

Expressions in Recovery

A digest for people in recovery describing their current state of mind, progress and future outlook

Communication, compassion, empathy and an open mind are some of the vehicles through which we attain understanding. Free will gives us never-ending choice. We are free to judge or we can choose to learn what we do not understand. The beauty of revelation, the fruition of hope and the re-awakening of the human spirit is miraculous and beautiful to behold.



Our Mission

OUR MISSION IS TO PROMOTE HOPE, FAITH AND A BELIEF THAT TOGETHER IN THIS JOURNEY OF HEALING AND GROWTH, OF RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE ANYTHING WE STRIVE TO ACHIEVE IS POSSIBLE.

TO FACILITATE THIS MISSION, THIS NEWSLETTER — YOUR NEWSLETTER WAS CREATED. THIS FORUM WAS CREATED BY AND FOR THOSE IN RECOVERY TO GIVE A VOICE TO OUR CONCERNS, HOPES AND TALENTS.

Rules for Submission

ART, POETRY, PROSE, TRUE OR FICTIONAL STORIES ARE WELCOME. THE PURPOSE OF THIS NEWSLETTER IS TO PROVIDE HOPE, FAITH AND INFORMATION. IN KEEPING WITH THE SPIRIT OF THIS ENDEAVOR ALL CONTRIBUTIONS MUST BE FREE FROM PROFANITY AND VULGARITY.

Department Descriptions

Here and Now

BRIEF STATEMENTS OR PARAGRAPHS FROM PEOPLE IN RECOVERY DESCRIBING THEIR CURRENT STATE OF MIND, PROGRESS, AND FUTURE OUTLOOK.

Feature Stories

ACTUAL LIFE EXPERIENCES INCLUDING INDIVIDUAL RECOVERY STRUGGLES AND TRIUMPHS.

Expressions in Recovery Poetry, prose, art etc.....

Last Word (in closing)

INSPIRATIONAL SUMMARY BY THE EDITOR OR GUEST CONTRIBUTORS.



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From the Editor

Editor's Note:

In previous issues, we heard from people with mental health and substance abuse issues. That's only half the story. The voices of those who cared for us, those who vicariously went through our addiction and mental illness challenges with us must be heard. We can't forget those who often cried in their own frustration, feeling helpless and ill-equipped to help us and in the process themselves.

The extent of their pain, the admirable tenacity of those who never gave up and the subsequent knowledge they gained and joy in our recovery, must be told. Their stories are here, on the pages of "Expressions in Recovery"

Gil Gadson

Here and Now

Short reflections



I used to think that drug use was a moral issue, I thought that people who used drugs were weak and had just decided to give up and do bad and irresponsible things. Seeing the pain from someone I loved opened my eyes. Becoming involved and learning made me see that we are all the same. We just deal with life and problems differently, and that no one just decides for no reason to destroy their life. There is always a reason, and once we find it, we are on the road to helping ourselves and someone else recover.

Anthony Logan

All I used to focus on and criticize were the so-called bad people in my neighborhood. I joined in with others thinking they were just predators and were less than others. It's amazing how God always shows you what you need to know and how he opens your heart. A young woman sat on my porch and just started crying in desperation. She made me cry because for once I understood and felt someone else's pain. She had been hurt, molested, abandoned and betrayed. She was crying because she saw no way out, she was tired and had no hope of it ever getting better. I had to admit that if it was me, I would not have made it as far as she had come — she humbled me. She taught me and opened my heart. She is now my friend.

Robin Wilson

Lord knows I have to thank some of the people I met that helped me understand why my brother was doing what he was doing. I often thought he was just crazy or stupid or just didn't care. I now know that addiction is a disease and there is usually a much deeper reason and that basically no one chooses to destroy their lives and the lives of others. When I meet people now with mental health and substance abuse disorders I see them now as I see myself. We just have different problems and different lives.

Benjamin Lee

I have learned so much. Almost everything I thought I knew changed. I didn't have patience before with people with mental health and substance abuse issues. Now I know why. I didn't have patience because I didn't know what to do or what to say and that was my problem. I learned by sitting down and listening without judging and remembering that I am only fortunate through the grace of God that I never had to go through these things.

