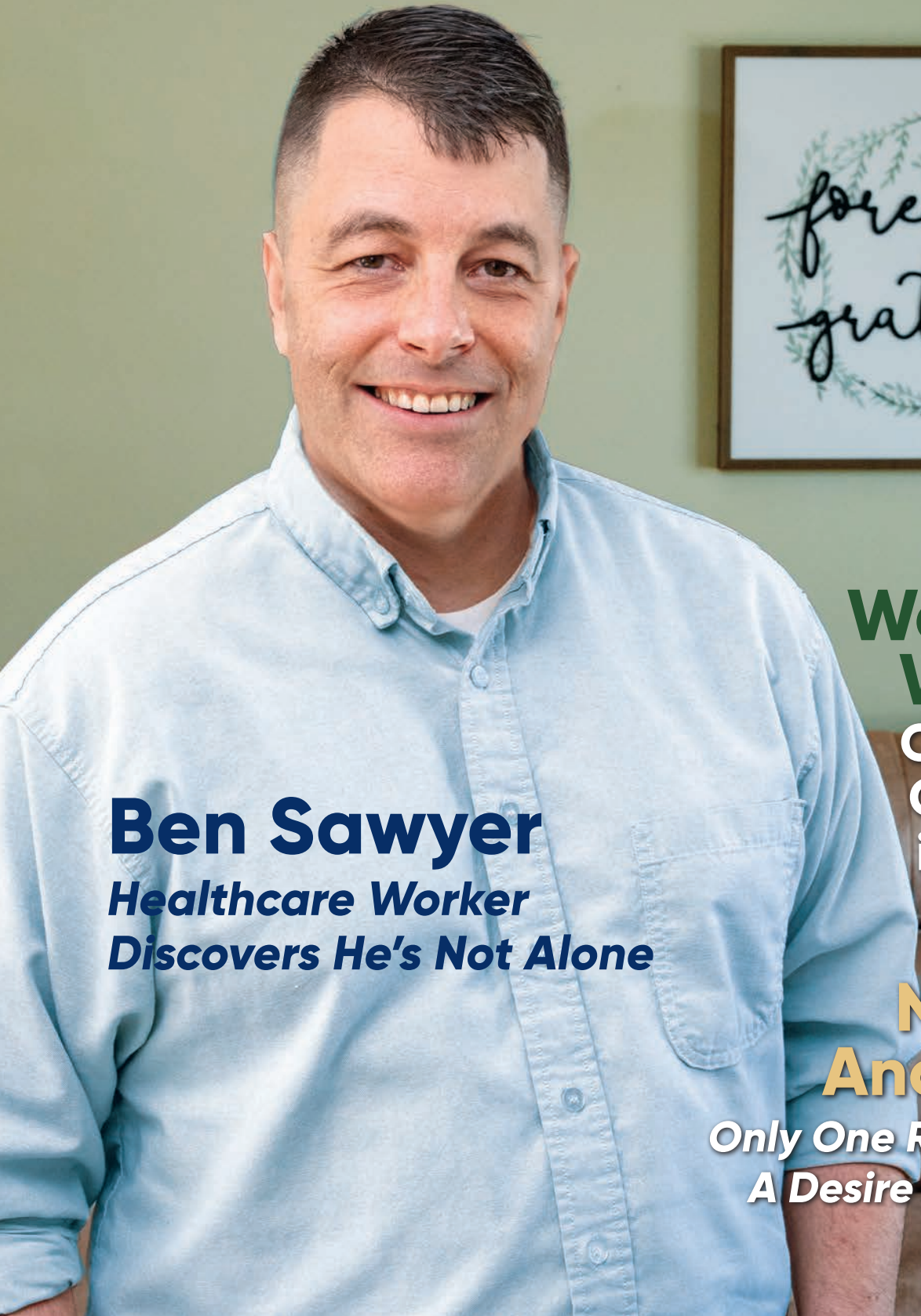


Journey

making recovery from addiction visible

Feb/Mar 2022 • Issue 19



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Discovers He's Not Alone*

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making recovery from addiction visible

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Forever Thanked

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

“All that mattered in that moment was that I no longer believed that I could help me. In that moment, a spark of hope transformed into action.”

These powerful, important words from Niki’s article, *Disbelief to Belief*, really resonated with me.

Hope is that thing that tells me I don’t need to know how things are going to work out ... just that they will; and my faith holds me steady while I take some action.



In this issue, we share stories about action taken. From Amy Paradysz, *A Cultural Connection Drives Personal Transformation*, is an inspirational story about Steven Knockwood, who, once he aligned his actions with his culture, found some ease in his recovery journey. Our *Couples in Recovery* column is about taking action in relationships to start the conversation.

Jacqueline Brown’s article, *Making It Work for Employees in Recovery*, provides information for employers to consider how hiring people in recovery may be helpful to relieve some of the high job vacancy rates, and is also great for their culture over the long term.

Our goal is to provide a spark of hope ... maybe even amplify it because hope implies that there is a possibility of a better future, one that can provide a compelling vision and shine a light for those looking for a way out.

We can and do recover.

With immense gratitude, *Carolyn*



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ry saves lives

Making It Work for Employees in Recovery

by Jacqueline Brown

The Maine Tourism Association recently hosted a virtual presentation on recovery-friendly workplaces and recovery-related employee rights. Here are some highlights from this fascinating conversation about how to make the workplace work for people in recovery.

Maine is known for its tourism and hospitality, but what's less well known is the epidemic of addiction in businesses that make up this industry. In the US, approximately 1 in 10 employees in any workplace is affected by substance use issues. In the tourism industry, however, this rate is almost double.

“Restaurant and hospitality workers have the highest rates of substance use disorders at 16.9 percent,” says Kathryn Ference, director of Workforce Development at the Maine Tourism Association. “Our industry has some of the highest rates of substance use disorder in the workplace.”

While addiction is a concern, another crisis is impacting the tourism industry in 2022: high job vacancy rates brought on by the pandemic, which has created hectic, short-staffed workplaces in many of Maine's restaurants, hotels and event venues.

What all this means is that many employers have found themselves at a crossroads. How can workplaces support employees seeking to end their addiction issues and enter recovery? What rights do employees in recovery have? And how might people in



recovery actually be a solution to the current job crunch?

Here are some answers.

Employees in recovery have rights

If an employee is using drugs or alcohol and this affects job performance, consequences can and often do follow, including termination of employment. However, when people are actively in recovery from addiction, they gain important protections under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The upshot of ADA safeguards is that it's illegal for employers to discriminate against recovering alcoholics and drug users who have sought treatment for their addiction. Under the terms of the ADA, employers cannot fire, refuse to hire, or refuse to promote

someone simply because he or she has a history of substance use. Employers also cannot fire, refuse to hire, or refuse to promote employees merely because they are enrolled in a drug or alcohol rehabilitation program.

Being in recovery and keeping a job or re-entering the workforce can be one of the most important steps to help someone stay in recovery.

Employees in recovery also have the right to request accommodations for their recovery, which might include time off for medical appointments or outpatient rehab care.

The key is that these rights are based on being in and staying in recovery. According to Anne-Marie

L. Storey, Esq., an employment lawyer and partner at the law firm Rudman Winchell in Bangor, “There’s a difference between requesting accommodations because you’re seeking treatment and you’re following through with that versus you’re asking for time off because you used drugs or alcohol the night before and you couldn’t get up on time for work... or you’re at work and making mistakes because you’re under the influence.”

Eligible employees in recovery may be able to request covered time off under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to deal with substance use disorders and related problems, including treatment of drug or alcohol addiction or treatment of another physical illness or incapacity related to substance use, such as kidney failure. FMLA provisions also cover taking time off to care for a family member seeking substance-related treatment.

Employees in Recovery Need Recovery-Friendly Workplaces

Supporting employees in their recovery journeys is just good business. The bottom line? “Workers in recovery miss approximately 13.7 days less per year than workers with substance use disorder. Each employee who recovers from substance use disorder saves a company over \$8,500. That’s on average,” says Joanna Russell, executive director of the Northeastern Workforce Development Board in Bangor.

