

Journey

making recovery from addiction visible

Dec 2021/Jan 2022 • Issue 18

**Al-Anon
Family
Groups**

**McAuley
Residence**
A Safe Space for Women

Willa Wirth
A Force of Nature





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Dec 2021 / Jan 2022 • Issue 18

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From the publisher

For this very last issue of 2021, our theme is transitions.

Some transitions we step up for, while other transitions are forced upon us (hello COVID), but regardless of why we find ourselves in transition, the ability to accept the reality of the situation can help us find our footing.

Transitions are ultimately about change: from one place to another. From one belief to another. From one season of our lives to another.



A transition is a break in what we know and a step towards an unknown, and along with the unknown can come grief for what was and fear of what's next.

In 1993 I made a transition that would change my life. I entered the McAuley Residence in Portland walking in with a whole lot of fear. Six months away from drinking, my own instincts were not to be trusted and I needed structured guidance to help me with my next few steps in this new life of mine. The McAuley Residence provided that structure, and continues to do so for others today, (*The McAuley Residence Provides a Safe Space for Women to Transform*, p. 6).

Although I was filled with fear to make this transition, I was open to the process, and willing to accept the help that was offered—an openness and willingness I still accept in my life.

Even though we may be open and willing, we still need to know how and where to access support. In *Brave the Unknown* (p. 14), Carole Fontaine offers great tips on ways to navigate transitions, and *Nine Recovery Tools*, (Roz Applebaum's first piece for Journey, p. 24) provides additional ideas.

Times of transition serve as a reminder that our story is not over and that chapters are still being written.

May this chapter be one of awe and joy for you.

Carolyn



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ry saves lives

The McAuley Residence

Providing a Safe Space for Women to Transform

by Jacqueline Brown

Living at the McAuley Residence literally saved my life. I learned that staying in recovery and being a good mother in recovery were both possible and within reach.”

This is how Nicole*, a single mother from western Maine, summed up her recent experience at the McAuley Residence in Portland, one of two transitional housing programs run by Northern Light Mercy Hospital.

Founded by the Sisters of Mercy over three decades ago, McAuley’s mission is to provide comprehensive support to women with and without children through programming focused on recovery from drug and alcohol dependency.

“At McAuley we do powerful work to help women and their families transform their lives based on best practices for addiction recovery. Our two-generational model provides a sacred space for these women and their children to become whole,” says former Executive Director Melissa Skahan, now vice president of mission integration at Northern Light Mercy Hospital.

When women in recovery and their children find a place at McAuley, it becomes their new home for up to two years, the typical time it takes to complete the residence’s three-phase program. Portland’s McAuley Residence provides apartment-style living while

Bangor offers private rooms and shared common areas. Women may live in the residence alone or with their children.

It’s often the case that women entering the McAuley program are struggling with other serious issues beyond addiction recovery. “Women may come to us from a place of generational addiction and undiagnosed and untreated mental illness and mental health issues. Some have been sex-trafficked or sexually abused or experienced domestic violence. They may have been homeless or had their children taken away by Child Protective Services (CPS),” says Skahan.

Taking into account these traumatic backgrounds and recovery needs, the program residents move through consists of three structured holistic phases, coordinated to achieve family reunification, independence, health, housing, and sobriety.

“In the first phase, we work very closely with women to help them become stabilized, in their recovery and in their physical, emotional and mental health needs,” says Skahan. This intensive phase may include medical appointments, addiction treatment and getting connected with individualized resources.

Phase two focuses on the family. The residence’s two-generational approach includes services and



These notecards were painted by women in Mercy’s McAuley Residence program.

interventions for both mothers and their children. “If a mother has been separated from her child, we’ll work very closely with CPS to ensure that assessments are carried out,” says Skahan. Learning new habits at McAuley can be a huge motivating factor for mothers to work with CPS and/or the courts to reunify with their children, she adds.

McAuley’s third phase solidifies the support system that will stay with the woman when she is ready to transition out of the program. This can include building a network of recovery groups, addiction treatment support, therapy, and career/life planning guidance. The goal is for this team to be part of a woman’s recovery long after she’s moved on from McAuley.

“One of the unique things is that we don’t provide treatment onsite. This is intentional. When women leave here we don’t want it to also mean they need to leave their treatment team behind. Losing support is a huge danger for women in recovery, so our approach is to build the best external treatment team for our residents. After they complete our program, we want the only difference to be where they lay their head at night,” Skahan says.

A day in the life

So, what does a typical day at the McAuley look like?

On any given day, residents may be found taking cooking classes or attending workshops on healthy eating or career planning. They may be coming and going to appointments and treatments offsite. Other programming may include yoga class or taking part in one-on-one coaching on a range of topics from parenting skills and family budgeting to re-entering higher education. In total, women take part in 35 hours of programming per week.

“What we’re doing is providing women with the opportunities to develop and reinforce healthy

routines for themselves and their children,” Skahan says.

There’s remarkable evidence that this holistic approach to recovery works, and works well. According to program statistics, 80 percent of women remain sober once they complete the McAuley program, and 95 percent of families remain reunited.

“It’s so rewarding to watch these women have the opportunity to flourish and to reunify with their families and then re-enter higher education and the workplace. These women are truly transforming their lives for the better,” Skahan says.

McAuley gave this mom wings

Nicole lived at McAuley with her young daughter joining her about halfway through the program. Before McAuley, and before entering recovery, Nicole had been couch-surfing with friends while leaving her daughter in the care of relatives.

McAuley represented the first place Nicole and her daughter could call home together.

“When I was using, I didn’t want my daughter to see all that so she stayed off and on with my mom and sister. First, I got sober,

then my daughter came to live with me. McAuley programs give moms so much help and support, and children receive support too. I learned how to be the mom I always wanted to be and am now able to give my daughter a good home,” Nicole explained.

Nicole described an activity she and her daughter completed together not long after the end of her time at McAuley, which to her symbolized the deep transformation she and her child, and the other women and children she met, experienced at McAuley.

According to Nicole, “My daughter and I raised two Monarch butterflies, starting from caterpillars. We watched the caterpillars go into their cocoons and then form these golden chrysalises, and finally, the butterflies emerged. When they spread their wings for the first time, my daughter pointed at them and said, ‘Mommy, they’re just like us!’ I gave her a hug and agreed.”

**Last name and certain identifying characteristics omitted for privacy.*



Jacqueline Brown is a freelance writer from Southern Maine who regularly contributes to national and regional publications.



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Trusting the Process

At the McAuley Residence, women are shown the path to success

by Emma Simard

When Amanda Kurlanski walked into the McAuley Residence eight years ago, she didn't know what would come next. She had lost years to her disease, she was unemployable, and she was working to regain custody of her children—but she had been sober for nearly two months, and she needed a support network that could help build her up.

The McAuley Residence was the key to reclaiming the life she had lost control of.

Amanda lived at the McAuley Residence for three years; it was longer than the typical stay, but every minute there gave her a chance to create a solid foundation for the life she has now. "It was a door that opened opportunities," she says. "Could I have done it on my own? Maybe. But I wouldn't have been able to do it to the level that I did."

The volume of support she found at the McAuley Residence couldn't be found elsewhere. The women-



only facility offered a longer stay than any other sober communities, and it provided safe and stable housing for her children, too. Amanda received counseling and had a caseworker, but the staff also helped her get her basic needs met so she could truly focus on her recovery.

While at the McAuley Residence, Amanda relearned basic life skills. She took cooking classes, attended a parenting group, learned how to budget, and even remastered social skills she had lost long ago. The facility also offered childcare, so Amanda was able to get her associate's degree during her stay.

Five years since moving out, Amanda is a licensed counselor helping others through their recovery processes. She's married, pregnant with her third child, and working toward attending the University of Maine School of Law. "I have a big, beautiful life today," she says. "And it's a direct result of the work that I did." Her life is unrecognizable from what it was 10 years ago, and it's all because of what she could accomplish during her stay at the McAuley Residence.



