SO MANY WAYS

The laughter of a child, 
ice cream on my chin. 
A Gazelle running wild, 
a fragrance of life blowing in the wind. 
In love.....not feeling the rain or the storm, 
a kind word to start my day, 
doing exercises and forms-feeling strong in my own way. 
A smile from you and an encouraging word 
The list is virtually endless.... 
with things I may not have seen or heard. 
There are so many ways.......
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 contributor’s inspirational summary.

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www.dbhids.org/expressions-in-recovery

Volume 12, 2014
Editor’s Note

The face of recovery and wellness is often seen through a finite lens. Many may not know that the pathways to wellness have no set limits.

Life dictates that be it physical, mental or spiritual, we are all on a sometimes challenging and/or difficult journey in our quest for a better quality of life for ourselves and those we hold dear. Personal perception shapes how we see, accept and face life’s challenges. For so many now, the pathways to wellness has expanded. Some have even found beauty and excitement in the search as they find a myriad of ways to stay healthy and help others. For some, the beauty of a starlit night or the ebb and flow of the seashore may have offered solace, peace and inspiration. For another, exercise, Yoga or maybe even the Martial Arts which can combine mind and body may be an anchor and pathway to strength and needed confidence. So much more, in ways we may have never imagined, contributes to wellness.

The list is endless. Come with us on the pages of “Expressions in Recovery” as we explore some of the countless ways that many are strengthening themselves and expanding the common road to wellness.

Gil Gadson
My morning ritual
Each morning, I roll out of bed, hit the floor, do 50 pushups and with my pulse rate higher, my breathing quickening, oxygenated blood rushing to every part of my body-on my knees I pray. I ask the God of my belief to reveal his will and if it is his will, to make me a better man each day. When I’m done praying, I rise, proud of myself to have once again disciplined my physical self with the morning exercise and grateful as well as hopeful due to my spiritual faith. I have no doubt that there is a connection with spiritual and physical health. At one time, anxiety attacks relentlessly held me captive. I never knew that how I processed stressful, everyday life situations was a trigger for the anxiety attacks. Once I got rid of or lessened the stress, the attacks become less and less until now I virtually don’t experience them anymore.

Feeling free
The editor asked me what keeps me healthy and it’s very simple for me. These days I make good choices. Life shows up but I always feel ready because I’ve become strong enough to make practical choices and for once on my life I feel like I’m in control and I love the feeling of feeling free and not just subject to everything around me or following the crowd. I sometimes sit back and watch people struggling and stressing themselves out like I used to trying to keep up with every latest fad or the newest phone and for once I feel no pressure as I keep it simple, make practical choices and stay within my means. I think this keeps me out of the doctor’s office because I’m always feeling free.

I’m Funny
People tell me that I’m funny. They tell me that I’m a natural comedian. What they don’t know is that I’ve experienced a lot of pain in my life. I choose humor instead of sadness. When I make people laugh the pains of the past go away for awhile and I’m convinced that this is my gift and the reason I’m still here, humor keeps me from the sadness of this world-the cheaters, the users, the thieves and the liars. I can remember in my past being in jail and my humor helped me to survive. There’s enough bad things in this world and I refuse to add to them so I make people laugh and momentarily forget their troubles. Humor chase stress away and let’s you see that ironic side of things and takes away the feeling of being helpless as you accept in a funny way, the problems we all face every day. I think my sense of humor keeps me well and sane.

My child and God
I have a daughter who I adore. I have a faith that keeps me grounded, calm and secure. I pray each morning and connect with what I believe to be a God who loves me to start my day and it empowers me. On the wall in the reception area where I work is a plaque in my honor that was given to me for being who I am. It was said that I’m an asset to my job and that in my position I make people feel welcome, valued and put smiles on their faces. I believe my faith and the love of my child and being a mother sustains me. This keeps me grounded, purposeful, happy and well.
Family

The editor of this asked me what gets me up in the morning and keeps me healthy. He asked me what gives me the strength to be lively, positive, fun and just be who I am, making people smile every day. Very quickly I told him that it was basically three things: God, gratitude and family.

