

Connecting through Storytelling

By Amanda Johnson
The Story Oracle | Co-founder and CEO Saved By
Story Publishing

"Studies demonstrate that engaging with others' stories enhances emotional awareness, labeling, and processing. So, why don't we just share our stories?"

"Thank you..." I looked into eyes wet with gratitude. "...for bringing her back to us."
"What do you mean?" I wondered.

"She's an amazing woman who shows up for everyone, but there was a part of her that wasn't showing up anymore... since the accident." The beloved daughter-in-law I'd heard so much about caught a runaway tear. "But it's back. Thank you."

"All I did was create the space for her to do the work, and it was such a privilege."

Rarely do I get to interact with clients' loved ones, but this is the sentiment shared by the handful who've connected with me.

I was at her first pre-launch gathering. The tear-stained (hers and mine) manuscript had been moved to production, and it was time for her to re-engage the heroes from the story—to thank them, to announce she had finished writing, and to ask for support in getting the book into the right hands.

Watching her delight the room, I was transported back to our first conversation over Zoom and her first retreat.

The Beginning

"I think you might have to cry... a lot..." I stared into the eyes of the woman whose writings of her journey of stunning faith, advocacy, and



Amanda and Booky Friend - Photo Submitted

miracles had failed to move me. (Yes, you read that right. Something was missing.) "To connect with that one sitting in the ICU wondering if their loved one will live, you'll have to reconnect with your mother's heart too, which I imagine is full of tremendous emotion..."

Determined to keep her promise—to share the miraculous journey if He chose to make it so—she signed the contract and sped through the pre-work before the fast-approaching retreat.

For the first three days, she showed up as the dynamic force of Good that she is—full presence to people and the process, wild honesty, and transporter of nature's glory (in the form of heart-shaped rocks and golden leaves) from early morning walks into the cocoon I had created for a dozen authors.

The fourth day, she struggled to construct the timeline as we organized her stories, confirming my intuition that emotional residue of the tragedy lay between her and a manuscript that felt true and good.

Then it was time to write.
I was coaching another author when I heard the blood-curdling sound and hurried toward it.

Laptop open on the bed in front of her, she wailed. I placed my arm around her shoulder until she was empty for the day.

That was the first of many days of emptying... I mean, writing through the true emotions of a
Connecting through Storytelling continued page 6

Panic Attacks vs Anxiety Attacks

Navigating the world of mental health can be challenging, especially when trying to understand the differences between similar conditions. Panic attacks and anxiety attacks are two such conditions that often cause confusion. While they share some similarities, they are distinct in several ways. In this article, we'll explore the differences between panic attacks and anxiety attacks, identify their symptoms and provide practical advice on managing them.

Understanding Panic Attacks

A panic attack is a sudden and intense episode of fear that triggers severe physical reactions. It often strikes without warning and can occur even when there is no real danger. People experiencing a panic attack may feel as if they are losing control or having a heart attack.



iStock Credit:yacobchuk

What is a panic attack?

Panic attacks are characterized by abrupt surges of overwhelming fear and discomfort. These episodes can peak within minutes and may be accompanied by a range of physical symptoms. Although panic attacks can be frightening, they are generally harmless and not a sign of a more serious medical condition.

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The Gratitude Issue

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Publisher's Note

By Barbara Nicholson-Brown

A Grateful State of Mind

Am I always in a grateful state of mind? Honest answer, no. But before my journey in recovery began — gratitude was a foreign concept.

My view of the world was distorted and playing the victim role was comfortable. I was hiding behind my own lies, telling myself and everyone else I didn't have a problem with alcohol. No matter how hard I tried to deceive myself, it was impossible to conceal my shame, guilt, and remorse. I constantly blamed external factors for my internal struggles. With such a negative perspective, how could I perceive anything positive?

Through years of long-term sobriety, while every day isn't perfect, I feel and experience gratitude on levels I never imagined. When days are difficult or my thinking takes a wrong turn, I have tools to get back on the right track. Sometimes all I have to do is stop for a moment, take a deep breath and ask my Higher Power to take over. Other times reaching out to friends who support my recovery journey brings me back to center. Sometimes it's as simple as asking the question out loud, "What am I grateful for right this second?"

