

ROADS TO RECOVERY NEWSLETTER

Created by Dual Recovery at Warren Washington Association for Mental Health to support individuals in recovery

*A newsletter for you
and about you*

SPOTLIGHT TOPIC

Life In The Cracks Day

BY GINGER MILLER

There is something about a flower pushing its way up through a crack in pavement or a sapling pushing its way up through rocks that speaks to me. I find it inspiring. I think of the persistence, strength, and resilience that seed must have to grow in such an unintended place.

Did you know that March 11th is Festival of Life in the Cracks Day? I'd never heard of it before, but I really like the idea. NationalToday.com explains the history behind this holiday:

“Life on earth is a complex system that is defined by birth, death, and rebirth. Soil holds the roots of numerous florals and acts as the material in which plants live and die. In a way, human life is also defined by the roots we plant in the ground, which determine the lives we live. Life can be found even in the most unexpected of places, sometimes in environments that, at first glance, you would not think to find signs of existence.

The smallest plant species can be found anywhere that either has traces of soil or is exposed to the elements. One of these places is the cracks in sidewalks and walls. Think about it. Even lifeless concrete can support the growth of life, so long as it fulfills the criteria mentioned above. This is a magnificent fact to ponder, and even more so when you witness healthy sprouts coming out of these cracks. These sprouts tend to appear almost every year in the same places, regardless of what they have been subjected to. Thus, these little sprouts also signify rebirth and renewal and show that **anything that has been beaten down can always rise again.**

This is the message of the Festival of Life in the Cracks Day. It is an event that celebrates the first signs of spring, traditionally seen as a time of rebirth. It also serves as a reminder for us to take time in the beauty of life, wherever one may be. The Festival of Life in the Cracks Day is not the time for one to stay indoors, but to go out and celebrate all that life has to offer with their loved ones. Seeing these resilient sprouts fall and rise again every year could inspire and motivate us to see our lives differently.”

Sometimes when I see growth like this, I think about people I know. I see the adversity they push through like the concrete, pavement, or rock. Sometimes people have unhealthy environments they live in that do not support or encourage growth like the tight space that



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Life In The Cracks Day (Con't)

sprout is pushing through. I think of those individuals' strength. I recognize this in myself as well, especially when I look at the cycles of depression I have been through. I remember I did not see the strength I had, didn't recognize that pushing through the depression to find light again was strength and growth. We all face challenges at different times, take some time to recognize your own strength, growth, resilience.

Spring is on its' way! So, the next time you're walking down the sidewalk and see a flower growing between the slabs or in a crack, I encourage you to give pause mentally to honor the beauty and strength it has pushing to bloom. Or the next time you see a friend or neighbor that struggles with depression or another mental health challenge that is having a good day – perhaps compliment them on how nice it is to see them up and about. Whether we are looking at life in the cracks of nature or the cracks in life that we as humans have to push through sometimes it is an inspiring and beautiful thing that life persists! Happy Spring everyone!



UNDERSTANDING THE DIAGNOSIS

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

BY GINGER MILLER

According to Johns Hopkins Medicine a Traumatic brain injury (TBI) happens when a sudden, external, physical assault damages the brain. It is one of the most common causes of disability and death in adults. TBI is a broad term that describes a vast array of injuries that happen to the brain. The damage can be focal (confined to one area of the brain) or diffuse (happens in more than one area of the brain). The severity of a brain injury can range from a mild concussion to a severe injury that results in coma or even death.

Brain injury may happen in one of two ways: Either a closed brain injury which happens when there is a nonpenetrating injury to the brain with no break in the skull. A closed brain injury is caused by a rapid forward or backward movement and shaking of the brain inside the bony skull that results in bruising and tearing of brain tissue and blood vessels. Closed brain injuries are usually caused by car accidents, falls, and increasingly, in sports. Shaking a baby can also result in this type of injury (called shaken baby syndrome); OR a penetrating, or open head injury which happens when there is a break in the skull, such as when a bullet pierces the brain.

