# **ROADS TO RECOVERY** NEWSLETTER

Created by Dual Recovery at Ascend Mental Wellness to support individuals in recovery

> A newsletten for you and about you

## Check Out Our NEW Peer Perspective Pod Cast!

On ASCENDMW.org, SPOTIFY, IHeart Radio, Apple Pod Cast, and Amazon "Peer Perspective" A new episode is released every Friday.

## SPOTLIGHT TOPIC **Depression Affects Self-Esteem** BY GINGER MILLER

Do you or someone you know struggle with depression? How is your/their selfesteem? I think the link between depression and self-esteem is probably a fairly obvious connection but one that is often overlooked. Let's take a closer look at that connection.

Depression has its own voice. In my mind, it sounds like my voice, which makes things complicated sometimes. My depression often told me that I was worthless and unable Chronic Traumatic Encepholapathy to accomplish anything worthwhile. No matter how hard I tried to succeed, I always felt disappointed in myself. Depression has followed me through every part of my life and the times that it had its grip on me it refused to let me see anything good. I'm grateful for the tools I've learned so that this isn't as much of a struggle now.

As I got help, I learned that negative thoughts and beliefs are common features of depression, and are often referred to as cognitive distortions. I, personally, was not a bad person. The depression symptoms, the negativity, was what made people uncomfortable and not want to be around me as often. That is around the time I started seeing the connection that negative thinking contributed heavily to my low self-esteem. The negative self-talk would criticize me and run me down. I had a very negative self-image.

For me, depression is usually like an ambush and prison sentence. It starts slow and soft then pounces and mauls me. Once it would take hold, I could not hear beyond its voice, I would see the world through a different lens; a very dark, bleak, and lonely one. I would feel like I would have to live like this forever. Sometimes thoughts of suicide would cross my mind. It felt as though I would never get better. I believed the weight of this depression would be forever. I've learned how to watch for signs to recognize when it is creeping in on me now, something that seemed impossible in the beginning. I've learned tools that help ward off at least some of it and make life a bit more manageable. Most importantly, I've learned that **depression lies** to me... in my own voice, it is not realistic, and it is trying to trick me into believing things that are not true. Knowing this, I can externalize, even personify the depression, which can give me strength to fight back at it instead of beating myself down more. Depression does not define who I am anymore, it is just something I have to deal with sometimes. When I conquer it, it's a huge victory and helps build my self-esteem and coping skills.



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## **Depression Affects Self-Esteem (Con't)**

One of the most important tools has been being able to reflect on the numerous other times I've been imprisoned by depression feeling hopeless and exhausted; and the fact that I got through those times. I can remind myself, "The depression lied to me before, and it is again. I am not trapped." I also use the phrase, "Feelings are real but they are not facts."

When I first started seeing a psychiatrist, I didn't think that we would ever find the right medication that would help me feel human again and allow me a life that didn't feel so heavy, overwhelming, and hopeless. The process of finding the 'right' medication was very daunting for me. Having the right medication helped me to be able to focus more on positive feelings and gave me strength to find the power to fight back.

Learning to recognize these negative thoughts is one of the first steps to feeling less depressed, taking back some of your power. I found having a therapist helpful in learning to recognize the cognitive distortions and lies depression would tell me.

If you know someone that struggles with depression, or if you do, they/you probably view the world differently, see things more negatively. Please reassure them/ know for yourself, **they/you are not alone**. Please reach out to trusted supports, you don't have to find the answers alone. There is help. The sooner you start addressing it the easier it is to fight. The deeper in the hole I got the harder it was to get out. **People can and do recover from mental health symptoms/struggles**.

### **Support Resources**

The 988 Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals in the United States. They can help prevent suicide. Call or text.

