

# Together AZ

MAY 2024

Inspiring Success on the Road to Recovery

## Healing Loneliness with Attachment

By Alexander Danvers, PhD, Director of Treatment Outcomes, Sierra Tucson

People in the U.S. are getting lonelier. In 2023, the U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy issued a warning of the epidemic of loneliness in the country. According to large national surveys conducted by Cigna in 2018 and 2019, over half of adults in the U.S. report feeling lonely—and that number has remained high since. All this loneliness hurts our physical and mental health. Lonely people tend to have more issues with sleep, substance use, depression, and anxiety.



### What should we do?

One obvious response would be to spend less time alone. However, loneliness isn't just about being around people. There are plenty of people who can feel alone in a crowd, or people who enjoy peaceful solitude. Loneliness is really about not having the kinds of social connections you want. Research my colleagues and I conducted at the University of Arizona illustrates that point. In this research, we looked at large groups of people who had allowed us to make brief audio recordings of their daily lives throughout the day, to see how much time they spent alone. We also asked them how lonely they felt on questionnaires. The results indicated that spending time alone isn't very strongly related to feeling lonely at all. In fact, being alone anywhere from 25% to 75% of the day was associated with equally low levels of feeling lonely. It was only when time alone got very high (more than 75% of the day alone) that loneliness started to increase.

### The Quality of our Relationships

Our research showed that loneliness wasn't just about being around other people. So what does work? One large survey study found that the people who said they were less lonely also reported having good relationships with family and romantic partners. That suggests it's about quality, not quantity—strong relationships, not just being around people all day. So how do we measure strong relationships?

In 2022, I started working at Sierra Tucson, a large, nationally recognized residential mental health facility. There I oversee the collection of data on treatment outcomes. In our Measurement Based Care program, we give regular assessments of mental health symptoms like levels of depression, anxiety, and PTSD. We also look at people's attachment styles. Attachment styles

are patterns of relating to close others in our daily lives, such as close friends, romantic partners, and family members. Our assessment captures two aspects of attachment:

- **Attachment Anxiety** is a worry that other people won't be there when you need them, and won't be willing to get as close as you want.
- **Attachment Avoidance** is a discomfort of being close or depending on other people.

Ideally, both these dimensions are low. That would be considered secure attachment. High scores on one or both of these dimensions are often related to difficulties relating to other people.

Attachment styles capture the strength of our connections. If you have a more secure attachment style, you're likely to be able to form stronger, more satisfying relationships. This difficulty forming strong, stable relationships can also influence other aspects of your life.

Recently, I analyzed the data we collected in 2023 to examine the way attachment is related to the mental health issues we encounter day-to-day at Sierra Tucson. In broad studies of the U.S. population, it's typical to see 60% of people having a secure attachment style. Among the people we see at our mental health facility, it's only 28%. Among the general population, it's rare to see someone who is high in both attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance. At Sierra Tucson, 45% of our residents are high on both.

*Healing Loneliness continued page 4*



## From a Mental Health Breakdown to Finding Hope

By Jessica Parsons

When Brianna Livernois found herself in Bullhead City with her autistic daughter Cristina, thousands of miles away from her family in Idaho, the weight of her circumstances was more than she could bear. Isolated, and without support, she teetered on the edge.

Adding to her challenges, a diagnosis of schizophrenia, and an incorrect prescription, Brianna sank into an **Finding Hope** *continued page 10*

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# Publisher's Note

By Barbara Nicholson-Brown



## Stomping Out Stigma

With rising pressures in today's fast-paced world, bringing awareness to mental health and wellness has never been more important. Through open and fear-less discussions, we are breaking down the stigma surrounding mental health issues.

- **Did you know 1 in 4 adults will experience a mental health condition in a given year?**
- **Our mental health affects every aspect of our lives, from how we think and feel to how we handle stress and build relationships.**
- **Just like physical health conditions, mental health challenges are treatable.**

Mental Health America has created a toolkit (<https://www.mhanational.org/mental-health-month>) filled with resources to help you address your mental well-being or support someone you care about. **Don't wait to seek help – you are not alone.**

Together, we can create a world where mental health is a priority. Share your copy of *Together AZ* with friends and family. Get involved with a mental health organization and keep the conversation going!

# Healing Trauma Together

## A Therapist's Perspective on Women's Trauma IOP Group

By Ashly Parsons, LMSW Outpatient Therapist, Valley Behavioral Hospital

As a therapist who facilitates the women's trauma Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP) group at Valley Behavioral Health Hospital, I am privileged to witness the transformative power of healing in a supportive and empowering environment. The journey of healing from trauma is a complex and deeply personal one, and I am honored to guide these courageous women through their process of healing and growth. In our trauma IOP group, we incorporate evidence-based psychoeducation materials to provide our participants with a comprehensive understanding of trauma and its effects on the mind and body. One of the frameworks we utilize is the *Polyvagal Theory*, developed by Dr. Stephen Porges, which helps us understand the role of the autonomic nervous system in responding to stress and trauma.

### What is the Polyvagal Theory?

The Polyvagal Theory highlights the importance of the vagus nerve in regulating our responses to stress and trauma. It suggests our autonomic nervous system has three distinct states: the social engagement system, the sympathetic fight-or-flight response, and the dorsal vagal immobilization response. By understanding these states, we can help our patients recognize their own physiological responses to trauma triggers and learn effective coping strategies to regulate their nervous system.

Our groups provide psychoeducation on Neuroscience which has provided us with valuable insights



into the effects of trauma on the brain and nervous system. When a person experiences trauma, particularly in childhood, it can have lasting effects on brain development and functioning. The amygdala, the brain's fear center, may become hyperactive, leading to heightened emotional responses and hypervigilance.

Additionally, trauma can impact the prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for decision-making, emotional regulation, and self-awareness. This can result in difficulties in managing emotions, forming healthy relationships, and coping with stress. By integrating neuroscience research into our group sessions, we help our participants understand the biological underpinnings of their trauma responses and empower them to work towards healing and resilience.

Creating a supportive environment is essential in our trauma IOP group. Women who participate in our group often report feeling seen, heard, validated, and supported. **It is a warm and brave space where vulnerability is embraced, and strength is celebrated.** Through group discussions, learning activities, and therapeutic interventions, we cultivate a sense of community and connection among our group members.

