TO A BLIND MAN

To a blind man I am beautiful each and every day, because of who I am.
To a deaf child colors are life's music because he/she hears them playing on life's canvas.
To the physically challenged, dancing with another is enough.
To the heartbroken, a simple hug becomes a haven and a place to store their heart.
And to us all, a sunny place is the place to be.

FEATURED STORIES
THE BEAUTY OF WISDOM
ORLANDO COLEMAN

I DID IT ONCE, I CAN DO IT AGAIN
BERNADETTE GILMORE
Editor’s Note

We are all entitled to our opinions, perspectives and choices. However, these perspectives will often color and decide how we proceed in life, what we go after, who we help, our fears, who we choose to be with, listen to, and even follow.

Perspectives can be personal, communal, cultural, and even blind. The one thing all perspectives have in common is their inherent power. If I see myself as strong, then I may be relentless in my pursuits. If my fears are paramount, I may hesitate or completely avoid situations and/or pursuits. Come with us once again as we explore and examine “The Power of Perspective” on the pages of Expressions in Recovery.

Gil Gadson, Editor

Please send your story ideas to bit.ly/EIRSubmissions

It is the mission of Expressions in Recovery 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

If you are interested in submitting a story, commentary, and/or poetry for inclusion in our next issue, please use the online submission form: bit.ly/EIRSubmissions.

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.

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
Philadelphia Recovery Community Center 215-223-7700

To view current and past issues visit www.DBHIDS.org/multimedia#EIR
EXPRESSIONS

EMPATHY

I used to always complain about other people not doing this or that. I was quick to call someone else lazy or judge them by what they did or didn’t do according to my standards. I never thought to ask them details about their lives because the few things that people told me were always taken as excuses by me. Needless to say, I got in plenty of arguments but it really hurt my feelings when I was accused by more than one person of thinking I was better than others. This made me look at myself and then I heard a man speaking at an affair about empathy, what it means, and how to develop it. What stuck in my head was when he said that those who are truly empathic simply care about what others feel and what they are going through so they take the time to really put themselves in someone else’s place—by being 100% honest and asking themselves what they would do in their shoes. I still had one more question that was eating away at me: deep down I still felt that empathy was something you either had or didn’t and then I learned something else.

I learned how to change my perspective. I learned that I had nothing to lose by doing this and everything to gain. I was taught that changing your perspective empowers you. It makes you more flexible and just makes life more interesting and even fun. I never knew that your perspective carries all kinds of power that affects every part of your life. Ever since I learned this, I am a happier man.

Jeffrey Coleman

MY HIGHER POWER

My perspective has changed. The way that I look at things now is completely different than before—I appreciate life itself a lot more. My spiritual belief in a higher power makes me look at things on a simpler level, be grateful for what I have and take joy in doing for others. I simply believe that I didn’t have to still be here. This is my perspective now.

Charles King

MY PERSPECTIVE

Perception to me is based on how I’m feeling that day, the mood I’m in, and the angle in which I see things. If I’m not feeling well that day or upset, I would see things in a negative light along with a dark attitude, and when feeling good I like to turn a bad situation into good; having a positive attitude changes my viewpoint, outlook, approach, reaction, inclination, approach, posture, and stance, and the simple beauty of perception is that everyone’s is different.

Edward O. Simpkins

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Charles King

HERE AND NOW

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Charles King
THE BEAUTY OF WISDOM

When I was younger, I used to hear the old folks talk about the good old days. Being young, foolish, and thinking that all that glittered was gold made me think they were corny, not hip, and stuck in the past. As the years went by and I got older, life handed me some good and bad times that I never forgot and made me who I am. As I made it through, got married, raised my children, and then settled down, I would often reminisce about the old folks in my youth and all the things they were trying to teach me. I sometimes feel bad when I think of how I used to talk to them and disrespect them.

However, they always just shook their head, kept their cool, and were always leaving me with some old saying that would ring in my ears and stay in my head. I can remember one day one of my elders was trying to tell me in my youth to start being responsible and everything wasn’t about just having a good time. I agreed with him then, but my reply was “Aw, don’t worry Pops, I’m still young. I’m gonna get it together some day—actually one day real soon.” That old man looked at me and said “Look here, son, there are seven days in a week. Some day and one day ain’t none of them boy. You remember that.”