Is your workplace recovery friendly? “A supportive workplace provides a sense of appreciation for employees’ wellbeing and recovery in general,” says Russell. To put recovery support into practice, an employer could develop policies that offer a safe environment,

confidentiality and promotion of healthy habits.

“This could mean lunch & learns with information and education. It’s about educating management, supervisors, and employees about what recovery is and helping them to identify where resources are,” Russell adds.

When people are actively in recovery from addiction, they gain important protections under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The result of implementing recovery-friendly practices is almost always all positive. “Employees will notice that management cares about their well being. As a result, employers see improved morale, higher attendances, less turnover, and a broader job applicant base,” Russell said.

Becoming a recovery-friendly workplace, however, is not an overnight process. According to Russell, “I suggest we compare our experience with the non-smoking movement when it started decades ago. It was a slow process. Do you remember when restaurants split an open dining room into two and they called one side non-smoking and the other side smoking? Now look at us.”



Hiring People In Recovery

A recovery-friendly workplace also values the recovery community as a source of new hires.

“Hiring people in recovery in no way suggests that you lower your hiring standards. What we are saying is that you, as a hiring representative of your company, utilize your assessment. What we would like to see you do is open your mind to those resumes that have time gaps and bring in that person who demonstrates needed qualifications and the skills and experience to be the best candidate for the position,” said Russell.

Employers must be aware that asking applicants about their history of addiction as a job screening tool is a big employment no-no. “The law is very, very clear that you, as the employer, can’t ask about that,” said Amy Sneirson, Executive Director of the Maine Human Rights Commission.

However, it is okay for employers to ask potential employees about any job lapses or past criminal convictions disclosed during the application process.

As Sneirson explained, “It’s appropriate to have a conversation about what was the criminal conviction and what were the circumstances and how long ago it was, and is it related in any way to the job that you’re hiring for? Also, what’s happened since the conviction? Did the applicant go through recovery? Have they gotten a college degree? There are all sorts of things that could have completely changed their circumstances since the criminal conviction.”

It’s also okay if the job applicant brings up their recovery without being asked.



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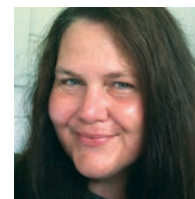


According to Snieron, “You may not know [prior to the interview] that the applicant is in recovery, but this whole recovery-friendly movement is all about the idea that it’s not shameful to bring this up. A person who’s in recovery may be very, very proud, rightfully so of how hard they have worked to overcome their addiction and how this hard work and dedication is going to make them a great employee for you.”

Snieron’s recommendation for employers is to stay open-minded and “understand if a person tells you about recovery.”

Being in recovery and keeping a job or re-entering the workforce can be one of the most important steps to help someone stay in recovery.

“One of the most beneficial ingredients to an individual’s recovery is employment,” says Russell. When an individual has established a strong foundation of recovery and is ready to go back to work, we can work together to contribute to the success of everyone involved.”



Jacqueline Brown is a freelance writer from Southern Maine who regularly contributes to national and regional publications. A former public school teacher in the Boston

area, Jacqueline is the published author of several books for children, one of which won the Maine Literary Award for Children’s Literature in 2018. When she’s not at her computer, Jacqueline can be found looking for seaglass at her favorite beach.

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Recovery is Good for Business

75% of people who struggle are employed

Employers **CAN** make a difference

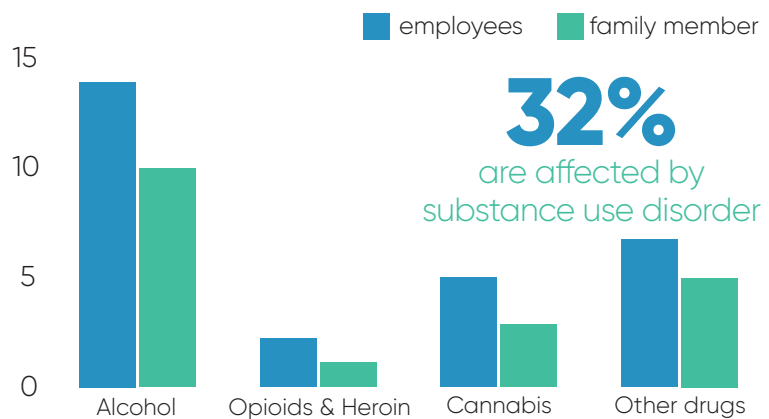
The National Safety Council collaborated with an independent research institution, NORC at the University of Chicago, to update “The Real Cost of Substance Use to Employers” tool, originally developed in 2017 with national nonprofit Shatterproof.

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.

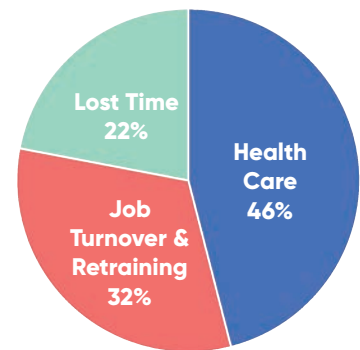
Although 75% of these people are part of the workforce, most employers are unaware of the hidden costs associated with these illnesses.

EXAMPLE: Maine ENTERTAINMENT, RECREATION and FOOD INDUSTRY with 100 employees



32%
are affected by
substance use disorder

Cost to the business is
\$98,882
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

Creating a Mentally Healthy and Happy Workplace

Prioritize Mental Health in the Workplace – You Can't Afford Not To!

The effect of mental health issues on a workforce can be significant, especially with the continued impact of COVID. According to a recent survey by The Hartford insurance company, employers are seeing a noticeable increase in mental health issues among their employees—including fear and anxiety about returning full time to the workplace, domestic violence, substance use disorder (SUD), and depression, resulting from the everyday life changes caused by COVID.



Workplaces bear substantial costs due to absenteeism, increased health care expenses, turnover, and lost productivity. Nearly one-third of U.S. employers (31 percent) said the strain on employee mental health is having a severe financial impact on their company—a 10-point increase from a March 2020 survey. Burnout and disengaged employees can cost

organizations between \$450-\$550 billion annually.

These implications across the workforce have ushered in a new era of focusing on behavioral health. The problem is obvious. Employees are more stressed-out than ever before. As a result, employees are at higher risk for severe mental health issues and SUD. Of course, we need increased access to traditional mental health support.

Nearly one-third of U.S. employers (31 percent) said the strain on employee mental health is having a severe financial impact on their company—a 10-point increase from a March 2020 survey.

Employers now, more than ever, have an opportunity to move

beyond an awareness of these issues and take a more active role in addressing them via support for their employees.

There is an urgent need to intervene upstream to prevent the escalation of these complex issues. Now is the time to share fresh ideas, innovations, and alternative solutions that support employee well-being.

Workplace best practices are critical for appropriately and proactively supporting employees.

These include:

- Updated policies and programs that support ongoing education and awareness around mental health that dispel the stigma associated with it
- Employee education and communication is crucial to ensure employees and their family members are educated on the resources available to them and how to use them
- Derive meaningful engagement and outcomes via data supported, value results of programs that demonstrate measurable success

Organizations need to evaluate innovative, virtual support programs that proactively support individuals who are struggling and their family members. Combining high tech platforms with high touch services that help navigate employees to the right care and deliver immediate behavioral health care by allowing employees to access peer coaches and trained health care professionals online is a confidential and evidence-based approach focusing on providing a safe and anonymous way for employees and their family members to engage on the topic of SUD in a meaningful way.

These issues existed pre-pandemic, but “mental health and mental illness was taboo and avoided with a ten-foot pole.”
—Melissa Doman

Beyond Mental Health

Employers spend, on average, over \$15,000 more a year on employees who experience mental distress. The implications in cost are around missed days of work, productivity, and turnover. Furthermore, mentally distressed workers are nearly 3.5 times more likely than their peers to have a SUD.

Supporting Mental Health is the Right Thing to Do

Stressed-out employees are at greater risk for health problems, are less satisfied and may be more likely to quit their jobs—we are seeing the number and the Great Resignation is upon us!