Emma Simard is a writer and editor living in Midcoast Maine with her cat, Frankenstein. When she isn't writing or proofreading, she's in her stained glass studio making suncatchers or on the hunt to find the best biscuits and gravy in the state.

Want to support the McAuley Residence?

As Lisa Silverman, Volunteer Coordinator at the McAuley Residence confirmed, "It takes a village to hold these women in safety and to help them thrive!"

Here are ways the Maine village can rally for these residents:

- Donate gift cards to stores for women to buy essentials that

SNAP benefits don't cover. Reny's, Walmart and Hannaford gift cards (ones that specify no cigarettes or alcohol purchases are preferred).

- Direct assistance. "We are trying to keep the internet going for all residents which is a huge expense over \$1000 a month," said Silverman. To make a monetary donation to support the McAuley,

contact Northern Light Mercy Hospital and give to McAuley Residence's Greatest Need Fund.

- "The best volunteer opportunity right now is for women to come to our meetings on Zoom," said Silverman. Contact the McAuley Residence for information on its open Zoom meeting: (207) 773-5289.

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PERSONAL RECOVERY STORY

Willa Wirth

A Force of Nature

by Jacqueline Brown

When you see silver jewelry made by Portland's Willa Wirth, you can't help but notice the energy that radiates from her unique designs.

A pendant takes the shape of a cresting ocean wave. Earrings shimmer like real moonlight. A necklace fans out with twin soaring wings.

Wirth's jewelry is instantly recognizable as the work of a master craftsperson. It's also the work of a woman in recovery. This is no coincidence.

According to Wirth, the creative spirit that sparks her imaginative jewelry designs is the same spirit that fuels her passion for sobriety.

"Committing to the creative process aligns me with my truth, it allows me to give and feel love, and it's what connects me to the light. I create art, and I also create the life I'm living, and this includes my life in recovery," Wirth says.

This understanding has taken time.

Twenty-plus years ago, Wirth was in a very different place. With college degrees in fine art and classical piano, Wirth knew her destiny was in the arts, but the shape this would take remained unclear, despite being hers to create. Unable to find a path forward, Wirth found herself turning her frustrations inward.

"I have always felt things so deeply...loved deeply...and been appreciative of the beauty of nature. But I was perplexed by loving everything external to me so deeply yet internally...I would walk down the street and whenever I caught sight of my reflection, I would criticize myself, absolutely tearing myself apart. There was pain, and I was not sure how to address this conflict. I later learned this was the perfect prerequisite for alcoholism. Drinking made it seem as though I fit into life as it was, rather than life as I am. Here is where I realized drinking numbed me out," she said.

Eventually, signs started to show up in Wirth's life that her creative work could be headed in a new direction. Notably, she took a ring making class at Maine College of Art which introduced her to the intricate art and craft of silver jewelry design.

"I fell in love with silver, hammering things out, polishing it, soldering it. It captured my spirit and began to help me create from my inspiration and my imagination," she described.

Still, despite the sense that she may have found her artistic calling, Wirth continued to struggle with self doubt even as externally she appeared confident. She was actively pursuing and building the foundation of her dreams and



Photo by Michael Blakemore.

achieving much in her life. Yet, she was not at peace with herself. A restlessness was still present, and she did not know how to change it.

Then a huge realization for Wirth occurred, just over 18 years ago. "I was fired from a waitressing job and my boss told me, 'Willa, you have more talent than any young lady that has worked for me, and I will not hire you ever again. You are here on this planet to do your art.'"

Wirth knew at this moment that she was at a crossroads. "I had believed, 'you must have a practical job as a means of income, so you can then do your art.' This was the belief at that time that I knew I needed to smash."

At first Wirth's 'why' for going into business for herself was simply so she couldn't get fired again. As her jewelry business took off, however, she realized the power of following her bliss. "I learned that if you go halfway, God will meet you in the other half...the more you let go, the higher you go. Spirit is with you."

Wirth worked at her dream and did whatever it took to make ends

meet and get her art out there. As word spread about Wirth's genius for silver jewelry design, she was soon able to open a studio and shop on Congress Street in Portland's Munjoy Hill neighborhood. On the outside, Wirth had established herself as a creative force of nature and successful working artist.

On the inside, Wirth was still in pain and still using alcohol as a way to numb.

"Inside I was not loving Willa. I was terrified for the world to really see who I was on the inside...how could I be loved and accepted if I couldn't love and accept myself? That was the conflict," she said.

Like the signs that had turned up pointing the way to silver jewelry design, Wirth can look back and see that bit by bit the same thing started to happen in this other area of her life.

"I noticed that I kept attracting people in my life who were in recovery. I'd be in the shop and customers would come in with this sort of glowing light about them. I would ask what that glow was about and learn their recovery stories," she says.

The beginning of Wirth's journey to sobriety was feeling drawn towards this light. "I began to understand that, no matter what our circumstances, we have a choice at any moment to be one of these beautiful healthy illuminated souls," she says. "With every thought I am either going towards the light or away from it and numbing myself out in the darkness."

This realization was Wirth's game-changer, but sobriety was still an uphill battle. After trying to go it alone off and on for months and falling into self-sabotage

traps—like celebrating two months of sobriety with two bottles of wine, Wirth listened more closely to the stories of recovery people kept sharing with her, and finally decided to join a 12-step program.

"I ventured into the halls and I was terrified because I really didn't think that this was for me and I couldn't understand how all these people could do this one book thing," she recalls.

After 90 days, Wirth not only realized how judgmental she had been about 12-step programs, but also how judgmental she had been about herself. This was the turning point for finally shedding her old self-limiting beliefs.

"Through the work, I came to rely on something greater than myself to support me in my experience. Whether you call it spirit or God, I knew that I was not alone. My limitations no longer had the same power over me. I was finally free to move towards the light."

Now almost a decade into her sobriety, Wirth has learned to take it day by day, and that some days will be filled with more challenges than others. "I am always asking myself, dark or light? Which way should I go next to stay in the light?"

Right alongside this, Wirth's silver jewelry business has continued to grow. Her designs are now worn by people here in Maine, across the U.S., and around the world. Wirth has found that her sobriety and her craft make for a powerful combination.

"I am creating my life...I am creating jewelry. Whenever I create, I allow myself to feel deeply and remove the mask. I am the vessel for a spirit moving through me and the pieces I make for others channel this creative energy.

People wear my jewelry and they tell me it feels like a talisman connected to their soul," Wirth says.

The jewelry designer is now happy — inside and out — with her life. She is making even more plans for her silver jewelry including starting a Youtube Channel devoted to her jewelry making.

Where Wirth's journey has brought her is a place of peace.

"I respect being a sober woman and not because I don't want to drink or can't drink. It has everything to do with being connected and awake to every moment. I am alive for the pulse of life. I protect and honor that."

You can find Willa Wirth's jewelry at willawirth.com. Her studio/shop at 99 Congress Street is open Tuesday–Saturday from 12–6 pm (hours may vary).

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Millions of cups of coffee and not a drop to drink

Helen Thorgalsen, H.B. Provisions

by Amy Paradysz

Most people in Helen Thorgalsen's life have only known her sober. That includes her two children—now in their 30s—and her partner of 20 years, Bonnie Clement, with whom she founded the general store H.B. Provisions in Kennebunk in 2002.

Two things haven't happened in all those years: H.B. Provisions hasn't closed, not even for a day. And Helen hasn't had a drink, not even a drop.

"I've been without a drink for 34 years," she says.

She was in her early 30s when she got pregnant, got married and stopped drinking—a major turnaround for a woman who had been drinking since her teens and drinking to the point of blackouts for several years.

"The drinking age when I was in college was 18, and I was 18," she

says. "I drank with a big group of people, and we drank often. I was one of the heavy partiers."

After graduation, she had a regular routine: working days and drinking nights.