Linda Berks

Featured Stories



Prayers are answered

I am a woman with six children. They are all grown now. They are all self-sufficient and doing well. However, it was not always this way. My youngest fought a battle with depression and drug abuse for a number of years.

**I was so stupid.
All I did was alienate her. I made her feel worse than
what she did and increased my ignorance.**

I'm writing this because I believe I played a part in her not recovering sooner. I talked when I should have listened, I yelled when she may have just needed a hug. I attacked her, always hammering her with moral guilt and thinking that if I made her feel bad or guilty enough, then that would bring her around.

I was so stupid. All I did was alienate her. I made her feel worse than what she did and increased my ignorance. The nights were the worse, never knowing if she was alive or dead, cold or warm, free or incarcerated or institutionalized.

Desperation made me seek outside help from someone who was in recovery. They taught me how inner pain will cause a person to self destruct, to lose self-esteem, to isolate and withdraw and why some seek the oblivion of substance abuse. They showed me how criticism, negativity and lack of empathy only served to rub salt in an open wound.

Once I regained my daughter's trust and she saw that I really, really wanted to listen, she opened up. There were things that I had done and things that were done to her that I had no awareness of. She never came to me in the past because of what she thought my reaction would be and what I would say. And she was right.

She cried, I cried and, then a door opened. I will never let that door close again. I would like to say to whoever reads this that the next time you see someone caught up in life's difficulties, have a little more compassion, empathy and don't judge.

We often have no idea what the next person is going through. I am a changed person because of this experience. I believe it made me a better person because now I am blessed with the ability to truly listen and help others.

Betty Washington

Featured Stories



Short and Sweet

Although I have never been a substance abuser, and have no mental health issues, my youngest, most talented brother did. Many days and nights I wanted to do something, but didn't know what to do. I wanted to say something, but didn't know what to say.

Knowing his abilities and what he had to offer, not only to himself and his family, made it more frustrating to say the very least. I felt sad not only for myself for losing a brother but also for my mother, losing a son, my niece, losing a dad, my daughters, losing an uncle and my brothers losing their brother.

So many roles wrapped up in one person is a lot to ask, but I always thought we were supposed to ask what we know a person can and should give. We all have a responsibility to each other. I felt left out and let down. You noticed I said felt.

All these negative feelings have been changed. Today, my brother is well, he is full of hope, he faced and chased his demons away, he is productive and one of the most talented, lovable, sensitive guys I know. And he is teaching me.

I'm so glad to have you back my brother.

Big Sis, Brenda Franklin

If we care

We all are guilty of having prejudices and pre-judging others. It is so easy to stick a label on someone or something without having all the facts.

If someone is homeless, it's obviously their fault. If someone has an addiction, they are a weak person with no morals. They are probably a thief, liar and not very smart as well.

Right or wrong, we make these assumptions on a daily basis. None of us can afford to make such broad, sweeping statements because none of us are perfect. We all stumble

and fall. There for the grace of God are we.

Just because someone made bad decisions in the past or succumbed to their environment does not preclude them from picking themselves up and turning their life around. We have no right to deny others their freedom of choice to change.

I fell in love with a person in recovery. He is intelligent, kind, caring and gets the greatest joy from helping others. Do I sit around scared he will relapse? Am I scared to trust him? No! Where he was is not where he is now. Once a person makes a conscious decision to change their reality, it is a beautiful thing to see. Nothing can deter them from this goal.

As those who love them, it is a must for us to not only encourage them but to make sure we are not slipping back into the what if scenario. What if it doesn't work? What if they can't make it?

Negativity is our enemy, we have to stay positive and make sure we don't enable them to go backwards. Yes, so many times in trying to help we enable, which not only does not help, it keeps them in their bad space.

Life is good, every day we are alive is a chance to change. We are not stuck where we are, no matter what our situation is, unless we choose to be.