These issues existed pre-pandemic, but “mental health and mental illness was taboo and avoided with a ten-foot pole,” according to Melissa Doman, organizational psychologist, former clinical mental health therapist and author of the book *Yes, You Can Talk About Mental Health at Work: Here’s Why... and How to Do it Really Well*.

Supporting Mental Health Is Worth It

- Annual average cost of each employee with an untreated substance use disorder has risen by 30 percent
- Employers spend an average of \$8,817 on each employee with an untreated substance use disorder

- Each employee who recovers from an SUD saves a company over \$8,500

Proven Programs

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Heritage CARES is a virtual support program designed to help individuals struggling with stress, SUD, and/or suicidal ideation. We utilize evidence-based strategies, ranging from 12-step facilitation to harm-reduction and behavioral modification, to support individuals and families in their health and wellness journey.



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Finding the Superpower Within

How a message of hope helped Ben Sawyer take his first step toward recovery. As a healthcare worker struggling with addiction, Ben Sawyer finally found he wasn't alone.

by Emma Simard

Ben Sawyer never thought addiction would be part of his journey. Unlike your typical high school or college student, he wasn't interested in experimentation with drugs or alcohol. Instead, Ben joined the U.S. Marine Corps in his twenties and served his country for eight years.

In 2003 Ben left the Marine Corps and was trying to figure out where his path in life would lead. He was working as a hospital security guard when some of the nurses dared him to try nursing school, he says. "The ego of a Marine said, 'Alright, fine. I'll do it.'" And in 2008, Ben became a licensed RN.

A few months later Ben was at the dentist, getting a root canal for an infected tooth. After the procedure he was sent home with a prescription for Percocet—the first time he had ever been prescribed an opiate. "That awakened a Hulk inside of me that I never knew existed," he says. What started as an innocent prescription quickly spun into an internal battle that ensnared him for years.

Ben's new nursing license gave him easy access to opiates, which only made the situation worse. Soon enough his addiction was raging, and it wasn't long until he lost his marriage, his house, and

his car. He was living in Connecticut then, so he tried the geographical cure—moving back to Maine where he was born and raised. But, he says, "Surprise, surprise, the Hulk followed me here, too."

As far as Ben knew, there wasn't any way for him to stay sober. As a healthcare professional who was struggling with addiction, he felt incredible isolation and immense feelings of guilt and shame. It was a cruel paradox to be responsible for the health of others while he was unable to maintain his own health. The remorse he felt kept him sick longer.

Five years after his addiction began, Ben finally got the wake-up call he needed. An investigator for the Maine State Board of Nursing contacted him. He was suspected of diverting drugs and under review for his pharmacy reports. It was only a matter of time before his nursing license would be revoked and his career would be over. After speaking with the investigator, Ben knew he had hit rock bottom.

But there was a beacon of hope in the darkness. The investigator



from the Nursing Board had given Ben the name of an agency that helps healthcare workers who struggle with addiction. The Medical Professionals Health Program supports doctors, nurses, and dentists with behavioral and mental health issues, substance abuse, and burnout. When substance abuse is a concern, they offer a monitoring program so medical professionals can start recovery while keeping their professional licenses. It wasn't an option for Ben to keep his license, but he could finally see the first step to healing.

Two days after Ben received that life-changing phone call, he was sitting in a support group for healthcare professionals. Within the first 15 minutes of the meeting, he knew the feelings he had carried around for years—

guilt, shame, exhaustion, and utter hopelessness—would finally start to fade. “I saw them laughing,” he says, “I saw them joking, and I wanted what they had.”

The message of hope that Ben found in that moment and in that meeting felt like a superpower, and it gave him everything he could’ve asked for: a foundation for his recovery. He started attending and working a 12-step program. It was exactly what he needed to heal. He could finally conquer the Hulk that had taken over his life.

Today Ben is remarried, has a house, and is working as a certified recovery advisor—a career he loves and can see is making a difference. “It was something I was actually very passionate about because it saved my life, and I’ve seen it save other people’s lives.”

He still regularly attends 12 step meetings, meditates daily (“I like to call it de-stressing, because sometimes the term meditation can scare people away.”), practices breathing techniques, and frequently goes on drives to help clear his head and keep him grounded.

That message of hope has kept Ben’s recovery strong to this day, and he readily shares it with anyone who might feel how he once did. When he sees newcomers in meetings, he recognizes that broken look. “You just want to grab them by the shoulders and say, ‘Hope is here!’” he says. “It’s a fatal disease but you’re not dead. Hope is here.”



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.

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— David L.

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A Cultural Connection Drives Personal Transformation

by Amy Paradsyz

Remember that week in March 2020 when Maine was getting its first glimpse of pandemic lockdown?

That was the week that Steven Knockwood was released from prison, where he'd been serving a sentence for drug trafficking. Less than two years later, his life has been utterly transformed—from self-loathing, self-medicating, and self-sabotage to love, connection, and making an impact.

Knockwood, 47 years old and four years into recovery, manages Opportunity House, the Wabanaki Public Health and Wellness indigenous men's recovery home in Bangor. He's gotten his driver's license back, he's one year into a loving relationship, and has found family—both with his girlfriend and her three kids and with other indigenous men in recovery.

"I speak what's here," he says, tapping his chest. "I have a daily practice of smudging in the morning when the sun comes up, and I ask the Creator, let me make that long journey—the longest journey in human history—let me connect my head and my heart. In that connection, there's true life. There's love."

There's a Cherokee proverb that talks about the battle within each of us, the black wolf and the white wolf. The grandfather tells the story to the grandson, and at the end of the story, the grandson



Steven Knockwood of Opportunity House has a daily practice of smudging at sunrise, when he asks his Creator, "let me make that long journey—the longest journey in human history—let me connect my head and my heart. In that connection, there's true life. There's love." Courtesy photo.

asks which one will win. And the grandfather says, "Which one will you feed?"

"That was the battle," says Knockwood, who suffered a back injury as a 23-year-old construction worker and was prescribed opioids for pain relief. "I didn't have a way at that point to feed that white wolf, and so the black one became dominant. I got involved in drug trafficking. I became cancerous to my community, to anybody's life that I touched, and it killed me inside."

Growing up, Knockwood knew that his family saw the world differently, that they were more focused on the family and the community—the tribe—than on individualism or competition.

He knew that his great-grandfather was of the Muin (or Bear) clan of Indian Brook, Shubik, Nova Scotia, and had settled in Maine after being forcibly educated in a residential school intended to erase his indigenous heritage.

But he hadn't identified, personally, as an indigenous man until he was introduced to the ceremony and traditions in a more formal way in 2017 at the Aroostook Mental Health Center's co-ed Residential Treatment Facility in Limestone, commonly called "The Farm." It wasn't his first attempt to get sober, but this time he was ready for honesty. He was also introduced to *The Red Road to Wellbriety: In the Native American Way*, which

presents Wellbriety Movement founder Don Coyhis' vision of the interconnectedness of 12-step recovery and traditional Native culture, with the help of elders in the Native community.

"Being introduced to Wellbriety sparked a fire inside of me to really learn and understand where I came from," Knockwood says. "I had this thirst to understand who I was culturally. And that journey directed me toward recovery, and my recovery became one and the same. Finally I had an understanding and found the piece of identity that I'd never had."

At the same time, the Maine Drug Enforcement Agency was investigating him. On that honest streak, he pled guilty to drug

trafficking and, in 2018, was sentenced to six years in prison, all but three-and-a-half years of which would be suspended.

When Knockwood was released in those early days of the pandemic, Wabanaki Public Health and Wellness was renovating what would become Opportunity House, an indigenous men's recovery residence, and was able to put his construction experience to use. From there, Knockwood has grown into a leadership role as house manager and someone devoted to serving his recovery community by facilitating smudges and other cultural practices.

