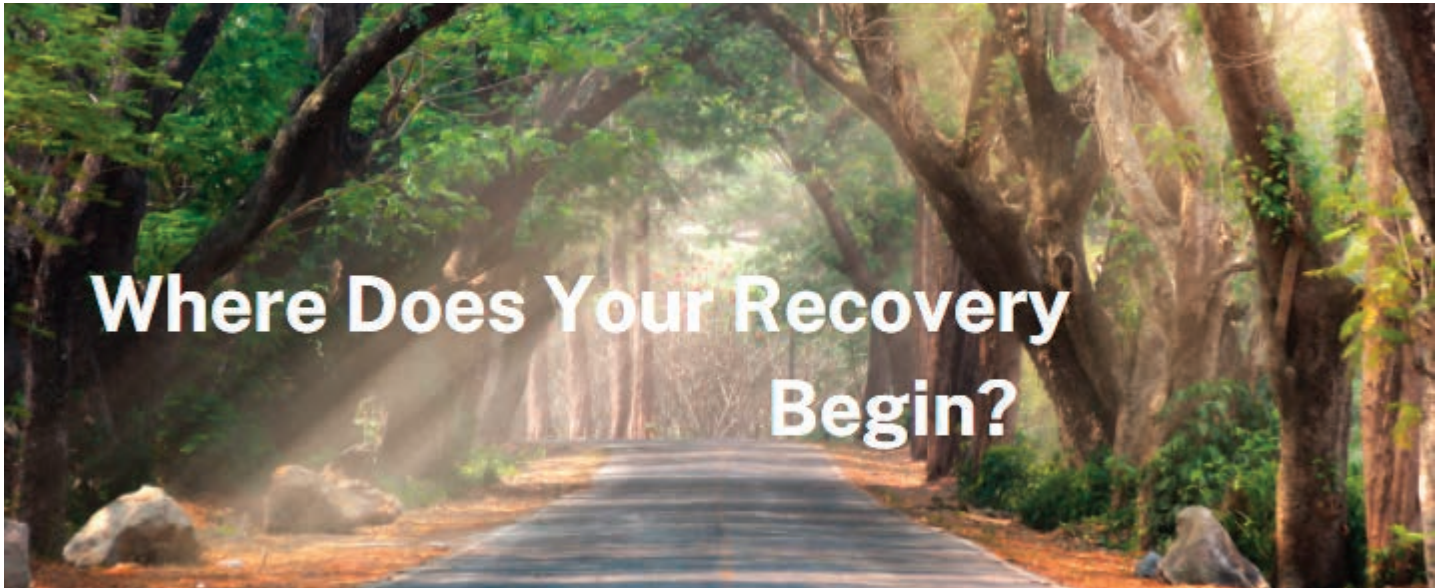


Carole Fontaine is an author, graphic designer, meditative writer, Shakti Dance®, and Reiki Master

Teacher. She manages Journey's social media. She uses her 20 years of living aboard a sailboat to teach empowerment, mindfulness, and spiritual connection.

Her book *SAIL ABOVE THE CLOUDS—How to SIMPLIFY Your Life* is available on Amazon.





# Where Does Your Recovery Begin?

Recovery community centers often bridge the gap between treatment and sustained recovery - living a full and happy life and giving back to others as they find their recovery. ***We are your people.*** We are people in recovery who know what it's like and are on the journey with you.

Whether you're new or you've been on this path for a while, ***recovery community centers offer the home base you need in your recovery journey.*** Membership is free and multiple pathways are honored.

**Portland Recovery Community Center (PRCC)** is Maine's recovery hub - building recovery community throughout the state of Maine. Find a Recovery Community Center near you by visiting [www.portlandrecovery.org](http://www.portlandrecovery.org) — and ***find your people.***

**Aroostook Recovery Center of Hope** (Houlton) 254-2213 • **Bangor Area Recovery Network** (Bangor) 561-9444 • **Bath Recovery Community Center** (Bath) 389-4937 • **Harbor Peer & Wellness Center** (Boothbay Harbor) 315-6236 • **Coastal Recovery Community Center** (Rockland) 691-3697 • **DownEast Recovery Support Center** (Calais, Machias) 259-6238 (C), 259-6238 (M) • **Lakes Region Recovery Center** (Bridgton) 803-8707 • **Larry Labonte Recovery Center** (Rumford) 418-4983 • **Portland Recovery Community Center** (Portland) 553-2575 • **Pir2Peer Recovery Center** (Millinocket) 418-4983 • **REST Center** (Lewiston) 783-7378 • **Roads to Recovery Community Center** (Caribou) 493-1278



**Portland  
Recovery Community  
Center**

Visit PRCC online at [www.portlandrecovery.org](http://www.portlandrecovery.org) or give us a call at (207) 553-2575.