There are also primary and secondary brain injury categories as well. Primary brain injury refers to the sudden and profound injury to the brain that is more or less complete at the time of impact. This happens at the time of the car accident, gunshot wound, or fall. Secondary brain injury refers to the changes that evolve over a period of hours to days after the primary brain injury. It includes an entire series of steps or stages of cellular, chemical, tissue, or blood vessel changes in the brain that contribute to further destruction of brain tissue.

Some brain injuries are mild, with symptoms disappearing over time with proper attention. Others are more severe and may result in permanent disability. The long-term or permanent results of brain injury may need post-injury and possibly lifelong



Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) (Con't)

rehabilitation. Effects of brain injury may include cognitive deficits, motor deficits, perceptual or sensory deficits, communication and language deficits, functional deficits, social difficulties, regulatory disturbances, personality, or psychiatric changes, and if damage changes the chemical composition of the brain development of traumatic epilepsy.

According to the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) TBI SUD Toolkit from November 2021 Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is a common but often undiagnosed co-occurring condition with substance use disorders. One-quarter to one-half of the people seeking substance use treatment will report a history of brain injury with some loss of consciousness. Those who do report a history of brain injury will also have longer and more severe histories of substance use and more cooccurring behavioral health issues. For this reason, as many as 75% of the people seeking services for concurrent mental health and substance use disorders are living with the effects of brain injury.



In most settings, the bottom line is that at least one out of five people presenting for treatment of a substance use disorder is also living with the effects of brain injury. Because brain injury is often an invisible disability, it is easy to miss and to misunderstand. People with TBI seeking services for substance use may experience subtle but significant changes in memory, attention, problem-solving, sensation, social behavior, and self-regulation, making it difficult to remember appointments, understand expectations, follow through with tasks, and participate in group settings. Trouble with recognizing social cues and observing social norms may make it difficult for the person with TBI to fit into and benefit from some types of services. As a result, they often leave treatment prematurely because they cannot keep up or become discouraged. It is easy to imagine how frustrating this can be for both the client and their care providers. Having the right tools to recognize and manage the impact of brain injury can make a big difference in outcomes for a significant number of the people served in programs addressing substance use disorders. When brain injury and substance use disorders occur together, the most successful approach to care will address needs related to both conditions in an integrated way. The report goes on to explain that substantial evidence suggests that having one or more brain injuries with loss of consciousness is associated with a significantly greater risk for behavioral health problems, including problematic substance use. A growing body of evidence indicates childhood TBI increases the risk for behavioral health problems, including problematic substance use beginning in adolescence.

Recent studies have found between 30 and 80% of clients attending inpatient programs scored below the cutoff for impairment on cognitive screening measures. Anoxic injuries (caused by a complete lack of oxygen to the brain) associated with non-fatal overdose and substance related brain injury are two common causes of injury to the brain in this client group.

• Non-fatal Overdose. The opioid epidemic has resulted in an increasing number of non-fatal overdoses that can potentially result in lasting changes in cognition and behavior. Overdose can result in hypoxic brain injury (loss of oxygen to the brain). It has been estimated that in North America, approximately 23% of all IV drug users will experience a nonfatal overdose per year. Those who do sustain a brain injury are at risk for future overdoses. Many overdoses are unwitnessed and do not result in medical attention, so it is difficult to measure their true impact. Still, evidence points to hundreds of thousands of episodes of loss of consciousness due to overdose each year. The cognitive effects of an overdose will vary, depending on how long the oxygen supply was interrupted.

Riddle of the Month:

What can fill a room but takes up no space?



Riddle Answer

Love!



IS THIS MEETING FOR YOU?

LifeRing

BY GINGER MILLER

LifeRing Secular Recovery on its web page explains itself as "an abstinence-based, anonymous organization dedicated to providing a safe meeting space where you can experience a non-judgmental recovery conversation with your peers. We do this through the lens of LifeRing's 3-S philosophy of Sobriety, Secularity, and Self-Help. LifeRing Secular Recovery is an organization of people who share practical experiences and sobriety support. There are as many ways to live free of illicit or non-medically indicated drugs and alcohol as there are stories of successful sober people. Many LifeRing members attend other kinds of meetings or recovery programs, and we honor those decisions. Some have had negative experiences in attempting to find help elsewhere, but most people soon find that LifeRing's emphasis on the positive, practical present-day can turn anger and despair into hope and resolve. LifeRing respectfully embraces what works for each individual.