The power of group therapy lies in the shared experiences and collective wisdom of the group members. Women in our trauma IOP group find solace in knowing that they are not alone in their struggles and that there is hope for healing and recovery. By sharing their stories, expressing their emotions, and offering support to one another, they create a safe space for vulnerability and growth.

As a therapist, my role is to facilitate the group process, provide guidance and support, and empower each participant to explore their trauma with courage and compassion. I am continually inspired by the resilience and strength of the women in our group as they navigate their healing journeys and reclaim their sense of self and empowerment.

In conclusion, women's trauma IOP groups offer a unique and powerful opportunity for healing and growth. By integrating evidence-based psychoeducation, the Polyvagal Theory, neuroscience, and creating a supportive environment, we empower women to confront their trauma, regulate their nervous systems, and cultivate resilience. Together, we embark on a journey of healing, transformation, and empowerment, one brave step at a time.

*As a Master of Social Work therapist specializing in intensive outpatient therapy, Ashly brings a compassionate and dedicated approach to supporting clients on their healing journey from trauma and co-occurring disorders. Her goal is to empower individuals to overcome challenges and achieve lasting well-being. Learn more at [valleyhospital-phoenix.com](http://valleyhospital-phoenix.com)*



## Empowering women in recovery for a healthy family and hopeful future

AZWRC is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing substance abuse treatment to women through a variety of programs to address family sustainability. All programs focus on providing the tools and resources to assist women in living financially independent, drug and alcohol-free lives.

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602-264-6214 [azwomensrecoverycenter.org](http://azwomensrecoverycenter.org)

# Inside the Mind: How SPECT Imaging Transforms Addiction Recovery

By Lisa Parsons, MD, Amen Clinics

What if you could see into your brain to understand the reasons for depression, anxiety, brain fog, mood instability, panic attacks, or obsessive thought patterns and more? What if your doctor had more than your description of symptoms to guide care? At the Amen Clinic, we do this every day. Brain SPECT imaging allows us to see the functional status of the brain and therefore tailor treatment plans to the individual specific brain needs.

## A Look at the Brain

Let me explain. We look at the brain in 2 ways.

One is through blood flow of the cerebral cortex. The cerebral cortex is the outside of the brain crucial for sophisticated cognitive functions such as reasoning, planning, decision making, language, memory, attention etc. The brain is the most metabolically active organ in the body. It uses 25% of all the energy that is used to power your entire body every single day. This means it requires huge amounts of oxygen and nutrient delivery. Through this testing, we can see which areas of the cerebral cortex aren't receiving enough of what it needs for proper functioning and, therefore, is leading to symptoms. Depending upon which area is struggling, symptoms may include those of ADHD, possibly mood instability or memory problems, panic attacks or many others. This testing shows us where to help and gives us clues about the cause or causes.

## Why is this important?

It gives us targets to treat the underlying problems, whether they are from a head injury, low blood flow, infection, inflammation, toxins or neurodegeneration.

The second way brain SPECT imaging helps untangle the mystery of human emotions, is by showing us the activity levels in the emotional centers located deep inside of the brain. Is there too much or too little in specific regions? This is important because it allows us to precisely target the area causing symptoms, therefore, have better symptom relief. Depression can be caused by either too much or too little activity in specific regions that are treated differently from each other.

This then allows for precision treatment. Likewise, anxiety can be caused by too much or too little activity in specific regions and we need to know which area or areas to target in order to give people relief.

This testing allows us to see if a person is vulnerable to addiction, the type of ADHD/ADD (which requires various types of treatment), if they are vulnerable to neurodegeneration such as dementia, and might they have been

exposed to toxins or mold leading to symptom. It allows us to evaluate the underlying health of a person's brain which then allows us to remove things causing problems and add methods of brain health support.

## Shrouded in Stigma

It is unfortunate that people with a mental illness are sometimes shrouded in stigma that may prevent them from getting timely help. They may hide behind a façade, pretend to be okay because they don't want to see themselves as weak or fear being judged by others. This can lead to self-deprecating thoughts and self-destructive behaviors. It cannot be overstated that this imaging allows people to feel validated, let go of self-judgment and let go of the shame they may have been carrying.

The reality is, we live through the brain we have, and the health of our brain determines how we think, how we feel and how we behave. Mental illness is a brain illness, not a character flaw. This imaging helps people realize this, develop a healthy relationship with their mental health (brain health) and begin carving a path to a better future.

*Dr. Parsons is passionate about helping to end the stigma of mental illness which opens doors for people to seek help and improves the quality of life for not only the person seeking help but also their friends/family. Dr. Parsons graduated medical school from Wayne State University in Michigan, and completed her residency at Banner Good Samaritan in Phoenix, AZ. She has practiced in varied settings including consult liaison on medical floors and in emergency departments, inpatient psychiatry, medical director for the largest community mental health center in Northern Arizona, addiction and recovery work including detox, residential and outpatient.*

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## Healing Loneliness *from page 1*

This is typically the most difficult attachment style to deal with, because it involves a push-pull dynamic of not wanting to depend on others but also wanting deeper feelings of closeness and connection. Our data show that people dealing with mental health problems are much more likely to have difficulty with attachment.

*"Feeling lonely isn't about how much time you spend with other people—it's about having strong relationships."*

When I analyzed the 2023 Sierra Tucson outcomes data, I also found large correlations between attachment and mental health symptoms. People higher in either attachment anxiety or attachment avoidance (or both) had higher

PTSD symptoms, higher depression symptoms, and higher anxiety symptoms. They also had more problems sleeping and experienced more difficulties from chronic pain, although these relationships were smaller. Overall, when people have difficulty forming strong attachments to others, they end up having more difficulty with mental health.

Here's what I was seeing in two of my recent research projects: First, feeling lonely isn't about how much time you spend with other people—it's about having strong relationships. Second, difficulties forming strong relationships can be measured by attachment styles, and these are related to larger issues with mental health. Were these issues linked?

I went back to the scientific literature, and I found evidence for a connection. A large study of college students published in 2011 found that attachment style was related to loneliness. Being less secure—and especially having higher attachment anxiety—was related to feeling lonelier. Further, statistical modeling suggested a pathway to explain the relationship:

- Feeling less secure—and especially having more attachment anxiety—is related to feeling like you have less social support, or the ability to get help from others when you need it.
- Feeling like you have less social support is related to feeling lonelier.