I don’t like tension and conflict so I work every day to create an environment that is peaceful, hopeful and happy. Feeling and believing that God exists and has blessed me gives me gratitude and tells me to focus on what I’m grateful for in the first place.

And what I’m truly, unbelievably grateful for is family. And I don’t mean just having family, I mean having family that teaches, instills, inspires and makes you proud. I am so very fortunate. I look at the younger generation today and I wish I could give them what I have: Old School values.

It started with my grandparents who at an early age gave me standards that still stand today. Those standards let me see things in a way that keeps me healthy and well. I still pass by people with a respectful hello and goodbye, a kind word, a smile and I try to learn something every day.

My mother is my alter ego. I am so proud that I am so like her. She has given me principles that I live by each and every day. She is the most down to earth and realistic person I know. Just like her, I don’t run, I deal with things as they come and keep it moving. As for my dad, he did what all men and dads should do. He showed and led by example. The thought of my Dad almost makes me want to cry but I would be crying happy tears. As a teenager, due to an accident, my dad lost both of his legs. From that day to this, he has had a full life, a wife and children. For him, there were no excuses. My answer again was that besides staying in my own lane, I always eat healthy, I worship and practice my worship in a God that I believe loves, blesses, sustains me and is real. I also like to laugh, I love rich, meaningful conversation, I like to play interactive games of fun with acquaintances and family and there are even those who think I’m funny. If someone comes to me with a problem of their own, a plan to solve it and legitimately needs my help or assistance, that’s a possible scenario. If they’ve come for a co-conspirator and/or to just dump and complain… I’ll politely “stay in my own lane” and not adopt a fruitless, unproductive and unhealthy conversation or action.

These principles keep my gray hairs to a minimum, keep me out of the hospital, and keep me positive, healthy and well……..

TRACIE BROWN

Staying in my own lane

When asked what keeps me healthy and well, I simply think it’s just that I’ve always “stayed in my own lane”. I’ve known for a long time that stress is the number one aggravator and killer. Whatever illness you may have, either temporary or chronic, stress can and will amplify it. We have a president in office who has aged 20 yrs right before our eyes in less than eight due to stress.

As the slang goes: I “Stay in my own lane”. I don’t adopt other people’s problems and make them mine. I’m not coldhearted or unsympathetic. What I mean is that if you don’t establish healthy boundaries, people will dump on you, bring gossip your way, ruin your day with their spirit of complaint and sometimes just want you as miserable as they are. There’s an old saying that ”Misery loves company”. I believe that to be true. Most people first seek to vent their frustrations, disappointments and misfortunes instead of immediately looking to address and solve their problems. I have raised five daughters and even with them, I draw the line. I will go to the wire for my children but only if they are doing the right thing, not looking for a scapegoat or easy way out and if they’re honest. Otherwise, they are on their own. I take a serious stand on this because they won’t grow otherwise and neither will I. I believe that human beings should help each other but not co-sign each other’s weaknesses, petty complaints, and wants. My brother started this conversation – he asked me what kept me so even-tempered and he said I was the best sister in the world. He began the conversation by reminding me that we’ve never, ever had a argument in all of our years and he said it wasn’t because of him, he said it was because of me and that I’ve never changed or let this world sour me. He also remarked how basically everyone in our family has dealt with some kind of health issues except me. My answer again was that besides staying in my own lane, I always eat healthy, I worship and practice my worship in a God that I believe loves, blesses, sustains me and is real. I also like to laugh, I love rich, meaningful conversation, I like to play interactive games of fun with acquaintances and family and there are even those who think I’m funny. If someone comes to me with a problem of their own, a plan to solve it and legitimately needs my help or assistance, that’s a possible scenario. If they’ve come for a co-conspirator and/or to just dump and complain… I’ll politely “stay in my own lane” and not adopt a fruitless, unproductive and unhealthy conversation or action.