LifeRing believes you DO have the power to overcome your addiction. It's hard, there are often setbacks, but in every addict there exists the desire to find lasting sobriety. We think of that as the Sober Self. With addiction, that part of us has been beaten down and relegated to a corner of our brains, but it's still there. We also have an Addict Self that wants to control our decision-making and lead us to use the substance that is wrecking our lives.

LifeRing tries to support your efforts to strengthen the Sober Self and weaken the Addict Self. Our meetings, whether in person or online, consist of addicts using their Sober Self to connect with the Sober Self of other addicts. We share advice, understanding, and encouragement. We focus primarily on our current lives, not on the hurts and damages of the past. Two addicts, talking Sober-Self to Sober-Self, learn from each other, and gain strength from each other.

Steps, and Higher Powers and Sponsors – those work for some people very well. Our approach is different. We think YOU are the best person to design your Own Personal Recovery Program – you know what's needed in your life and what has to be abandoned. You know what triggers cravings and what provides healthy and strengthening pleasure. You know the path you want to be on and you are the only person who can figure out how best to get there. LifeRing provides safe and supportive contact with others that enables that process to succeed.

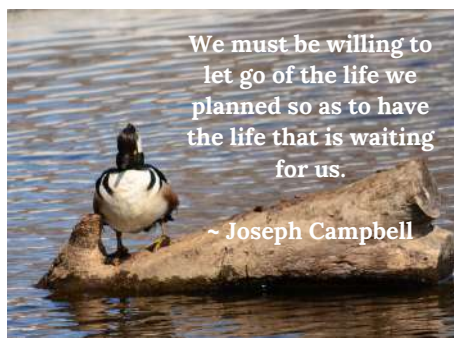
LifeRing provides support for you to get and stay addiction free. You do the hard work, and we offer information, advice, understanding, and lots of support through local in-person meetings, online meetings, other online resources, and a variety of publications." For more information visit: <https://lifering.org/lifering-recovery-menu/>

INSPIRATION & MOTIVATION



"Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work."

~ Thomas Edison



We must be willing to let go of the life we planned so as to have the life that is waiting for us.

~ Joseph Campbell



"Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the COURAGE TO CONTINUE that counts."

~ Winston Churchill



CREATIVE WRITING CORNER



A Winter Memory

As I stepped outside onto the newly fallen snow I smiled. I'm 10 years old and it's a snow day! I begin patting down the snow. I'm making a dragon. A long row of snow for his body. I make a smaller side for his tail. On the other side I make his neck and head. Add two ears and he's done. I wish I had taken a picture because it was the first and last time that I made Eliot.

~ Sherri Crowd



As I stepped out on the newly fallen snow I looked down and noticed all the tiny foot prints of the little animals that come to feast. As I stand here the snow continues to fall and you can see that the snowflakes are unique, they all have their own special shape and glitter. Some melt as they react to the ground and some choose to stay. No matter what, the pretty glitter of all the white flakes is so beautiful. I try not to step where I will make it dirty, although sometimes it can't be helped. Its beauty is exquisite.

~ Florence Getter



I wake up every day thankful for everything I own. Always say than k you to the Lord when I wake up. Start my day with coffee and cigs VERY thankful for my state of mental health. I use my You Version Bible App every day. Time, patience, trust, hope, and fear of the Lord. Love to learn about physical and mental health. Thankful for my part-time job at Glens Falls Hospital. I pray and think everyday about world peace, separation of church and state, and trying to "fix" my diagnosis with the "right" medications and prayer.

~ Brent W.

If I were a migratory bird and the time came to go south, I would be thinking about the hazards of the journey and especially the physical exertion involved in reaching my destination. Then how would life be if I safely arrived and the retracing my flight path on the way back! But there would always be the thought of returning to my familiar homeland, which makes the journey worthwhile!