**Mobil Crisis** 24/7 Support. Speak with a clinician for support, meet with them in an agreed upon location if you like. 518-741-6099

**Crisis Text Line:** 24/7 Support. Text "HOME" to 741741 for a crisis counselor.

## UNDERSTANDING THE DIAGNOSIS Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE)

BY GINGER MILLER

According to the *Cleveland Clinic*, Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE) is a brain condition that can develop due to repeated head impacts and concussions. This condition affects how areas of your brain function, communicate and work with each other. Depending on the extent of the damage and the affected brain areas, this condition can have severe effects.

CTE is best known for affecting professional athletes in contact sports, especially boxing, American football and ice hockey. However, this condition can develop in people with repeated head impacts regardless of their sport (or if they don't play sports at all). Healthcare providers also identify it in military veterans who experienced multiple explosion- or blast-related incidents.

The name of CTE breaks down like so:

- · Chronic: This means CTE is a long-term condition.
- Traumatic: This term means CTE is trauma- or injury-related.
- $\cdot$  Encephalopathy: This combines two words from ancient Greek. The literal translation means "brain disease."

For most people with this condition, it can take years or decades before symptoms are severe enough to draw attention. People who develop CTE typically have a history of many head impacts over several years, especially people who play sports professionally. The vast majority of people who play high school sports don't develop CTE. In fact, the average age of people with confirmed CTE is around 42 to 43 years old.

## Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (Con't)

People who have the greatest risks include people who participate in combat-centered sports and competitions, who play contact sports, especially football, ice hockey and rugby, participate in road/concrete-based activities like cycling, rollerblading, skateboarding, etc., and military personnel exposed to explosions and other concussive events.

Symptoms of CTE can include trouble concentrating or focusing, headaches, short-term memory problems, changes in behavior, including sudden outbursts or explosions of anger, depression, executive dysfunction, trouble speaking clearly, tremors and other kinds of uncontrollable muscle movements, balance problems and walking unsteadily, loss of coordination, increasingly aggressive behavior, self-harming thoughts and behaviors (including thinking about and attempting suicide).

There's no conclusive way to diagnose CTE while a person is alive. The only way to do that is to examine samples of a person's brain under a microscope, which is only possible during an autopsy after death. While experts may not be able to confirm CTE before death, they can still make a presumptive diagnosis based on your symptoms and a physical and neurological exam. They'll also review your history of head injuries and recommend certain lab and imaging tests. The most common tests don't diagnose CTE. Instead, they rule out other conditions.

## HEALTH & WELLNESS Putting Yourself First In Recovery



## BY GINGER MILLER

I have found that being on a path of recovery has been a very empowering journey that is helping me transform my life. Although I didn't realize it when I started this journey it was the beginning of finding self-love, self-care and building healthier relationships. Being in recovery doesn't mean everything becomes problem free though, there are many challenges – especially early on. Recovery isn't just putting down the substance, stopping an unhealthy behavior, or finding a 'magic' pill for our mental health (all things that took time to sink into my brain!). Life continues as it always does, we just learn to make better decisions and cope with things a little easier. Personally, I've found not doing it alone is the best way. A large and important part of the journey has been looking at and finding which tools and skills are most helpful to me; and there are a wide range of tools in my 'tool box'! Just like with actual tools, say a hammer, it takes practice to be skillful and not hit your fingers, then to be able to be accurate in hitting the nail, and eventually be able to hit the nail with more ease. Recovery tools are the same way, it's important to be gentle with yourself (watch for that negative self-talk in your head!) while learning to use a new 'tool'. The more you practice, say expressing your feelings, the easier it gets and the better you get at doing it more accurately. Here are just a few tools I've found to have lasting benefits:

**Being Positive.** Before I got into recovery, I was a very negative person; the glass wasn't even half empty... it had a hole in the bottom. I had a therapist ask me to think of something I could be positive about and my reply was, "I'm positive life sucks." Not quite what she was looking for. When I started recognizing how negative I was and the impact it was having on my health and relationships I wanted to change. This was probably one of my first steps in my mental health recovery. I started writing down quotes I came across that were the way I wanted to think, feel, and believe. I started writing positive, motivational phrases and affirmations on sticky notes and leaving them in places I would read them often... on the bathroom mirror, the refrigerator door, my nightstand, the dashboard in my car, my work desk, etc. Here are some of my favorites:

"Nothing changes if nothing changes."