"I felt like I didn't know any other way to live; that's what you did, you just drank every day," she says. "I got very inebriated most nights, and blacked out almost every night. I lived in a small town and would go to a local bar. I just drank a lot, went home and went to bed. But I knew when I got pregnant that I couldn't keep drinking."

While she was determined to break that cycle, her new husband was not.

"It became very problematic," Helen says. "We saw a counselor, and she sent me to a family support 12-step program and him to a 12-step program. I was going to

meetings six days a week, hanging on for dear life."

The other difficulty with giving up drinking is that while going to meetings and dealing with being the wife of an alcoholic, she hadn't faced her own alcoholism. By the time they had their second child, she had been sober for two years. But their relationship was fraying, and the marriage didn't last much longer.

"Seeing him drink and him being drunk, and all the drugging, it wasn't pretty," she says. "Drinking isn't pretty on anybody, and I was able to see that. And I had the clarity that I didn't want to do that anymore."

To get herself "in a better place" as she was going through the divorce, Helen went to the Renewal Center at Hazelden in Minnesota, then got involved in a recovery program.

Helen Thorgalsen, the "H" of H.B. Provisions, hasn't had a drink in 34 years. But she's sure had (and sold) a lot of coffee. Photo by Amy Paradysz.

“I got much more real with my personal recovery,” she says, “and owning the fact that I am an alcoholic and that I had been drinking alcoholically.”

Not long after that, Helen was having dinner with old friends who convinced her—once—that she could drink socially with dinner. And she shared a bottle of wine with a friend.

“I woke up the next morning so hungover, and I was clear without a doubt that I never wanted to feel that way again,” Helen says. “It was a spiritual awakening. It was crystal clear in my head and my whole being.”

Helen raised her kids in Kennebunk, where she has been active in a 12-step program all these years.

“I’ve been able to learn more about who I am, being sober,” she says. “And now I have a community. It’s a much richer, more fulfilling life.”

In August 2001, Helen’s youngest daughter got a job as a dishwasher at Dockside Café, which was being run that year by Bonnie Clement. When Clement was short-staffed once teens went back to school, Helen came onboard to help. The two hit it off and have been life partners ever since.

In January 2002, Helen and Bonnie decided to buy what was Meserve’s Market in the Lower Village of Kennebunk. They gutted, renovated and rebranded the historic building as H.B. Provisions, with the H. and B. short for Helen and Bonnie. It’s been almost 20 years since they opened their general store and lunch counter.

“That’s a lot of sandwiches,” Helen says, smiling. “A lot of coffee. A lot of everything. It’s really good.”

They also sell beer, wine and alcohol. “When I first got sober, I wouldn’t be around alcohol,” Helen says. “But now I’m okay. It doesn’t appeal to me. That’s not to say there haven’t been challenges, and it’s been a bit of a bumpy road at times with alcoholic behavior and not feeling comfortable in my skin and dealing with frustration and anger. All the emotions you experience in life, I’ve experienced here while working in my store, because it’s been 20 years.”

All those years have come with some transitions, of course. One of which was that Helen and Bonnie tied the knot in May 2007. Part-time Kennebunkport resident George H. W. Bush, who used to stop by the store for a cup of coffee and donut after church, was one of their wedding guests.

“I never would have been able to do all this if I was drinking,” Helen says. “I’m an all or nothing gal. I don’t do moderation. And with alcohol, I definitely couldn’t do moderation. I feel very blessed that God gave me an opportunity to have a sober life.”

She credits the recovery community as the rock upon which she has built her busy and purposeful life.

“When I’m having a bad day, I don’t even think of reaching for something to drink,” she says. “My sobriety is first. If I’m not sober, I have nothing. I don’t have my relationship with my granddaughter, my children, the store, nothing. It’s number one. Without that I have nothing. And still, this many years later, it’s still number one.”



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

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Brave the Unknown with Spirit

by Carole Fontaine



Look at myself in the mirror, stare deep into my eyes, and tell myself, “I can do this. I trust this next step and have faith that Source will guide me.”

I’ve reinvented myself so many times that I feel like I’ve lived multiple lives. Some chapters have been dark but I’m grateful for the lessons, strength, and resilience they gave me.

When in doubt, I get back to my breath and use it to center myself. Just like my body takes in oxygen, transforms it into energy, and expels what it doesn’t need, I use my breath to ground myself, connect with spirit, and propel myself forward.

The fact that I am here today, willing to learn, grow and change is cause to celebrate!

When I feel a storm brewing and I’m navigating uncharted territory, I allow myself to dream and wonder, “Where could this change be leading me?” I channel my inner explorer and open myself to new horizons. Transitions are like great adventures and I decide who is the hero in my story.

I know I can rely on my practice to help me sail through any impasse.

All I need is the courage to brave the unknown, the willingness and curiosity to look beyond familiarity. There is magic in exploring all possibilities...some may happily surprise me.

I feel the winds of change calling. I turn to face it, feeling the breeze on my face, and take a deep breath. I hear a song playing in my heart, the notes of inspiration have a positive intonation that fills me with joy. Its energy is hopeful and uplifting. I embrace it with joy. From my 20 years living on a sailboat, I came up with S.A.I.L., a practice that helps me navigate change. Perhaps it will help you to take one step towards the future.

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Early morning journaling exercises (or following meditation). Time yourself and write 5 minutes for each question. If nothing comes up, write “nothing comes up” until something does. It is part of the process. Allow whatever feelings, thoughts, or emotions to express themselves. Once uncluttered, inner intuition and wisdom will arise.

1. **Simplify** to clarify. I declutter my mind to get a clear picture of my goals and vision.

- Where do I feel stuck or face obstacles?
- What are my greatest skills?

2. **Align** to purpose. I spend time in self-reflection learning what brings me true joy.

- What do I want?
- Is this aligned with my goals?

3. **Integrate** tools, support groups, steps, in your daily life. Discipline and consistency help me achieve my goals even when I’m having an off day.

- What daily practices or actions have I established to support my goals?
- What else can I try?

4. **Let Go** of all that does not serve you. I forgive myself and others and make room to receive. I trust that spirit is guiding me when I’m aligned with purpose. I deserve to realize my dreams.

- What am I ready to let go of?



SAIL: Simplify, Align, Integrate, Let go™ is Carole Fontaine’s signature program. She is a bestselling author, Certified Life Coach, meditative writing teacher, Shakti Dance®

yoga instructor, and Reiki Master Teacher. She manages Journey’s social media.

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This Recovery Life

Senior Sober

by Brian Cuban

I am sixty-one years old.

Not quite senior, but certainly approaching the cusp. I have reflected on words my father spoke often to my brothers and me growing up in Pittsburgh.

“Today is the youngest you will ever be, live like it.”

This was a mindset that escaped me when I began recovery at 46 years old. I sat in the 12-step room and listened to men and women who were 20 and 30 years sober. They had begun their recovery years and decades before me. It honestly depressed me. I wasn’t sure if I even had that many years in front of me with all the damage I had done to my body.

I lamented the loss of a way of life and uncertainty about a projected future free of the bonds of substances. I was terrified of looking at myself in the mirror, stripped naked, having to love the person I saw without an expensive but ill-fitting suit of cocaine and booze. I wasn’t even sure I was an “alcoholic” nor did I care that first day in 12-step. I simply wanted to wake up the next day and for the first time in my life, walk to the mirror in my birthday suit naked, look at myself and love my reflection without the aid of substances. A feeling I had never experienced without the drugs.

Beginning recovery at any age is difficult. It often involves some sort of loss: Loss of family; the loss of self-respect and the breaking down of self to ground zero before the

slow re-build begins; sometimes the loss of freedom.

When it happens at a later stage in life, there is a lot more room to engage in looking back at all that destruction. I certainly did that quite a bit in those early days of recovery. I obsessed over the years I had “wasted,” convinced that I might as well have lit a match to them. I felt the shame, regret, and contemplation of the uncertainty and fear of “middle-age sober.”