We can always turn things around, it's hard work but totally doable. It is in all of our best interest to outgrow indifference to those who may be challenged in some way, choosing to instead nourish compassion for them and open our hearts and minds, remembering that all of us stumble and fall at one time or another, and we did not stay there, we fought back and forged on, to get us to the better place we are in today.

Michelle Ramos

Expressions in Recovery

Talent, ability, truth and the beauty of expression resides in every facet of life. The human condition - be it good or bad has always been shown through mediums such as art, writing, singing and speaking.

The following pieces exhibit the innermost thoughts of those who wish to share their heartfelt thoughts and feelings.

How we feel

*The road we traveled
brought us here
and we have traveled far
We came to heal and face our fears
And this we're doing thus far.
We write to share our heart and hope,
and show that hope is real
Our higher power said to share,
so this is how we feel.*

-Us

They walked with me

*They walked with me
And shared my shoes
They began to see
And feel what I do*

*Yes, they walked in my shoes
and they feel what I feel.
Feeling how it feels
to again be whole and real
to be seen and touched, once again,
to be respected
and seen as a man.*

*They began to see I'm just like you
Even though they didn't go through what I went through.
Now they are my friends
They watch me grow
And now they learn
Now they know*

*They walked with me
Even in the snow
As we both learn
And as we both grow.*

-Orlando G.

Trust

*Trust is a wonderful thing
It's the thing we must have
To apply to our daily lives
like a little salve.
It's comforting, it's vital
It's our only choice.*

*It saves us
from stifling our own voice.
Trust was something that I had when
I was a little kid
but as I grew older-
The pot was stifled by the lid.
Things conspired to turn
my trust upside down
and the world just started bouncing around.
People kept borrowing money or whatever
And I never could find the right lever.
It's still up to me
To put a stop to it at home
It's getting better
even though they won't leave me alone
But I'm trusting again
and it's a wonderful thing
it's like anticipating spring.
I won't let negative things
get in the way of something vital.
I've come too far to give up the fight*
-Ronald Young

Learn to heal

*We must be gentle to the ones who are fragile
To heal their broken hearts that aren't stable
We must show tenderness that is sweet and kind,
that nurtures the soul and makes them divine.
We must speak words of comfort to relax their minds
to ease away the pain and make their lives feel fine.
We must feel their needs, and supply it with happiness
as we see the change in their lives,
as they emerge from the darkness.*
-Edward Gaines

Rising Star

*Another day has begun as we rise again
to conquer and achieve victory
to the bitter end.
To struggle for the goals we strive for-
a daily routine, as we strive for more,
To look for strength when times are tough,
is to fight with courage and to rise up
To achieve is to go far as, we show the world who we are.*
-E. Gaines

The Last Word

As human beings we were created for relationships. We thrive when we are in healthy interdependent connections to each other. For some that means biological family, for others that means chosen allies.

The stories represented here are wonderful testimonies to the power of love and to the power of recovery—not just for the person but for those who love them and even for our communities.

At the same time there is a voice and that is the voice of those who love deeply, clearly and actively and yet for their loved one recovery does not happen. As a family member this is my experience. My sister-in-law died seven years ago at the age of 39 because of her mental illness. As her siblings we loved her deeply. We loved her spirit, her fight, her wicked sense of humor and her ability to play the piano with a passion that would make you weep.

Sometimes an expression of that love was the ability to say no when her demands were beyond our capacity or when giv-

ing in would only support illness — not health. So this thing of loving each other is a complex one.

That's why we need community. Sometimes communities of recovery whether in 12 step groups, faith-based contexts or the people on the block can go where family members can't. Families also need communities—peers who can say I have been where you are or here is a hand to guide you. Families need communities that reflect their spirituality, where they can find acceptance and connection beyond themselves. And families need hope, hope that tomorrow can be better than today. May we continue to work together to build a system that supports individuals, families and communities to live with hope.

Joan Kenerson King

Joan Kenerson King is a consultant with more than 20 years of experience in behavioral health. She is a family member and a passionate advocate for systems change to promote recovery, resilience and self determination.



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