



# A Better Way

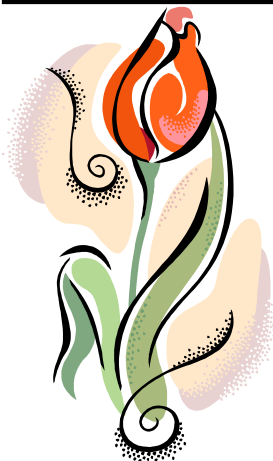
A newsletter by and about those in Recovery

May/June 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...



## Welcome Springtime



**Happy Spring!** The rain we so desperately needed finally arrived- and took way too long to leave! Seems like we're never quite satisfied, whether it be with the weather, or our growth.

As a gardener, I have been waiting for the

weather to cooperate, in order to do some serious planting. But it is *so hard* to be patient- so easy to be anxious and distracted. I want rain and sunshine on *my* schedule!

I have been thinking about what I am learning, both as a gardener and as a woman in recovery – that not being patient, and being too busy can actually do tremendous harm. It can prevent me from having control over my own life, and can keep me from what is really important.

I need to learn to reserve time for what really matters to me, like the flowers in my garden and the people in my life. Like special flowers,



family, friends and loved ones are people who cannot be replaced.

As I find my balance in this garden called “recovery,” I am reminded just how much special people mean to me, and how important it is to save time for them in my life.

A plant grows in its own time; it blossoms when it is ready. No amount of frenzied digging, watering or weeding by me can hurry that flower along; in fact, I do more harm than good when I mistake busyness for good gardening!

When I understand this reality, I feel better. I understand that *patience*, not busyness, is good for relationships, gardens and recovery. Patience brings me peace.

So, happy spring from the happy gardener. Take it slow, make time for yourself, your friends and families, and your flow-  
ers. And try for patience. **Mimi**

*Here's something to keep in mind as you go through this hectic day.*

*The person who benefits most from your patience is you.*



# Yoga - an Art and a Discipline



There are many paths to wellness and healing. Many people use 12-step programs as a tool for health and well-being, but there are other tools as well that can help us on our journey.

I recently had an opportunity to speak with a man whose practice of yoga has had a profound impact on his life. He spoke openly and simply of his experiences with yoga, recommending it to looking for growth and health of body, mind and spirit. Read on for his story.

## Chip's Journey

"Fifteen years ago, I made a vow to find God and truth, and I believe I have found both. I share my journey with you, in the hope that my experiences will help you on your own path of healing.

Years ago I suffered a back injury while skiing in Maine. The hotelkeeper suggested I try yoga for the pain, and I did. I found relief and enjoyed the experience, but then put my practice of yoga on the back burner.

Years later I experienced a series of losses in my life. Death took several beloved people from me, and I suffered serious health issues. I gave up, not even wanting to live - I had bottomed out. Sound familiar to you? If you have ever felt like this, maybe you would also benefit from the practice of yoga.

I tried yoga yet again. Bit by bit I felt better, got stronger, and eventually was able to get a job again. Yoga transformed me from a basket case, back into a functioning human being.

Yoga helped me feel better about myself. As I did the yoga postures, I found that I grew in self esteem, and experienced feelings of contentment and real bliss."

So, what is this experience Chip speaks about so highly?

## What is Yoga?

Yoga is built on *exercise*, *breathing*, and *meditation*. The exercises of yoga treat the body with great care and respect, increasing its efficiency and total health. Breathing techniques are based on the concept that breath is the source of life in the body. Yoga gently increases breath control to improve the health and function of both body and mind.

The two systems of exercise and breathing prepare the body and mind for *meditation*, a quiet mind that allows silence and healing from everyday stress.

Regular practice of the three parts of yoga produces a clear, bright mind and a strong, capable body, and leads to self discovery.

"Yoga is an art, a discipline, and a science that leads to discovery and learning about life's big questions. Yoga has helped *me* find what is important in life, helping me nurture the seed that has grown into the knowledge of who I am."



Yoga means union, the union of body + mind, mind + soul, soul + universal spirit.

