I used to follow every fad and style.
I didn’t have a mind of my own
I never took the time to think for a while.
I thought I was wise and grown,
and then an elder pulled me aside one day
and told me I had a choice.

I could be my own me in every single way
and could listen to a very different voice—
It’s a voice I hear when things ain’t right
and I’m caught up in the crowd;
It’s the voice that tells me to back away
when things get a bit too loud.
Deep down I knew I had a choice
and I began to really see that
today I don’t have to follow the world,
today...
I follow me.
Editor’s Note

In today’s world,
we are caught up in a technological age that tells us what to do,
when to do it, and often makes us feel out of step if we don’t
follow everyone else. My phone may work very well, but it’s not
the latest (and that commercial made it look so good!), plus all
my co-workers have the new one, so I feel like I gotta’ get it even
though I really know that I don’t need it, and I could use the
money for something more practical. Thoughts like these may
go through a person’s head but the pressure of keeping up with
everything new and everyone else often clouds our judgment.
Many have come to the simple conclusion that we all have a
unique power as human beings … and that is the power of
choice. Come with us on the pages of Expressions in Recovery
as we explore “The Power of Choice.”

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, and prose 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 Protective Services 877-401-8835
Philadelphia Recovery Community Center 215-223-7700

To view current and past issues visit www.DBHIDS.org/multimedia#EIR
**CHOICE AND GRATITUDE**

I used to always have a negative attitude, pick arguments and fights, and always refused to look at the man in the mirror. It was easy for me to get into arguments with other people, and I became a professional at pushing people’s buttons. I thought this made me stronger and smarter than others.

And then, one day when I was trying to get someone to argue a point, a co-worker – who was usually quiet – got annoyed at my mouth and calmly said, “Hey my man, why you act like that? You young, you good looking, you dress nice, you drive a nice car, your girlfriend is cute as a button, you got this good job but you choose to be obnoxious all the time and you don’t have to be. So many people ain’t got half of what you got but they obliged and they choose to be pleasant and have something good to say. You gonna’ end up with no friends, son. You got a choice and you can start by being grateful for what you got and change your attitude.”

I was speechless and embarrassed because the truth hurts. And that night when I went home, I thought about everything he had said, and a light bulb went on in my head when I realized that I chose to be that way and I didn’t have to be. That night, I told myself the truth, and the truth was that I had never looked at what I really have, how much people must tolerate me, and how small I had been.

I made the choice that night to be a better man and I’d start by thanking that man for saying what he did and how he did. He didn’t yell, he didn’t scream, he didn’t look away, and there was no look of anger in his eyes. Me and him are now best friends because I made choices. I became grateful and I’m actually happier.

Yusef Aikens

**I HAVE TO TELL THE TRUTH**

After therapy, I learned the reason why I didn’t like making decisions. I was so insecure at that time that I always let others make them for me. The real reason was that, at one time, I thought very little of myself. This was because I grew up in an abusive household. My dad was a long-distance truck driver and a functioning alcoholic. My mother lied to herself all the time and thought that she didn’t have a problem because she didn’t drink rough alcohol like whiskey, bourbon, gin, rum, etc. She drank wine-coolers, and beer but she drank almost every day, and just like my dad, they’d pick at me when they were drinking. Nothing I did was ever right or good enough, so when I grew up and started having relationships, I always let men tell me how to dress, what to say or not say, and just went along with whatever others wanted to do. I didn’t know how to choose or that I always had a choice.

In therapy, I learned that insecure people can make other people insecure. I didn’t know that a person can be aggressive and appear to be very strong, but may be extremely insecure.

Once I gained my confidence, took control of my life and was given the knowledge that I had a choice, and everything changed. All it took was for me to say “no” to someone, stand my ground, and walk away with my head up.

I walked away scared and nervous, but each step I took walking away from an unwanted situation made me stronger.

This is my truth, and I have to tell it. We always have a choice. It may not be easy but it’s ours all day and every day.

Karen Sonnelli

**FREE WILL**

I’m a very spiritual person, so when I was asked “what did the power of choice mean to me?” it instantly made me think about my belief and love of God. I truly believe that God gives us free will. To me, it explains so many things. I’m not trying to preach anything or persuade someone to my point of view. My relationship with the God I believe in is mine alone, but the peace of mind it brings and the answers I feel I have gotten helps me make it through the day and always lets me have an answer for those who question my faith. When asked by the editor of Expressions In Recovery “what the Power of Choice has done for me?” my answer is that it explains a lot of things that go on in the world, and that it is the individual who has the right to choose and if he/she exercises it, better decisions can be made. While things may influence our daily decisions, we always have the right to change them, alter them, or not make them at all.