Starting out, it ripped me apart that I had two successful brothers who I measured myself against and never came out feeling good about it. I engaged in the most self-destructive kind of reflection on the past. I call it “revisionist recovery:” going over every moment in my past and wondering how things would be different if I had only not taken that first substance. Would I have been a better law student? A better husband. A better brother. A better son. A better lawyer.

I eventually realized that this was not going to help my recovery because it boiled my life down to moments in time rather than viewing it as a fluid chain of events that make me the person I am today.

Do I have regrets? Sure, I will always regret the collateral damage, but that is what making living amends and doing my best to change the world with acts of kindness is all about for me. I can’t change the past, but I can control how I respond to it and do my best to stay in the present, trying to do the next right thing every day.

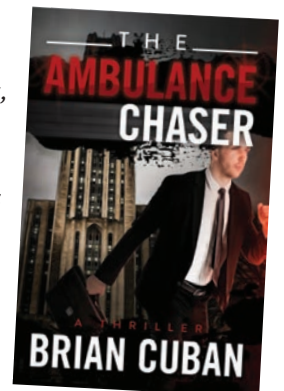


I had the epiphany that, for my recovery to truly move forward, I could no longer obsess about “wasted years” and how things could have been different or what I could have done in my life if I had gotten sober earlier.

I embrace who I am today. Today is the youngest I will ever be, and I will live like it one day at a time in my recovery. That’s what I hope as I move through my sixties. When the time comes, I will embrace the cusp of senior sober, hopefully looking forward with verve and purpose. Senior sober will be a wonderful place to be.

.....
Brian Cuban is an attorney, author and mental health awareness and recovery advocate. He is the author of the best-selling book, The Addicted Lawyer, Tales of The Bar, Booze Blow & Redemption. His debut thriller novel, The Ambulance Chaser, is set for release in December 2021.

He has spoken at conferences, non-profit events, colleges and universities across the United States and in Canada. He also writes extensively on these subjects. His columns have appeared on CNN.com, Foxnews.com, The Huffington Post, The New York Times, and in online and print newspapers around the world.



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Staying the Course

A winding road to recovery sends a message of hope

by Michael Paddleford

That early morning in March 2002, it seemed like every other snowstorm. I was the assistant manager at a convenience store, and they had called me in to cover the night shift. I began to spread salt around and a simple slip on the ice resulted in six herniated discs in my back, which eventually led to me becoming disabled. Due to my age, surgery wasn't an option and painkillers became the only course of treatment.

After eight years, I was hooked on the medication. When one doctor stopped prescribing, I would find another. Eventually the legal prescriptions stopped, but my addiction did not. I did my best to raise my family, in an environment of guilt, shame, and chaos. Relationships were destroyed and my entire family was hurting.

Finally, when my daughter was 16 years old, she was able to meet a sober version of me.

In November of 2018, I took a chance and made a change. I had to accept the fact that I had no control over my addiction, and my life was unmanageable. At the time, I knew nothing about recovery in my small town in northern Maine. I was connected to a Recovery Coach who guided me to a path of recovery that has changed my life forever.

But the change didn't happen right away.

I went to detox in Portland, a rehab in Old Orchard and then sober living in Portland.

I did all the things and read all the books and learned a lot about myself navigating sober living along with a recovery community that was so large and supportive.

I couldn't go home for a long time and when I did it was against a court order and I got arrested for violating my probation.

The next eight months found me homeless, sleeping in my car in parking lots and rest areas up and down the interstate but thankfully, I still had a recovery community around me.

I no longer woke up obsessed with how I was going to get through the day. I didn't have to worry about the things I didn't have, or couldn't do. I had choices that I could make, instead of everything being centered on finding and using substances.

Living in my car wasn't a perfect option but I was living without substances, and remaining grateful for everything I had; this



experience, and all the ones before, caused me to become humble.

Today, Lorie and I are just over three years into recovery. Before the pandemic, I was allowed by the courts to reunite with her in Auburn.

Together, we Recover Loud and we celebrate each milestone with the community. In June of 2020, we created a Facebook group, **Recovery on the Road** for shared connection, acceptance and hope.

In June of 2021, I was added to the Maine State Registry of Recovery Coaches and recently applied for my Alcohol and Drug Counselor's Aide license. Today, I am attending an online course for a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice.

I count my blessings daily, knowing that just over three years ago, none of this would have been possible.

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Aroostook County Action Program (ACAP):

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207-554-4154,
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Getting Through Transitions as a Team

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

Life presents us with many transitions. Good or bad, change can be stressful for both the individual and the couple in recovery. In our work, we have found that learning how to function as a team helps during these times.

How Change Can Be A Trigger

Change creates vulnerability because your flow is disrupted. For many in recovery the state of transition can trigger memories of feeling uncertainty, fear, abandonment, the need to fix, or the desire to flee. Whether the transition is planned (a new job) or unplanned (the death of a parent), vulnerability can lead to recurrence of symptoms for both individuals. Talking about the transition at hand is a crucial first step to maintaining your relationship.

Understand Each Other's Needs

At times like these, it is often tempting to just put your head down and work on the tasks at hand. However, ignoring each other's emotional experiences can make the transition much more

difficult. Here are some ways to approach these conversations:

- Make time to understand each other's needs. Let each person have uninterrupted time to express what they need to feel less stressed and more supported. Don't be surprised if your partner's needs and feelings are much different than yours.
- Check in frequently to understand how each other's needs may have changed over the course of the transition and how to best adjust.
- Practice non-judgmental listening at a time you are feeling calm and open. Try to imagine yourself in the other's shoes.
- Maintain eye contact, sit openly, wait to ask clarifying questions, repeat back what you heard, show that you care and really want to understand what they are going through.
- Express appreciation for your partner's courage to discuss this with you.

How to Act as a Team

A couple in recovery has the advantage of facing a new transition as a team, creating

more trust and connection in the process. Here are tips on how to improve your relationship during critical times:

- Talk with your partner about what you both wish to happen during this time.
- Resist making unilateral decisions
- Develop an action plan for what you can and cannot control
- Decide what each of you need and can expect from your partner
- Make the time to keep talking
- Lean into your support network
- Don't hesitate to reach out for professional help

Life is a journey with highs and lows. Embracing change with your partner can deepen your recovery while creating healthy interdependence with your partner. That's exciting!



Elaine Shamos, MPH & Glenn J. Simpson, LCSW-cc, CADC, from Portland, are new contributors to the Journey editorial team, and they can be reached at [facebook.com/CouplesInRecovery](https://www.facebook.com/CouplesInRecovery).



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This is a FREE public service for any Maine resident navigating any type of substance use disorder, including friends and family. For more information on the program, visit knowyouroptions.me/about-options.



KNOWYOUOPTIONS.ME

The Pillars of Recovery

by Alison Webb

The Merriam Webster dictionary defines a pillar as “a firm upright support for a superstructure.”

This is a perfect description of the four pillars of recovery!

Home, Health, Purpose, and Community are the four supports for a super recovery.

In 2010, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) convened a group of people in recovery from behavioral health conditions (substance use and mental health disorders) to define “recovery.” The group defined recovery as, “A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.” They emphasized recovery as a process of change that looks different in the beginning than it does years later in long term recovery. They also identified four dimensions that support a life in recovery — the four pillars — that will change over the course of your recovery.

Home. Home is a stable and safe place to live. For people in early recovery, a safe home usually means a place where relapse prevention and peer support are prioritized, like in a recovery residence. Later on, independent living with peers can create confidence and connections. Living alone can create time for reflection and creative pursuits. Living with a partner or family

can contribute to stability and can create deep, emotional connection.

Wherever you live, it’s important to be in an environment where you can keep your recovery front and center. When asked, “what’s the best recovery residence or living situation?” Ron Springel, Executive Director of the Maine Association of Recovery Residents, responds, “the one where you got well.”

