LOVE & FAMILY

As a child, I would just explore and play, and look for joy each and every day. The worries of the world were not known to me, and the end of my porch was as far as I could see. But thinking back at this time of year, when things were sweeter, with fewer tears, when parents were magicians and made our dreams appear, I remember what I really, really held most dear.

It was grandma and grandpa with hugs that melted my heart with that old twinkle in their eye they would always start to tell me stories better than anything in books.

Stories of times when people always gave more than they took, and that this time of year it was about being a sender, a sender of love so we always remember what matters most, and that is family.

Grandma and grandpa taught me that, and that’s what I believe.

Love and Family.
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.

Section 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
Editor or guest contributor’s inspirational summary.

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For additional copies of current and past issues visit
www.dbhids.org/expressions-in-recovery

Resources
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800-273-8255
Mental Health Crisis Line 215-685-6440
Domestic Violence 866-723-3014
Protective Services 877-401-8835
Phila. Community Center 215-223-7700

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Editor’s Note

In this fast technological age, we often look for quick fixes, pacifications, and substitutions while we rationalize our dilemmas and, unfortunately, often feel hopeless as a result. However, in midst of this dog-eat-dog world the indomitable human spirit always rises to the top and two of our premier tools combined, that cement our foundations are family and the holidays. And as the year draws to a close, it’s a natural time of reflection.

The holidays are a time for renewal, patience, empathy, kindness, and, most importantly, forgiveness and love. At this time of year, more than any other, we forgive, we graciously share, and we remember.

We remember the good times. We remember when life was simple and just when it seemed like those lazy beautiful days could get no better, the doorbell rings and in walks Grandma and Grandpa bearing the greatest gifts of all...Love and Wisdom. The holidays mean a lot of different things to many. As we look ahead to the coming New Year, join us as we explore the impact of the holiday season and family in the pages of Expressions in Recovery.

Gil Gadson
The holidays for many seem to have become more of a responsibility and a burden than a time of joy but I think it’s different with everybody and it depends on how you look at it. For me, they still excite me bringing back childhood memories and anticipation of seeing those I’ve missed. It’s not the food or the gifts that excite me. The main part of the holidays for me is just seeing old friends. I know I’ll see and be with family, but it’s those old friends that I know will be coming to town that I look forward to seeing. For someone in recovery, it does wonders for me to see others in the fight, doing well, not giving up and bringing good news, new babies, husbands, girlfriends and stories about what they are working on here and now. This is what I love about the holidays: seeing old friends and making new ones.

SANDRA WILLIAMS

This year, the holidays will be a little hard and different for me. First of all, this is going to be the first time that I’ll be sober and well on a holiday. Holidays for me were always a time to get drunk, amongst other things, and use this time to do what I wanted to do anyway. These days, I no longer get high, the anxiety and depression attacks are at a minimum and I’ve learned some things. This year, I have hard decisions to make. Most of my family drinks and alcohol will be flowing everywhere. I’m thinking of calling everyone and wishing them well because I don’t think I’m ready yet or strong enough to be around all that, and not indulge. The holidays this year might be good and bad for me because most likely I won’t be going to celebrate with family and I never did that before. But the good part is that I’m clean and sober, anxiety free and for the first time in years I don’t really feel depressed.

I’ve met people like me and I think I’ll just go and hang with them; they invited me. This is the good part. I have choices today and I think I choose to make this a holiday of gratitude.

MALIA COOPER

Every year at this time I get excited, nostalgic and just plain happy. For me it’s music and memories. The holiday music for me is by far some of the most moving music in the world. It gets in your heart, and just makes you feel good and at peace. I’m a man with a number of serious responsibilities on an everyday basis. These responsibilities are on my mind all day long but when those holiday songs are played or come on the radio, I can feel the tension of the day, and life itself, become a bit lighter and then my mind is flooded with past holidays, family and friends and even memories of my childhood at this time of year when magic was real and a sort of spiritual happiness filled my home.