In short, we always have a choice, and I choose to be the best that I can be.

Denise Bryant
A PEOPLE-PLEASER

I was a people-pleaser because I always wanted to be part of the crowd. I needed to be accepted all the time. I can remember when I first started smoking cigarettes. I taught myself how to smoke a cigarette to be like others because I thought they'd think I was cool. Then I went to drugs, which only made it worse because the drugs made me quiet and I'd go along with people more than I should have. The funny thing is, when I discovered alcohol, it gave me liquid courage. I could be somewhere, where someone was saying something to me that I didn't like and I'd leave purposely to go get a few drinks to get the courage to come back and let them have it. I laugh when I think about this because today – clean and sober – I face things. I've gained the knowledge and courage to know that it's my choice what happens to me, the company I keep, what I listen to, and who I let into my life. Being and staying clean gave me courage and learning new things made it clear that I have a choice today.

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.

Kelly Dixon
My perspective, and the way I see life, gives me choices. I choose to get up in the morning happy for another day. I choose not to judge that homeless man because I don’t know his story. I choose to forgive because I’m not perfect and I’m sure I get on somebody’s nerves every day. Miserly, pain, and unforeseen occurrences can’t decide how I react before I decide. I decided to have principles to live by, and I choose to follow them as much as I can. This is my power of choice.

Samuel Williams

I’m not perfect

PERSPECTIVE AND CHOICE

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Samuel Williams
EXPRESSONS IN RECOVERY

The second half
I thought I knew a kiss
until I saw I missed
her smile... and when I held her hand
for me there was no plan.
I just held it...for a while.
Now, I'm in the second half
and these days when I laugh
it's from my soul.
I now look at the sun
taking a walk ... I don't wanna run.
These days I feel so whole.
A kid said .... you're 53?
I said: "Yes!" and as happy as can be.
I don't think he believed me
because my eyes sparkled. You see...
I'm in the second half.
I know things that the young don't know,
and if they would ask
I'd gladly tell them so...
of the wonderful ebb and flow
that the second half lets you know.
Gil Gadson

HOPE AND BELIEF

Sometimes I don't wanna hear all the stupid
and negative things people say.
Sometimes I just wish people would get out
of the way ... of life,
and all the mysterious beauty it contains,
a billion cells in a drop of rain.
A waterfall that flows again and again and
again.
That first snowfall which seems to cleanse
the land
and that ocean wave that knocks me down
when I stand.
My very first kiss and the smell of her hair.
The way she teased, made me give her
piggy-backs, and I don't care.
These are the things I cherish.
These are the things of my own.
And, when I choose to reminisce and
remember... sometimes I walk alone.
Orlando Laws

I most powerful choice I've ever made was when I regained my sanity and
had just gotten a year clean from drugs. I also had just gotten my own place
and a job – at the same place I had been in drug treatment. So many things
were going so well and I felt stronger than ever, so I felt it was time to find my
son, who I had left, once my addiction had made me its slave.
After going to my personal therapist with my wishes to find my son,
we went onto the internet and found him and his address. I wrote
him a heartfelt letter and a week later got a call from his aunt saying
that they were trying to find my address. These people had travelled
from New York, my original home, and were in Philly.
I ran outside looking for their vehicle to pull up, and when it did about
six people got out but they were all women. Everyone's head dropped as the
matriarch of the group told me sadly that my son had died two months before.
Shock and pain are understatements for what I was feeling, but my gratitude
for the life I had found and the love that these people showed after 21 years
made me hug them, hold onto them, and vow to always be a man my son
would have been proud of. Any other choice would have led me back to the
streets of New York — lost and hopeless once again.
Eight years have gone by and I still choose to keep my word and be the man
he would be proud of and maybe have chosen to call 'Dad' ... this is my choice.
Gil Gadson, Editor
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

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
Philly Recovery Community Center 215-233-7700
  Offers services that help people deal with their addictions in a safe and supportive community-based setting

Intelectual 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
Philly Domestic Violence Hotline 866-723-3014
  Congreso de Latinos Unidos (Español) 215-763-8870

Training
IDS Supported Employment 215-685-4734
  Mental Health First Aid 215-685-3755

More Services
City Hall Connection, Philly311 311
  Warmline A friendly “listening ear” Mon-Fri 4-7pm 855-507-9276

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 (Español) 215-686-4420

CLICK
HealthyMindsPhilly.org
LOCATE For crisis help in your area.

LOCATE
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
   (Hill 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

CONNECT
DBHIDS:

888-545-2600
www.DBHIDS.org