

# EXPRESSIONS IN RECOVERY

A DIGEST FOR PEOPLE IN RECOVERY DESCRIBING THEIR CURRENT STATE OF MIND, PROGRESS AND FUTURE OUTLOOK



Recovery is so much more than struggle. It is the awakening of the human spirit, new appreciations, abilities, an ever-expanding hope for the future—and the many facets of love.

## Expressions in Recovery 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)

EDITOR OR GUEST CONTRIBUTORS INSPIRATIONAL SUMMARY.



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# Editor's Note

As we recover, so do our senses. Our wants and needs change. Our perception broadens and sharpens at the same time. Smelling a flower, watching a sunset and marveling at the beauty of natural color, shape and symmetry.

We no longer just eat—now we dine. We savor life. The beauty and innocence of our children, asleep and in play swells our hearts. An innocent infatuation, a crush and for some of us, even falling in love, for the very first time.

Relishing a hand in ours, a simple kiss, a caress and discovering the true meaning of intimacy. The pure blessing and joy of being in service and helping others is realized.

Come with us as we explore the awakening of our senses and love, on the pages of “Expressions in Recovery”.

Gil Gadson

# HERE AND NOW

## Short Reflections



I'm in love with me. I'm in love with the me I never knew and I've come to love. I'm in love with life and being clean and clear.

Yolanda Crawford

First and foremost, I like and love myself. I like the way I look today and I see the beauty in everyone else too. I love the clean freedom of choice today. I just love life period! I have a different outlook on life these days. I'm in love with being responsible and having money in my pocket without the overwhelming urge to spend it. I'm in love with paying bills and feeling like a man again. I'm in love with feeling strong and rediscovering how to love others too.

Steve Covin

As a person who works in the field of recovery, my greatest joy comes from seeing others begin to love themselves, to accept themselves, good and bad and love it all. It's like a light bulb being turned on and you can see the brilliance of the room. Seeing these awakenings, for some, for the first time, validates everything that I do. There are definitely hard times and disappointments but seeing these things makes it all worthwhile.

Judith Bigley

I'm in love with rediscovering life. I go to my daughter's school and interact with other parents our children's welfare. For the first time, I went to my niece's basketball game and watched her score 21 points. She periodically looked in the stands for her uncle's approval. I could never fully express all the things I'm discovering now that I'm committed to recovery. I'm just in love with life and all the possibilities.

Gardner Davenport

I love being able to wake up in the morning not having to wonder where I've been, what I've done, what was done to me and who I may have been with. I wake up feeling happy, not worthless. I'm somebody, not just that addict. I'm really somebody. I've come to really love myself along with loving my higher power.

Now I have the capability and courage to make my dreams come true. I love helping people. I always wanted to be a nurse and that's just what I'm gonna' do—what I love.

Barbara Ann Washington

I get to touch the spiritual part of individuals. I believe in God and I believe he uses me. Sometimes I get words, feelings and things to say that I feel are given to me through the grace of God.

Recovery is a hard process, but even in the struggle, when they keep coming back, I know they want and need something. I feel so privileged sometimes just being trusted and consoling those who come to me. A co-worker told me that they loved my smile. They told me my smile can change someone's day. God gave me that smile. And I love giving it away. I truly love what I do.

Carmen Olmeda

I've always loved education. My substance abuse and the subsequent madness led me on a path where I nearly lost my mind and became filled with misinformation. Today, four years later and four years clean, I now fill my heart and mind with true and accurate information. I'm in my second year of college, I'm am a big brother to those who've come behind me. Everything I learn now is worth sharing. I'm in love with regaining my mind and the ability to learn again.

Darroll Savage

# LEVELS OF LOVE

## Featured Stories

### Hands Of Diversity

I was sitting at a table with all of the coke and heroin I could ever want, and my gun. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't get high. I believe God gives each and every one of us moments of clarity and I also believe that incident was one of mine.

Honestly, it would take a few more clarifying moments before I finally committed myself to sobriety and sanity. Once I was truly on this road, nothing stood in my way. There were never too many meetings and none were ever too far away. After seeing the sad state of the recovery community and seeing too many places that were only interested in money and filling out forms, I became obsessed with truly helping others get what a man who had been convicted seventeen times, stabbed seven times, shot once and abused every drug known to man had gotten. A dream and a mission developed.