"Just when the caterpillar thought her life was over, she became a butterfly." "Every challenge I face is an opportunity for growth."

"The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any." "Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you react to it." "Be kind to yourself." "Life is a journey, not a destination.' "Indecision becomes the decision." "Breathe." "Smile."

**Affirmations.** Recovery isn't just about not using a substance or acting on a behavior; it's about rewiring our thinking, establishing new beliefs, and reinforcing positive thought patterns. Affirmations are statements or ideas that are being stated as true. For recovery purposes, they are positive and empowering beliefs about yourself. Repetition is a key part of the use of affirmations. Write them down, say them out loud, and work on believing them to reinforce the neural pathways in the brain.

## **Note to self**: Don't just be good to others. Be good to yourself too.

## Putting Yourself First In Recovery (Con't)

With

"You are stronger than you believe." "You can do this." "You are worth it." "You are beautiful." "You are enough." "You have courage, more than you know."

**Accountability.** This means being responsible for your decisions and actions. In recovery it is also about transparency; being honest about both your progress as well as your setbacks with a trusted individual or group. For some this may be a sponsor, counselor, peer advocate, or self-help group that is attended regularly. Your accountability person(s) should be there to celebrate achievements, provide encouragement, be willing to share perspectives that indicate you might be slipping, and be supportive through setbacks. This sense of responsibility can be a motivator in moving forward with our recovery goals.

**Other recovery supports.** The more committed I became to my recovery the stronger I felt...with time of course. Here are some other things I found essential to building my recovery.

1. **Support Groups.** There are all kinds of support groups these days. 12-Step such as Alcoholic's Anonymous (AA), Narcotic's Anonymous (NA), Celebrate Recovery, etc., SMART Recovery, All Recovery, Dual Recovery, Refuge Recovery, or Life Ring to name just a few.

2. *Educate Yourself.* Understanding more about addiction or your mental health diagnosis, this can be empowering. The more you understand, the better equipped you can be to face the challenges that can arise in recovery.

3. **Try New Activities.** It is important to replace old habits with new hobbies. Try things you used to enjoy as a child. Try things you've never done before. Hiking, dancing, painting, crafts, fishing, woodburning, gardening, any new activity or hobby can act as a distraction from cravings or the desire to act on a behavior you're trying to change. Not to mention it can be a great way to meet new people and possibly make new friends.

4. **Physical Health.** A balanced diet, good sleep habits, and regular exercise can have a large impact on our mental health. When we feel good physically, the mind will often follow suit.

5. **Therapy.** Having a professional therapist or counselor to offer personalized coping skills (tools for our tool box), strategies for handling issues in life (more tools!), and a safe space to process feelings can be extremely helpful.

Everyone's recovery journey is unique and very personal even though the challenges we face are often common. By putting yourself and your recovery first, using positive affirmations, having an accountability partner, and trying other holistic approaches you will find a life of clarity, purpose and good health *are* within reach. Every time you choose recovery, you are choosing yourself and that is a profound act of self-care and self-love.

**Riddle of the Month:** 

1.What tastes better than it smells?

2.What has 4 wheel and flies?



2. A garbage truck.

1.Your tongue.

## INSPIRATION & MOTIVATION

Life is like a book: some chapters are sad, some happy, and some exciting. But if you never turn the page, you will never know what the next chapter holds.

Ships don't sink because of the water around them.

Ships sink because of the water that gets in them.

Don't let what's happening around you get inside and weigh you down.