This study suggested that people's attachment styles make them see other people differently. When they are less secure, they see other people as less willing to support them. The feeling that "no one has my back" then makes them feel lonely.

Identifying this pathway is good, because we can change attachment styles. People learn attachment styles from the patterns they establish in their close relationships. When people have less secure attachment, it suggests they were in a relationship that established an unhealthy pattern. Establishing healthy patterns of relating, however, can change attachment style. One place this happens is therapy. Another key finding from our 2023 Sierra Tucson data was that, over the course of their stay in treatment, people's attachment styles steadily became more secure. Our data suggest that having restorative experiences with therapists can help heal attachment wounds.

The research and reading I've done over the past year suggests a deeper story about loneliness. Loneliness is about not having the kinds of deep, satisfying connections we want. Getting those connections may involve looking at the patterns of attachment we have formed in our past relationships. When we take the time to examine these patterns, often with the help of a strong connection to a therapist, we may be able to undo our loneliness.



Alexander Danvers, Ph.D., is a psychologist with expertise in mobile sensing, machine learning, and psychophysiology. Dr. Danvers joined Sierra Tucson in 2022 from the U.S. Army Research Labs, where he was a civilian research scientist working on mobile sensing and artificial intelligence projects.

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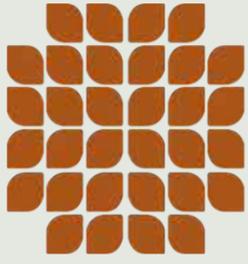


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## Community Bridges, Inc. (CBI) Celebrates Mental Health Awareness Month

Since 1949, May has been observed as Mental Health Awareness Month, a month intended to increase awareness of mental health issues globally and to mobilize efforts of support. As an integrated behavioral health provider, CBI Team Members are on the front lines of the mental health crisis in various communities. As we honor their hard work and sacrifice as mental healthcare workers, it is equally important that as an organization, we prioritize our own mental health as well.

During Mental Health Awareness Month, we should use this as an opportunity to check-in with ourselves to evaluate our mental health, utilizing our resources within our community and check in with our healthcare provider to address any concerns we may have.

- Talking openly about mental health is invaluable and cannot be under-scored.
- Open discussion with a trusted friend, loved one, or mental healthcare worker can encourage suffering individuals to seek help, and reduce the misconceptions and stigma around mental health.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), nearly one in five adults in America are living with a serious mental illness. This suggests that mental health is a commonplace that should be rid of shame or judgment. While some individuals are more vulnerable than others, everyone faces obstacles in life that impacts them in various ways.

We encourage everyone to practice mindfulness, engage in meditation, exercise, show gratitude, find a new hobby, or attend a mental health seminar. Any activity that supports your mental health or simply brings you joy is highly encouraged and has been proven to provide positive outcomes. No matter what activities you choose to partake in, we want you to prioritize your mental health and encourage others to do the same.

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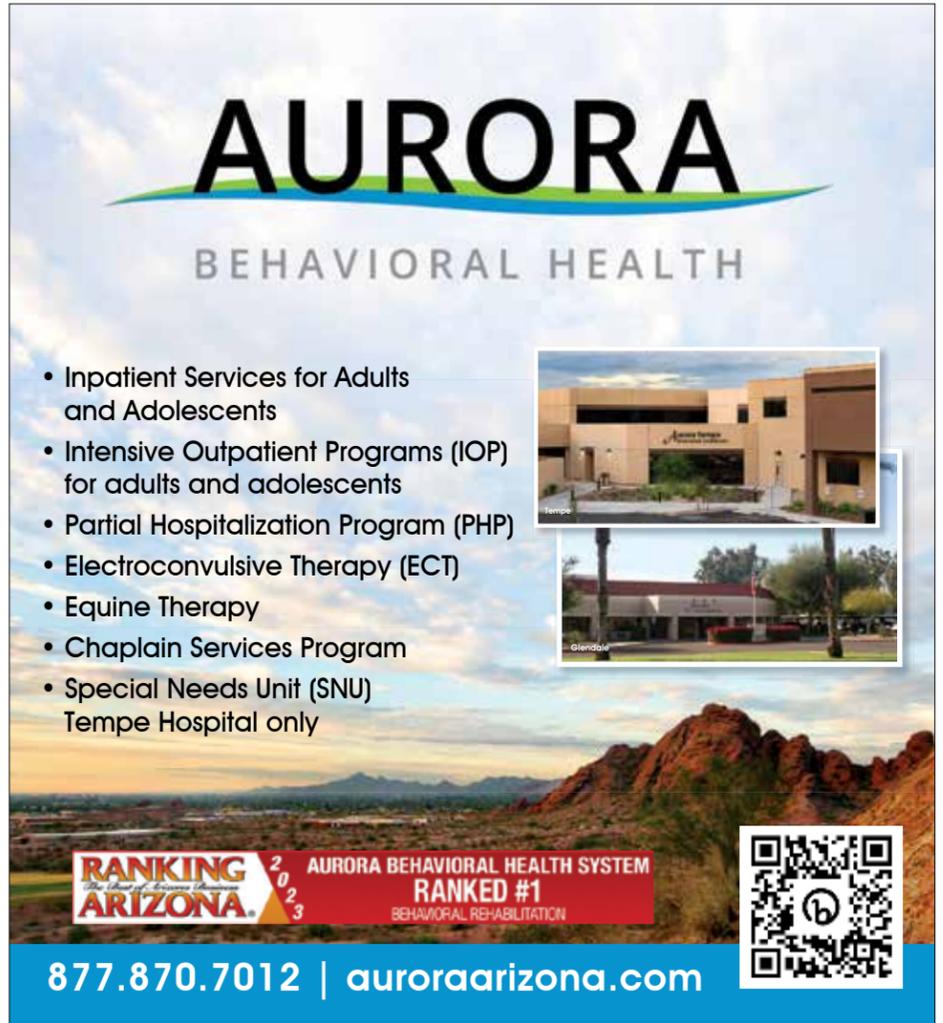
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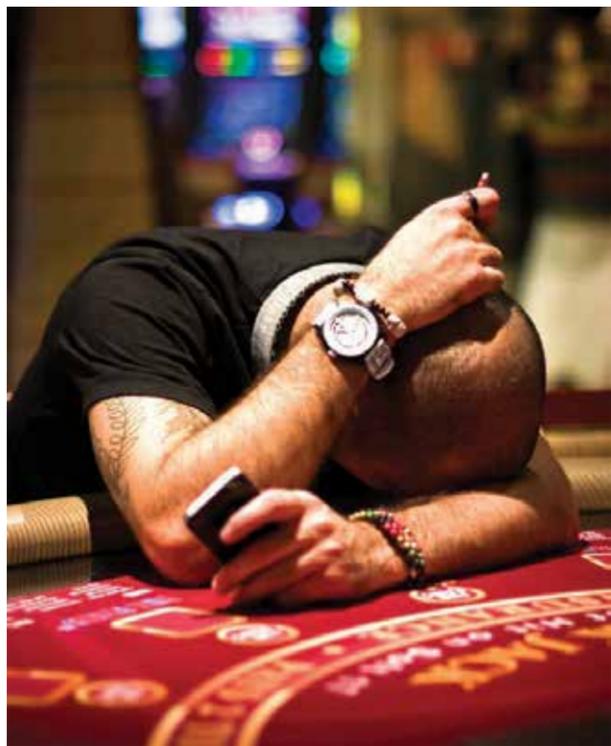
# Understanding the Intersection of Gambling and Co-occurring Disorders