"This work is life-saving," says Lisa Sockabasin, co-CEO for Wabanaki Public Health and Wellness. "We've heard from many that when they're able to reconnect with culture they find strength. We wanted to create a sacred place for people to heal and to recover, regardless of where they may be on their recovery journey, where they can reconnect with their culture. That may be learning language or engaging in ceremony or it may be engaging in a sweat or a healing circle. Whatever that means for the individual, we help to create that. Opportunity House is instrumental in providing a place for people to connect with each other and to connect not only in suffering but in hope that things can be different—and that's what people are seeing."

Daily life at Opportunity House is much like it is at any other recovery home but with a cultural plan added into the evidence-based mix.

"We have an ongoing dialogue of culture, of relationship and of self-worth, and we build our recovery home in the same fashion that indigenous ancestors built their family units," Knockwood says. For example, the men wanted a

Christmas tree, but within their indigenous culture it didn't seem right to kill a tree to bring it in the house. So they chose a live tree, and this spring they'll plant it in Millinocket, where Wabanaki Public Health and Wellness has established a 45-acre Gathering Place recovery center along the Penobscot River.

That same love extended to the cedar tree—and to all living beings—is extended to the men in recovery, understanding that their path might not always be straight or narrow.

"If you are on your recovery journey and are in crisis or you return to use, we say that's when you need us the most," Sockabasin says. "That's when we wrap around more love and support. That's our focus, really loving people regardless of the choices that they make. And eventually the choices that they make are choices of service, of digging into their own group. We're seeing people who have never been in a formal recovery program before and needed one for decades and they're thriving."

For Knockwood, a life once driven by need is now driven by love. And he's seeing the other men changing, too.

"We're seeing lives changed on a deep, profound level," he says. "It's unreal to see how bright that fire is inside these people when you're there to stand with them and fan that flame. I commonly say to them, the same flame that fueled my addiction became the very fuel of my recovery. It was a flame of identity."



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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Disbelief to Belief

by Niki Curtis

I was sitting in a small room in the emergency department in Fort Kent, Maine wearing nothing but a hospital “johnnie” thinking that I was suffering from mono when the doctor came in and notified me that the only one of the several tests they ran that had come back positive was a pregnancy test.

I remember the deep sense of disbelief that came over me even when all of the evidence I had presented during my intake interview pointed to this pregnancy as an actual possible outcome. Disbelief and denial on many levels had led me to this moment.

I didn’t believe that missing birth control doses because of my excessive partying would make a difference. I didn’t believe that it could happen to me.

When faced with the facts, a positive pregnancy test, my sense of disbelief tried to hang on until I could do nothing but surrender to the idea that I was pregnant.

This same “disbelief” centered thinking was at the root of my addiction. I would not believe that I would ever become an addict. I never believed I was good enough to deserve any better than what was in my life. I never believed that I could get free from the horrors of my addiction. Disbelief stacked upon disbelief.

Years later, when, again faced with facts: an eviction notice, no driver’s license, unemployable, hospital visits, toxic and broken relationships, self-loathing, and disgust, I surrendered again to the truth of my situation and in complete desperation, I cried out to the God of my childhood and begged for help.

It didn’t matter that I didn’t believe that God would help me, even if he really existed.

All that mattered in that moment was that I no longer believed that I could help me. In that moment, a spark of hope transformed into action.

I stepped out of the trap that disbelief and its lies had created, and I started to collect proof of my own. I called an 800 number that directed me to various addiction treatment facilities. I made an appointment at one of them. I asked for a ride to an intake appointment from my Mother. I got a ride to treatment from my son.

Today, I know the transformation from disbelief to belief is much like the metamorphosis of the butterfly.

Slowly, as each step led me to the next step, I started to believe that the God I had cried out to had actually heard me and was helping me. There was a power at work that I had never experienced and had always wanted my own proof of.

Years before this moment, my friend Jerry had a deep belief in that power of God, and I could just never understand how he could

believe in something that had not prevented an accident that had left him paraplegic, in a wheelchair.

Yet, without obvious proof, he believed. He trusted the idea that what had happened to him was working for good in someone else and that sustained him. He was at ease with his situation even when it seemed unfair to me.

The second accident Jerry was in took his life and it was not building a case for the existence of God in my mind. My need for proof grew and it came a week after his death in the form of a butterfly. A perfectly dried butterfly, spread out on a welcome mat in a closed in glass porch with no possible way that it could have gotten there, landed on the mat, spread its wings, died, dried and flipped onto its back. Despite that moment of profound proof, for five more years I still held on to that diseased disbelief that only true desperation could break through.

Today, I know the transformation from disbelief to belief is much like the metamorphosis of the butterfly. The transition from the caterpillar to the chrysalis, where a complete transformation happens, to the painful yet necessary process of breaking free, to the resting and drying out before the inaugural flight of freedom, is proof, to me, that God exists.

My own recovery is proof that God not only exists, but that he loves me. I am in full flight.



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.



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

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.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE MAINE OFFICE OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH



GOOD CALL, GOOD SAMARITAN.

In a drug overdose emergency, 911 should always be an easy call. That's why, in 2019, Maine passed a new Good Samaritan Law.

Its purpose is to ease any hesitation a person might have about calling 911 for medical assistance. Bottom line: first responders want to keep everyone alive and safe, so call them right away if you ever witness or suspect an overdose.

Even if you have Narcan on hand (another lifesaving choice), getting EMS/police there can make the difference between life and death.

Maine's Good Samaritan Law:

- ✓ Protects a person who calls 911 in a drug overdose emergency from arrest
- ✓ Protects the overdose victim from arrest

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Little Miracles

After a decades-long battle with addiction, Vickie McLeod is given the gift of life.

by Emma Simard

When she was just 14, Vickie McLeod found an escape at the bottom of a bottle. At first, drinking was harmless fun with friends, but she was naturally introverted, and Vickie liked how liberated she felt when she drank. Alcohol consequently became a social crutch. As her teen years progressed, a harmless drink turned into a means to forget. She had been sexually abused for most of her childhood, and because she didn't have any other way to cope, she drank.

As she got older, Vickie continued to drink heavily, but she graduated from college and got married. Two years into her marriage, she got pregnant. For the duration of her pregnancy, Vickie stayed away from alcohol—it was the longest she had ever gone without drinking, and it would remain her longest stretch of sobriety for decades.

After her daughter grew up and went away to college, Vickie's behavior spiraled out of control. She was fired from her dream job for drinking at work. She was diagnosed with breast cancer, but she drank her way through treatment. After her mother was killed in a tragic accident, she was supposed to be caring for her father, but she could barely take care of herself. Vickie could no longer function without alcohol in her system. All she could do was

scrape together some cash and find her next drink just to avoid having a seizure.

Vickie knew she was sick and sought help several times. She tried Intensive Outpatient Programs and attended AA meetings. It would work for a little bit—she would get sober for a few weeks or months—but she always relapsed. Nothing was sticking and she didn't know why. She just couldn't stop.

Illness ravaged Vickie's life for more than 40 years before the help she needed finally came.

A friend of a friend called one day and told her about a program in Ireland that was unlike anything she had ever tried. It was far away from everything she was worried about, and she couldn't easily check out of treatment in another country. Vickie said yes and got on the plane, she says, "Because what I'm trying to do here isn't working and I still want to live."

In an old estate run by two "tiny little Irish nuns" who were sisters, Vickie found her path to recovery. She was taught that she deserved so much more than the life she had been living. She was worth sobriety, and she could choose to fight her disease and live differently. Over the course of her illness, Vickie had completely lost the ability to love herself, but she finally knew



how to rebuild. "It was a spiritual awakening in the best place possible," she says. "It was a gift of life."

After coming back to the states, Vickie focused on creating a life that would support her sobriety. She regularly attended meetings, started working again, and got her own apartment while she and her husband mended their relationship. While she was attending meetings, Vickie would frequently hear about miracles happening in people's recovery journeys. Without realizing it, her miracles were coming.

Vickie had always had a special connection to horses. When she went to Ireland she had to give up her beloved horse, Prince, because nobody could care for him in her absence. Two years into her recovery, Vickie was contacted by Prince's owners. They asked if she wanted her horse back. She immediately said yes and started crying tears of joy, knowing this was one of her miracles. Today she works as a Therapeutic Riding Instructor at Hearts & Horses in Buxton.