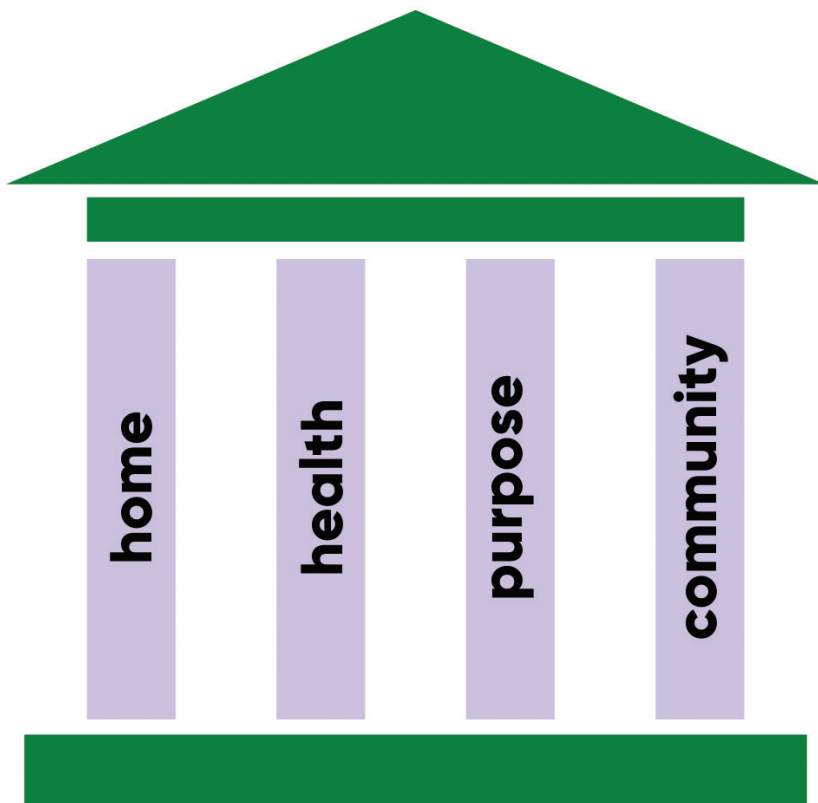
Health. Taking care of your health in early recovery is an important part of overall wellness. Going to a doctor, dentist, or traditional healer to deal with physical health issues is a good start. Making healthy choices like eating nutritious food and getting regular exercise and sleep are important, too. When you’re ready, quitting smoking is one of the most important steps you can take to improve and maintain your health. (Did you know that people treated for alcohol or drug addiction are more likely to die from smoking-

related diseases than from causes related to their drug use?)

But health isn’t just about the body, it’s also about our emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Being in touch with your feelings, forming caring relationships, and understanding your place in the universe contribute to your health, too.

Creating a healthy lifestyle is good for recovery! As the Arabic proverb says, “He who has health has hope; and he who has hope has everything.”

Purpose. We all need to find meaning in our daily activities. That can be through work, volunteering, taking care of other people, and creative activities. Work can give us the resources to participate fully in society. Volunteering is an important way of giving back. Taking care of our family, by supporting them financially, taking care of their physical and emotional needs, and growing with them is meaningful for many of us.



We also find meaning in creativity. Journaling or drawing can help quiet your mind and slow down the world, so you feel present in your recovery. Dancing and singing can bring you into the moment and remind you of the sheer pleasure of living. Playing music with other people can create joyful and memorable connections.

Community. Relationships and social networks with other people in recovery can provide support, friendship, love, and hope. Spending time with people who have been down the same road, who “get you,” can be healing, meaningful, and just plain fun. Joining - or rejoining - a community outside recovery circles when it feels right can create opportunities to meet new people and learn new things. You might even feel comfortable sharing your recovery experience as one way to educate people, reduce stigma and create hope in the community.

Adding it all together — health, home, purpose, and community — creates a solid foundation for recovery, no matter where you are in your journey.



Alison Jones Webb is a public health professional who has worked in the field of substance use prevention, treatment and recovery in Maine for over 15 years.

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9 Work–Life Recovery Tools to Empower, Satisfy, Grow, and Delight

by Roz Applebaum



I am a recovering workaholic. I love to work. But I have discovered that the pressures of my career can collapse my soul if not balanced with play. I crashed in my third year of sobriety—a total emotional break-down. I had invested my life in my job and didn't have a cushion on which to land. I had distanced myself from my recovery program and had only co-workers for “friends.” I was unemployable, drained, and emotionally broken.

Twenty-plus years later, I have several successful careers. The only reason I can say that now is because I took a sabbatical from my high-powered corporate career of launching companies for someone else to start a dog walking business, which I called my “recovery job.” It took several years in the company of dogs for me to regain my sense of self, earn boundaries, practice self-care, re-engage in my recovery program, and find my true career path that I'm on today.

I learned that I can juggle much more than I thought—my own businesses, a very satisfying

personal life, and giving back to my community, as long as I take care of myself first and closely adhere to my top nine work recovery tools:

1 Focus: When I'm at work, I work. I focus on what I'm doing and leave my personal issues at the door. I have a virtual filing cabinet in my brain. I put my pressing challenges in drawers and keep them firmly closed until I'm ready. If all my drawers are open, the filing cabinet falls over, and I'm completely immobilized.

2 Time Management: I track my life on an electronic calendar that syncs between my computer and phone. I review this calendar regularly throughout the day and set alerts for important engagements. My calendar also provides a virtual container for my life. I can live in the moment rather than worrying about what's coming up next. I minimize stress and anxiety by setting aside time on my calendar to prepare for appointments and engagements. A paper calendar can also start

you off in the right direction until you're ready to go electronic!

3 Organization: Create “to do” lists either electronically or on paper. I'm actually pretty old school and have multiple lists on paper. Each list is a project category, both personal and professional. It gives me great satisfaction to cross off “done” items. When I put a task on a “to do” list, I know it's safely there, won't be forgotten, and there for me when I'm ready to focus on it. I can let it go!

4 Self Care: Take breaks every couple hours! Include healthy snacks, meditation, prayer, a quick check-in phone call, breathe, stretch. Get outside in nature if you can.

5 Professionalism: Dress for success; dress for the job you aspire to, even if you work remotely or have a uniform. Start your day with an invigorating, energizing bath or shower. Water is cleansing to mind, body and soul. I get my best inspirations while showering! Keep a notepad in the bathroom! I put

on clean clothes, check the mirror. Feeling renewed and fresh, I'm ready to launch into the day with enthusiasm, feeling abundant and grateful.

6 Expansion: Get a side hustle; learn something new. Take a class. This strategy takes the pressure off your regular job, which may or may not be all you want for a career. Volunteer. Help someone else. Busy people get more things done.

7 Opportunities: Update your resume. You never know when the next opportunity will come your way. Get help from a friend or professional with this; a second eye will help you uncover skills and talents you may not even know you have!

8 Combatting Fear, Doubt, and Insecurity: Overwhelmed? Procrastinating? Suffering from Perfectionism? Do one small task.

Set a timer for 5 or 10 minutes. You'll be amazed that one small step leads to a flow through to more action.

9 Play: This list isn't meant to overwhelm, but to inspire: Just for the love of it, try a new sport, take up a hobby, join a club, think about what would ignite your passion, get off social media for a day and walk in nature. There are so many things you can do instead of watching TV that don't cost a lot of money. Brainstorm with your friends,

family! Enjoy the journey! If you find it impossible to work with these tools, then maybe it's time for a change.



Roz is a Journey Team Member and a coach for entrepreneurs in recovery. She resides in Southern Maine, where she gratefully lives with her yellow Labrador retriever, climbs mountains, walks the beach daily, takes art classes and engages extensively with her recovery community. rozapplebaum.com



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Al-Anon Family Groups

Help and Hope for Families and Friends of Alcoholics

by an anonymous member of Al-Anon in long term recovery

Who are Alanon members?