By Bobbe McGinley, Provider for the Division of Problem Gambling  
Founder of ACT—Counseling & Education  
Clinical Director, Recovery in the Pines and Birches Health

May marks Mental Health Awareness Month, a time dedicated to raising awareness about the importance of mental health and breaking down the stigma surrounding mental illness. During this month, it's crucial to shed light on the complex interplay between mental health disorders and addictive behaviors, such as gambling disorder, compulsive sexual behaviors, video gaming disorder, and internet and online addiction. As with mental health disorders regardless of age, community, or socio-economic status, gambling can transform into a debilitating struggle for individuals and close community members, especially when co-occurring with other mental health disorders.

## Depression and Gambling

The relationship between depression and gambling is notably significant, given the shared neurobiological pathways and psychological profiles associated with both conditions. Depression is often characterized by persistent sadness, lack of interest in enjoyable activities, and a variety of cognitive and physical symptoms. For some individuals, gambling becomes a way to escape these depressive symptoms, providing temporary relief and excitement. Unfortunately, this can lead to a vicious cycle where the individual's gambling losses lead to increased depression, which in turn may drive more gambling as a form of self-medication.



Research indicates that the prevalence of major depressive disorder is significantly higher among pathological gamblers than in the general population. The impulsivity associated with depression can exacerbate gambling behaviors, leading to more severe gambling problems. Treatment for individuals who are dealing with both depression and problematic gambling often involves cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), which aims to address distorted beliefs about gambling,

improve emotional regulation, and develop healthier coping mechanisms.

Personalized, integrated treatment plans like those offered by licensed specialized counselors that also address depression through pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy can be effective in breaking the cycle between these co-occurring disorders.

## Substance Use Disorder and Gambling

The link between substance use disorders (SUDs) and gambling is well-documented, with studies showing that many individuals who suffer from problematic gambling also struggle with alcohol or drug use. This comorbidity can be partly explained by the similar ways in which gambling and substance use activate the brain's reward system, producing feelings of pleasure and euphoria. For someone with a SUD, the stimulating environment of gambling can enhance the psychoactive effects of substances, making both behaviors more appealing.

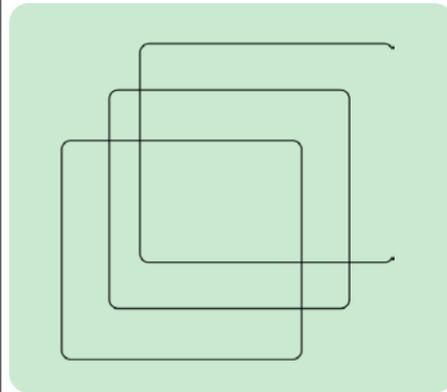
Moreover, both substance use and gambling disorders involve repeated behaviors in spite of negative consequences, and both require increasingly larger amounts of the activity to achieve the desired effect, a phenomenon known as tolerance. Treatment for individuals grappling with both gambling and a substance use disorder typically involves an integrated approach that addresses both issues simultaneously. This may include residential treatment programs, 12 step support groups like Gamblers Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous, and therapies that focus on harm reduction, impulse control, and relapse prevention.



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## Bipolar Disorder and Gambling

Bipolar disorder, characterized by extreme mood swings ranging from manic highs to depressive lows, has a complex relationship with gambling. During manic phases, individuals may exhibit heightened impulsivity, grandiosity, and poor judgment, which can lead to excessive gambling. The thrill and risk associated with gambling match the heightened reward sensitivity and impulsivity seen in manic episodes, making gambling particularly enticing.

During depressive episodes, individuals with bipolar disorder might turn to gambling as a way to alleviate their symptoms, similar to the pattern seen in unipolar depression. The management of co-occurring bipolar disorder and gambling addiction requires careful psychiatric treatment, including mood stabilizers and psychotherapy, to address both the emotional swings and the compulsive behavior. Behavioral therapies that focus on impulse control, such as CBT, are also essential components of treatment. Moreover, ongoing monitoring and support are critical given the cyclical nature of bipolar disorder and its impact on gambling behaviors.

## What To Be Aware of During Mental Health Month

The co-occurrence of gambling with depression, substance use disorders, and bipolar disorder presents significant challenges for treatment and recovery. Understanding the intricate relationships between these disorders is crucial for developing effective intervention strategies.

By focusing on integrated treatment approaches that address both the psychological and behavioral aspects of these conditions, healthcare providers can better support individuals struggling with these complex co-occurring issues. Importantly, enhancing awareness about these co-occurring disorders can also help reduce stigma and promote earlier intervention, leading to better overall outcomes for affected individuals, their families, and their loved ones.

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Bobbe works in private practice, where she is Clinical Director, Counselor and Consultant at her agency ACT - Counseling & Education. For information call 602-569-4328 and visit [www.actcounseling.com](http://www.actcounseling.com).

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**Do you know Ellie Mental Health?**

Ellie Mental Health is a group of licensed professional therapists providing outpatient therapy throughout the valley to everyone. Our mission is to compassionately transform the culture of mental health care by providing creative solutions that make wellness accessible in every community. We make getting mental health care easy without the weeks and weeks of waiting to get an appointment while also accepting commercial insurance.