As this season of thanksgiving approaches, I invite you to create space for yourself. Grab a notepad and let the blessings flow—write down everything that makes you feel grateful, thankful, or blessed. I believe you'll find your list is rich, long and filled with love.

Thank you to all of our contributors for providing your expertise and being a valuable resource to our community.

In gratitude,

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Spotlight on Gratitude

A Conversation with Gwen Henderson



Gwen is a shining beacon of light for many on the road to recovery. This month of Thanksgiving and gratitude is the perfect time to spotlight her wisdom and inspiration. — Barbara Nicholson-Brown

Despite the challenges you've faced, what keeps you grateful?

First and foremost, I am grateful to God. Without His grace, I know I would not be here today. My son, Eric, has been my angel on earth. During my addiction, my greatest fear was leaving behind a painful legacy — that my son's mother had died an addict. That fear stayed with me through multiple treatment attempts until twenty-eight years ago, when I finally reached a breaking point. My pain had become greater than my desire to continue living that way. I called my son, and he helped set in motion my final treatment — one that would change everything. **Today, my grandchildren—now 25, 22, and 17—have never known “drunk Granny.”**

Four years ago, my health took a terrifying turn; doctors told my family I had only 24 to 48 hours to live. My son slept in the hospital parking lot both nights. But God had another plan. At the same time, my great-granddaughter was born. Though my family prepared for my passing, I felt peace knowing my great-granddaughter would grow up hearing about the best version of me — the sober woman my grandchildren know.

Every time I hug my son, grandchildren, great-granddaughter, my family, and friends, I am overcome with gratitude. I thank God for giving me grace and for giving me a son who never let go of my hand through the darkness. Despite the many challenges of life, God's mercy and my son's unwavering love keep me grateful every day.

Early in recovery who were your positive guides helping you stay on track?

My greatest motivation came from the thought of my son, Eric, carrying the legacy of a mother who died an addict. He didn't deserve that. I didn't deserve that. Alongside him, I had two incredible sponsors who became pillars of strength and wisdom.

My first sponsor, Olivia, taught me the importance of living the Twelve Principles of AA in every area of life. She helped me understand while perfection isn't the goal, honesty and willingness are. When I fell short, I could choose to do better—always learning, never defeated.

My second sponsor, Diana, introduced me to my ego in the most humbling way. She would say, **“If it's outside your nose, it's none of your business.”** She never scolded me but guided me gently, challenging my thinking and holding me accountable. Whether I realized it or not, she helped me grow spiritually and emotionally. Both women showed me how to walk in truth, humility, and grace.

What personal quality do you value most?

My genuine smile—it comes from within. My smile reflects my inner peace and love. It's a reminder that no matter how heavy life gets, light still exists. I've learned to trust my instincts and maintain strong boundaries, avoiding places or people that drain my spirit.

Even in painful moments, I can smile through tears because I've learned to see hope in hardship. My faith anchors me. Time and again, God has proven that He shows up when I step aside and allow Him to work. Surrendering control can be hard—I often think I need to manage everything — but in truth, I can only control my behavior. My daddy once told me, “Your smile will bring you joy, even in hard times, and may bring joy to others.” He was right. That lesson has stayed with me, and I'm forever grateful for it.

What practice helps you cultivate a sense of thankfulness?

Each morning begins with quiet time with God—through prayer and meditation. Before I do anything else, I align my spirit with gratitude. I read books that lift my heart and bring spiritual peace. Soft jazz plays throughout my day, its rhythm keeping me grounded in calm awareness. Often, while listening, I whisper “Thank You” to God for the simple blessing of life itself.

Photography also fills me with deep gratitude. Behind the lens, I feel a sacred connection to creation—it's what I call “God's Eyes.”

Every photo becomes a form of prayer, capturing beauty in moments both grand and simple. Through these practices, I remain centered in peace, love, and thanksgiving.

How can we pay gratitude forward year-round?

Kindness—pure, intentional kindness—is the way to carry gratitude forward every day. We must be kind to one another, with our time, words, and our hearts. None of us are too busy or too important to show compassion. Be the listening ear someone needs.