Another miracle wasn't far behind. Before her illness caused her to lose the job, Vickie worked as the Life Enrichment Assistant specializing in Alzheimer's Care at the Barron Center in Portland.

One day, a friend contacted her and said a spot was opening up—she should apply. Vickie was certain that door was closed forever, and it broke her heart because she loved that job more than anything. But with no expectations, she applied. Much to her surprise, Vickie was hired back.

Seven years into her recovery, Vickie's journey has been filled with little (and not so little) miracles. She has a beautiful relationship with her daughter, she and her husband are back together and just bought a house with a barn for her horses, and she's been cancer free for eight years.

Vickie knows her recovery is still one day at a time, but she finally has the groundwork and support system that allows her to put her sobriety first, always.



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.

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"Let's Talk!"

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

Couples in recovery have some unique characteristics, which can make communication about everything from the mundane to the most serious topics especially difficult.

A common issue we hear from couples is the fear of telling their partner some truth, feeling, need, or desire. When asked what they are afraid of, the response is often: "upsetting him," "she will ramp up the conflict," "he will bring up the past," "they will leave me."

Before one or both people were in recovery, many couples learned a co-dependent style of interacting that often included hiding, controlling, lying, or "faking it." When each person begins to grow in their individual recovery, healthy communication may stand out as a problem. Research shows that relationships can only thrive when the couple is able to communicate openly and honestly.

This first takes questioning one's beliefs about the consequences of being honest with each other. Fear of abandonment, anxiety, past trauma, and resentments are real. Your partner will likely be able to relate, although your stories may be different.

Here are some steps you can take to approach the topics you've been avoiding.

Preparing:

- Make a list of what you've been avoiding talking about.
- Ask yourself what you believe will happen if you tell your partner.
- Question your beliefs about your imagined consequences.



- Look at how you may be projecting those beliefs on your partner.
- Consider professional help to better understand your issues.

Planning with your partner:

- Talk about making a "date" to talk about your reluctance to bring up feelings.
- Use only "I" language. For example, "I feel anxious when I want to bring something up with you because I was criticized in the past. I've been working on these old beliefs and want to be able to share more with you."
- Ask each other the best ways to approach better communication. For example, you may want to share your "lists" with each other, make a plan for when you are "activated," or set up regular date nights taking turns telling your partner more about yourself.

Practicing the new communication style:

- Choose a time and place where you are both relaxed, safe, and uninterrupted.
- Start with what you are grateful for in your partner.
- Simply state your feelings using "I" statements. For example, "I feel nervous asking if you would mind my playing video games once a week at my brother's

house. I want to hear your concerns. I have been afraid you wouldn't trust me and get mad, and I want to work on that." Remember, your partner can't "make you feel" something.

- Learn to listen all the way through to your partner. Then you can ask for clarification by repeating what you heard.
- Thank your partner for being vulnerable and honest. Pause or take time out to think before you respond.
- Come up with a plan to resolve that issue that works for both of you.
- Follow-up at a future "date" with how that solution is working out for both of you.

Most of all, let in humor and fun. Don't prolong the discussions—you can always decide to come back to it later.

End the "session" with affection and joy for creating a great foundation for your relationship!



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).

The Handshake that Changed the World

by Bruce C.

I've been thinking a lot about energy lately, particularly its spiritual essence. I see and feel the healing energy in the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous, particularly with peer contact in recovery. "I know how you feel" creates the foundation of an energetic and emotional bond. It is an undeniable force.

My first sponsor, the "avowed atheist" told me that my addiction was as much a part of me as my blue eyes or my once-blond hair. It was part of my nature, and my natural state was to be drinking or using, thinking about it, or getting over it. For me to not drink and use was an unnatural act, and one that I couldn't do on my own. Whether by support of the group, or faith in God, or whatever, it didn't matter. For an addict, being clean and sober is a spiritual piece of business, regardless of the pathway. This sponsor and I may not have talked about God much, but he did a helluva job teaching me how not to drink, how to be clean and sober today, that "spiritual piece of business."

We are beings of energy, the energy that keeps the nucleus and electrons in place, not in just our bodies but the entire universe—science now tells us we are composed of .00001% matter and 99.99999% energy.

We all know and feel the energetic essence of our soul. And the cumulative and healing energy of a recovery meeting, the collective



experience of a group of addicts coming together so they may not take the first drug or drink today, the collective "spiritual piece of business we call sobriety," is magic. It sometimes fills the meeting room with a feeling so thick it wraps us like a warm blanket.

Physicists know that energy is undeniable and indestructible. COVID taught us that very same lesson when the recovery community almost automatically pivoted to Zoom. There are people thriving in virtual recovery platforms who have never been to an in-person meeting.

The Spirit of recovery refuses to be denied. My "Zoom home group" has members throughout the country and the world.

Energy is powerful and can be unleashed in a moment. Whether it's a gentle persuasive moment

of clarity when we hear that quiet voice inside us, begging for our attention, or the explosive energy of a group of people joining forces to create positive change.

The overwhelming energy of love, justice and self-sacrifice exemplified by Jesus on the cross, Buddha under the Bodhi tree, Gandhi on his march to the sea, Martin Luther King, Jr and his "I Have a Dream" speech were energy in moments of time that changed the world.

And in 1939 in the kitchen of Dr. Bob, co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, a moment in time changed the world for alcoholics.

These simple words combined with an outstretched hand, "Hello, my name is Bill, and I am an alcoholic." unleashed the irrepressible energy of recovery.

Thank God.



The Healing Power of Touch

by Karen Lurie

Yomassage is a fully immersive mind-body experience that combines restorative stretch, mindfulness meditation, and therapeutic touch.

Picture this: While you are lying down in the most comfortable and cozy restorative stretch, you are guided through a themed meditation that takes you even deeper into the relaxation experience. While you are relaxing and meditating, your Yomassage® practitioner provides head-to-toe therapeutic touch.

Why do we combine touch, stretch, and breath?

While all of these modalities are amazing on their own, combining them in a single session provides a unique opportunity for healing and relaxation. When you experience Yomassage, you will activate the parasympathetic nervous system and create an environment for your body to relax

and relieve stress. And it only gets better the more you practice!

Yomassage can:

- Release more muscle tension than regular massage
- Get deeper into the connective tissues without accessing pain receptors
- Activate more sensory receptors than in a normal massage
- Empower the client to continuously release tension during and after the session
- Help the client relax and release earlier in the session
- Maintain a deeper state of relaxation throughout the session
- Help maintain a balanced nervous system after the session
- Make the body and mind more resilient to stress

What is a restorative stretch?

Yomassage positions are inspired by restorative yoga. In restorative yoga, you relax in gentle,

restorative stretches supported by props that allow you to slowly lengthen muscles and get into the deep connective tissue over 8-15 minutes.

Gentle stretching is similar to massage in that it increases dopamine (the happiness hormone) while decreasing cortisol (the stress hormone) and the body's stress response.

Yomassage is a fully immersive mind-body experience that combines restorative stretch, mindfulness meditation, and therapeutic touch.

Yomassage takes it further by adding therapeutic touch and mindfulness to each position.

The restorative positions we use in Yomassage are accessible to everyone who can get up and down

off of the mat. You don't need to be "flexible" at all or have any prior yoga experience!

Meditation can be hard.

But it doesn't have to be. There are so many positive benefits of incorporating mindfulness and meditation into your routine. But it's easier said than done. In our Yomassage sessions we take a beginners approach to mindfulness and meditation. Through guided breathwork and themed meditation prompts, you will forget you are meditating as you enter into a deeper state of relaxation.

Why do we crave therapeutic touch?

We all know that after a massage we feel better... but why? Why do we look forward to the yoga instructor's adjustments or light

touch at the end of class, or feel better after receiving a hug?

Research shows the right kind of touch can lower blood pressure, heart rate, and cortisol levels, stimulate the hippocampus (an area of the brain that is central to memory), and drive the release of a host of hormones and neuropeptides that have been linked to positive and uplifting emotions. The physical effects of touch are far-reaching.

