



A BETTER WAY

A newsletter by and about those in Recovery

November 2005

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...



Giving Thanks-Thanksgiving

Gratitude Attitude

Can I be wholeheartedly grateful for today? What if I can't be thankful for the "rain" that has fallen in my life—for the so-called bad times? What then?

I can begin by giving thanks for all the sunshine I can remember & for every blessing that has come my way.

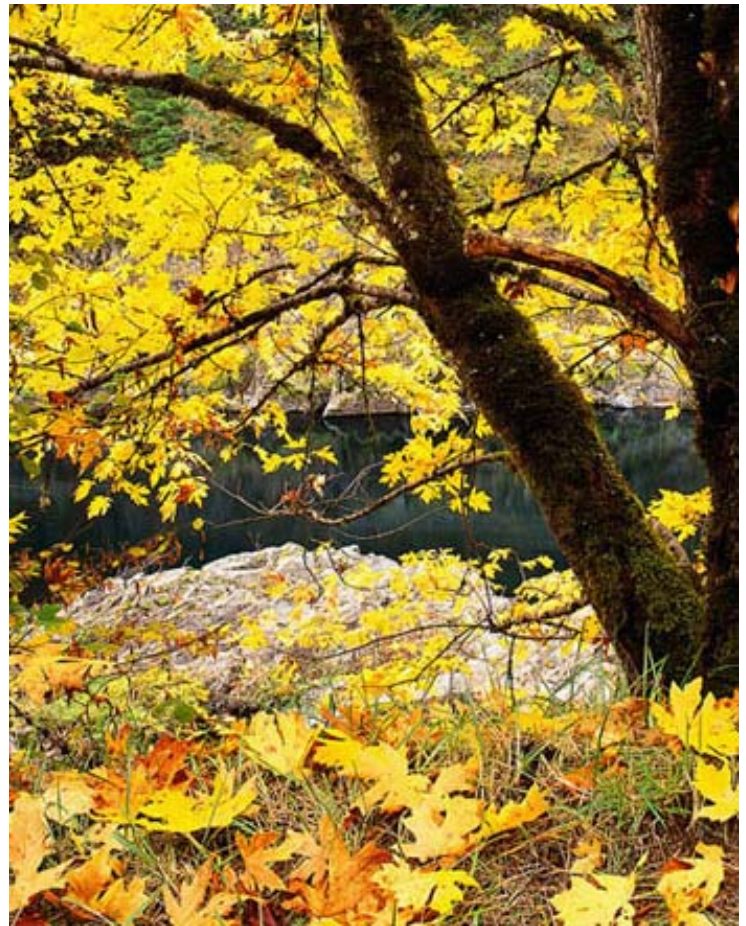
Perhaps then I'll be able to look back over the rainy periods of my life with new vision; perhaps then, hidden blessings I've overlooked will come to my attention.

Am I grateful for all of life—both the sunshine & the rain?

Here we are at Thanksgiving— can we be grateful? An alumni of Willis Recovery Services writes this Thanks giving greeting to us all -

"It's almost Thanksgiving and I wanted to send you a sincere note of thanks—I am six years clean this year. I have been very successful both in my recovery and in my life. I just wanted to say how grateful I am to Linda F. Griffin house and to all those that have remained my close friends over the past six years. Thank you and I miss you all so much—and I will keep moving forward!!"

What's so important about gratitude? It seems like such a small gesture. Can it really make a difference in our lives? The answer is yes, of course. It's not that others are changed by it; it doesn't change the



circumstances of our lives. But it does quite emphatically change us & how we see the world around us. In that process, everything changes, absolutely everything.

Making the decision to cultivate a grateful attitude every day gives us a new way to look at our lives - a new set of eyes that lets in lots of light. Try it— gratitude!

Sober, safe and sane for the holidays

I recently had the privilege of discussing the challenges of the holiday season, and strategies for staying straight, sane and sober, with a group of Channing House brothers.

The ghost of holidays past

"Families don't all stop drinking when you do." Just because you are in a family setting doesn't mean you won't feel alienated. You might be the only person in the room not drinking!

"I was always 'messed up' at the holidays, just waiting to open my gifts so I could get out, sell them and get my fix."

"When I was using, my family were the people I ended up hurting the most. Because holidays are so centered on the idealized family, this is an especially painful time for me."

"I have always been high during the holidays. This holiday season I am in recovery, which brings its own challenges. I can no longer turn to substances to deal with negative feelings. There is no longer anything to protect me against the hurt and pain that I tried to escape in the first place. I feel raw and exposed- like having a scrape or wound that is open to the elements."