Share your resources—especially with the homeless, who need support not only during extreme weather but every single day. Be kind to those struggling with addiction or mental health challenges. Be kind to our children, our elders, our sick, our animals, and our earth. Kindness is a divine ripple; one act can touch countless lives. And through it all—smile. A smile is one of the simplest and most powerful ways to express gratitude and love.

What was the best thing that happened today that made you grateful?

I reunited with my niece—the first time since she was born in 1979. Hugging her filled me with emotion and overwhelming gratitude. Her daughter, my grandniece, now attends the University of Arizona here in Tucson, playing on the women's baseball team. Seeing her thriving made my heart swell with pride.

Most importantly, I woke up this morning with a sound mind, a healthy body, and a clean, sober spirit. That alone is enough to make me grateful every single day.

Gwen Henderson brings 27 years of extensive experience in the field of Mental & Behavioral Health. She has served in roles as an Executive Director, CEO, Vice-President, Business Development Representative/Director and Consultant for Behavioral Health facilities. In addition, she has provided services as a clinician, case manager, post-intervention planning, recovery advocate and various other roles supporting individuals and families.



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World Kindness Day and the Benefits of Being Grateful

By Amy Tilley, PsyD

On **November 13**, 2025, the world will celebrate World Kindness Day. This annual, global event is a reminder of how important and impactful random acts of kindness can be. They can create a ripple effect (remember skipping stones across a pond as a kid?) throughout your community—and you can touch lives of people that you don’t even know you were connected to.

In a world that often feels chaotic and disconnected, **World Kindness Day** offers an opportunity to reconnect not only with others but with ourselves, contributing meaningfully to mental health support and emotional recovery.

Simple Things You Can Do to Make the World a Kinder Place

- **Become a RAKtivist:** a Random Acts of Kindness Activist! This is a group of people who spread kindness throughout the world, wherever they go! Simple acts of kindness can go a long way to improving someone’s day. Next time you are in line at the grocery store, let someone ahead of you. Hold the door open for someone behind you. Pay it forward: are you ordering your favorite coffee drink? Pay for the person behind you, you never know how that will impact the other person’s day.
Find out more by visiting:
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- **Visit your local “free little library”**—do you have bookshelves full of books, collecting dust, and know you may never read what is sitting there? Find a little library in your neighborhood and donate the books. They are generally on or near a sidewalk and easily accessible. Donate your books and browse for a new title that catches your eye! Check out: <https://littlefreelibrary.org/>
- **Visit a senior care home**—many people in senior care homes do not get a lot of visitors. For some, living there can be a lonely place. Call the local care facility near you and see if they allow open visitation. Take a card game or board game with you and spend some time with a resident or two. An hour of visiting can make their entire day brighter—and you may just make a new friend in the process!

Benefits of Being Kind

It may not be coincidental that World Kindness Day happens in November, the month where we generally focus on gratitude and thanks. Kindness, gratitude, and thanks have many health benefits in common (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual). Engaging in kind behaviors—whether it's offering a compliment, helping a neighbor, or simply listening to someone in need—can trigger the release of dopamine and serotonin, two brain chemicals that contribute to feelings of happiness and calm. Kindness also activates the brain’s reward centers, which can provide a natural “helper’s high.” Kindness promotes the production of oxytocin, a hormone linked to bonding and trust. Oxytocin helps reduce blood pressure and cortisol levels (a stress hormone), creating a physiological state of relaxation. These responses can be especially beneficial for individuals who are navigating mental health challenges or recovering from trauma.



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maintaining relationships with others. It also increases your empathy towards people, helping you be more supportive and understanding in your relationship with others.

When you contribute to society (volunteering, donating to a cause, etc.), it provides you with a sense of purpose, which can lead to overall improvement in your mental health. Being kind causes you to be happier! Who doesn’t want to experience more of that and less symptoms of anxiety and depression?

Kindness as a Tool for Recovery

Whether you or someone you know is recovering from a mental health condition, substance use, or emotional trauma, kindness can serve as both a personal practice and external support system.