I wanted to open a house for men to restore them to sobriety and sanity. Four things stood out in my mind that became the basis of our goal and structure. For a man to be complete he needs to unite, enhance and strengthen the spiritual, the mental, the physical, and ultimately the financial as he becomes in touch with his heart, his mind, his body and the practicality of making sound decisions with their finances.

It was hard getting started but the love of what I was doing and God kept me going. Quickly I saw the fruits of our labor as members stayed clean, grew and before my eyes matured into men that were now an asset and a benefit to their wives, children, parents, brothers and sisters and society at large. I believe God is using me, but he is using me in a way that let's me see dreams come true each and every day.

Currently one member of Hands of Diversity (HOD) works at 8th and Girard Medical Center and previously worked at the NET for over two years. Five other members of HOD now work at Northeast Treatment Center (the NET). The person who interviewed me for this article is an alumni, a person I sponsor, and my spiritual brother, Mr. Gil Gadson. We have members with up to ten years clean and others who are quickly catching up.

Our name is central to our philosophy our beliefs and what I learned. My grandfather was not only wise but he was a hands on person who had very crafty hands and a wise word for everyone, no

matter what race, creed or color. He was a very diverse person. Thus, the name Hands Of Diversity was born. There have been times I wanted to quit. Exhaustion, adversity, obstacles, human nature and life in general often had me wondering where I would get the strength and money to continue.

Each and every time without fail, God would send me a clear sign to keep pushing on. A member would call saying he or she had found a job, asked to speak or lead a recovery affair or to tell me how much clean time they had, how good they felt and the best of all, just to say thank you and tell me they loved me.

These signs of encouragement and affirmation would be so clear. I'd bow my head, pray and thank God for helping me raise soldiers to fight in this battle against substance abuse and insanity. I am in love with this. I love what I do and the path God has set me on. Hands Of Diversity now has three houses. Its main house, the work and transition house and the women's house.

We've earned numerous awards from the city and state, however my greatest reward comes in two forms each and every time an alumni walks through our doors to speak or give whatever he has of himself and his or her time and second, when I can step back now sometimes as members are able to take the reins in our day-to-day affairs as I proudly watch. I love my wife and I love my children and God knows I am in love with this path God he has set me on.

Nathaniel "Nate" Green  
Director and Founder of HOD

### A Gift From God

There are a number of things I'm in love with now, but one memory stays embedded in my mind. In 2010, after acquiring five months clean, I went to the Catskills in upstate New York to work at a camp doing whatever kind of work was needed.

Each day was different. I was eager to wake up each and every morning. Each workday, on my break, I'd take walks. I'm from Philly so I never got to see real nature up close. This place held me spellbound every day. The clear blue skies, all sorts of trees, the birds and sounds of nature captured my full attention.

There was this beautiful trail that went up the side of a mountain. At the top, I'd look out over the most beautiful sights this city boy had ever seen. I

## LEVELS OF LOVE

### Featured Stories

sat by streams listening to clear water flow. I chased wild turkeys, laughing all the way as deer watched this crazy, silly happy man.

At night, in crystal clear skies, the stars would come out and put on a show. It almost felt like it was all done just for me—a gift. I'd sit and get in touch with God's will and purpose for me, his mercy, blessings and my gratitude.

The disease of insanity and addiction had blinded me. Recovery gave me back my sight, and allowed me to see and love life for what it truly is. I'm in love with being clean, sanity, God and life.

Steven Whiteley

### Sister With The Cart

As a person in recovery, I have realized that the blessings I give I receive tenfold. Every day that I'm granted the gift of life I use it to give to those who are in need in any form available. That is why I always have my shopping cart. I use it like people use a car to deliver to the less fortunate.

I have received many of blessings from Allah, just using my shopping cart to bless others from all walks of life. I use my shopping cart like a vehicle to navigate throughout various communities. On the wheels of my shopping cart I have led a trail of wonders. I have rescued battered women and children, donated food to multiple community affairs which feeds the homeless, and I prepared meals twice a week for the same purpose. I help people in transitional housing by opening up an email account and helping them register for training.