I did remember, and after a lot of screw-ups and wasted years, I got it together. When I first started thinking about all this, I went back to my old neighborhood and looked up one of the old folks and asked them, “Why did you put up with me?” His answer was “Why not, son? You didn’t know any better.” I still persisted for more reasons and the old man told me how he was hardheaded, too. He said that nobody is perfect and that he believed that he’d rather try to help someone instead of passing judgment and giving up on them. This man lived in a building complex for the elderly. We were in an outside courtyard and this old man never stopped smiling as he looked at me. I started apologizing for how I used to act when I was young and he stopped me and said I didn’t have to apologize. When I asked why, he reached his hand out and asked me to come closer and then he said: “Because you’re here son...You’re here.”

When I left that day, I knew I’d keep coming back to visit and maybe one day I’d be lucky enough to be as wise, patient and loving as that old man. He had given me a great gift. He showed me that the way you look at things shapes your life, your health and how happy you’ll be and that you can adjust it when you need to. He gave me the power of perspective...forever.

Orlando Coleman
FEATURED STORIES

We made it through in spite of the odds.

I DID IT ONCE...I CAN DO IT AGAIN

Sometimes tragedy and loss pushes you to make life-changing decisions. I lived in a part of West Philly where there had been a number of water main breaks. When people generally hear this they have no idea of the damage it causes and the after effects. In my area, it was so bad and the water was so deep, you needed a boat. Besides the water destroying a lot of my personal material things, mold would grow as the water evaporated. This mold was dangerous and the city wouldn’t let me stay in my house. I had no choice and had to leave...permanently.

When I looked around at 30 years of history, I cried because I didn’t want to leave anything. But the fact was that I couldn’t take everything and these things in my house had been there for a long time. People had no idea how traumatizing all this was. At that time I sat and agonized over this, thinking about how unfair this was and then something clicked in me. First I got mad at myself thinking here I was sitting and feeling sorry for myself as if things were so bad. I started thinking about growing up with eight brothers and sisters and how sometimes we had no gas, no light, no heat, the food was low, and in my neighborhood I saw things that no child should ever have to see, but we made it through in spite of the odds. Leading our family was the light of my life, my mom. No matter how bad things got, she just showered us with an unconditional love that kept us going no matter what. When I put myself in my mom’s place and thought of how she stayed strong for us, I got up on my feet, took a deep breath, looked around the house, and told myself: “I did it before and I can do it again!” I changed my perspective in how I was looking at everything. I counted my blessings and thought to myself that things could have turned out a lot worse. I still had my health and sanity. I still had a future, friends, associates, mentors, and another roof over my head. So many others were so much worse.

Bernadette Gilmore
HOW I SEE
The silhouette of branches outside my window, dancing and painting shapes my room.
The laughter of children on their way to school, often growing up too soon.
That same old squirrel who fusses with himself each and every day.
I hear him in the ceiling counting his stash before he hides it away.
I open the window for a God-given breeze, and then I close my eyes.
I pray, I’m grateful, it’s another day and with it, another surprise.
A chance to love, to laugh to care and see life with my own two eyes.
To grow, to learn and get life’s lessons as I try to stay healthy and wise.
This is the beauty of life.
It is what I know and what I truly believe, and now you know and maybe you’ll understand that.
―this is how I see.
Anonymous

HOPE AND BELIEF
I believe in hope, of a tomorrow.
I believe there’s truth, and truth is what we can all believe.
I see life everyday—in spite of death.
I see smiles everywhere—in spite of frowns.
I see hugs and kisses and in spite of wars and violence.
I believe in peace and I hope that one day love guides us all.
Vincent Canard