For individuals in recovery:

- *Receiving kindness reinforces that they are worthy of love and care.*
- *Giving kindness offers a sense of purpose and agency, which can be empowering.*

Therapists, recovery programs, and 12 step groups increasingly integrate kindness practices into healing strategies. Activities like gratitude journaling, volunteering, or participating in support groups are all forms of kindness-oriented behaviors that support sustained recovery and personal growth.

Being Kind is Contagious

When other people witness random acts of kindness, they are more likely to be generous to someone else. Its benefits on mental health and recovery are real, lasting, and deeply human. Whether you're on your own journey toward wellness or supporting someone else, embracing kindness—on this day and beyond—can be a meaningful step toward a healthier, more compassionate world. Let’s keep the movement going!

Amy Tilley, PsyD, has 20 years in the mental health and addiction recovery field. Her clinical interests include working with young adults and adults diagnosed with co-occurring conditions.

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mother who wondered and wandered through days, months, and years of acute crisis, grueling rehabilitation, and miraculous reclamation.

The Disconnection Epidemic

“And I couldn’t have done it without Amanda and her cocoon…” Her voice brought me back to the room full of heroes and their now more-whole-yet-lighter leader.

I regularly think about her daughter-in-law’s words: “She’s an amazing woman who shows up for all of us, but there was a part of her that wasn’t showing up anymore… since…”

How many of us have a loved one who would say the same thing about us?

We’re showing up, we’re loving on the people around us, and we’re even vowing folks with our superpowers; and yet there’s a part (at least one) that’s just not showing up anymore. If you’re nodding, you’re not alone.

Research identifies disconnection as a public health epidemic in the United States, strongly linked to depression and addiction. What’s causing this? Well, I suppose it depends on who you ask.

There’s data to suggest that social media is distorting our relational and physiological realities, confusing fast communication and hyperconnectivity with intimacy, while its algorithms increase self-consciousness and social division. Those more religious-minded point to the erosion of principles and rituals that bound communities, families, and partners together. I’ve heard holistic health practitioners say it’s partly the result of microbiome and neurotransmitter imbalances due to high consumption of processed foods, compromised water supplies, and even vaccinations.

Me? Well, I’m always of the opinion that it’s never just one factor; but I’m going to leave the sociocultural, spiritual, and physical causes to be debated and (hopefully) addressed by the experts in those domains while I focus on the part of the solution I’m here to share: Story.

What if Story is an Answer?

After twenty-plus years of mindfully engaging, writing, and facilitating storytelling in community, I can confidently proclaim that Story wields salvific power for those disconnected from self and others.

Salvation? Really, Amanda? Isn’t that a bit much? Can speaking and writing our stories protect us from harm, risk, loss, or destruction… even redeem us?

"Research identifies disconnection as a public health epidemic in the United States, strongly linked to depression and addiction. What’s causing this? Well, I suppose it depends on who you ask."

Ask the hospice nurse whose family members recognized that a part of her came back as a direct result of her writing a truer story that included her mother’s heart. Perhaps the wildly successful entrepreneur who experienced an unexpected healing with her father while writing a memoir about overcoming beliefs he’d instilled. Perchance the social worker who made preparing for a custody evaluation more exciting by writing a fictional choose-your-adventure book, not knowing that by the end of the manuscript, she would realize she had written her own story and courageously choose to walk away from her marriage, start a new chapter of life, and maybe more importantly… end an insidious generational narrative for her children.

Maybe even the clinical therapist who wiped her forehead and held her stomach while she wrote the most pivotal scene in her novel and, two weeks later, realized that her character wasn’t the only one processing a family secret that had wreaked havoc on the mental health of the family system.

Decades of research show that writing and sharing personal stories engage mirror neurons and trigger cascades of neurotransmitters, such as dopamine, oxytocin, and serotonin, fostering empathy, intimacy, motivation, learning, and collaboration. Expressive writing, in particular, can help uncover and process suppressed emotions and memories, often hidden during moments of self-protection. Studies also demonstrate that engaging with others’ stories enhances emotional awareness, labeling, and processing.

So, why don’t we just share our stories?