LATEVI LAWSON

My favorite part of the holidays is the food. It seems like everyone who makes food, makes their best dish and really puts their heart in it. Everything looks so perfect. The spread looks like something on TV or out of a magazine. And it’s like a silent rule to eat to you bust, rest, and then go back again. I can see that ham my aunt always brings with the pineapples and cherries stuck to it and her smacking my hand away and watching me knowing I’m gonna’ try and steal another one before it is time to eat. I have a tight family, so I know we will always get together, we often do, so I’m not worried about that. For me it’s the food that I look forward to, the looks on the cooks’ faces and nobody talking about diets.

KEVIN SMALLS
Her Smile

If someone were to ask me how an angel smiles, I’d tell them to look at my aunt who is also legally my mother. Every year, I make sure I get her a gift, and I have to admit I’m being kind of selfish. It’s that smile of hers I need and love to see. In her smile is a hundred good moms all wrapped up in one. All of the kindness and love in the world is wrapped up in her smile. It doesn’t matter what you give her because she’s a true giver, and true givers appreciate everything and just want a bit of love. This year again, I’ll bring her a gift and see that smile that rivals the sun and fills my heart.

KYLE McTILLMAN

It’s simply the love that pours out on the holidays, seeing my children and grandchildren – an extension of who we are. You could close your eyes and just breathe the love in the room, in your home and wherever family gathers at this time of year. More than the food and presents, I just lose myself in the love.

CELESTE RILEY

The holidays to me are simply about love, life and family. I know there are some without families and my deepest sympathies go out to them because I don’t know what I’d do if I couldn’t see my family get together every year; forget past beefs and just have fun, eat and love each other. My Grandpa died last year and Grandma is dealing with it by making these holiday occasions something out of a fairytale. She showers us all with unconditional love and wisdom. I told her recently that I thought she was the sweetest and most loving person I’ve ever known. She laughed and then told me how her husband, my grandfather, even at the end, knew all of our names, birthdates, anniversary dates and talked about all of his Grands and Great-Grands each and every day. She told me that all during the year whenever they were out, he was always looking at gifts and things he knew his Grands would like. And then she reminded me of how he would just sit and look, nodding his head in approval all the time. My Grandma said that those times were the happiest of his life. And for all these reasons, the holidays to me are simply about, love and family.

ROBERT CARTER
We’re still here

Through all the days that brought only rain, we got out of bed, even in our worse pain. We found the strength to persevere — being grateful for a new day, and a purpose that was clear, knowing there is always a new beginning and forever... a new year.

We’ve cast away last year’s habits and are trying something new, looking forward to a new year with new things to do. We sit, make plans and New Year’s resolutions.

FEATURE STORIES

When I’m giving

Even though life and my own mistakes has handed me some really rough and often unfair things, life and the God that I worship has given me endless faith to keep on pushing forward. The greatest thing I have to offer always, and especially during the holidays, is giving. People talk about the spirit of giving but mostly, they commercialize it, cheapen it, and we lose the full meaning. All religions talk about the importance of giving but I don’t think they talk about it enough— the way the bible explains it, or just explain what it really means and are sincere. To me, giving means doing something from the heart and looking for nothing in return, except the other person’s happiness.

I still remember my grandfather’s last wife who was the closest thing I had to a grandmother, being one of the sweetest and most giving persons on this earth. She would always stand at the table while everyone was filling their plates, and as we would start in on some of the most delicious food ever, a smile would start from one corner of her face and then spread across her whole body. She would then go to the little ones, cutting up their food, feeding them herself and giving kisses that were never brushed away. I can still hear her giggling and watching everyone enjoying themselves. I can see grandpa telling her to make sure she saves him some of her greens and just sitting proud, as he looks back and forth at three generations he started. These memories flood my mind and heart at this time of year and make me wanna’ be like her and just enjoy the fact that I’m making others happy.

So I give of my time, I give of myself. I lend my ear and my heart to others less fortunate, and I’ve even found a better way to pray. I don’t ask for things anymore. I ask for understanding, patience, tolerance, clarity, and most of all, I ask my higher power to reveal not my will and dreams but his will to me, and the power and strength to carry it out.

And when I’m giving, when I’m truly giving, I feel like God himself is guiding my steps. And, how can that go wrong?

SHEILA POSTON

We calculate, formulate and then find our solutions. We write them all down, make promises and swear that they will be fulfilled with the utmost of care.