Portland Recovery Community Center is funded by Maine Department of Health and Human Services, other public entities, private foundations, corporations, and individuals.

# Understanding the Teen Brain

## *Why teens can get addicted easily*

by **Barbara Sullivan**

**H**ow many of us worry about the possibility of alcohol or some other drug use problem affecting a young person in our family?

If you are nodding your head “yes” to this question, you are not alone.

We can all help teens understand the impact of early substance use on their young brain and how dependence on a drug can happen very quickly.

Addiction is a brain disease, plain and simple.

This is how it works:

Many teens think they are invincible, that alcohol and drug problems will never happen to them.

What they need to understand is that their teenage brain is not fully developed until their mid 20s.

The brain’s limbic system, which is responsible for their emotional response and their prefrontal cortex, which regulates their impulse control and decision making, are still growing. It should come as no surprise when parents ask their teenager the age-old question, “What were you thinking?”

The answer is simple.

They weren’t thinking clearly because their brains are not fully developed so they don’t always have the ability to control impulsive behavior or make sound decisions.

Teenagers love to have fun. Let’s face it, we all do.



All of us have a natural chemical in our brain called dopamine. It is released in the brain when something good happens to us. Dopamine helps us remember those things we enjoy in life: favorite foods, good friends, and those activities that make us feel good.

Dopamine also plays another role in the brain.

### **Their teenage brain is not fully developed until their mid 20s.**

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, addictive drugs like alcohol, nicotine, and marijuana release dopamine, flooding the brain with the “feel good” chemical giving the false perception that something pleasurable has happened.

The brain records the memory and triggers the desire for more

of the drug. After continued use, a person becomes more and more dependent on the drug. This can happen very quickly to teens due to the sensitivity of their still developing brain. When the drug is not readily available, the user experiences withdrawal that can include stress, anxiety, depression and physical symptoms of discomfort.

What can you do if you are concerned that a young person in your family may have an alcohol or drug problem?

First of all, remember that addiction is a disease centered in the brain.

Here are some suggestions for parents and caregivers to get help and support:

- The disease of addiction can be genetically inherited. If the disease exists in your family tree,

please share this with your teen as early as possible.

- There are common signs to look for when teens start using substances: tiredness, change of mood, depression, anxiety, withdrawal from friends and family, loss of interest in things, and possible disruption in eating or sleep patterns.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) offers a national helpline, a free 24/7 referral and information service and resources available for families. Call 1-800-662-HELP (4357).

Parents and caregivers also need help when a substance use disorder is affecting a teen in their life. The following is a list of free local organizations available to help those people supporting a loved one:

**Al-Anon:**

[www.maineafg.org](http://www.maineafg.org)  
207-284-1844 / 800-498-1844

**The Family Restored:**

[www.thefamilyrestored.org](http://www.thefamilyrestored.org)  
207-387-0015

**WSCA Addiction and Recovery Podcast Series**

[www.wscafm.org/listen](http://www.wscafm.org/listen)



*Barbara Sullivan taught middle school in Maine for 25 years where she designed a middle school substance abuse curriculum for grades 6-8. Barbara has presented at*

*professional conferences on the topic of alcoholism as a family disease. She is currently working as a Prevention Specialist for FCD Prevention Works, a division of the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation.*

This column brought to you by



# Bath Recovery Community Center

## Bringing Recoverees Continuous Connection

- all services at no cost:
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- recovery coaches available
- community resources
- harm reduction training & resources

**(207) 389-4937**

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[www.wscafm.org/listen](http://www.wscafm.org/listen)



Believing recovery is possible, our mission is to strengthen and support families affected by addiction

**WHAT WE OFFER:**

- **Family Support Groups in Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont - in person and virtually**
- **Financial assistance for treatment and recovery housing**
- **12-Step workshops for families and incarcerated individuals**

**The Family Restored Support Group**

The Family Restored Support Group is an educational support group for families having difficulty navigating a loved one's addiction. Our meetings are facilitated by individuals in long-term recovery that offer a unique perspective from first-hand experience. Families have the opportunity to discuss their concerns and build community with other families.