## IS THIS MEETING FOR YOU? Yoga for Recovery

Yoga is an ancient practice that focuses on mind and body helping build strength and flexibility. There are several styles of yoga that combine physical postures, breathing techniques, and meditation. It usually involves a combination of movement, meditation, and breathing techniques to promote mental and physical well-being. The internet, YouTube, and Apps, offer a wide variety of groups that are combining yoga with addiction recovery and/or mental health recovery. Many of them are businesses and charge a fee for their services; but there are some that are not. Below are three that I found that are free or on a donation basis:

- Yoga Recovery Yoga is a healing modality and a system of ethics. It can guide you to relief from mental suffering, and to a way
  to befriend your body. By adding the philosophy of yoga to the practice of recovery principles, we can un-snarl the hidden
  wounds that prevent us from connecting fully with ourselves and others. This is a discussion meeting with the last ten minutes
  devoted to a yoga practice: seated movement, meditation or breath awareness. ~ Allison Stanley, Yoga Instructor In The Rooms
  (App) Yoga Recovery 11:00-12:00 daily
- Y12SR (Yoga of 12-Step Recovery) a 12-step based discussion and yoga practice that is open to anyone and everyone dealing with their own addictive behavior or by the addictive behavior of others. This is an open and inclusive group. *In Person*; Sundays 10:30am, 12 Washington St, Ballston Spa. (They also offer other classes for a fee at this location) For more information go to https://www.sahayogabspa.com
- Recovery Yoga Each meeting begins with an anonymous and confidential small group-style check-in sharing session. Then a certified yoga instructor who has personal experience with addiction and recovery guides participants through a sequence of postures that embodies the spiritual principles of recovery, to "work" the 12 Steps physically. Each meeting ends with a brief "check out" session for participants to share any thoughts, discoveries, or feelings that emerged during practice. New to yoga or recovery? Students at all levels of practice and stages of recovery are welcome. You participate at your comfort level. https://www.recoveryyogameetings.com/schedule register for virtual Zoom meeting Sunday's 6:30 8:00pm

## Peer Perspective BY GINGER MILLER

Dear Peer,



I thought that with the beginning of a New Year I would feel a sense of relief. I was looking at it being a chance to start fresh to let go of the past. Unfortunately, I seem to be having a slight setback. I was all ready to go. I had my list of goals ready for this new chapter, and then I felt like I stepped off a cliff. Suddenly, I have no motivation. I have a lot I want to accomplish. But, I am also feeling dread, and stuck like there is no way to move forward. Do you have any ideas what I could do to get out of this slump?

~ Feeling Stuck

Dear Feeling Stuck,

I can relate to the feelings you have expressed. I've had a few situations that left me feeling much like you have described. You mentioned a list of goals. I wonder if perhaps you became overwhelmed at the thought of so many changes at once. Change is difficult for most people, even good change that we want to make can be. So, perhaps starting with just 2 or 3 and only tackling them a few at a time would be easier. I know I lose motivation when something seems too big or overwhelming. Another thing you could look at is your strategy for accomplishing your each of your goals. S.M.A.R.T. goals are often the most successful ones. Specific - What will be accopmlished? What actions will you take? Measurable -How will you know you are on your way to accomplishing the goal? Perhaps having it broken down into steps? Achievable - Is it doable? Do you have the necessary skills and resources? Relevant - How does this goal align with your broader goals? Why is the goal so important? and *Time-Bound* - What is a realistic time frame each step of this goal can be accomplished in? And, although the complete goal is the accomplishment you're aiming for, don't forget to recognize and celebrate the little goals you finish along the way since they will get you to the main goal!

~ Caring Peer

To submit a question you can leave it in the mail box in the Peer Pod (behind the door) at East Side Center, mail it to ASCEND Mental Wellness - Dual Recovery, 230 Maple St., Glens Falls, NY 12801, email it to gmiller@ascendmw.org, or text it to 518-401-5991.