Ellie provides mental health care for people. Period. This includes people of all ages, (2 years of age and up) with individual, couples and family therapy. Our primary goal is to make therapy accessible and effective so you can get support, discover healing, and see amazing results. When you get in contact with us, our Client Access Specialists will learn your therapy needs and help you find your match. We are growing quickly and currently have locations in Scottsdale, Greater Phoenix, Chandler, Tempe and Deer Valley.

And while we know caring for your mental health and being vulnerable with someone you just met can seem scary, we do everything that we can to make each Ellie appointment as comfortable and as fun as possible. We aim to walk along this journey with you and provide you with a comfortable place to talk, decompress, do the work, and heal.



Ellie was founded in 2015 by Erin Pash and Kyle Keller when they opened the first Ellie clinic. Since then, the Ellie fam has continued to grow with multiple clinics in Minnesota and a growing number of franchises across the country (over 180 and growing).

**Moving through the barriers**

Ellie was proudly founded on the principle of destigmatizing mental health. The mental health industry is full of barriers, and we've made it our goal to fill the gap and find innovative ways to break down these barriers for the communities we serve.

The main way we do this? With humor! We believe that struggling with mental health issues is 100% normal. Some days are great, and some days make you wish you could dig yourself into a hole and hide from it all. Everyone has those days (even your therapist).

Every single person on this Earth has had their share of bad days—and if they say otherwise, just know that's total bunk. When your mental health is at its lowest, getting the care you need should be as easy to access as possible. Ellie is here to provide you that support: a real person walking alongside you through life's wildest moments.

**Employee Experience**

We take care of our people. It's that simple. From investing in their financial future, to providing wages that shatter the ceiling in our industry to reasonable caseload expectations we ensure that our people are happy. Happy employees do better work and provide better client care! No matter what it is that you do in your mental health career at Ellie, our clients depend on us cultivating an environment where our employees can thrive so that they can thrive too! Careers in mental health are tough jobs with a high risk of emotional fatigue and burnout.

At Ellie, we use all of our core values of humor, creativity, authenticity, acceptance, determination, and compassion not just out in our communities, but we turn them inwards too! Our employees have clear growth paths for advancing their careers. We have created a culture that reminds us that our employees are our leaders!

**Learn more about Ellie Mental Health by visiting <https://elliementalhealth.com/>**



# Spring Cleaning for Your Mind



By Amy Tilley, PsyD, Clinical Director, Desert Star Addiction Recovery Center

**Spring is here!** That means taking advantage of opening your windows in the house, letting the cool, crisp morning air in, and enjoying morning coffee and quiet time on your patio as you watch the sunrise. During the month of May, it is a great time to focus not only on your mental health, but to declutter your environment to improve your state of mind. Spring is a time of renewal and rebirth—and a great time to organize your space and donate (of all those things you don't need) to your favorite charity.

Did you know that if your environment (home, workspace) is cluttered, that it influences your mental health? Living in cluttered chaos can cause you to feel hectic and unbalanced. This can correlate with increased depression or anxiety symptoms, lower your motivation, and cause difficulty focusing.

Take advantage of the increased daylight we gain in spring and take a week or two to organize and declutter your living space. This will get your environment in order, and you will reap the many mental health benefits of having a clean-living space.

## The Benefits of Spring Cleaning

According to the Cleveland Clinic, there are several benefits to spring cleaning each year:

- You feel accomplished: when you finish a task, there is a sense of pride and “Hey, I did that!” Our brains like it when we complete what we started, and it can reduce your stress level.
- You gain a sense of control and feel more peaceful having accomplished a task.
- Less clutter increases your focus. This is particularly helpful for people living with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. The less clutter, the less distractions, the better work productivity.
- Your environment is safer when there is less clutter. Taking toys, random objects off the floor reduces the risk of falls.
- Cleaning gets you moving! It can be a great physical activity if you are a vigorous cleaner!

## Make a Decluttering Plan

Spring cleaning can be overwhelming if you don't know where to start. Decluttering your entire home can be a daunting task, but making a schedule can help reduce your stress level.

- Write down your plan. Take two weeks to complete your spring-cleaning schedule.
- Decide on an organization that you want to donate your belongings to. Create piles: Keep, Donate, Trash. This will help you figure out what you want to do with all those things you may not need or want anymore.
- Do one room at a time. Breaking it down into smaller tasks can make things more manageable.
- Start small—pick your smallest bathroom and begin there.
- Each day you complete one room is a small (or big) victory!

As you go through your home, room by room, notice how you feel once each space is clean. Is your mood improved? Do you feel refreshed? Do you have more motivation? Are there less cobwebs in your brain? Don't forget to continue to get support: continue with your treatment program, go to therapy or a 12 Step meeting. Let the month of May be a rejuvenation of your mind and your home.

*Amy has 20 years experience in the mental health and addiction recovery field. Learn more at <https://desertstararc.com/> Contact: 520-638-6000*

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## Finding Hope from page 1

abyss. “I had a mental breakdown,” Brianna admits, while struggling to care for herself and her toddler. The Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS) stepped in. Soon, a referral to the nonprofit, Mentally Ill Kids in Distress (M.I.K.I.D.) would provide a lifeline.

“We work in conjunction with the Mojave County courts, the dependency court team, and we have M.I.K.I.D. Family Support Partners in court from the first initial hearing all the way through the end of the case,” explains M.I.K.I.D. Project Administrator James Beecher.

M.I.K.I.D.’s Parent Support Now program was established in Mohave County in 2015 to provide early intervention in child safety removal cases. It was through this program that Brianna was able to reunite with her daughter after a year and a half of putting in the work. Her case was dismissed on March 21, 2024.

“Most children in these cases remain out-of-home for more than two years, that’s a national average,” says M.I.K.I.D. Vice President of Marketing and Development, Patrick Winters. “But, if we can intervene early and provide immediate support as a liaison with the court system, then we can help educate and assist families with reunification, treatment goals, and positive coping skills.”

### Focus on Family

This is just some of what M.I.K.I.D. offers families in Arizona and parts of Colorado. From depression, to anxiety, and from ADHD to autism, M.I.K.I.D. focuses on improving mental and behavioral health issues plaguing children while also providing parents with resources and support to navigate the complexities of life, mental healthcare, and the court system.

“We are the largest family-run organization in the Valley with more than 80 percent of M.I.K.I.D.’s staff and 51 percent of the board having their own lived-experience with a behavioral health challenge in their own families,” says Patrick. “That means we can relate and understand at a deeper level some of the challenges our families face.”