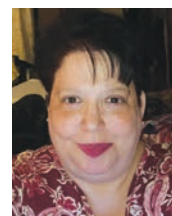
To sum it up:

- Touch is essential to the human experience.
- Touch can impact anxiety, depression, stress, and the nervous system.
- Infants can have developmental delays associated with touch deprivation.
- Massage decreases symptoms of PTSD among military veterans.

- Touch trains neural pathways —safe, therapeutic touch re-trains the brain to predict safe interactions.

While yoga has been shown to be extremely beneficial for both the physical body and emotions, adding the powerful element of touch has the potential to exponentially increase positive effects for the mind and body.

Using trauma sensitive language, I can partner with recovery institutions in being a facilitator for Yomassage classes to help those struggling with addiction to self soothe.



Karen Lurie is a Licensed Massage Therapist and Certified Yomassage Instructor working in Southern Maine. For more information, contact her at lurie.karen@gmail.com

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Living Sober

by Lisa T.

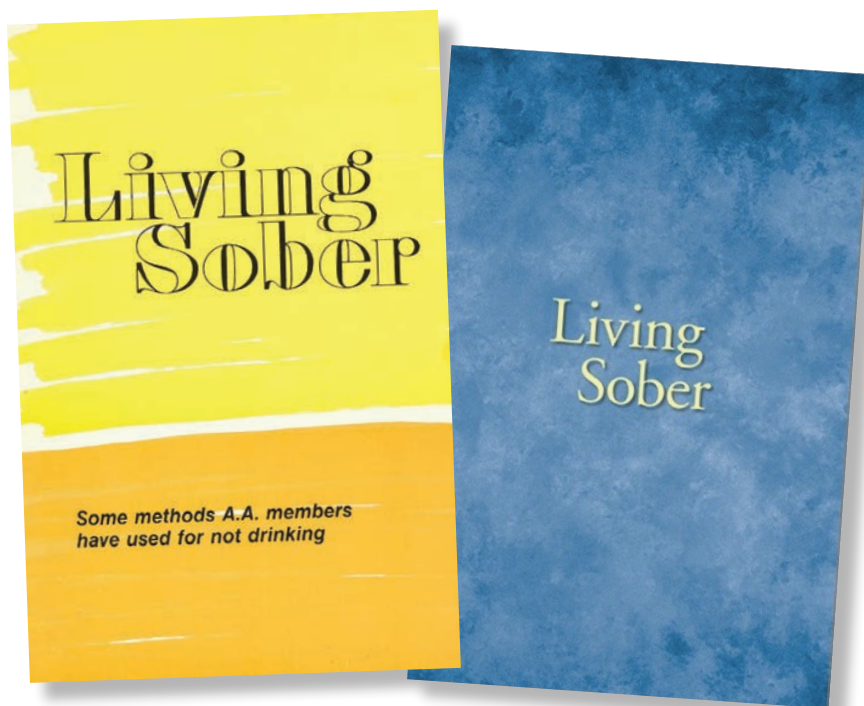
I was gifted with this little gem at one of my very first meetings.

At 70 pages, *Living Sober* is considered a booklet. It saved my backside several times in the early days, providing simple, practical answers and strategies to problems ranging from changing old routines to letting go of old ideas.

This book was a godsend to me. Unlike the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, or the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, *Living Sober* is entirely practical, “do this” advice. I needed LOTS of this type of guidance in the beginning, having lived a life of alcoholism and all the other -isms. Alcoholic thinking had led to behaviors that kept me completely in the dark as to how to more appropriately navigate the day-to-day. This book gives that kind of guidance.

Living Sober is entirely practical, “do this” advice.

In the earliest days of sobriety, I felt like my world had been completely upended. It was clear to me that I needed to do things—really *everything*—differently, but what to do, how to do it, where to begin—overwhelmed me. Every day presented challenges to my fledgling sobriety. Sometimes it felt like literally every five minutes I was facing the realization that I needed help to do things differently.



With headings such as *Staying Away from the First Drink*, *Getting Plenty of Rest*, *Being Wary of Drinking Occasions* and so on, one can quickly find a simple discussion and accompanying advice for dealing with or getting through common situations or feelings experienced in early sobriety. Aside from the calls to other women in the program that absolutely saved me during those early days and weeks, this book provided a clear foundation for keeping it simple.

The section and idea that provided me the strongest foundation and was simple enough for me to follow, even in my upended state,

was the idea of *Just For Today*. By staying in today, one day at a time, the suggestion is that we “try living in the now just in order to stay sober—and it works.”

The other idea that landed in my baffled brain about being sober was not about constant focus on alcohol, rather it was about getting into action. With my activities previously centered around drinking and the thoughts and behaviors that come with the -isms, I needed clarity and literal directions about what to do with my time. This section gives a list that includes many activities I’ve carried into my long term sobriety; talking walks, reading, exercising, trying a new hobby, volunteering

to do some useful service, and even, “taking a fling at something frivolous”!

Living Sober is available for free, online at the AA website under Literature, along with all AA publications.

Aimed at the beginner, the topics and style of *Living Sober* are so clear and approachable, anyone can find something useful here, and I have, many times.

Living Sober is available for free, online at the AA website under Literature, along with all AA publications.

Excellent guidance and information, even life-changing stories and strategies can be found in the many pages and volumes in the AA literature.



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Narcotics Anonymous



Narcotics Anonymous is a 12-step recovery program whose primary approach to recovery is its belief in the therapeutic value of one addict helping another. As members, we take part in NA (nickname for Narcotics Anonymous) meetings by talking about our experience and recovery from drug addiction.

Meetings

NA meetings are informally structured, held in space rented by the group, and are led by our members who take turns opening and closing the meeting. NA meetings and other services are funded entirely by our contributions and the sales of recovery literature. Financial contributions from non-members are not accepted.

There are two basic types of meetings: those that are open to the general public and those that are closed to the public (for addicts only). Meetings vary widely in format. Some formats are: participation, speaker, question and answer, topic discussion, and some have a combination of these formats.

The function of any meeting is always the same: to provide a suitable and reliable environment for personal recovery.

Who is an addict?

NA is made up of a diverse assortment of addicts joined together by the strength of our mutual commitment to recovery. As a fellowship, our ability to reach still-using addicts is tied to our willingness to offer meetings that



are accessible and attractive to those addicts. We offer recovery from the effects of addiction through working the Twelve Steps.

One reading states “Most of us do not have to think twice about this question. We know! Our whole life and thinking was centered in drugs in one form or another—the getting and using and finding ways and means to get more. We lived to use and used to live. Very simply, an addict is a man or woman whose life is controlled by drugs. We are people in the grip of a continuing and progressive illness whose ends are always the same: jails, institutions, and death.”

Participation in Narcotics Anonymous shines light on the truth that we do recover. The promise of NA is freedom from active addiction and finding a new way to live.

What is the Narcotics Anonymous Program?

The core of the NA program is the Twelve Steps. These “steps”

are a set of guidelines outlining a practical approach to recovery. By following these guidelines and working closely with other members, we learn to stop using drugs and face the challenges of daily living.

NA does not mandate any particular belief system. It does teach basic spiritual principles such as honesty, open mindedness, faith, willingness, and humility, which may be applied in everyday life. Recovery in NA is not a miracle cure that happens within a given period of time. It is a process, ongoing and personal. We each make an individual decision to join and recover at our own pace.

Our “What is the Narcotics Anonymous Program?” reading in our meetings sums up what the program is by saying “NA is a nonprofit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other

stay clean. This is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. There is only one requirement for membership, the desire to stop using. We suggest that you keep an open mind and give yourself a break. Our program is a set of principles written so simply that we can follow them in our daily lives. The most important thing about them is that they work. There are no strings attached to NA. We are not affiliated with any other organizations. We have no initiation fees or dues, no pledges to sign, no promises to make to anyone. We are not connected with any political, religious, or law enforcement groups, and are under no surveillance at any time. Anyone may join us regardless of age, race, sexual identity, creed, religion, or lack of religion. We are not interested in what or how much you used or who your connections were, what you have done in the past, how much or how little you have, but only in what you want to do about your problem and how we can help. The newcomer is the most important person at any meeting, because we can only keep what we have by giving it away. We have learned from our group experience that those who keep coming to our meetings regularly stay clean.”