Strategies for staying sober and sane

The holidays (Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's) can be a time of great joy and celebration or a time of great pain, sorrow and depression for *anyone*, but is an especially difficult time for people who in recovery- particularly those in early recovery.

"If you know there will be alcohol at a family gathering this season, but you don't want to be isolated from your family, invite them to come to your place, where you feel safe and have supports." This is a good way to stay connected to family while ensuring that you don't slip up.

Plan your days

If you have a plan, you have a weapon. To leave yourself free is to leave yourself wide open to temptation. Let your friend or sponsor know where you will be, and make sure you have that person's number available - just in case you need help.

Plan B - an escape route

If you must attend a party or gathering where alcohol is being served and temptation becomes too great or you

feel uncomfortable by the environment around you, all you need is an alternative place to go. Perhaps go out for coffee or to a movie. If the host or hostess pressures you to stay, simply tell them you have a previous engagement.



"Want a drink?"

One of the toughest challenges at a holiday party can be when someone offers you a drink. Not only is it putting temptation right in your face, but it could also make you feel uncomfortable. So, when you are offered a drink say, "What a good idea, I would love a drink! Do you have a soda-water with lemon or a coke?"

Holiday survival tips from the experts- recovery survivors!

At all costs stay away from old people, places, and things you were familiar and comfortable with while drinking or using. - Lisa

Never go anywhere alone if there is going to be alcohol. I take an AA buddy with me. -Lynne

Going into an AA meeting where I know no one's name, but yet I know **everyone**, makes the holidays more bearable. - Nadia

On the night of the party I would have attended in the past, I made plans to be active with my family. -Penny

Holidays can be very hard for all of us - just don't watch the commercials! -Rosie

I do 12-step calls during the holiday to help others, but more honestly to keep the memory of what the first drink will do to me. -Sam

The holidays are hard to get through, but sometimes what I need to focus on is just staying sober and remembering that as long as I do not pick up today, there is hope. -Sandy

For me taking a drink is like jumping out of a plane without a parachute. It would be one hell of a buzz, but that buzz would cost me everything I had, forever. -Bob

Stay clear of HALT (don't get too hungry, angry, lonely or tired). -Jim

I learned that no one cares if I'm drinking or not and that "what" I carried in my glass was rarely noticed by anyone...

- Anonymous

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

"You're renting space in your head for free!" – unknown

I can't remember who said this to me. It was some wise soul when I was in very early recovery. It was one of those days when I was wasting a lot of mental and emotional energy obsessing about what someone else had said to me. I'm sure the individual that I was angry with wasn't wasting any time or energy worrying about hurting my feelings or my anger, but they sure were taking up a lot of space in my head!



Every once in a while someone will say or do something that I can't seem to get out of my head. I waste a lot of mental energy thinking about what I should have said or what I will say to them the next time I see them. Call it resentment, call it obsessive thinking, call it whatever you want. No matter how much I understand why something that someone said or did bothers me, it doesn't help me stop wasting mental and emotional energy on it.

This past week I could feel myself becoming very frustrated and angry with an individual because they just couldn't seem to grasp what I was saying to them. I know the source of my frustration; old conversations I had many years ago trying to "talk sense" into addicts and alcoholics in my personal life. I think I handled this conversation pretty well; however, I was angry, upset and frustrated when I got home that evening. I wasted a lot of mental energy replaying the conversation in my mind and thinking about things that I could have said and would say the next time round. Like I said, understanding where it's coming from, that I

can't *make* people see things my way, doesn't always stop me from wasting emotional and mental energy on that person!

I share this because I've found through the years that my struggles and experiences aren't special or unique; others have the same struggles I do. Maybe sharing my solution to this particular struggle will help someone else.

*My struggles and experiences aren't unique;
Others have the same struggles I do ...*

My solution is pretty simple: I find other things to occupy myself. Don't isolate, tell someone about it. I just admit that I'm upset and preoccupied; that helps. I keep myself busy with routine day to day things like work, family/friends, laundry, watching a movie...whatever.

I just keep busy and don't let it consume me. After a few hours (or days), it goes away and I find something more productive to obsess about. Yeah I know, I need to stop obsessing about things! Well, until I figure out how to do *that*, I'll try to use my mental and emotional energy obsessing about more productive, positive things.

So if you're like me, and have repetitive, obsessive thoughts about situations or people you can't change...stop renting space in your head to them for free! Find something more positive to distract you from the negative *stuff*. Keep your mind busy and move on.

Jeanine

Recovering Alcoholic and Addict

Recovering Community Events

SOBER SALSA SOCIAL!