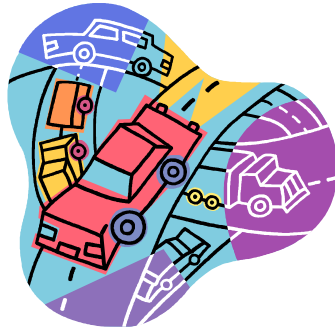
## The Key to Yoga

"The key to yoga is *practice*. It is through the practice of yoga that I feel better, both in my spirit and in my physical self. I can feel the life force – or chi, or spirit, or higher power – flowing inside me when I practice yoga. I think yoga is a great gift you can give yourself.

We look for artificial bliss, by using substances such as drugs or alcohol, by amassing lots of "stuff" or by losing ourselves in relationships. I suggest you go for "true bliss", the natural high that accompanies the practice of yoga. It has made all the difference in my life."

## Relapse: Bump in the Road, or End of the Road?

*On the road again:  
Goin' places that I've never been.  
Seein' things that I may never  
see again,  
And I can't wait to get on the  
road again.*



When I started out on my road of recovery, I remember thinking while still in the hospital, “I can do this—all I need is to get to a place where I have the option to drink, or not.” I honestly thought it would be okay for me to “use” at some point, because I really believed I could control my substance use. Of course I was fooling myself, but fooling myself had helped me get through tough times before, so I felt safe.

I put in a year of sober time, and was so happy and proud of myself! But the issues that were present in my life *before* I was in recovery were still present in my life *during* recovery, and the behaviors that I used in the past to help me survive were the very behaviors that caused me harm in recovery.

### The “Busyness” Behavior

Throughout my life, I had always been busy with “something,” always “doing” for someone. But that someone was not me - it was usually someone else. I was not good at taking time for myself (didn’t think I deserved it!). So I exhausted myself with efforts to please others, in order to feel good about myself.

It’s always been hard for me to value myself – it’s so much easier to “do” for others, and get validation and positive feedback in that way. It’s been so difficult to understand that *I* am worthy of

good, that what *I* think of myself is as valid as what another person thinks of me!

### Crisis

Then there was a terrible crisis in my life – the death of a loved one that devastated me. I sat in the cemetery, missing this person, and trying to make sense of the loss. I couldn’t.

### Relapse

*I relapsed.* I remember panicking and thinking, “My God, I’ve relapsed – I want to order a coffin!” I was sure that this was the end of the road for me, that it was all a downhill trip from there.

The first thought to cross my mind was that I had lost a year. I had been sober for over a year, and had lost that. But now I am learning that the length of sober time is not as important as just *being* in recovery.

### On the Road Again

As I look back from where I am today (still in recovery), I see how rigid I was; I allowed myself no room for a mistake.



Today I can see that relapse was *not the end of the road* - it was more like a *bump* in the road. I was lucky enough to pick up sobriety again, and so I can see that relapse was not the end of the road for me.

My recovery is my life journey, and I am still on it, even with bumps, twists and wrong turns. I like the Willy Nelson song “On the Road Again,” in reference to my recovery - on the road again, learning lots of new things, and happy for it!

- Mimi

Knowledge is power

- get the facts!

# **HIV HEALTH & TESTING FAIR**

June 27

10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

**Willis Center Outreach Center  
199 Chandler Street, Worcester**

***Counseling & Testing - Cookout - Prizes - Music - Speakers***

**HIV Testing Week Collaborative:** AIDS Project Worcester; Centro Las Americas; Family Health Services; GBV Health Center; Health Awareness of Central MA; Homeless Outreach Advocacy Project [Community Healthlink]; Jeremiah's Inn; Legal Assistance Corp. of Central MA; PIP Shelter; UMass Medical School; Willis Center; Worcester Common Ground

## **TAKE THE TEST-TAKE CONTROL!**

**CORI Training - WORCESTER - FOCUS ON GETTING JOBS**

**June 7, 2006** 9:30 - 12:30—all welcome!

Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Massachusetts

More info: **call Lena Wilson at 617-357-0700 X 319**

### **Voices of Recovery Radio Show**

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

June's discussion:

**HIV Testing  
Monday, June 26  
4:00-5:00 p.m.**

**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 the quality of life.

[www.williscenter.org](http://www.williscenter.org)

119 Forest St. Worcester, MA 01609

### **Willis Center Outpatient Services Relapse Prevention Group**

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

Treatment group for individuals currently maintaining sobriety who can benefit from group discussion of relapse prevention strategies.

Call 508-799-2934 for an intake appointment with a clinician at Willis Outpatient Services.

**No insurance?** Please make use of this service.

We also accept MBHP, Medicaid, and Network Health.