M.I.K.I.D. was initially founded in 1987 as a support group, by a mom, Sue Gilbertson, after encountering obstacles in obtaining mental health services for her son Eric. Although they have since passed away, their legacy of improving behavioral health in children lives on.

## “Just don’t lose hope, stay connected and ask for help.”

– Brianna Livernois

Today, 37 years later, M.I.K.I.D. has grown to include respite care, home-visits, day camps for kids, group activities, reunification, and court intervention, all of which Brianna has taken part in. “It’s been really helpful, and I would recommend it to other families,” she says. “I was nervous in the beginning because I wasn’t sure what it would entail, but they helped me so much with the court case, and with Cristina; I just felt motivated and empowered.”

Brianna’s support system at M.I.K.I.D. includes Family Support Partner Tami Rickert along with Project Administrator James Beecher, a true team effort. “We are so proud of how far she has come,” says James. “In her time here, she has worked diligently, becoming a core participant. And, in the next part of their journey, Brianna will continue to receive Family Support services with Tami, and Cristina will receive Direct Support services with one of our Direct Support Providers. This will help reduce the risk of further out-of-home placements.”

Last year, M.I.K.I.D. served 4,000 children and their families, from birth to 25. Brianna is just one of those success stories. “Our goal is two-fold,” explains Patrick, “to provide support for parents in navigating the systems of care, and to help young people develop into stable, self-sufficient, and successful adults, which is our desire for Brianna and Cristina.”

Brianna is now looking toward the future with her daughter and believes sharing her story will help others who might be struggling. “Just don’t lose hope,” she says. “Stay connected and ask for help.”



Learn more: [www.Mikid.Org](http://www.Mikid.Org) 1-844-805-2080

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# Who Are YOU?

By Dr. Dina Evan

Things in the world may feel weird because things ARE weird right now. We hear of war in so many places, people experiencing political differences, health issues and stress on budgets. We are experiencing many hardships not of our own making: from weather, companies down-sizing and closures, party and affiliation differences and the strains on our relationships. This is a deep breath moment, an important time for all of us.

## What is your spiritual purpose?

In every moment of this life we are being asked a huge question which many of us never hear. The question you have heard from me before.... What did you come here to do?

We are living in a precious time in the stream of life and the question is more important than ever. The entire planet is in an uproar. And the answer is not out there. It's right inside of you, probably sitting quietly next to your heart trying to get your attention. Let's give it some.

## IMAGINE

Can you imagine what the world might be like or how it might change if love and respect was the leading emotion for all of our actions? Such a simple thing with huge worldwide results! It all starts simply with your intention to change something or someone with your loving kindness and attention. Look around and find a person who needs some support or advice that will change the direction of their life **for the good**.

*Sounds pollyannish?* Perhaps it is to some, but not to an employee I worked with years ago who had withdrawn and was considering suicide. I watched her for almost a week as she withdrew more and more. She was kind and loving, so I knew something was wrong. Her husband had asked for a

"Look around every day to find a simple, yet meaningful way to add **love, connection, and support** to the energy on this planet."

*It's up to us.*



divorce — she was devastated and admitted having self-destructive thoughts. She had filled a prescription she thought would end her life. So, we talked, and I made a deal with her to connect and talk every day until she felt safe. She honored her agreement and her feelings of wanting to escape — passed.

We all come here having mutually agreed upon, or having independently decided on, a purpose. Then we spend our life, depending upon how awake we are, fulfilling our purpose which is what gives us the joy in having chosen this incarnation and doing the work we came here to do.

## This is an incredible time to be alive

Things are changing in our world faster than we could have ever imagined. People all over this country and planet are coming to the realization we are in for wild ride of great importance. This is not about ego or accomplishment, it is about awakening to an acceptance of authentic love for every kind, color, and creation.

It's not who you love, it's how you love, and if you are adding to the growing awareness and acceptance necessary to change things for the future and the good.

You chose to be here at this time for this purpose, and you will hear about families uniting again after years of estrangement. You will experience amazing open-hearted acceptance because we are finally getting to the awareness that unless we begin to live the principles of loving without prejudice and division, we cannot sustain life as we know it.

It is the most important part of our job here on earth.

Look around every day to find a simple, yet meaningful way to add love, connection, and support to the energy on this planet. It's up to us. We are the changemakers! And isn't that what you came to do and who you came here to be?

No one needs to give us permission to do what we came here to do and be who we came here to be. No one except the spirit in you.



Dr. Evan is a marriage, family, child therapist and consciousness-counselor. [www.dr dinaevan.com](http://www.dr dinaevan.com)  
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# Mental Health



## ***Myth: Mental health issues can't affect me.***

**FACT: Mental health issues can affect anyone.**

In 2020, about:

- 1 in 5 American adults experienced a mental health condition in a given year
- 1 in 6 young people have experienced a major depressive episode
- 1 in 20 Americans have lived with a serious mental illness, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or major depression.

*Suicide is a leading cause of death in the United States. In fact, it was the second leading cause of death for people ages 10–24. Suicide has accounted for the loss of more than 45,979 American lives in 2020, nearly double the number of lives lost to homicide.*

## ***Myth: Children don't experience mental health issues.***

**FACT:** Even very young children may show early warning signs of mental health concerns. These conditions are often clinically diagnosable and can be a product of the interaction of biological, psychological, and social factors.

Half of all mental health disorders show first signs before a person turns 14-years-old, and three-quarters of mental health disorders begin before age 24.

*Unfortunately, only half of children and adolescents with diagnosable mental health conditions receive the treatment they need. Early mental health support can help a child before problems interfere with other developmental needs.*

## ***Myth: Mental health issues are a result of personality weakness or character flaws, and people can "snap out of it" if they try hard enough.***

**FACT:** Mental health conditions have nothing to do with being lazy or weak and many people need help to get better. Many factors contribute to mental health conditions, including:

- Biological factors, such as genes, physical illness, injury, or brain chemistry
- Life experiences, such as trauma or a history of abuse
- Family history of mental health conditions

*People with mental health conditions can and do get better and many seek recovery support.*

## ***Myth: There is no hope for people with mental health issues.***

**FACT:** Studies show that people with mental health conditions get better and many are on a path to recovery. Recovery refers to the process in which people can live, work, learn, and participate fully in their communities. There are more treatments, services, and community support systems than ever before, and they work:

- **Prevention**
- **Treatment**
- **Recovery**

## ***Myth: I can't do anything for a person with a mental health issue.***

**FACT: Friends and loved ones can make a big difference.**

In 2020, only 20% of adults received any mental health treatment in the past year, which included 10% who received counseling or therapy from a professional.