BRENDA FRANKLIN
Humility and Gratitude

I believe that I’m a servant. I truly believe that my job is to help others—looking for nothing in return for myself. I don’t look for kudos, pats on the back or anything special for doing what I do. My bar is not set low; it’s just that simplicity, humility and gratitude rules my day. If I was looking for constant approval, I would be inviting in disappointment, betrayal and pain. If I was not humble, it would be harder to learn because I believe humility keeps the doors of knowledge wide open and gives you patience. If I was not grateful, I could not be humble and more importantly I wouldn’t recognize blessings when they are right in front of me and those that some think have passed them by. People that I know keep telling me that I’m a magnet—that I attract others. I’m beginning to see it but never knew it because I just kept it moving and as I said, I didn’t look for things in return.

I sit in the middle of the seesaw, seeing each side constantly go up and down in life while I hold on to my place of balance, always trying to be careful not to fall one way or the other. What I’m saying is that my key to health and wellness is establishing and keeping balance in my life. So many are too angry, too mad. Too disappointed, too rich, too poor, too hopeless, too arrogant, too and without a belief that balances them and the way they see this world. I believe that a solid belief in something is the glue that holds all the different facets of life in balance. When all is said and done my spiritual belief, my God, gives me that balance and subsequently I am healthy and well......

SHANEEN MOORE

Love

The man in my life looked me square in the eye, kissed me and asked me how did I become so sweet in such a dog-eat-dog world, and how I stay so even tempered and healthy. He thought at first that I was just giving an expected answer when I said that it’s my children and grandchildren-especially the babies. People have asked me through the years how I have so much patience with them. It started when my children’s dad left suddenly. Besides providing for them, my main concern was that they felt loved each and every day. And while I was giving them unconditional love and spoiling them... I fell in love... with them. So I didn’t scream or ever yell at them. I didn’t curse and complain about what I had to do for them and we became joined at the hip.

My children are my fountain of youth. When they simply called me mom, even now when they are grown-still motivates and rejuvenates me. I see the look in their eyes when they say it and it fills my heart and gives my life purpose.

When my grands run to me and even call me on the phone, no matter what I’m doing, I stop and take the time with them that they need. But honestly, it’s them that keeps me going and I truly believe that besides trying to eat healthy and sometimes, exercising, they keep me happy and I believe that keeps me healthy.

Angry people seem to always be sick, mentally and physically and complaining all the time. Love keeps me healthy and well. What better love than that which can come from your children when your as close as me and mine........

CELESTE RILEY

Secrets keep you sick

I’ve fallen in love with learning. I spent most of my life on drugs, in and out of jail, physically and mentally sick while also being spiritually dead. I forced myself to be who I really wasn’t and I always had a secret. My secret was that I loved to read and learn about almost anything. I say anything because so much interested and fascinated me. However, being in the hood and having to be tough and hard never let me share my secret or go after it freely so I’d drown myself in drugs to try and forget who I really was and who I was meant to be. I went to an N.A meeting once but my reason was to meet someone who I was selling drugs to. At that meeting, the featured speaker spoke about secrets and then he said that quote which is my mantra and key to staying well. He said: “Secrets keep you sick”. I couldn’t leave that seat that night as this stranger described my life and he didn’t know me. I never forgot what he said. In fact, it haunted me until I could take it no more and one day I got away from everyone and walked into a library. I stayed there almost all day reading and feeling my mind and spirit come alive as I became that little boy again who was always fascinated by learning things. I got a library card that day and I also went into a recovery house to kick my habit. So many of us walk around every day, never really being our true selves and finding where we belong and we become sick as we put on false faces, saying and doing things contrary to who we really are and then ultimately put false things in that empty space trying to fill it. I’m in college now and I’m loving the challenge and thoughts of the future.

Today, I believe I stay healthy and well because of all I’ve learned and I’ve gotten rid of that stress that always kept me sick when I was keeping secrets. Today... learning keeps me well and I have no more secrets, I’m free and I know without a doubt that’s what keeps me well. ....