Al-Anon members are people, just like you, who are worried about someone with a drinking problem.

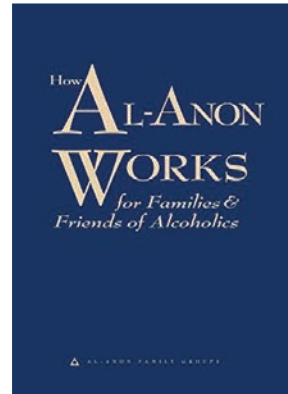
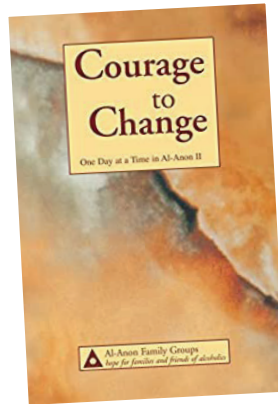
Al-Anon is a mutual support group of peers who share their experience in applying the Al-Anon principles to issues related to the effects of a problem drinker in their lives.

In Al-Anon, we have come to know that alcoholism is a family disease. We call it a family disease because the alcoholic's drinking and behavior impacts those in their proximity. The alcoholic's loved ones may change their own attitudes and outlooks in response to the alcoholic's drinking. They could even experience anxiety, depression, or shame at their inability to "rescue, fix, and save" the alcoholic.

Under such conditions, the family members need help to recover from the effects of alcoholism. That's where Al-Anon comes in. The Al-Anon Preamble describes the fellowship and its purpose:

The Al-Anon Family Groups are a fellowship of relatives and friends of alcoholics who share their experience, strength, and hope in order to solve their common problems. We believe alcoholism is a family illness and that changed attitudes can aid recovery.

Al-Anon is not allied with any sect, denomination, political entity, organization, or institution; does not engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any cause. There are no dues for membership.



Al-Anon is self-supporting through its own voluntary contributions.

Al-Anon has but one purpose: to help families of alcoholics. We do this by practicing the Twelve Steps, by welcoming and giving comfort to families of alcoholics, and by giving understanding and encouragement to the alcoholic.

There are several tools and resources available through Al-Anon. Here are some that we have found essential to aiding our recovery.

Meetings

What is an "Al-Anon Meeting"?

An Al-Anon meeting is a gathering of people who meet at an identified location each week for about an hour to share their experience, strength and hope around issues related to their recovery process from this family disease.

We focus on ourselves and not on the person/s with alcohol issues. I have found in Al-Anon, also known as Al-Anon Family Groups (AFG), an amazing new family that helps me fill in the gaps that my birth family

was not able to due to their being affected by this family disease.

What is a "beginners" meeting?

There are specific meetings for those new in Al-Anon. They are a great place to start to learn about ourselves and how we have been affected by the family disease of alcohol use disorder (AUD, previously referred to as alcoholism). Mutual support is provided and every member is on an equal level no matter how long, or how short their time in Al-Anon.

Where do I find a meeting in my area?

We are fortunate to have a good array of meetings in Maine and locations can be easily accessed at afgmaine.org. Some meet in person, some are held virtually by zoom and some are a hybrid of both in-person and virtual.

The 12 Steps

What are the steps?

Al-Anon uses the 12 steps that they adapted with permission from Alcoholics Anonymous [AA] in 1951. These steps have been shown as successful as a means of living that

has helped thousands of members over the years. The 12 steps are focused on several ideas:

- a) we are powerless over another's alcohol use;
- b) we need something greater than ourselves (this could be the meeting/group) to provide a "higher power" to us;
- c) we need to change both our own attitude and our own actions; and
- d) as we recover from this family disease we need to carry the message of help and hope to others who still may be suffering. This is the give and take of the "mutual support" found in AFG.

The Steps provide an orderly direction to follow in learning to love myself.

Sponsorship

What is a sponsor?

A sponsor is a member of Al-Anon who is committed to our 12-step program, and as a result of working these steps, can provide their experience, strength and hope to a newer member.

What is sponsorship?

It is a mutual and confidential sharing between two Al-Anon members. Experience shows that having a sponsor is a valuable aid to personal understanding and use of the Al-Anon program of recovery. The sponsor is a person with whom you can have close, personal support between meetings. We talk about general issues in the meetings and you can share more intimate details with your sponsor.

Literature

Al-Anon has an incredible number of books, guidelines and pamphlets that were written over the years to help family and friends recover from the effects of someone else's drinking. This literature can be found at most meetings and some

of it is free. You can also find a vast array of literature, guidelines and a member blog at al-anon.org.

An example is the daily reader called "Courage to Change" that provides us with a daily story of a member's experience in their recovery process. I read this when I have my morning coffee and it starts my day on a positive note.

My favorite book is "Lois Remembers" which is a memoir of the co-founder of Al-Anon and the wife of the co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous. She talks about the long and painful road of her husband's AUD and its effects on her, as well as the powerful and motivating story of her co-founding Al-Anon.

Slogans

What are Slogans?

Slogans are short phrases that members use in times of feeling overwhelmed or in crisis. They act like a mantra, to provide me with

a focus that can provide me some relief from my challenging situation. A few examples are *Easy Does It*, *How Important Is It?*, and *Keep it Simple*. I use the last one almost every day because my mind gets clogged up with so many racing thoughts. It is useful in bringing me back to the present and allows me to figure out what is the most Important at that moment.

Unlike some of Al-Anon's practices and principles that take a while to learn and apply, the Al-Anon slogans are easy to learn and remember. You may have heard some of these slogans hundreds of times before without ever taking them seriously or trying to put them to work. After all, they are clichés, and easy to disregard. But it is their very simplicity that makes them so powerful."

To contact Al-Anon, call 1-888-425-2666 or visit alanon.org. If you are affected by someone else's drinking, Al-Anon can help.



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Carolyn Wallace MS LADC
Portland Maine

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carolynwallace@maine.rr.com



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Al-Anon

Personal Experiences

by Amy Paradysz

No one can seek recovery on behalf of someone else. But, if you're worried about someone with a drinking problem, Al-Anon meetings are for you. Not for you to help figure out how to make your person get sober. Just FOR YOU.

Founded in 1951, Al-Anon is a worldwide fellowship that offers a program of recovery for the families and friends of alcoholics, whether or not the alcoholic recognizes the existence of a drinking problem or seeks help. Meetings are about an hour, and there are no fees or dues. Members lead the meetings, with a message of hope passed from person to person.

Perhaps you're curious about Al-Anon and why and how it works. Three Mainers active in the Al-Anon community answer these questions and more.

Who is Al-Anon for?

Al-Anon is for anyone worried about someone—a partner, child, sibling or anyone else they love—who has a drinking problem.

“It's hard to watch loved ones go to rehab or jail or self-destruct in some way,” says Finn, who has been active in Al-Anon for 7 years. “We come in needing support.”

“At the moment when we join this group, we're usually confused and life is unmanageable,” says Yaeko, who first walked into an Al-Anon meeting when her husband was in Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.). Thirty-five years and untold numbers of meetings later, she says, “I find that having sponsees

works like having a sponsor. Helping someone helps me.”

Is Al-Anon about helping the person you love get sober?

In short, no.

“It's a way of living life and dealing with everything coming at you, not just a way of dealing with a specific problem,” Barry says. “It really has changed my life, whether my loved one is drinking or not.”

Why is it anonymous?

“Anonymity keeps it safe for people who are new and scared to share without consequences,” Yaeko says.

Why does talking help?

“I grew up in an alcoholic home, and when I was in a relationship with an alcoholic Al-Anon helped me see whether my thinking was distorted,” Finn says. “One of the things I would do is shut people off. I had a coping mechanism of withdrawing. Being in touch with my sponsor and staying connected to the fellowship, going to meeting and doing the step work—all these things help.”

What are the steps?