Sponsorship

One of the first things many of us hear when we begin attending NA meetings is get a sponsor. As newcomers, we may not understand what that means. Our Basic Text tells us that “the heart of NA beats when two addicts share their recovery,” and sponsorship is simply one addict helping another. The two-way street of sponsorship is a loving, spiritual, and compassionate relationship that helps both the sponsor and sponsee.

Sponsorship is a personal and private relationship that can mean different things to different people. An NA sponsor is a member of NA, living our program of recovery, who is willing to build a special relationship with us. Most members think of a sponsor, first and foremost, as someone who can help us work the Twelve Steps of NA, and sometimes the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts. A sponsor is someone in whom we confide. We can share things with a sponsor that we may not want to share in a meeting.

Literature

We have an array of literature available. NA World Service produces a number of different kinds of publications, Only NA-approved literature is appropriate for reading in NA meetings. We have books, pamphlets and service related items available. All literature is written by addicts FOR addicts. We have a *Basic Text* that talks about the Twelve Steps and contains personal stories. *It Works How and Why* does a deeper dive into each of the twelve steps as well as the twelve traditions. *Living Clean: The Journey Continues* states “that this book is not a catalog of advice, but rather a collection of experience, strength, and hope about living clean as we experience it in our daily lives, in our relationships, and in our service to others.” *Just for Today: Daily Meditations for Recovery*

Addicts shares daily snippets from the various literature and includes a personal reflection of shared experience. The many various IPs (informational pamphlets) focus on specific topics, including: Self Acceptance, The Triangle of Self Obsession, Am I an Addict?, Recovery and Relapse, The Loner, Staying Clean on the Outside, and many more.

We Do Recover.

At the end of the meeting there is a reading that reminds us that we really do recover and that our program can help.

When at the end of the road we find that we can no longer function as a human being, either with or without drugs, we all face the same dilemma. What is there left to do? There seems to be this alternative: either go on as best we can to the bitter ends—jails, institutions or death—or find a new way to live. In years gone by, very few addicts ever had this last choice. Those who are addicted today are more fortunate. For the first time in man’s entire history, a simple way has been proving itself in the lives of many addicts. It is available to us all. This is a simple, spiritual—not religious—program, known as Narcotics Anonymous.

To find NA meetings in Maine visit namaine.org or call 1-833-436-6166. For more information about NA, visit na.org.



Bangor Area Recovery Network
Supporting life beyond addiction

(207) 561-9444
www.bangorrecovery.org

Recovery is a process.
There are many pathways to recovery.
Recovery overcomes shame and stigma.
Supporting recovery is a community responsibility.

Narcotics Anonymous

12 steps, 12 traditions, millions of lives changed

When Nicole from Portland went to her first Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meeting, the message she heard was, “The lie that people can’t recover is dead.”

What she saw and heard was hope. And confidence. And 12 steps that have worked for millions of people all over the world.

Those 12 steps worked for her in the beginning, when she went to a meeting almost every day, and they still work for her today, 9½ years into recovery.

In this Q&A, Nicole and two other members of the NA community in Maine—Brendan, who has been in recovery 6½ years, and Jamie, who has been in recovery 9 years—reflect on commonly asked questions about NA.

Who is NA for? Is it just for people addicted to narcotics?

Jamie: It’s for anyone who suffers from the disease of addiction and any substance that has altered your way of living.

Why does NA work for you?

Brendan: When I get to go to a meeting, I’m not alone and I get to be with my people. Talking. Laughter. Hugs. Going out to eat afterwards. Going to meetings is 100% my social life.

Why is it anonymous?

Nicole: It doesn’t matter who I am, it matters that this program can work. And it takes the pressure off people in recovery to be perfect.

Why does talking help?

Brendan: I needed to have people who have been through the same stuff and who understand. It gets me to be honest and share about what’s really going on with me, good or bad. And people are there to help me heal.

How is NA different from AA?

Nicole: NA was derived from AA in 1953. Our 12 steps are very similar, except that rather than being “powerless over alcohol,” we’re “powerless over the disease of addiction.” Also, we talk about a Higher Power that is caring and greater than you while AA uses the more specific word “God.”

What are the 12 steps?

Brendan: They’re a guideline to better yourself. The steps are there to help you change and find a new way of life. For me, the steps are freedom from everything going on in my head.

Do you ever finish the steps?

Nicole: Not really. Whether you attach a number to them or not, you use them in your life every day. In any given day, for example, I can determine something that I’m powerless over; I can build up hope; I can work an inventory about it and talk about it with my sponsor; I can look for my part in it; and I can bring it back to God. And so on. They’re tools for living.

Do I need to believe in God?

Jamie. No. But we talk about a Higher Power. I’m not attached to any particular religion, but I’m attached to the spiritual piece. What helped me was to think about when the sun goes down



in the evening and comes up in the morning. I don’t do that. You don’t do that. Something greater is doing that. The tides of the ocean going in and out, there’s not a human force doing that. Something greater is doing that. That’s how I began to understand that there’s something greater in the universe that works in our favor.

How has NA shifted your thinking?

Nicole: We talk about addiction as being an obsession and compulsion in the brain—that the addiction isn’t about drugs. I’m an addict, which means that I have an obsessive and compulsive way of thinking. And I had a spiritual void, or an emptiness inside, that I was trying to fill.

What if I relapse?

Brendan: You come back. I started 12 years ago, and I got clean for 6½ years my first try. And then I got away from the program, complacency kicked in, and I didn’t think I needed a sponsor anymore. I ran into a drug dealer at a grocery store. I took what he had and I relapsed. About a month later I reconnected with the NA community.

Isn’t talking about personal stuff kind of uncomfortable?

Jamie: I would not be alive if

not for NA. Life is about getting comfortable with being uncomfortable all the time. And then it doesn't feel so uncomfortable after a while. It's life changing to let people into your life and hear how they got closer to a Higher Power. Because, if we already knew what we were doing, we wouldn't end up in institutions and dying.

Can I do a meeting online?

Brendan: Yes! I was big into Zoom and did a lot of internationals. I went to Guam, Spain, Brazil and even spoke at a New Zealand meeting once. And I did all my local meetings on Zoom [during shutdown].

What's the relationship like between a sponsor and sponsee?

Jamie: I love that my sponsor says that she doesn't walk in front of me or behind me, she walks beside me. And, even though she has many more years [in recovery] than I do, she's always walking beside me on the same path.

What advice would you give to someone new to NA?

Brendan: Stick it out. When you first come in, your emotions are all over the place and you're raw. Stick it out and don't leave until a miracle happens. Hold onto your seat, as they say, white knuckle it, and don't give up until you find hope and find your people.

How do I find a meeting?

The website couldn't be simpler: na.org.

There's also an NA Meeting Search app available through the App Store.

Belonging & Purpose

Volunteers are the heart of Maine's Recovery Community Centers

From Caribou to Bridgton, to Calais, and Boothbay, and Portland, and Bangor—in seventeen Maine communities, Recovery Community Centers are bringing hope and connection for individuals and families in recovery. The need for belonging is a fundamental human need. Recovery Community Centers meet this vital need by offering a place to connect and build positive relationships.

As important as our need to belong, so is our need for purpose. For those of us in recovery, recognizing that we can help others—even in the first days or hours of our journey—offers new-found purpose as we start out, and for many years to come.

One of the many things I love about recovery community centers is that volunteers are at the heart of everything we do. People in recovery volunteer as board members and leaders, giving countless hours to assuring the resources needed for the success of the mission. They organize, educate, advocate and stand up against stigma and discrimination. In the day-to-day of a recovery community center, volunteers are the first people to greet newcomers at the front desk. Volunteers call to check in with people in recovery through the Telephone Recovery Support (TRS) program. They start meetings. They organize activities. They serve as recovery coaches. They plant gardens, and keep the building clean and welcoming. There is no end to the ways that volunteers create, sustain, and build recovering communities.