~ Steve Ross



There's not much you can do during the long winter days. I usually watch some tv after chores are done or I will work on one of my puzzles. I have 1,000 piece puzzles that I do. It is time consuming, especially when I have to go through the box and find all the frame pieces and I sort the colors out. I do enjoy my puzzles though. I also enjoy my pets. They always bring me comfort and love. Rebel just turned 15 years old and Baily is 6 or 7.

~ Florence Getter

Hi, my name is Punxsutawney Phil. The men yank me out of this man made log with hay in it. February 2nd is the only day of the year that I work. All the other days I'm in a large cage with a big house that I live in. When I work, I usually see my shadow. Six more weeks of winter. That's fine with me 'cuz I have on a fur coat.

~ Sherri Crowd



Hi, my name is Phil the ground hog. Every year these people come and wake me up out of my hibernation. I do not like that. Regardless of what happens there is going to be six more weeks of winter. Spring is not going to come in February. These people do treat me special, however, I'd much rather continue my hibernation in peace.

~ Florence Getter



We would love to hear from you too! If you'd like to share a poem you've written, some creative writing you've done or a piece of your recovery story we would love to add it to our newsletter to help support or inspire our readers. Not sure what to write about? I'll provide a prompt each month as an option.

March's prompt - Creative Writing - Write a short story about a woman that is in her late 90's that lives on the top of a mountain. A situation she is facing (you choose what) requires her to come up with a good plan to survive.

Submit your writing please email it to gmler@wwamh.org, mail it to WWAMH, Dual Recovery Department, 230 Maple St., Glens Falls, NY 12801, or drop it off to me in the Peer Pod at the East Side Center at the address above.

RECOVERY

Resources

PHONE NUMBERS

Life Line Mental Health Crisis & Suicide Prevention: 24/7 support for people in emotional distress or suicidal crisis. **Call or Text 988** or visit 988lifeline.org

Mobile Crisis: Meet a clinician in an agreed-upon location. 518-741-6099

Crisis Text Line: 24/7 for any crisis. A live, trained Crisis Counselor receives the text and responds, all from our secure online platform. Text 'HOME' to 741741

United Way: 24/7 Connects you to a community resource specialist who can put you in touch with local organizations that provide critical services. English and **Spanish** Dial 211

Never Use Alone Crisis Prevention Center: A toll-free nationwide overdose prevention, detection, crisis response and reversal lifeline services for people who use drugs while alone. The all volunteer peer-run call center operators are available 24-hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. No stigma. No judgment. Just love! 800-484-3731

Rose House Warm Line: 24/7 A safe place to stay or someone to talk to. 518-502-1172

National Domestic Violence Hotline: confidential support 24/7/365 **English, Spanish and 200+ languages through interpretation service** 800-799-7233 or Text 'START' to 88788

National Sexual Assault Hotline RAINN (Rape, Abuse, Incest National Network): 24/7 1-800-656-HOPE (4673) or visit online.rainn.org.

The Trevor Project: 24/7 crisis support services for LGBTQ young people. Text, chat, or call anytime to reach a trained counselor: thetrevorproject.org/hotline: 866-488-7386 or Text 'START' to 678678

National Center for PTSD Helpline: 1-800-273-8255

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI): Hotline staff are prepared to answer any mental health questions you may have. (800) 950-NAMI (6264)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): Available 24/7, 365 days a year: (800) 662-HELP (4357). The professionals on the phone can provide treatment information and referrals in English and **Spanish**.

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH): Available 8:30am to 5pm EST: (866) 615-6464 or (866) 415-8051 (TTY). Professionals can answer any mental health related questions in English or **Spanish**.