**Scholarships for Treatment and Recovery Housing**

TFR established a scholarship program to help families pay for intensive 12-Step based treatment and/or recovery housing. To see if you qualify for a scholarship and to submit an application, please visit our website.

**CONTACT US**

**ADDRESS**

P.O. Box 10116  
Portland, ME 04104

**PHONE**

207-387-0015

**EMAIL**

info@thefamilyrestored.org

www.thefamilyrestored.org  
501(c)(3) non-profit

# We Make Our Way — with a guide

by Joe Bennett

With God as our guide we make our way,  
Or we'd be just strangers in this land,  
I've heard each morning take time to pray,  
Yet even then life may not go as planned.

But it's not "results" we should be praying for,  
Rather for knowledge of what is God's will,  
We have no idea what lies in store,  
So take your time, slow down, sit and be still.

What is "unmanageability"?,  
Acting in a way I can't condone?,  
All I know is that's it's just not pretty,  
When I try to handle life on my own.

I have to recognize, the times I stray,  
Before I get too far off course,  
To stay sane there's only one way,  
It's staying very close to the Source.

And it might be nice if we could arrange,  
To perhaps stay safely in one place,  
But we've learned the only constant is change,  
But constant, too, is the strength of God's grace.



**Connecting Maine's Re-Entry Community**

**(207) 330-1446**

info@re-entrymaine.org <http://re-entrymaine.org/>

# Statewide RESOURCES

*These resources are gathered from a variety of sources. Our goal is to provide information on nonprofits that provide free or affordable services that benefit the recovery community.*

## CRISIS HOTLINE

### **Maine Crisis Hotline**

Maine Behavioral Health  
888 568 1112

24 hour hotline, mobile assessment & crisis intervention

### **National Human Trafficking Resource Center/ Polaris Project**

888 373 7888

National, toll-free hotline, available to answer calls and texts from anywhere in the country, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year.

### **Safe Voices (domestic violence)**

800 559 2927

### **Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault**

800 871 7741

Confidential services, free of charge. Provides information, crisis counseling, and emotional support and advocacy.

### **Maine Access Points**

207 319 8823 (call or text)  
info@maineaccesspoints.org

We provide state-wide naloxone distribution, overdose prevention education, support and aftercare.

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

## POISON CENTER

### **Maine Medical Center**

800 222 1222

The NNEPC poison help line is available 24/7 by phone, chat and text to provide treatment advice for poisonings or to answer poison-related questions.

## HOTLINES

### **Intentional Warm Line**

50 Moody St Saco  
866 771 9276

Confidential telephone support services for non-crisis situations, including, but not limited to: Peer-to-peer support, social connection, sharing personal victories, overcoming fear, grief or sadness, developing effective strategies for the future, assistance with referrals to community resources, talking to someone when feeling sad, lonely, or discouraged.

### **Maine Tobacco Helpline**

800 207 1230

M-Th 10a-8p, F 10a-5p,  
S 10a-2p

If you call after hours please leave a message. Staff will call you back.

## Domestic Violence Support

866 834 4357

Information, crisis counseling, emotional support and advocacy.

## MISCELLANEOUS

### **211 Maine**

Directory connecting people to variety of health and human services in Maine that can be accessed online or on the phone.

### **Medical Professional's Health Program**

20 Pelton Hill Rd Manchester  
8a-4p  
207 623 9266 x5

Assessment/screenings for medical professionals who might have substance use disorders/mental health disorders. Referrals. Monitoring.

### **Wellness Mobile**

207 520 1683

Outreach vehicle and materials for recovery or prevention.