I first started my shopping cart refuge on the day my sister wanted to leave her abusive

husband with her children, while he was drunk and asleep. I had no car, so I transported her and the children's belongings with my shopping cart to a safe haven. From that day, I knew my shopping cart could be used for a greater good.

When people see me today in JFK or throughout various communities they say "Hey Sister, is there anything in your cart for me?" I will usually feed people who just want a decent home cooked meal. And when I say "I have no food today but I will get you something to eat," some smile, some cry, but they all give me a grateful hug and say "God bless you".

I have two goals. My first goal is to have a real vehicle to continue my delivery of blessings around the city. My second goal is to open a recovery home for women with children that will become a safe haven built on recovery and love. Having a vehicle will help me bring blessings to all. My safe haven will be named "SisterZ" because it will be a place where I can help women build their self-esteem and help empower themselves.

In Shall Allah

In God's Will

"Fatima" Ramona Glover

### Engaged

My name is Jimmy Members. I am a peer specialist, community recovery specialist, and mentor. I now work at Girard Medical Center in their I.O.P program and volunteer at various community projects. I am proud of what I've accomplished for myself and the things I'm still reaching for (college, certifications, etc.)

However, there is a greater accomplishment and privilege that I possess and savor. There

is a greater gift that I have been given. I have the opportunity to see others grow, reach their full potential and fulfill their wildest dreams. This field is so vast. There are so many in society who can be touched and healed—mothers, fathers, sister, brothers, children, the elderly, those with mental disabilities and those with no issues except loving those that do.

Through this process of recovery, I've learned to love myself, and through loving myself, I can give love to others, genuinely. We all have faults, however love truly does conquer all. I've found that the beauty of this field is in seeing the transformation that occurs among my peers each and every day as they acquire they ability and confidence to help them selves .

They are growing emotionally, spiritually, physically and mentally as they go forth being part of families, communities and ultimately the world at large

Jimmy F. Members

### Gratitude

I used to always look at the stuff other people had. Now I only see and notice the things that people don't have, that I have. I am so grateful now. There are others who have so much less and are simply concerned with trying to survive and live day-to-day.

Gratitude can't be expressed with just words. You have to act. I love giving my best, helping others with similar problems that I've had in the past. I love seeing them reach the level of peace God has saw fit to bless me with. I'm in love with the simple reality of what love really is. For me—love is giving.

Jeffrey Hughes

# EXPRESSIONS

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. Then 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:*

## I fell in love

This feels like the very first time  
I never been in love before—sane  
and sober.

This love gets in my mind, and I  
wanna hold her.

I wanna be gentle and hold her  
hand

I want her to see I care, and I'm  
really her man.

I heard her before I saw her

and fell in love with her voice

This feels so different

Sober—and having a choice.

I took a walk with her

Never did that before

I'm pulling out chairs and  
holding doors.

I can't wait 'till tomorrow, so I  
can do it again

Just wanna be with her and be  
her man.

I fell in love

Junie

## I just wanna walk with you

I'll never ask for a kiss  
you see,

the things that I miss  
are all inside.

The beauty that is you  
as you talk

comes shining through  
your spirit—you cannot hide.

You make me want to see

a life I never believed  
and a life I never tried  
I'm shaking—thinking of you  
I'm quaking—thinking of truth  
and the fact is, I don't think you  
lie

I just wanna walk with you  
I just wanna talk with you  
something tells me

you are who I've been looking for  
I wanna share my mind

I wanna see what we find

when we walk and,

when we talk

You probably know of places

I should go,

and of faces I should know  
and I believe in you.

No one else  
could take my hand

No one else  
could make me stand

and see,  
where I needed to be.

No one else  
could make me feel

a dream

so full

so real

and now, I wanna be me

I'm walking with you now

and you may wonder how

you see—you're in my heart.

I think you're right for me

I know you make me see,

that it's time for me to start.

Right now, life seems so clean

I think you know what I mean

because who you are, taught it to  
me.

That's why when I think of you  
I only think of us two,

walking and talking—like we do.

Orlando

## I helped somebody

Little ole' me helped somebody.  
She told me I made her want to

stay clean

She hugged me and squeezed me.