Think of the 12 Steps as a roadmap to sobriety. Al-Anon uses the same steps as A.A., except that the final step is to share what they've learned “with others” rather than “with other alcoholics.”

“The first step,” Yaeko says, “is to admit that we are powerless. And the first word of that is ‘we.’ It's a ‘we’ program. We encourage each other to do the work. It takes courage to change thoughts, feelings

and behaviors. We find out our shortcomings and strengths and, if we have done wrong by anyone, we make amends.”

What does that mean, being ‘powerless’?

“We thought that we held the power to get someone to stop drinking,” Yaeko says. “With my Dad, I thought that if I was good and smart and knew what ticked him off and how to make him happy, maybe, I thought, I could stop the drinking. There were all kinds of ways that I thought that I could stop it. But that fake belief makes life even more unmanageable. And when I couldn't manage, I would think it was my fault.”

Why would I need a Sponsor?

A Sponsor helps you walk through the steps in real life. A Sponsor is simply an Al-Anon member who you ask to be your mentor in this thing we call life.

Do you ever finish the steps?

“There's no 12 step test,” says Finn, who describes steps 10, 11 and 12 as maintenance work. “As much you want to work, you can—and that's what you'll get out of it. When I feel better, more at ease, not waiting for someone else to change for me to be happy, I've done enough.”

Do I have to be religious to be in Al-Anon?

No, Al-Anon does not demand that anyone profess belief in 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.

“We need the help of others and a higher power,” Yaeko says. “Until I could really see that there is a higher power, how could I give up ‘helping’ the alcoholic in my life? They have a higher power, too, and that higher power can guide them. But I’m not the answer. Understanding that really helped me.”

What has surprised you about Al-Anon?

“I thought at first I might not fit in because I identify as a trans man,” Finn says. “It surprised me that no matter who is in the room, it can work. The message of recovery is enough to bind us together.”

How many meetings should I go to?

That depends.

“When I started, I went to four or five meetings a week and, now, maybe three,” Finn says. “It’s finding the right balance. In the beginning, five was too much with my other responsibilities and three wasn’t enough.”

Yaeko says, “I have been to nearly all the meetings, different days of the week and at different times. When I was new, I went practically every day. Once I got the hang of it, I told my sponsor that I didn’t want to go to as many meetings because I wanted to do other things. And she said, ‘Congratulations!’”

What keeps you coming back?

“It helps me to better understand relationships, how I deal with things and how I can change to make a relationship better,” Yaeko says. “For example, in my chaotic alcoholic home I had to be watchful and feel in control, which made me become a little self-righteous, giving too much advice, being manipulative.”

How can I find a meeting?

Maine has about 100 Al-Anon groups—with meetings in all 16

counties and on different days and times of days—all listed on www.maineafg.org/. Meeting via mobile app is also an option (video must be on to participate).

Can teens go to meetings, too?

Teens have their own groups, called Alateen, so they can talk with other teens with similar situations. Two certified Al-Anon adult sponsors host each meeting. Check www.maineafg.org/ for meeting options.

Can I start with a book?

Sure! Al-Anon Family Groups has a book called “How Al-Anon Works for Families and Friends of Alcoholics.”



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

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Music for Recovery

by Kathy Moser



I fell in love with the guitar and songs in general at Girl Scout camp. When I was 10, my dad bought me my first guitar. We had just moved, and I was starting fifth grade in my third new school. A year later, my parents divorced. Through the turmoil, music became true solace. All these years later, it still is.

In my teens, the people who introduced me to music also introduced me to drugs. It was part of the deal. The bands I loved, concerts I went to, people I played music with—drugs were part of it all.

When I got clean, a very well-meaning person said “If you want to stay clean, you should stop playing music.” I thought “If I can’t play music, I don’t care if I’m clean.” Renegotiate my relationship with music, yes. Stop playing, no.

The message was that drugs were part of music so therefore music couldn’t be part of recovery. And that music without drugs would be less creative. Both were wrong.

Recovery has been great for my music. Music has been great for my recovery.

In early recovery, songwriting was a sacred form of alchemy that turned my new-found rage and grief into art. A way to know my new self, true self. A problem-solving tool. A grieving tool. A life-line.

Being clean also made it possible to eventually tour, show up on time prepared to perform, lead a band, book and promote gigs. And to write better, play better and sing better. It’s true that I had some good musical ideas when I was high, but

the creativity was always in me, not the drugs. And getting high made it impossible to follow through.

Music is part of many people’s using-stories. But it can also be a powerful, joyful and important part of our recovery.

That’s why I started Music for Recovery in 2008. We want to destroy the myth that drugs and alcohol are necessary for creativity and showcase sober musicians as role models. The vision we hold is that evidence-based, clinically integrated music programming will become standard in treatment. If you are a musician in recovery, we’d love to hear from you.

Science shows the value of music to people in recovery. But it’s the stories of the people we’ve worked with, the over 750 songs we’ve written with clients, that show the true power music has to help people in their recovery. All names have been changed for privacy.

Carol’s Story: Finding her voice

When the treatment center talent show was first announced, Carol put her head down and said “I’m not doing it!”

After listening to her peers choose songs to perform she said, “I’ll do it, but I’m only singing the chorus, and I’m not using the microphone or standing up in front of the group.”

Week two: After watching her peers practicing singing on the microphone, she said “I’ll sing the whole song, but I’m not using the microphone or standing up in front of the group, and I’m keeping my eyes closed.”



Week Three: Carol got an iPad with her song on it and a pair of headphones. She learned how to record herself singing to the track. After 30 minutes recording herself in the pantry, she came out and said “I actually don’t sound bad!”

Week 4: After listening to her peers’ recordings, playing hers for them, and watching them learn to sing through their anxiety, practice where to breath in the song, memorize lyrics, experiment with more confident body posture, and get support and positive feedback she said, “I’ll sing in the front of the group with the microphone, but I’m staying seated and keeping my eyes closed.”

Week 5: Standing on the side singing into the microphone, she suddenly opened her eyes and it was like watching a soul re-inhabit a body. Everyone gasped and clapped. Carol could not stop smiling.

Week 6: Carol did her hair and make-up, stood up in front of the group with her eyes open, shoulders back and recorded a music video of the song, with a dedication for her daughters that she was in treatment to get back.

At the end she wrote: “What I got out of music class is confidence. I was afraid to sing in front of my peers because I was always told I had a bad voice. This class made me

believe that every voice is different, and I have a unique voice that is worth listening to.”

John's Story: Together we can

At a 28-day treatment center, the group decided to write about having a second chance. One of the clients said “This is my 15th Second Chance,” so that became the title. When asked about how people felt about having another chance, one client who was still shaking looked up briefly and said with great weariness “here I am again,” which was a great first line.

When it was time for someone to try to sing it, to create the melody a shaky voice said “I’ll do it.” John had never sung before in his life, and he stood in front of the group and sang “Here I am again, scared and uncertain, can I do it? This is my 15th second chance.” He sounded like Tom Waits.

The room went still at the beauty and unlikeliness of it. When it came time to record, the group chose to have John on the mic and they surrounded him in a half circle. He was too foggy to track the words on the screen so they sang with him to guide him.

Years later we ran into people who had been in that group. They still remembered what a miracle it felt like, and how good the group felt about their decision to support and surround John so he could record.

Cheryl's Story: Slowing Down Works

Cheryl was 16, in treatment and struggling when she came into the studio and asked for a piano lesson. Like many people in early recovery, she was anxious and scattered but she really wanted to learn Für Elise by Beethoven. She was guided to slow down, to play one line at a time and breathe before repeating it, to stay relaxed when she stumbled

and missed a note. After about 20 minutes, to her surprise, she could play the entire first page.

Reflecting afterwards on what helped her, she said slowing down helped her the most. She was asked where else in her life slowing down might help. “When taking a test,” she said. Where else? “In a job interview.” Where else? “With my mom.” Bingo.