In recovery, we strengthen our own footing on the path of recovery when we serve others. Service creates connection and purpose, and reminds us that we're not alone.

Showing up for others who depend upon us builds self-esteem. We need each other—our recovery depends on it.

All throughout Maine, at seventeen established and newly forming recovery community centers, people in recovery volunteer their time to serve others in recovery and champion the recovery movement. We asked several volunteers why they volunteer, and here's what they said:

"Volunteering makes me realize that I'm not alone in my own struggle. There's always somebody there."

—Jordan G.

"As a recovery coach, talking with recoverees about their successes and struggles has helped me stay in recovery."

—Jason C.

"For me, the best part of volunteering is being around other people in recovery."

—Heather F.

Volunteering with others who have shared similar experiences creates community, magnifies hope, and provides vital support and opportunities for mutual healing. We find ourselves through our community of belonging and purpose.

To find a center near you and see how you can get involved, please visit portlandrecovery.org/maine-recovery-hub or call PRCC at 207-553-2575.



Leslie M. Clark, MSW serves as executive director of Portland Recovery Community Center (PRCC). Leslie speaks openly as a person in long-term recovery to help reduce

stigma and advocate for resources and effective public policy.

Working in Harmony with Spiritual Principles

A Roadmap for Employees and Entrepreneurs in Recovery

by Roz Applebaum



It took a long time for me to integrate spiritual principles into my work. I was on an autopilot disconnect from my higher power (HP) regarding work and money. I just couldn't let go of the reins—trying to control everything and everyone.

I always thought I knew best how to run the company, how to do my supervisor's job and what my co-workers and clients should be doing. I never asked for help. It was exhausting.

When I became willing to accept that spiritual principles of my recovery program could indeed be applied to my work, a lot of doors opened. I gradually gained peace of mind, built harmonious relationships and increased my productivity and prosperity.

New opportunities emerged and seemingly unsolvable problems disappeared or were quickly resolved. No longer was I always striving to control outcomes and trying to change other people. I worked on my own attitudes and

behaviors, kept the focus on me, and let HP handle the rest.

Sad to say, it took me many years in recovery to finally let go of work and money.

By let go, I mean I stopped living in fear: Fear that I would lose my job or my business; fear that I wasn't good enough; fear that I would land in the street, penniless and living in a large refrigerator box with my dog.

I learned to replace fear with faith, in the beginning with logic, and later more metaphysically. When I took the time to sit down and write—searching fearlessly for evidence that any of my worries and anxieties were true—I realized that most of my fears were about an imagined future of catastrophic events or about cringeworthy flashbacks to the past.

Living in the moment by doing the next right thing always helps me release those fears, together with prayer and meditation.

I have been fired from a job and started a business that was a bit less than successful. But those troubling events ALWAYS presented tremendous learning experiences (after I had a good cry), and new and better opportunities—all which contribute to a life filled with purpose and passion today.

I learned to voice my opinions, ideas and strategies without alienating others. I discovered how to take calculated risks based in a faith that was once an alien concept.

A wise someone once told me, if you're not making mistakes, you're not taking enough risks. And taking risks means having faith in myself and my HP, stepping out of my comfort zone, finding work that lights up my world, and living a balanced, fulfilling life.

This doesn't mean I have to accept unacceptable behavior from others either at work or elsewhere. Today I strive to employ diplomatic strategies to redirect toxicity away from me, and when all else fails, I

move on. I truly believe we teach others how to treat us, mostly by treating people the way we want to be treated with kindness, compassion, empathy and love.

I know it's hard when the boss or client is being overly critical, or micro-managing, or imposing an idea you disagree with.

However, I know that NOT reacting in the moment works much better than an emotional outburst. Hitting the pause button when disturbed (I visualize a big red PAUSE button in my mind and on my keyboard), allows me time and perspective to assess the situation without acting out in anger or saying something I would most likely regret later.

Sometimes I come up with an idea, response (or no response or action)

days later. I try to do my best every day.

Here are some things I've learned over the years to launch (or continue) your spiritual journey at work:

1. Refrain from gossip
2. Establish appropriate boundaries (knowing when and how to stand up for yourself, and when to remain silent)
3. Do the best you can every day and let go of perfection
4. Don't take things personally – almost everything has nothing to do with you
5. Keep your resume polished, even though you could be quite happy where you are
6. Realize that perception may not be truth: Get all the facts from reliable sources
7. Keep the focus on you (mind your own business)

8. Leave your personal life at the door
9. Remember your HP is in charge. Relax!

Some days, I have to pray for the willingness to do the next right thing, having faith that my HP will take care of the rest. Most days, I wake up inspired and excited to start my work.

I wish you much abundance, prosperity, peace and joy as you weave spiritual principles into your work world and into your entire life!



Roz is a Journey Team Member who contributes to content and business strategy. She is a coach for entrepreneurs in recovery and a leader in the events industry. Roz lives 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. www.rozapplebaum.com

CORRECTION

McAuley Residence

We had an error in our contact information for McAuley Residence in our last issue and are reprinting it here for clarification.

Contact information
(207) 747-4121

A little about McAuley:

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," said Melissa Skahan, Vice President of Mission Integration, Northern Light Mercy Hospital and former Executive Director at McAuley.

McAuley has residences in Portland and Bangor, and 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

- **Gift Card Donations.** 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 of over \$1000 a month. To make a monetary donation to support McAuley, contact Northern Light Mercy Hospital and give to the McAuley Residence's Greatest Need Fund.

- **Attend AA Meetings on Zoom.** Women needed to share their experience, strength and hope with the women in the houses. Contact the McAuley Residence for information on its open Zoom meetings.

To read more, check out Journey Issue 18!

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)

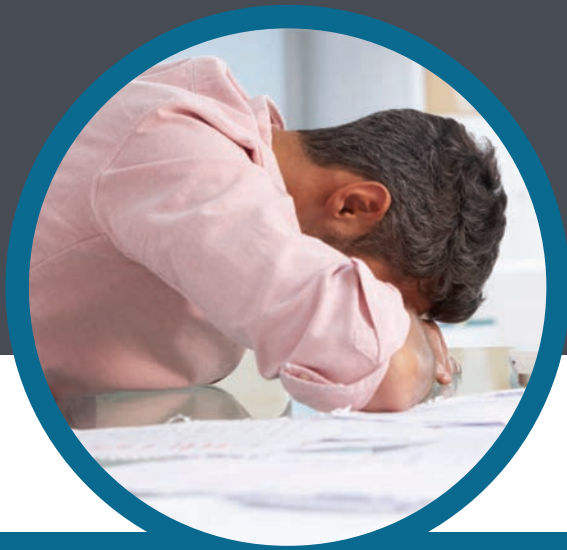
A program of recovery for people addicted to sex and love, based on the 12 steps of AA
207-323-5143 / 800-204-2803
www.slaafws.org

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



73% of people experience stress that affects their mental health.

IF YOU NEED SUPPORT, AND DON'T KNOW WHERE TO TURN, YOU CAN START WITH US.

Up to 85% of people experience a relapse within one year of treatment.



RECOVERY IS A JOURNEY, NOT A DESTINATION.

We understand. We can help.

YOUR JOURNEY TO IMPROVED WELLBEING CAN START WHEREVER YOU ARE TODAY.

Heritage CARES is a flexible program that can help you find and maintain recovery from whatever mental or emotional challenges you may be experiencing, including substance misuse, depression and anxiety, and suicidal thoughts.

With Heritage CARES, you will receive unlimited peer coaching for you and your family PLUS an online learning management



system with an extensive library of educational, inspirational, and insightful videos about substance abuse and suicide prevention that will support you through your journey.

Our peer coaches have lived experience as a family member of a loved one who has struggled with – or lost their life due to – substance misuse.

Is Heritage CARES right for you and your family? Reach out to learn more:



- › Phone: 877-62CARES (22737)
- › Email: Help@heritage-cares.com
- › HeritageHealthSolutions.Com/Heritage-CARES