# FREE Mutual-Aid RECOVERY PROGRAMS

*We are fortunate to live during a time when there are many options for finding and sustaining lasting recovery from addiction. We are all individuals and while there are many aspects of our personal journeys that may be similar to those of others, we are each called to discover for ourselves what works and what doesn't work for us. Our goal is to provide options and shine a light on different approaches that people use to maintain lasting recovery without endorsing specific approaches or recovery programs.*

*We ultimately leave it up to you, the reader, to decide what works best for you, while presenting you with multiple pathways to recovery.*

## **Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)**

207-774-4335/800-737-6237  
[www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org)

## **Al-Anon /Alateen**

[www.maineafg.org](http://www.maineafg.org)  
207-284-1844 / 800-498-1844

## **Adult Children of Alcoholics**

(ACOA or ACA)  
A 12-step, 12-tradition program for men and women who grew up in dysfunctional homes  
207-322-6284  
[www.adultchildren.org](http://www.adultchildren.org)

## **Cocaine Anonymous (CA)**

617-539-6090 / 800-347-8998  
(meeting info only)  
[www.ca.org](http://www.ca.org)

## **Codependents Anonymous**

602-277-7991 / 888-444-2359  
[www.coda.org](http://www.coda.org)

## **Debtors Anonymous (DA)**

Debtors Anonymous offers hope for people whose use of unsecured debt causes problems and suffering. 800-421-2383 / 800-974-0062  
<https://debtorsanonymous.org/>

## **Drug Addicts Anonymous (DAA)**

A fellowship of men and women who have recovered from addiction and are committed to helping those who still suffer, based on the 12 steps  
970-761-5189  
[www.daausa.org](http://www.daausa.org)

## **Food Addicts in Recovery**

**Anonymous (FA)** is a free 12-step recovery program for anyone suffering from food obsession, overeating, bulimia and under-eating. [www.foodaddicts.org](http://www.foodaddicts.org)

## **Gambler's Anonymous (GA)**

718-352-1671 / 888-830-2271  
<http://newenglandga.com>

## **Heroin Anonymous (HA)**

A fellowship of heroin addicts who help each other practice complete abstinence from drugs and alcohol 347-858-3601  
[www.heroinanonymous.org](http://www.heroinanonymous.org)

## **H.O.P.E. Group**

A safe place where people come together to find wellness by sharing their stories and listening with an open heart and mind to others  
727-420-2964 (Liz)  
[www.hopehealing.org](http://www.hopehealing.org)

## **Marijuana Anonymous (MA)**

A fellowship of people who share their experience, strength and hope to recover from marijuana addiction 609-529-6332 / 800-766-6779  
[www.marijuana-anonymous.org](http://www.marijuana-anonymous.org)

## **Narcotics Anonymous (NA)**

A support program for people in recovery from drug addiction based on the 12 steps of AA  
[www.namaine.org](http://www.namaine.org)  
818-773-9999/800-974-0062

## **Overeaters Anonymous (OA)**

is a community of people who support each other in order to recover from compulsive eating and food behaviors. We welcome everyone who feels they have a problem with food. Dial 211 for meeting info. <http://oamaine.org>

## **Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous (SLAA)**

A program of recovery for people addicted to sex and love, based on the 12 steps of AA  
207-323-5143 / 800-204-2803  
[www.slaafws.org](http://www.slaafws.org)

## **SMART Recovery**

Mutual-support meetings that are free and open to anyone seeking science-based, self-empowered addiction recovery  
440-951-5337  
[www.smartrecovery.org](http://www.smartrecovery.org)

## **Wellbriety Movement**

(White Bison)  
A sustainable grassroots movement that provides culturally based healing for indigenous people  
207-992-0411 / 877-871-1495  
<https://wellbriety.com>

# Peer-Run RECOVERY CENTERS

A place where hopes, goals, dreams, and values are explored together.

The togetherness, also known as peer support, is empowering and provides a trusting environment and for someone ready for a different life.

## **Change begins and community is formed.**

Each person is encouraged to share what they know and how they have come to know it.

Unbiased knowledge creates a platform for opportunities to contribute and be creative while nurturing personal development, wellness, and vocational connections.

Peer Centers are offered to anyone seeking life changes at **no cost, no referral** and **no registration**.