Friends and family can be important influences to help someone get the treatment and services they need by:

- Reaching out and letting them know you are available to help
- Helping them access mental health services
- Help them learn self-care and coping techniques
- Learning and sharing facts about mental health, especially if you hear something that isn't true
- Treating them with respect, just as you would anyone else
- Refusing to define them by their diagnosis or using labels such as "crazy", instead use person-first language

**Source:** <https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/myths-and-facts>

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# The **PATH** to Calm

1

## PAUSE

Instead of acting on feelings right away, stop yourself and think things through. Count to 100 or say the alphabet backwards.

## ACKNOWLEDGE FEELINGS

For example: Are you mad at someone, or are you sad because you were hurt by their actions? Whatever it is you're feeling, it's okay to feel that way.

2

## THINK

Now that you've taken a few moments to figure out what exactly it is that you are feeling, think about how you can make yourself feel better.

3

## HELP YOURSELF

Take an action to help yourself based on what you came up with in the "Think" step.

4

# The Importance of Rest

By Rachel Jensen, MC, PsyD

What I have found throughout my time in the mental health field is that many people in the world equate or have learned to equate their productivity to their worth. It is common that these individuals will take on many tasks and activities that fill their time and mind so they are able to feel valuable in the world or to certain people. These activities can be emotionally, mentally, or physically taxing for each person and yet they continue to participate with little to no time for themselves to recuperate; just constantly going and doing.

Rest has not been modeled or considered positive for many. In fact, slowing down has often been described as “lazy” or unnecessary by many clients who have come through my office. With this perception, these people are consistently depleting themselves—leaving them left to give and do none of the activities and tasks they hope to.

It seems that we can't really give what we don't have. So, if we hope to give our greatest effort/energy in all that we do, it is likely that we will need to rest to show up in the ways we want. This can be achieved by taking time to check in with our needs, be present to our emotions, and truly find times/ways to REST. Rest can look different for each person—it can be emotional, physical, spiritual, social, mental, sensory, or creative rest.



*"Slowing down has often been described as 'lazy' or unnecessary..."*

This can look like lying in bed/taking a nap, participating in meditation, being in nature, taking time away from social activity, pausing use of television or social media, and more.

It is my hope that the skewed perception that someone is not productive if they choose to take time for themselves or engage in restful behaviors can be debunked and the concept of rest can continue to be reframed as a helpful tool and positive activity for those that need it most.

Rachel holds a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology (PsyD) from Midwestern University, Glendale, AZ where she received a Masters degree in Clinical Psychology (M.A.). Visit [www.pcsintensive.com](http://www.pcsintensive.com)

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**ARIZONA Suicide / Crisis Hotlines by County**

Maricopa County served by Mercy Care: 800-631-1314 or 602-222-9444

Cochise, Graham, Greenlee, La Paz, Pima, Pinal, Santa Cruz, Yuma served by Arizona Complete Health— Complete Care Plan: 866-495-6735

Apache, Coconino, Gila, Mohave, Navajo and Yavapai Counties served by Health Choice Arizona: 877-756-4090

Gila River and Ak-Chin Indian Communities: 800-259-3449

Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community: 855-331-6432

Tohono O'odham Nation: 1-844-423-8759

National Substance Use and Disorder Issues Referral and Treatment Hotline: 1-800-662-HELP (4357) Text the word "HOME" to 741741

Arizona Statewide Crisis Hotline Phone: 1-844-534-4673 (HOPE) Text 4HOPE (44673)

Trevor Hotline (LGBTQ support) [thetrevorproject.org](http://thetrevorproject.org) 1-(866)-488-7386

National Sexual Assault Hotline (24/7 help) [online.rainn.org](http://online.rainn.org) (800)-656-4673 (HOPE)

Mesa Family Advocacy Center (480)-644-4075  
Phoenix Family Advocacy Center (602)-534-2120  
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CBI, Inc.	877-931-9142	communitybridgesaz.org
Copper Springs	480-418-4367	coppersprings.com
The Crossroads	602-263-5242	thecrossroadsinc.org
Desert Star Addiction Recovery Center	520-638-6000	desertstarARC.com
Dr. Dina Evan	602-571-8228	drdinaevan.com
Dr. Marlo Archer	480-705-5007	downtoearthenterprises.com
Ellie Mental Health		elliementalhealth.com/
Gifts Anon	480-483-6006	
Hushabye Nursery	480-628-7500	hushabyenursery.org
The Meadows	800-632-3697	meadowsBH.com
Meadows Adolescent TMAC	866-492-1431	MeadowsAdolescent.com
Mens Teen Challenge	520-792-1790	tcaz.org
Mercy Care	800-631-1314	mercycaarez.org
Newport Healthcare	888-675-1764	newporthealthcare.com
NotMYKid	602-652-0163	notmykid.org
Psychological Counseling Services (PCS)	480-947-5739	pcsintensive.com
Recovery In Motion	844-810-1599	recoveryinmotion.com
Recovery Ways	888-986-7848	recoveryways.com
Revive Recovery Center	480-405-5396	reviverecoverycenters.com
Scottsdale Recovery Center	888-663-7847	scottsdalerecovery.com
Sierra Tucson	800-842-4487	sierratucson.com
Brough Stewart, MC, LPC, NCC	602-316-3197	
Valley Hospital	602-952-3939	valleyhospital-phoenix.com
Teen Challenge AZ	602-708-9475	tcaz.org

### Additional Resources

ACT Counseling & Education	602-569-4328
AZ Dept. of Health	602-364-2086
Arizona Opioid Assistance Helpline	888-688-4222
Eric's House	855-894-5658
Desert Drug Dog	602-908-2042
Hunkapi Programs	480-393-0870
EMPACT/La Frontera	800-273-8255
I Am Teen Strong	480-396-2409
Mind 24/7	text/call 844-646-3
TERROS Health	602-685-6000