With tears in her eyes and to my  
surprise

She said I was wise

Then she told me she loved me  
and always would

Nothing ever, ever felt so good

I only did what I should

Stayed clean

Even when I walked in the hood

But she said I understood and

helped her love herself.

Little does she know,

she helped me love me today.

Storm

## I watch him walk

I never watched a man walk  
before

Or I was too high to pay  
attention.

Now every time he walks in  
the door

It's like an intervention

He grabbed my hand yesterday

as we crossed the street

I let him as I walked like I had  
two left feet.

It's the little things he does

That drive me wild

He rubs my head, I feel like a  
child.

Just the innocence feels so  
good

I never felt this before, I never  
understood.

Here he comes again walking  
through the door.

I'm a walk back so he can walk  
some more.

They say this is only the  
beginning

And there's more in store

This new life is what's

happenin'..now and

forevermore

Desiree

## I love my child

I remember when she was born  
I held my baby in my arms  
it didn't take long,  
my life set off alarms  
then fear took over  
because of how I lived  
I didn't know what to do, I didn't know  
if I could give  
This little baby, that needed me  
Scared me and  
Dared me  
to try to change  
I had to stop and rearrange  
—my life  
and become captain of my own ship  
Time was not my friend  
so I cracked the whip.  
Now here I am  
At her bedroom door  
Watching her sleep  
Toys on the floor  
Teddy bear in her arms  
As content as can be.  
She calls me mom again  
I'm as blessed as can be.  
I'm in love with my child

Karen Lassiter

## At the end of the tunnel

To live a life clean  
life sometimes seemed  
so lonely and bleak.  
The trials of life,  
the stress and strife  
made it hard to see  
the light...  
at the end of the tunnel.  
We waited and waited,  
we prayed and we hated  
being alone.

But GOD gave us time

so we could find  
that

one—  
to



call our own.  
Now you are here  
and things are clear  
I know you are the one.  
You are there when I sleep,  
you are there when I wake,  
you are my moon and sun  
you tell me to pray  
each and every day  
you feed my soul  
and you wonder why,  
I reach for the sky  
when I speak to you?  
You are the honey to my tea  
my smile, when people see...  
You're the answer to my plea.  
So blessed am I  
just thinking of you and it  
makes me want to cry  
happy tears for all the years  
when I used to ask— why.  
I feel this is right  
and I see the light.  
it's shining so bright  
At the end of the tunnel

Gil

## I'm in love

I don't think you know  
how I think of you.  
I live and breathe because you do.  
I am so proud  
to be your man  
I watch you walk  
I'm your number one fan.  
And when you talk  
I get taken away  
by the sound of your voice  
it's my music, and it plays  
in my mind always—as I go about my  
day.  
I know God loves me  
he gave me you  
He let me see  
that dreams come true.  
My friend asked me  
what do I love about you  
it only took a second to say what's  
true  
and I boldly told him smiling...I love  
everything about you.

Hector Cortez

## THE LAST WORD

Throughout man's history, we have tried to analyze, explain and define love. There are limitless works of art, poetry and deeds of others that attempt to explain what love really is and does. I am no authority, these words are simply my beliefs and I believe with all my heart, the following about love.

I believe love gives. I believe love is a force. I believe love is a gift. On these pages, we have seen a few common themes that seem to be unavoidable when talking about love. One is selflessness. This spiritual quality manifests itself not in what we do for ourselves, but for others. It can bring an undeniable joy which not only enriches our days but can even validate our very existence, and give us insight as to who we are, what we can do and the measure of our character.

Another is gratitude. When we are grateful and truly thankful for what we have and what we've received, humility and appreciation can open our eyes to deeper meanings in life. There are others, but these two, as we've seen, on these pages carry with them the power of change, purpose and realization.

I believe there is a beauty in discovering love. I believe love has limitless forms as we are limitless individuals. Someone once said love does not brag. I believe that. I believe love speaks for itself through what it produces.

My sponsor and my spiritual brother has a saying that was given to him by his grandfather. His grandfather said, "Love is the highest elevation of understanding. If you can understand something, you can love it."

This is a rough world and rough times we live in but I offer the thought and wish that in this new year, we become committed to caring, understanding, and bringing back the power, the healing and the beauty of love.

Gil Gadson

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