Boys Town: Specially trained counselors are available 24/7, 365 days a year to provide crisis support specifically for children and their families: (800) 448-3000

National Eating Disorders Association: 24/7 crisis support Text 'NEDA' to 741741

WEBSITES

Al-Anon and Ala-teen Groups: Hope and help for families and friends of alcoholics: al-anon.org

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA): Local group schedule and information: district13.aahmbny.org To speak to someone local call 518-463-0906

Debtors Anonymous: Debtors Anonymous offers hope for people whose use of unsecured debt causes problems and suffering in their lives and the lives of others: debtorsanonymous.org

Digital Recovery Support: Online recovery support groups are available daily. They are open to anyone who is dealing with substance use, mental health conditions, and any other quality of life concerns. Meetings are led by peer recovery support specialists who have firsthand experience and understand what you're going through: www.recoveryanswers.org

Gamblers Anonymous (GA): Online services for anyone struggling with a gambling addiction: gasteps.org

Grief Recovery After a Substance Passing (GRASP): For those who have lost someone to substance use or addiction: grasphelp.org

In The Rooms: A free online recovery tool that offers 130 weekly online meetings. We embrace multiple pathways including all 12 Step, Non-12 Step, Wellness and Mental Health modalities. Other resources available also such as news, blogs, guides, and more <https://www.intherooms.com/home/>

Narcotics Anonymous (NA): local group schedule and information: narcotics.com

Overeaters Anonymous (OA): Online support groups for anyone who wants to stop eating compulsively: oarecovery.com

PODCASTS

Mental Illness Happy Hour: Weekly interviews with comedians, artists, friends, and the occasional doctor.; exploring mental illness, trauma, addiction and negative thinking.

This Naked Mind: Some of the episodes discuss alcohol withdrawals, the link between drinking and binge eating, how to deal with loneliness, and more.

Recovery Rocks: Our varied paths show listeners that there are a myriad paths to recovery and countless songs to rock out to along the way.

Mental Health - Hope and Recovery: They share inspirational true stories and a host of recovery skills. You'll learn about treatment options, coping skills, goal setting, relationships, and mindfulness.

APPS

Addiction Apps: Twenty-Four Hours A Day (Free), Quit That! Habit Tracker (Free), NoMo (Free)

Anxiety Apps: MindShift (Free), Self-Help Anxiety Management – SAM (Free)

Bipolar Disorder Apps: IMoodJournal (\$), EMoods (Free)

Counseling Apps: TalkSpace (\$\$) BetterHelp (\$\$) Larkr (\$\$) ReGain (\$\$) TeenCounseling (\$\$)

Depression Apps: Talk Space Online Therapy (\$\$), Happify (Free), MoodTools (CBT; Free)

Eating Disorder Apps: Recovery Record (Free), Rise Up & Recovery (Free), LifeSum (Free)

General Mental Health Apps: What's Up (CBT; Free) Mood Kit (CBT; \$)

Mindfulness & Meditation Apps: Calm (\$), Serenity: Guided Meditation & Mindfulness (Free)

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder Apps: nOCD (Free), Worry Watch (\$), GG OCD (Free)

PTSD Apps: PTSD Coach (Free), Breathe2Relax (Free)

Recovery Support Meetings:

Schizophrenia Apps: UCSF Prime (Free), Schizophrenia Health Story Lines (Free)

Suicide Prevention Apps: MY3 (Free) notOK (Free)

Wellness: Wellness Recovery Action Plan (Goal Setting; Free)

THANKS FOR READING! :)

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTERS, PLEASE EMAIL US AT GMILLER@WWAMH.ORG OR CALL 518-401-5991



WWAMH DUAL RECOVERY SUPPORT GROUPS

EVERY MONDAY
2:00 - 3:00 PM EXPRESSIVE ARTS FOR RECOVERY
EAST SIDE CENTER
230 MAPLE ST, GLENS FALLS
IN PERSON

EVERY TUESDAY
4:00-5:00 PM OPEN DISCUSSION/RECOVERY TOPICS
HOPE & HEALING RECOVERY CENTER:
2 MAPLE STREET, HUDSON FALLS
IN PERSON OR
VIRTUALLY - ZOOM MEETING ID: 844-2214-0148

EVERY THURSDAY
3:30-4:30 PM OPEN DISCUSSION/RECOVERY TOPICS
OPEN DOOR MISSION
226 WARREN STREET, GLENS FALLS

EVERY FRIDAY
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM EMOTIONAL WELLNESS & RECOVERY
EAST SIDE CENTER
230 MAPLE ST, GLENS FALLS
IN PERSON

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