Then we gather with family and our dearest of friends, on a day for making vows and year-long amends. And we vow to do better and move forward with no fear... then shout out the words loudly: “Happy New Year!”

MALCOLM DIXON

I have two sons aged one and three. And they are by far the first and best part of the holidays. This will be the first holiday for the one-year-old and I can already see him not knowing which way to turn as brightly wrapped presents mesmerize and fascinate him. The three-year-old watches TV and when the toy commercials come on he has an excited and animated conversation with the television, as if it can hear him telling the kids on it to bring him the toys, and he even comes to me to plead his case. I try to film everything because these memories are priceless.

My second favorite holiday pastime is watching Grandpa and Grandma supervise everything. They’re the experts and want everybody to know it. They are a perfect combination of hilarious and adorable. These are the two things I look forward to this year.

MAKELA DIXON
EXPRESSIONS IN RECOVERY

How we feel...

The road we travelled brought us here and we have travelled far. We came to heal and face our fears, and this we’ve done thus far. We write to share our heart and faith, and show that hope is real. Our higher power said to share, so this is how we feel...

Love.

Henry

I could’ve gave him a few bucks and got that gummy grin as he’d skip away to the liqueur store for that bottle of Gin. I could have brought him clothes and simply walked away, that may’ve eased my conscience but it wouldn’t have changed his day. But, I walked up to him and asked him to walk too. He asked why, and I said “I wanna’ talk to you.” He asked if he’d done something wrong or was it something he said. I told him that last night, I realized I didn’t know his name as I crawled into my warm bed. Still scared and suspicious, he asked me why did I need his name. I said “That’s what friends do, or they can’t make that claim.” He smiled, searching my eyes for some sort of game. When there was none to be found, he told me his name. Now Henry is my friend, and we go around telling how we met. We preach of possibilities and dreams not met yet. We speak of friendships that seem powered by something divine, and when they look mystified, we show them this friendship of his and mine.

Love

You can keep all the diamond rings and all the pretty little things. This season brings what I want from you is more precious than gold. You can’t can it or wear it. It cannot be sold. You can’t trade it or fade it and make it go away. You see, God made it and gave it, and it’s here to stay. It’s free and it’s here for you and for me, and it’s here to stay. It’s free and it’s here for you and for me, and it’s perfectly clear that you can get it, if you believe. But there’s a catch to this my friend if you want to keep it at all. You gotta’ give it back when you get it, and you gotta give it your all. We talkin’ ‘bout love my friends. It won’t cost you a dime, just some humility, a little civility and a wee bit of your time...love.

ORLANDO

BLUE
AS I WRITE THIS AND COUNT MY BLESSINGS, A BIT OF MELANCHOLY VISITS me as I remember the times when this time of year was purely about goodwill. It was a time where you left the cocoon-like warmth of your bed, bundled up in your warmest clothes, armed yourself with warm food, a few dollars, or both, and headed out the door, resolute that you’d find that homeless person who thought that he or she was invisible, forgotten and unloved.

It was a time where old grudges disappeared, as the season reminded us of what was important. We called those long-lost ones and invited them over to sit at our table.

It was a time when poor, hard-working families were trying to make ends meet, were suddenly blessed by nameless benefactors – never a moment too soon – making them gaze heavenward promising to once again pray every day.

It was a time when children found that sweet spot in grandma or grandpa’s lap as they told us stories that we would one day tell our own children and our children’s children, embellishing as we go along.

I could go on and on but the real point I want to share is my hope that most of us return to the purpose of these holidays and spread goodwill. Make it a point to change someone’s day. Simple kindness is a gentle giant that wraps around you, insulating you from the world for a moment while you taste the inclusive flavor of recognition.

Let’s bring back the days of when what excited you was the way you felt and not what you got.

Let’s remember and honor the elderly, and return that sparkle to their eyes with just a bit of love and patience as we let them know that they are our foundation and a continuing wellspring of knowledge and life-lessons. I hope we can all share these wishes and make them resolutions to carry us into the New Year.

This season, my friends, let’s put some love out there in the world and make these days real.

GIL GADSON, EDITOR