Friday, December 9, 2005

8:00 pm - 11:00 pm

Assabet Valley

**Center for Continuing Education
Epicurean Room, 215 Fitchburg Street
Marlborough, MA 01752**

Tickets- \$10 in advance - \$15 at the door

Email: salsastorm22@aol.com 508-854-8489

Immerse yourself in the sounds of a lively Son Montuno, a Guajira, a Bolero and of course Salsa, Salsa, Salsa! The caliente sounds of Curubande will play their hearts away, lighting up the room and bringing a night of endless dancing and music for the soul...

Invite your friends. Tickets are going **FAST** - call to pick yours up!



Thanksgiving Alcahthon

Sacred Heart Church

600 Cambridge Street, Worcester, MA

November 23 - 24, 2005

We post this list of AA meetings as a tool for our readers during the Thanksgiving holidays. Stay connected –and supported!

List, courtesy of Worcester Area Intergroup <http://www.aaworcester.org/>

Date	Day	Start	End	Group Name	Community
Nov 23	Wednesday	Noon	1:00 PM	7:00 AM	Worcester
Nov 23	Wednesday	1:00 PM	2:00 PM	Thurs Night Step	Charlton
Nov 23	Wednesday	2:00 PM	3:00 PM	Gratitude	Worcester
Nov 23	Wednesday	3:00 PM	4:00 PM	Traditions	Millbury
Nov 23	Wednesday	4:00 PM	5:00 PM	Triton	Webster
Nov 23	Wednesday	5:00 PM	6:00 PM	BB Step Study	Worcester
Nov 23	Wednesday	6:00 PM	7:00 PM	Young People's	Worcester
Nov 23	Wednesday	7:00 PM	8:00 PM	Holden Group	Holden
Nov 23	Wednesday	8:00 PM	9:00 PM	Made A Decision	Worcester
Nov 23	Wednesday	9:00 PM	10:00 PM	Maint & Repair	Douglas
Nov 23	Wednesday	10:00 PM	11:00 PM	Gratitude	Shrewsbury
Nov 23	Wednesday	11:00 PM	Midnight		
Nov 24	Thursday	Midnight	1:00 AM	Happy, Joyous & Free	Grafton
Nov 24	Thursday	1:00 AM	2:00 AM	Quinsigamond	Worcester
Nov 24	Thursday	2:00 AM	3:00 AM	Crozier	Worcester
Nov 24	Thursday	3:00 AM	4:00 AM		
Nov 24	Thursday	4:00 AM	5:00 AM	There Is Hope	Worcester
Nov 24	Thursday	5:00 AM	6:00 AM		
Nov 24	Thursday	6:00 AM	7:00 AM	People Helping People	Worcester
Nov 24	Thursday	7:00 AM	8:00 AM	Saturday Morning	Northborough
Nov 24	Thursday	8:00 AM	9:00 AM	Mid-Day	Worcester
Nov 24	Thursday	9:00 AM	10:00 AM	Sun. Night Big Book	Auburn
Nov 24	Thursday	10:00 AM	11:00 AM	Original	Southbridge
Nov 24	Thursday	11:00 AM	Noon	Sunday Morning	Brookfield
Nov 24	Thursday	Noon	1:00 PM	Forge	Westborough
Nov 24	Thursday	1:00 PM	2:00 PM	Joy of Living	Webster
Nov 24	Thursday	2:00 PM	3:00 PM	Serenity	Worcester
Nov 24	Thursday	3:00 PM	4:00 PM	Way of Sobriety	Worcester
Nov 24	Thursday	4:00 PM	5:00 PM	Friday Night	Spencer
Nov 24	Thursday	5:00 PM	6:00 PM	Rebound	Worcester
Nov 24	Thursday	6:00 PM	7:00 PM	Sutton Center Step	Sutton
Nov 24	Thursday	7:00 PM	8:00 PM	We Mean Business	Worcester
Nov 24	Thursday	8:00 PM	9:00 PM	Easy Does It	Grafton
Nov 24	Thursday	9:00 PM	10:00 PM	As Bill Sees It	Worcester
Nov 24	Thursday	10:00 PM	11:00 PM	Greendale	Worcester
Nov 24	Thursday	11:00 PM	Midnight	Day At A Time	Dudley

Voices of Recovery Radio Show

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

This month's discussion:
**Staying, sober, sane
& safe during the
holidays**

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, listen as alumni, staff, and program recipients of Willis Center recovery services share their challenges and their ideas about coping with holiday issues.

Call (508) 799-0702 ext. 113 to
sign up to be on the radio

Let's talk!



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

119 Forest St. Worcester, MA 01609