



A Better Way

A newsletter by and about those in Recovery

April 2006

Recovering people come from all walks of life. We are all races, all economic levels, all ages, male, female and transgender. We are as varied as the rest of the human race. Listen to our voices and our stories...



Taking Care of Ourselves

It is time to stop this nonsense of running around picking on ourselves!

We may have walked through much of our life apologizing for ourselves, feeling less valuable than others, believing that they know better than we do, and believing that somehow others are meant to be here and we are not.

But *we* have a right to be here; *we* have a right to be ourselves. There is a purpose and an intention for our life. We do not have to apologize for being here or being who we are, because *we are good enough*.

Others do not have *our* magic - *we* have our magic. It is in us.

We are the greatest thing that will ever happen to us.

Believe it. It makes life much easier.

- Codependent No More

We all have a past, woven with mistakes, successes, and learning experiences; we have a right to our past; it is ours. Our past has shaped and formed us. As we progress on this journey, we see how each of our experiences can be turned around and used for good.

We have already spent too much time being ashamed, being apologetic, and doubting the beauty of ourselves. *Be done with it - let it go!* It is an unnecessary burden.

Others have rights, but so do we. We are neither less than nor more than - we are equal. We are who we are, who we were intended to be.

That, my friend, is a wonderful gift.

AFTERBURN

How could I do it? How could I say it? Even though I meant it, I still feel ashamed, guilty, and afraid.

This is a common reaction to new recovery behaviors. Owning our power and taking care of ourselves can trigger feelings of shame, guilt, and fear. But these feelings do not need to control us; they're just a backlash. They're "afterburn". Let them burn out.

When we start confronting old feelings and messages, we will experience some afterburn. The afterburn is what we allowed to control our life - shame and guilt.

We grew up with shame-based messages that it wasn't okay to take care of ourselves, to be honest, direct, and own our power with others. We grew up with messages that it wasn't okay to be who we were and resolve problems in relationships. We grew up with the message that what we want and need isn't okay.



Let it all burn off. We don't have to take afterburn seriously, or let it convince us that we don't have a right to take care of ourselves and set boundaries.

Do we really have the right to take care of ourselves? Do we really have the right to set boundaries? Do we really have the right to be direct and say what we need to say?

You bet we do!

When we hear the word “craft,” we usually think about a skill such as woodworking, pottery or quilting; something that is learned and practiced until the person is very good at what they do.



Just as there are crafts that engage the hand and the eye, so there are crafts that engage the mind and the emotions. Instead of learning how to use pieces of wood or cloth to create something of beauty, some crafts use the skills of listening and thinking to create something new in a relationship.

C.R.A.F.T. (Community Reinforcement and Family training) is a Willis Center Outreach program, one that teaches the skills needed to help the “loved ones” of a person involved with drinking or drugs.

C.R.A.F.T. is an individualized program available to “loved ones,” (a family member, partner or friend), who are concerned for their “significant other.” The program consists of private, confidential meetings with the C.R.A.F.T. worker. Sessions are usually an hour or so, and can occur over a period of time, as requested by the “loved one.”

C.R.A.F.T. teaches “loved ones” how to approach their significant other about substance use, how to take care of oneself, and how to encourage and support that person into recovery.

Amaryllis Chavez, director of C.R.A.F.T. at Willis Center, is enthusiastic about the program. “C.R.A.F.T. has a posi-

itive record for assisting people into treatment for substance use. More than 64% of the people using the program go into treatment. That works out to treatment for six out of every ten people who use the program,” she states, “I love those odds!”

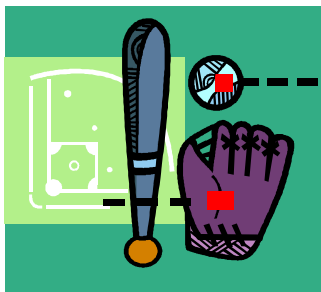
Amaryllis addresses any issues that come up during the C.R.A.F.T. conversation sessions; nothing is off limits. Amaryllis offers bilingual sessions, and talks separately with all parties involved, respecting each one’s confidentiality.



Amaryllis has seen the C.R.A.F.T. program help “loved ones” take care of themselves. Through their times together, the women have learned how to talk about issues with their significant other, how to create healthy limits for themselves, and how to reduce harmful substance use on the part of their significant other.

The program charges no fees, and can be offered at a time and place that is convenient for the loved one.

Call Amaryllis at 508-799-0380, or stop by the Outreach Center at 199 Chandler Street, for more information on C.R.A.F.T.



BATTER UP!

Willis Center recovery programs are playing sober softball this spring and summer.

Donate your used softball equipment-

Call 508 799-2934 and ask for Dana

Life on Life's Terms: *A Woman's Thoughts on Recovery*

♪ "I have tasted the maggots in the mind of the human race. I was not offended though I knew that I had to rise above it all or drown in my own s_ _ _!" ♪

– Parliament and the Funkadelics



This song lyric precedes a very intense guitar solo that just oozes anxiety, darkness, anger and fear, all on top of a very soft, mellow base guitar. Some of you might find this a pretty strange quote for me to base an article on, but it kind of sums up my life in a nutshell.