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ACA	aca-arizona.org
AA	520-624-4183
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Anger Management	520-887-7079
Behavioral Awareness Center	520 629 9126
Co-Anon Family Groups	520-513-5028
Cocaine Anonymous	520-326-2211
Cornerstone Behavioral Health	520-222-8268
Cottonwood Tucson	800-877-4520
Crisis Intervention	520-323-9373
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## Resources & Helplines

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)	602-264-1341
Al-Anon	602-249-1257
Tucson Al-Anon Information	520-323-2229
Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACA)	aca-arizona.org
AZ Women's Recovery Center	602-264-6214
Bipolar Wellness	602-274-0068
Child Abuse Hotline – Support & Information	800-422-4453
Cocaine Anonymous	602-279-3838
Co-Anon	602-697-9550
CoDA	602-277-7991
COSA	480-385-8454
Copper Springs	480-418-4367
Crisis Help Line – For Any Kind of Crisis	800-233-4357
Crisis Response Network	602-222-9444
Crisis Text Line	Text HOME to 741741
Crystal Meth Anonymous	602-235-0955
Debtors Anonymous	(800) 421-2383
Domestic Violence	800-799-SAFE
Families Anonymous	602-647-5800
Gamblers Anonymous	602-266-9784
Grief Recovery	800-334-7606
Heroin Anonymous	602-870-3665
Marijuana Anonymous	800-766-6779
NDMDA Depression Hotline – Support Group	800-826-3632
Narcotics Anonymous/Phoenix	480-897-4636
Narcotics Anonymous/Casa Grande	520-426-0121
Narcotics Anonymous/Flagstaff	928-255-4655
Narcotics Anonymous/Prescott	928-458-7488
Narcotics Anonymous/Tucson	520-881-8381
Nar-Anon Family Groups	(800) 477-6291
National Youth Crisis Hotline	800-448-4663
Overeaters Anonymous	602-234-1195
PAL (Parents of Addicted Loved Ones)	480-300-4712
Parents Anonymous	602-248-0428
Phoenix Metro SAA	602-735-1681
RAINN (Rape, Abuse, Incest National Network)	RAINN.ORG
Rape Hotline (CASA)	602-241-9010
Sexaholics Anonymous	602-439-3000
Sexual Assault Hotline (24/7 English & Spanish)	800-223-5001
Sex/Love Addicts	602-337-7117
Sex/Love Addicts Tucson	520-792-6450
Sex Addicts Anonymous	602-735-1681
S-ANON	480-545-0520
Suicide Hotline and Prevention Line	988
Teen Challenge	888-352-4940
Teen Life Line	800-248-8336

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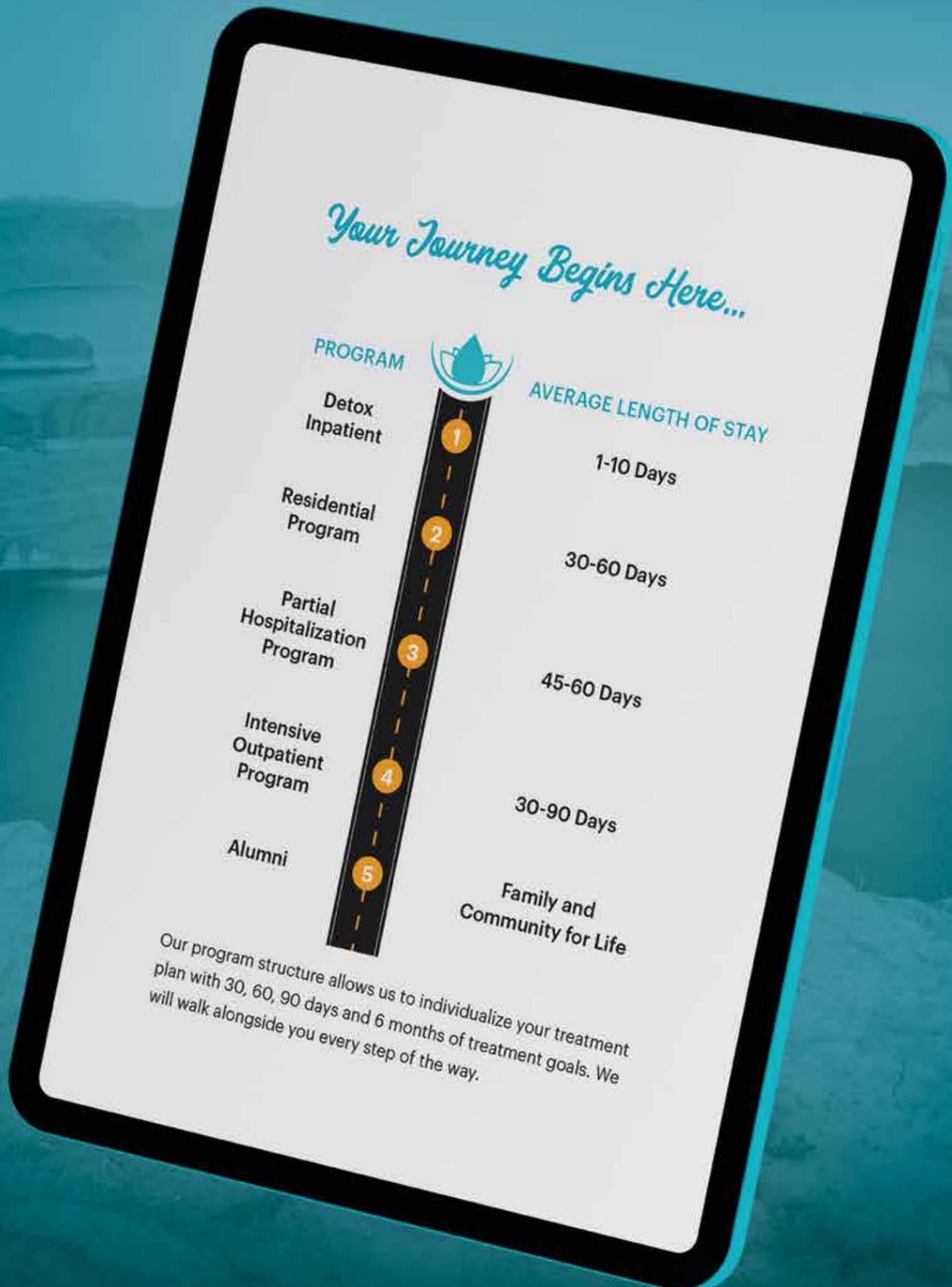
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