KELLY COLEMAN

Mr. Fix It

There was a time that I seemed sick all the time but every time I went to the doctor they couldn’t find anything really wrong. At that time, I was living wrong, involved with all the wrong people and I had no goals. I was just existing, working jobs I hated, not facing my demons and my self esteem was at an all time low. I finally got the courage to get honest with myself, tell the truth and got help. It was hard at first facing myself and realizing that I was keeping myself miserable with self doubt and the fear of doing things and challenging myself like never before. Once I got clean, I could see clearly and I began to believe that anything is possible once you find your passion. I was always good at fixing things and before I took this for granted. I now work with a friend who has a home repair business and each day I’m learning more and more. I love the feeling of being useful and that my skills put smiles on people’s faces. Each time I finish a job, I stand back look at it and it’s better than any drug or drink. I look at some of the things in my apartment that I built with my own hands everyday and it gives me the peace of mind I’ve always searched for. I have a nickname that was given to me by family, and friends—‘Mr. Fixit’. I love it. Finding an identity and what I’m really good at and enjoy has given me peace of mind. I don’t feel sick anymore all the time. Finding my place and dignity keeps me well. I like being Mr. Fixit.

KEVIN GREEN
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.

The second half
I remember
We used to like to breathe early in the morning,
When the air was new, populated by morning creatures—signaling another new and welcome dawn.
I remember when cornflakes and Captain Crunch were fun, as we rushed off to school...the way we used to.
I remember my first crush and wanting to hold her hand or just sit next to her and it was enough for the day.
And that first kiss, lost in the recollection for days to come...the way we used to.
I remember foot races but not who won and I don't care.
I remember basketball games in the snow with frozen hands and cold cheeks split by smiles outshining the sun.
I remember fathers being magicians making things we needed appear and mothers being angels making us believe in things we could not see, our future and ourselves.
We often ate together...after we prayed...I remember that.

Yesterday, I saw a child playing with a stick—he was a general in an army of his creation and as he marched, I saw the fertility of his mind—the free imagination unfettered by sophistication and the fearlessness of innocence as he played happily...The way we used to...

STORM

Cheerios
A high fiber diet / vitamins from A to Z
reading the labels / scared of what I might find and see.
Life used to be simple, / now I can't even get a hug'
everyone's so afraid they gonna' catch some kind of bug
Pills for this / and pills for that / enough how-to instructions
to fill a cowboys hat. / All this stuff can get crazy / and only God knows / that I am not being lazy / when I say man...just give me a bowl of Cheerios.
Maybe I'll take a nature hike / And only eat what I find
But I'm still paranoid / with all the warnings and signs. / but in my backpack where none can see, / simplicity lives so I can be me. / So I'll find me a tree / Where under it, I'll sit down / I'll put out a bowl for you and me right there on the ground. / And we'll chill for awhile. / in a place no one knows / and have the time of our lives / with a simple bowl of Cheerios............

GIL
I WISH THERE HAD BEEN MORE ROOM AND MORE PAGES WHERE I COULD have chronicled the endless stories of how so many of us stay well. It is not just those in active recovery who are trying to get well, healthy and stay that way. In some way, shape, form, method or action, we are all in some form of recovery, always striving for a better quality of life, mind and spirit.

Some are trying to recover from the loss of loved ones, some are experiencing financial hard times and the lost of prosperity, some have lost faith in basically everything as we listen and read the news stories of man’s inhumanity to man. Some feel unloved everyday—carrying undue pain and crippling loneliness and feelings of abandonment, loss, insignificance and the scars of abuse.

However, even with all this pain, the indomitable human spirit always rises to the top. With all the uncertainty in the world, we still love, we still play, we worship, we work, make plans and dream. We never give up and sometimes the simplest of things can motivate us and sustain us for another day. The gaze and laughter of a trusting child, a mother’s touch, a funny joke, the early morning chirp of a bird, the comedic wisdom of the neighborhood wino, a lover’s touch, a job well done and a simple belief in something more than ourselves has kept us moving forward, sometimes actually laughing at our worries as we continue to believe in tomorrow. There are so many ways to stay well and we are finding that the list is endless……..

GIL GADSON
EDITOR