One of my daughters gave me some old 70s funk music and I was driving down the street, listening to it when this particular song came on. It was one of those “*aba!*” moments that we are blessed with from time to time, and it helped me realize why I’ve been in a weird place emotionally.

Let me explain. Last week I received a phone call from an intoxicated extended family member that I haven’t seen or spoken to in years, who had called to tell me that my father’s brother had passed away. My father and his brother stopped speaking to each other when I was very young (about 40 years ago), and I assumed it was due to my father’s drinking, although we just didn’t talk about that stuff when I was growing up.

This person was obviously hurting and reaching out, since she knows I’ve been clean and sober for a long time. I was tempted to offer to spend some time with her, maybe try to persuade her to go into treatment – but then she started to talk about how *terrible* things were for me when I was a child. Although I insisted it wasn’t *that* bad, she kept pointing out things and bringing up unpleasant memories, while I kept bringing the conversation back to the present.

Eventually I agreed to go to the wake, thinking that would satisfy her, but it wasn’t enough; she wanted me to attend a family gathering as well. I found myself having a very

difficult time saying no; I felt like I was being sucked back into the “isms” of my childhood. She just kept talking about things that went on in my family when I was a child, about how angry my father’s brother had been angry with my father all these years for the way he treated us. The memories were like those “maggots of the human mind”- the darkness, the enmeshment...creeping back to get me.

I’ve been feeling kind of irritable and on guard since I got that call. I *already* “rose above it all so I wouldn’t drown in it.” Now that same past was reaching out to pull me back, trying to bring me back into the darkness of addiction and the havoc it wreaked on me and my family.

Life is full of things that test our commitment to a healthy, sober lifestyle

I will go to the wake and maybe even stay for the funeral, because there are some things that I have this morbid need to face. It’s kind of like opening up that long buried box of maggots and taking another look. Ew! Well, the past *can* be pretty scary and nasty, but I guess sometimes we are just drawn to examine our demons.

My point is that I really try to keep it in the present and not wallow in the remorse, regrets or sadness of the past. I can’t change the past and I can’t run away from it; it’s just there. Living a healthy, sober lifestyle doesn’t prevent the past from rearing its ugly head once in a while, so this is where the coping skills I learned in sobriety really come in handy. It’s kind of like being able to look into the abyss of the past without getting sucked in.

Life is full of things that test our commitment to a healthy, sober lifestyle. Are you committed to a sober, healthy lifestyle, or are you still struggling to rise above it all? No matter where you are...whether still exploring the “maggots in the mind of the human race” or “rising above it all” so you don’t drown in your own stuff, just know that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. I know it’s there, because I’ve made it through the darkness of that tunnel!

Pages from the Recovery Journal

Happy Spring!

It's time once again to resurrect outside projects – we have waited so long for this! In pondering the many projects in my own life, I ask myself – “how serious is this recovery process of mine?” My answer – “very!”



I have been working the program for more than a year now, with just one “slip.” I have learned some things about myself, like doing things consistently in a specific order works well for me. It seems like I desperately needed a lesson in time management, and I am still learning.

I was contemplating returning to my “old life” in another city, when a trusted friend asked me why I wanted to leave the Worcester recovery community so quickly. She suggested, “Maybe you should think about staying with the ‘new’ people in your life who love you.” Hearing those words, I rethought my plans and have decided to stay in my new recovery community and see what happens.

I find I have taken the time for many things this past year, except perhaps for myself. I am working on that piece, and it is starting to change (growth is slow– just look at the flowers budding out in our gardens!). I do what I can without “shorting” myself, in order to stay emotionally healthy.

But I have two new projects in my life, that bring me joy and enthusiasm, a new garden, and a cooking project. The new garden will be located at Visions House, (I need help and support with that). The cooking project uses my passion and talent for cooking, in order to benefit the Willis recovery programs that have supported me in my recovery journey.

That's it for my journal this month– I remain hopeful and excited about the possibilities in my life.

Yours, Mimi

If you have a recovery resource you would like to publicize, give us a call at 508-799-0702 ext. 113. We will be happy to publish the resource, as space allows.

Willis Center Outpatient Services Relapse Prevention Group

Monday evenings 6:30 pm, Willis Center Outpatient Services, 44 Front Street, Suite 490, Worcester

Treatment group open to individuals who are currently maintaining sobriety and can benefit from group discussion of relapse prevention strategies.

Call 508-799-2934 for an intake appointment with a clinician at Willis Outpatient Services. Individuals with no insurance are encouraged to make use of this service. We can also accept MBHP, Medicaid, and Network Health.

Voices of Recovery Radio Show

Listen to our radio show-
The Voices of Recovery
on WCUW 91.3 fm.

April's discussion:

Outreach & Recovery
Monday, April 24
4:00-5:00 p.m.

Each month, our guests discuss topics of interest to people in recovery, to those who are not yet in recovery, and to those who care about people with addictions.

This month's conversation is about Outreach programs, and how they help people get into recovery.

Let's talk!

Call (508) 799-0702 ext. 113 if you would like to be on a radio show.



WILLIS CENTER is a minority-based organization located in Worcester, committed to creating a community in which people of color and the disadvantaged can gain equal access to quality human and social services that improve their quality of life.

www.williscenter.org

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