I remember my first day at East Side Center. I was looking forward to it, although I was quite nervous as well. I always feel nervous around groups of people that I don't know. The not knowing how I will react to them or them to me for that matter. I had to conquer that fear or else I would never make new friends. Fortunately, I was assigned a 'buddy' for the day. So, there it was, I made my very first friend at the center. She showed me around and taught me the ropes. We had a lot of fun together and it was 'simply the best' day of my week. Now, I just keep coming back making new friends every day.

~ Cookie

### If you looked into a crystal ball, what would you hope to see?

In a crystal ball I'd like to see tomorrow's lotto numbers and win big. I'd give more money to charities and invest in banking with high interest, and I keep some money in my pocket. I'd buy a home too and get married if possible and share my wealth.

~ Anthony G.

## (TRESH) STARÎ) BEGINS TODAYI

~ Cassie B.

### What do you think a squirrel preparing for winter thinks about?

I wonder if the squirrels are wonder if they have 'squirreled' away enough food to keep them alive over the cold winter months. Lord knows they have been busy gathering nuts and other foodstuffs and finding places to hide them. Plus they have been planning and executing the building of their nests high in the trees – no matter how fierce the winter gets, they never fall apart! I also ask myself if they foresee the eventual return of spring, or do they just react to it when it happens? Either way, what industrial little creatures they are!!

~ Steve R.

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? We'll provide prompts each month as an option.

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To submit your writing please email it to gmiller@ascendmw.org, mail it to ASCEND, Dual Recovery Department, 230 Maple St., Glens Falls, NY 12801, or drop it off in the Peer Pod at the East Side Center at the address above.

### January/February prompts

- 1. Finish this story: "It was then that she figured it all out. She bolted out the door and drove straight to..."
- 2. Write a "recipe for happiness." Be sure to include an ingredient list, measurements, and instructions!

3. What would you do if you had the ability to communicate with animals?

### ROADS TO RECOVERY Newsletter



It means a new purpose in life. It means getting my family back. A fresh start on a new year of sobriety means no more tears and a time to open my mind to new adventures. I am and always will be a child of God.







I would like to make a snowman, but we don't have enough snow yet. So, I guess I will think about my Aunt leaving for Florida soon. In my mind I will make a sandcastle with her at the beach near her home.

~ Marsha B.

What Recovery Means To Me



### **PHONE NUMBERS**

Life Line Mental Health Crisis & Suicide Prevention: 24/7 support for people in emotional distress or suicidal crisis. Call or Text 988 When calling Press 1 for Veterns, Press 2 for Spanish, Press 3 for LGBTQIA+, or visit <u>988 lifeline.org</u>

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

The Trevor Project: 24/7 crisis support services for LGBTQ young people. Text, chat, or call anytime to reach a trained counselor: the trevor project.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

National Human Trafficing Hotline: Serving victims and survivors. Toll-free hotline is available from anywhere in the country, 24/7, 365 days a year at 1-888-373-7888

### WEBSITES

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

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

Debtors Anonymous: Offers hope for people whose use of unsecured debt causes problems and suffering in their lives and the lives of others: <u>debtorsanonymous.org</u>

**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: <u>www.recoveryanswers.org</u> **Gamblers Anonymous (GA):** Online services for anyone struggling with a gambling addiction: <u>gasteps.org</u>

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 <a href="https://www.intherooms.com/home/">https://www.intherooms.com/home/</a>

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

relationships, and mindfulness.

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,

#### 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)

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 <u>GMILLER@ASCENDMW.ORG</u> OR CALL 518-401-5991



## Weekly Podcast: "Peer Perspective" On Spotify, iHeart Radio, Apple, Amazon, or at ASCENDMW.org

#### ASCEND DUAL RECOVERY SUPPORT GROUPS

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 4:30-5:30 PM OPEN DISCUSSION/RECOVERY TOPICS CONIFER PARK 55 ELM STREET, GLENS FALLS

PLEASE VISIT <u>WWW.ASCENDMW.ORG</u> FOR MORE INFORMATION & COPIES OF OUR NEWSLETTERS