The Most Common “Buts”

Maybe it’s because we’re so busy and can’t imagine taking the time to slow down and… wait… feel all of that again? Yuck! And no one has the desire, time, or capacity to listen to a story like ours, right? Might it be because we regret the roles we’ve played and wonder if the damage can be repaired? Perhaps we don’t want to stress someone with our story, or we are tired of people minimizing or gaslighting our facts and feelings? Maybe we’ve been isolating so long, we don’t know where we would start or whether anyone would remember the sound of our voice?

All of those reasons are valid and can also be overcome by someone determined to reconnect with their true self and others.

How?

Create Safety for Storytelling

Find a safe place with at least one human who has some capacity—time, intention, presence, empathy, etc. A personal therapist or therapy group revolving around a particular trauma or tragedy that became your “since…” (i.e. grief, divorce, betrayal trauma, etc.). Maybe a recovery group if your life has been impacted by addiction. Or if you’re a helping professional or leader who wants to write and publish to save others with your story, look for a therapeutic writing community like the one we’ve cultivated at Saved By Story.

Carl Jung said it best, “We don’t get wounded alone, and we don’t heal alone.” What he didn’t say there, but I know for certain, is the way we do that most effectively—writing and sharing our stories.

About the Author

Amanda Johnson alchemizes twenty-five years of transformative experiences through story literacy, writing, and narrative medicine to fulfill her mission: to equip individuals to use humanity’s most innate tools to transmute the pain of their backstory into a more magically-ever-after for themselves, their loved ones, and those they serve.

Known today as **The Story Oracle**, Amanda partners with organizations and individual helping professionals, creatives, coaches, CEOs, educators, and parents who want to learn how to use Story, Writing, and Community to open portals of (re)connection and belonging, (re)build resilience and trust, and (re)claim and leverage latent superpowers in themselves and their families, workplaces, and communities. With her partners at Saved By Story, she midwives paradigm-changing brands, content, and more whole thought leaders and storytellers into the world.

Learn more by visiting <https://the-story-oracle.com/>



Symptoms of a panic attack

Panic attacks manifest in several ways, and symptoms can vary from person to person. Common symptoms include:

- **Rapid heartbeat or palpitations**
- **Sweating or chills**
- **Trembling or shaking**
- **Shortness of breath or a feeling of choking**
- **Chest pain or discomfort**
- **Nausea or abdominal distress**
- **Dizziness or lightheadedness**
- **Numbness or tingling sensations**
- **Fear of losing control or “going crazy”**
- **Fear of dying**

These symptoms can occur suddenly and without warning, leaving the person feeling overwhelmed and frightened.

Understanding Anxiety Attacks

Anxiety attacks, unlike panic attacks, are often a response to a perceived stressor or threat. They develop more gradually and are typically less intense than panic attacks. Anxiety attacks are tied to worrying thoughts about a specific event or situation.

What is an anxiety attack?

An anxiety attack is marked by feelings of worry, fear or apprehension. These feelings can build over time and are often triggered by stressors such as work pressure, relationship problems or health concerns. While anxiety attacks can be distressing, they are a normal response to stress and are not as intense as panic attacks.

Symptoms of an anxiety attack

The symptoms of an anxiety attack can vary, but common signs include:

- **Restlessness or feeling on edge**
- **Difficulty concentrating**
- **Muscle tension**
- **Fatigue**
- **Irritability**
- **Sleep disturbances**
- **Increased heart rate**
- **Sweating**
- **Dizziness**

Anxiety attacks can last for extended periods, and symptoms may persist until the stressor is resolved or managed.

Panic Attack vs Anxiety Attack: Key Differences

While panic attacks and anxiety attacks have overlapping symptoms, key differences set them apart:

1. **Onset and Duration:** Panic attacks come on abruptly and peak within minutes, whereas anxiety attacks develop gradually and can last much longer.
2. **Intensity:** Panic attacks are typically more intense and can include severe physical symptoms. Anxiety attacks may be less intense but can be prolonged.
3. **Triggers:** Panic attacks often occur without a specific trigger, while anxiety attacks are generally linked to specific stressors or situations.
4. **Symptoms:** While both can include physical symptoms like increased heart rate, panic attacks often have more severe symptoms such as chest pain and a fear of dying.