EXPRESSIONS IN RECOVERY
ne of the greatest influences on my perspective, besides God, was a man named Edward Mays.
I met him when a friend and I used to do home and property repairs. Edward liked you to call him “Mays.” He and his wife had a few properties that needed care often and Mays was always there when we did the repairs, but it was never like he was micromanaging or anything. It was truly like he was just hanging out with us.
Mays was much older than me but me and him would always get into very deep conversations about all sorts of subjects and forget everyone else around us. I loved Mays’ mind and the fairness in all his thoughts. Every time we talked, it seemed that we always came to some agreement in terms of personal philosophy and our internal senses of what was decent and right. Mays always made me laugh and smile and he quickly became that favorite uncle and dad I never had.
A few years passed and Mays’ health started to need more attention. When I met Mays he was well into his sixties; missing half a leg, which had a prosthetic limb attached; one of his hands was deformed from a fire many years ago, but he held medals at his age for swimming and, of all things, skiing. You see, Mays was not one to sit around feeling sorry for himself, complain, or spread misery. He always had a ready smile, a witty thought, and would slip me a ten or twenty dollar bill when no one else was looking.
As he became wheelchair bound, I would visit him often because I loved him and was always concerned. By now, he had congenital heart failure, cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure, and other ailments, but his spirit and demeanor never changed. Mays showed me by example how to look at life, get the most out of it, and count your blessings every day. At his funeral, people from all ranks of society came out in droves. The line went outside of the church and down the steps. When I got to his casket, I bent over him, touched his hand, kissed him on the forehead, and went outside. I was crying, but I wasn’t sad. I took a long walk, reminiscing about our times together and the impact he always had on me. He never got to see me get clean, sane, and as productive as I am now, but I know he wouldn’t be surprised. He always told me that I was better than I was. Mays changed my perspective in life forever, he still inspires and guides me as I try to honor him and I often tell the beautiful story of a man who taught me how to love life...named Edward Mays...my friend.
Gil Gadson, Editor

THE LAST WORD
HealthyMindsPhilly.org
A friendly resource to support and improve the wellness of all Philadelphians.

Features include:
• A free, 24/7 online behavioral health screening
• Sign up for a free Mental Health First Aid training to identify, understand and respond to signs and symptoms of mental illness or substance use challenges

Network of Care™
DBHIDS.org/NetworkofCare
An online, one-stop-shop resource guide for people interested in seeking behavioral health services.

DISCOVER
The Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services (DBHIDS) offers resources, services, and advocacy through a strong partnership with a network of healthcare providers to help people, whether they are uninsured or underinsured, lead a fulfilling life in a supportive community free of stigma.

We believe everyone has a right to realize their fullest potential to determine their own destiny within their community, fully recover from mental illness or addiction, and use strength and resilience to overcome adversity.

CALL
Alcohol, Other Drugs, & Gambling
CBH Member Services 888-545-2600
Behavioral health services for Medicaid recipients
BHSI (Behavioral Health Special Initiative) 215-546-1200
Addiction services for the uninsured and under-insured
Phila. Recovery Community Center 215-223-7700
Offers services that help people deal with their addictions in a safe and supportive community-based setting

Intellectual disAbility Supports
IDS Office 215-685-5900
IDS Registration 215-685-4677

Homelessness Supports
Food Helpline 800-319-3663
Outreach Coordination Center (24/7) 215-232-1984

Domestic Violence
Phila. Domestic Violence Hotline 866-723-3014
Congreso de Latinos Unidos (Espanol) 215-763-8870

Training
IDS Supported Employment 215-685-4734
Mental Health First Aid 215-790-4996

More Services
City Hall Connection, Philly311 311
Warmline A friendly “listening ear” Mon-Fri 4-7pm 267-507-3945

24/7 Hotlines
Mental Health Line 215-685-6440
Suicide Line 215-683-6100
Child Line (State Hotline) 800-932-0313
Domestic Violence 866-723-3014
Congreso de Latinos Unidos (Espanol) 215-686-4420

LOCATE
For crisis help in your area.

1. Einstein Medical Center
   (includes services for children)
   1 Penn Blvd
   Germantown Comm. Cntr
   215-951-8300

2. Mercy Hospital
   501 S. 54th St
   215-748-9525

3. Pennsylvania Hospital
   (Hull Mercer)
   8th and Locust St
   215-829-5433

4. Temple/Episcopal Hospital
   100 E. Lehigh Ave
   215-707-2577

5. Friends Hospital
   4641 Roosevelt Blvd
   215-831-2600

CLICK
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CONNECT
DBHIDS: 🌐 UNSIGNED