### **A. Perry Center (formerly Amistad)**

835 Forest Ave., Portland, 04103  
(207) 615-3691

### **B. Beacon House Peer and Recovery Center**

3 Canal St., Rumford, 04276  
(207) 418-0079 / (207)369-0868

### **C. Biddeford Peer Support Center**

15 York St., Biddeford, 04005  
(207) 358-4414

### **D. Harvest Inn Peer Center**

43 Hatch Drive, Caribou, 04736  
(207) 492-1386 / (207)498-0247

### **E. LINC Center**

38 Memorial Dr, Augusta, 04330  
(207) 530-0391 / (207)430-4001

### **F. Rockland Peer Support Center**

12 Union St., Rockland, 04841  
(207) 317-3012

### **G. Sanford Peer Support Center**

19 Washington Street  
Sanford, 04073  
(207) 956-2984

### **H. Together Place Peer Run Recovery Center**

2 Second St., Bangor, 04401  
(207) 941-2897

### **I. Valley Peer Run Recovery Ctr**

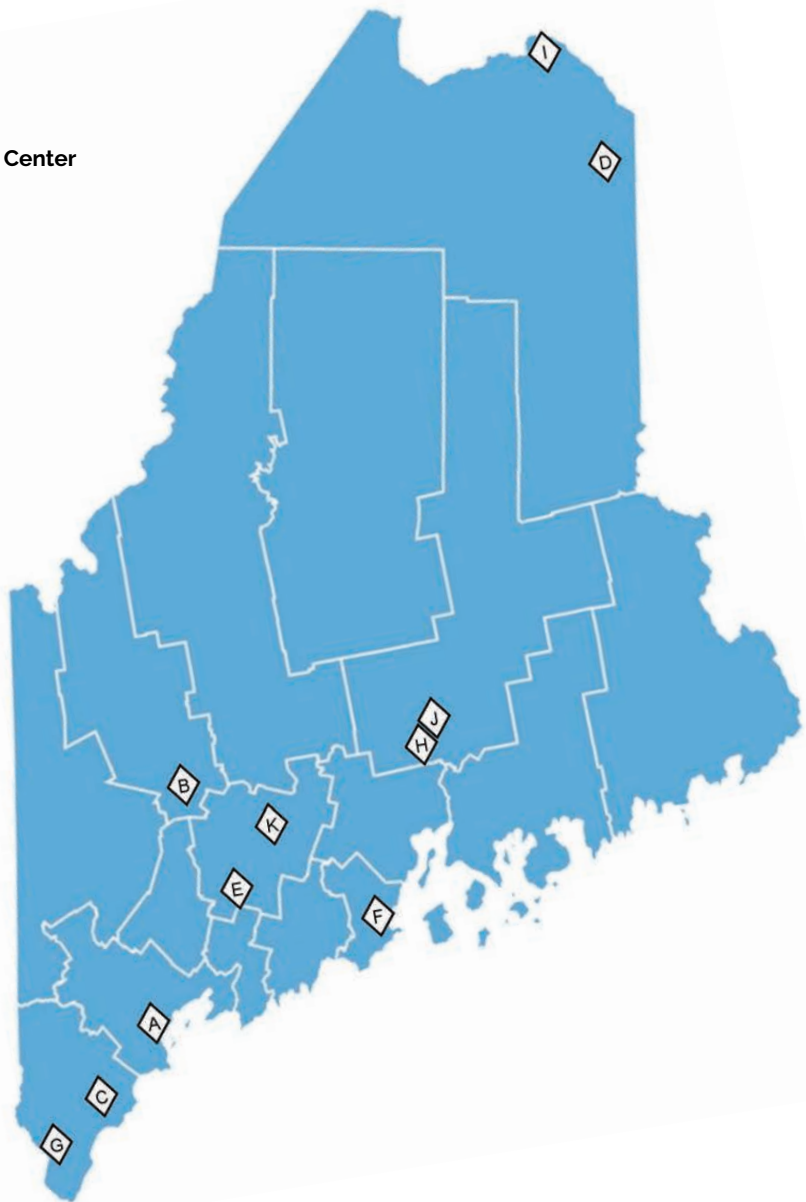
272 Main St., Suite 101,  
Madawaska, 04756  
(207) 728-4806 /  
(207)316-7375

### **J. Wabanaki Health & Wellness Ctr**

157 Park St., Suite #5  
Bangor, 04401  
(207) 951-7526

### **K. Waterville Peer Recovery Center**

32 Ticonic Street  
Waterville, 04901  
(207) 859-2667





# SHARING THE TOOLS TO LIFT UP OTHERS



The Rx Abuse Leadership Initiative (RALI) of Maine is proud to work with organizations across the state that are sharing information and ideas to address the opioid crisis. Together, we're finding solutions to ensure individuals and families have the support they need.

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Learn more about RALI and our partners at [rali-me.org](https://rali-me.org).