In the piano lesson she had the felt experience that slowing down created success and that she could do it. She wasn’t taught, shown or told. She experienced it while learning the music that interested her.

Music for Recovery is about creating experiences like this, embodied experiential learning in the music realm that translates directly into recovery success skills. We’ve been doing songwriting workshops, concerts, talent shows, teaching instrumental music and creating music studios in treatment centers nationally for over 12 years. We’ve seen it change lives.

Songwriting allows people to say things they can’t say in a meeting or therapy session. Songwriting can be used to create positive mantras with a melody that are memorable. They can be a concrete reminder of a lesson or event that someone wants to remember. For example, a song about what to do when you are triggered.

Group songwriting is not just cathartic and deep, it can also be seriously fun. The joy of working together to create something from nothing mirrors the recovery process. One client said afterwards “First it was intimidating. Then, it was possible. Then it was creative and fun. I felt proud at the end, something I haven’t felt in a very long time.”

If you are interested in adding music to your recovery, look around your



Music for Recovery team—Foreground: Founder and Director Kathy Moser, Back left: Master Teaching Artist Alice Leon, Back right: Ella Y, Apprentice.

area for open mics or songwriter groups. Many really talented musicians are teaching online these days. Look for a teacher who is patient and kind, not just a good player. Get a rhyming dictionary and play around with lyrics. Try one of the beat-making apps like Garageband or FL Mobile. Check out the many sober fan groups for bands like Phish, The Grateful Dead, Disco Biscuits and many more.

Many recovery centers have sober open mics. If you can’t find one, start one. Build in practice sessions where participants can get used to being on stage, singing into a mic, being in front of people and identifying step-by-step goals for improving their performances over time.

If you are already a musician and are new to recovery, you may need time to find a new way of being with your creativity. Performing and playing are amazing and also exhausting. Self-care is key. But I promise you, recovery will make you play better, sing better, write better and perform better. Rock on!

.....
Kathy Moser is an award-winning songwriter, performer and teaching artist, a person in long-term recovery, and the Founder and Director of Music for Recovery. She has over twenty years of experience in the mental health field. She founded Music for Recovery in 2009 to help people develop recovery skills through music.

What Are Puff Bars?

by Barbara Sullivan

I had never heard of Puff Bars until a colleague recently mentioned them. It turns out that Puff Bars are the new kid on the block in the vaping world. Puff Bars are disposable vape products, aka disposable e-cigarettes. They work just like JUUL, but unlike JUUL, Puff Bars are not subject to the new federal regulations for e-cigarettes because they are disposable. While JUUL is busy fighting lawsuits having to do with marketing their product to teens, it was a perfect opportunity for Puff Bars to enter the vaping market. Like JUUL, Puff Bars label their product as containing 5 percent nicotine. What 5 percent means is that each Puff Bar e-cigarette contains 41.3 mg of nicotine, the equivalent of 41 tobacco cigarettes.

There are several brands of these disposables on the market such as E-Puffer, Mr. Vapor, and BIDI. Because they are not regulated by the FDA, the industry is able to market their products with fruity and sweet flavors like orange mango and blueberry ice, which the FDA banned JUUL from manufacturing due to their appeal to the teen market.

What are the health risks for teens who vape? Nicotine increases heart rate, can cause acid reflux, and create breathing problems for the

user. Teens are inhaling harmful chemicals into their lungs when they vape. Some of the known chemicals are formaldehyde, acetone, propylene glycol, and arsenic. Stanford University researchers collected data this year to show that teens who vape are at risk for COVID.

Most teens are unaware of the chemicals in a vape aerosol. As adults we can educate teens about the dangers of vaping any type of e-cigarette. We can tell them that none of these chemicals should ever be inhaled into one's lungs. We can remind them that their teenage brain, which isn't fully developed, is highly vulnerable to nicotine addiction when they vape. These are simple prevention messages that can open the door to a conversation about the risks of substance use.

Nicotine is a highly addictive drug. As adults and caregivers, we can recommend quitting but keep in mind that most teens can't quit vaping overnight, especially if they are addicted to vaping.

Here are some suggestions you can make to help teenagers quit vaping.

- Encourage teens to pick a "quit date" and to tell family and friends

of their plan to quit

- Suggest downloading a phone apps like QuitSTART or MY QUIT
- Plan activities that can help avoid vaping like hiking or going to a movie
- Avoid being around friends who vape
- Plan an exit strategy if you find yourself in the presence of people vaping

Teens who want to quit can also take advantage of This is Quitting, a free and anonymous program offered by Truth Initiative, the country's largest nonprofit health organization whose mission is to end nicotine addiction and tobacco use. Teens and young adults can join This is Quitting by texting DITCHVAPE to 88709, and parents can find support by texting QUIT to 202-899-7550. To learn more, visit truthinitiative.org.



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



Statewide Resources

CRISIS HOTLINES

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

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.



Recovery Centers

Aroostook Recovery Center of Hope

36 North Street #1, Houlton
207-254-2213

ARRC Augusta Recovery Reentry Center

2 Bangor St, Suite 2, Augusta
(207) 226-3438

Bangor Area Recovery Center

142 Center Street, Brewer
207-561-9444

Bath Recovery Community Center

97 Commercial Street, Bath
207-389-4236

Beacon House Peer and Recovery Center

3 Canal Street, Rumford
207-418-0079 / 207-369-0868

Beacon of Hope Recovery Center

19 VFW Street, Lincoln
207-403-9100

Biddeford Peer Support Center

15 York Street, Biddeford
207-358-4414

Boothbay Harbor Peer & Wellness Center

35 School Street, Boothbay Harbor
207-315-6236

Coastal Recovery Community Center

24 Lincoln Street, Suite 103, Rockland
207-691-3697

DownEast Recovery Support Center

311 Main Street, Calais
207-952-9279

Down East Recovery Support Center

11 Free Street, Machias
207-259-6238

Harvest Inn Peer Center

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

Lakes Region Recovery Center

25 Hospital Drive, Suite E, Bridgton
207-803-8707

Larry Labonte Recovery Center

412 Waldo Street, Rumford
207-418-4983

LINC Center

38 Memorial Drive, Augusta
207-530-0391 / 207-430-4001

Perry Center (formerly Amistad)

835 Forest Avenue, Portland
207-615-3691

Pir2Peer Recovery Center

1009 Central Street, Millinocket
207-723-1327

Portland Recovery Community Center

102 Bishop Street, Portland
207-553-2575

REST Center

205 Main Street, Lewiston
207-783-7378

Rockland Peer Support Center

12 Union Street, Rockland
207-317-3012

Sanford Peer Support Center

19 Washington Street, Sanford
207-956-2984

Together Place Peer Run Recovery Center

2 Second Street, Bangor
207-941-2897

Valley Peer Run Recovery Center

272 Main Street, Suite 101, Madawaska
207-728-4806 / 207-316-7375

Wabanaki Health & Wellness Center

157 Park Street, Suite 5, Bangor
207-951-7526

Waterville Peer Recovery Center

32 Ticonic Street, Waterville
207-859-2667

Roads to Recovery Community Center

1 Water Street, Caribou
207-493-1278

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

Al-Anon / Alateen

207-284-1844 / 800-498-1844
www.maineafg.org

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

Cocaine Anonymous (CA)

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

Codependents Anonymous

602-277-7991 / 888-444-2359
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
www.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

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

Gambler's Anonymous (GA)

718-352-1671 / 888-830-2271
www.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

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

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

Narcotics Anonymous (NA)

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

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.
www.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

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

Wellbriety Movement

(White Bison)

A sustainable grassroots movement that provides culturally based healing for indigenous people
207-992-0411 / 877-871-1495
www.wellbriety.com

WHAT DOES RECOVERY LOOK LIKE TO YOU?



INSERT YOUR IMAGE HERE

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If you would like support on your journey, our team of professionals are here to listen, to help and to offer the treatment that's right for you.

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- Patient Navigation
- Education about health maintenance through each level of treatment


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