Managing Panic and Anxiety Attacks

Understanding how to manage panic and anxiety attacks can provide relief and help reduce their frequency and intensity. Here are some strategies to consider:

How to calm panic attack<s

1. **Breathing Exercises:** Focus on slow, deep breaths to help calm your nervous system. Inhale deeply through your nose, hold for a few seconds and exhale slowly through your mouth.
2. **Grounding Techniques:** Engage your senses to bring yourself back to the present moment. This can include focusing on the feel of an object in your hand, the sound of ambient noise or the taste of a mint.
3. **Reassurance:** Remind yourself that panic attacks are temporary and not life-threatening. This can help reduce the fear of losing control.
4. **Physical Activity:** Light exercise, such as walking, can help release built-up tension and reduce stress hormones.

How to calm anxiety attack<s

1. **Identify Triggers:** Recognize the situations or thoughts that lead to anxiety attacks and work on strategies to manage them.



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"If you or someone you know frequently experiences panic or anxiety attacks that interfere with daily life, it may be time to seek professional help."

2. **Mindfulness Meditation:** Practicing mindfulness can help you become more aware of your thoughts and reduce anxiety over time.
3. **Progressive Muscle Relaxation:** Tense and then relax each muscle group in your body to help relieve physical tension.
4. **Seek Professional Help:** If anxiety attacks are frequent and disruptive, consider speaking with a mental health professional for guidance and support.

When to Seek Help

If you or someone you know frequently experiences panic or anxiety attacks that interfere with daily life, it may be time to seek professional help. Mental health professionals can offer therapies such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), which has proven effective in managing anxiety and panic disorders.

Help for Anxiety in Arizona

Understanding the differences between panic and anxiety attacks is crucial for effective management. While they share some common symptoms, recognizing their distinctions can guide you in choosing the right strategies to cope and seek appropriate help when needed. Remember, reaching out for support from mental health professionals can provide valuable tools and resources to navigate these challenging experiences. (Source: valleyhospital-phoenix.com/blog/panic-attacks-vs-anxiety-attacks- Reprinted with permission)

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Mesa Partners with The Be Kind People Project on Innovative Youth-Focused Campaign Against Opioid and Drug Use

The City of Mesa is announcing an innovative partnership with the nonprofit **The Be Kind People Project®** to create educational content for students, educators and parents in Mesa Public Schools and other local institutions. The initiative, **Be Aware. Be Strong. Be Healthy™** Mesa is supported by funds from Mesa’s opioid settlement allocation and will focus on building resiliency in children—equipping them to grow into thriving teens and adults who are better prepared to resist the pressures of drug and opioid use.

“This is a one-of-a-kind effort that invests in prevention by reaching children where they are,” said Mesa Mayor Mark Freeman. “By building confidence and resiliency early, we are strengthening the foundation for a healthier and stronger Mesa for generations to come.”

Mesa has received \$4.7 million to date from national opioid settlements, with an expected total of up to \$22 million over 18 years. Earlier this year, Mesa launched a \$1 million community grant program, inviting nonprofits to apply for funding to support services such as prevention, early intervention and recovery. More than 25 agencies applied, and \$1 million was distributed to seven organizations, including Jacob’s Hope, which provides care for newborns experiencing opioid withdrawal.

Mesa’s initial use of settlement funds is focused on prevention, education and youth support. Allocations include:

- \$1 million for public safety initiatives, such as new tools for Mesa Police to manage opioid-related incidents
- \$1.2 million for community education and outreach, including \$513,000 for The Be Kind People Project partnership and other programs, such as community navigators
- \$1.1 million to fund nonprofit community grants

Additionally, the education campaign, based on Council’s direction, was created to complement the community grants program, underscoring Mesa’s commitment to education and prevention among children and youth.

“The opioid epidemic continues to devastate families and communities throughout Arizona,” said Marcia Meyer, Founder and CEO of The Be



The BE KIND Crew with Councilmember Julie Spilsbury and Mayor Mark Freeman Submitted photo

Kind People Project. “Addressing it requires bold partnerships and innovative solutions. That’s why this collaboration is so powerful — together, we’re not just talking about prevention, we’re transforming it. By reaching children and families early with programs that build confidence, kindness and resilience, we’re equipping Mesa’s students to make safe, healthy choices and lead positive lives — in school and far beyond.”

Since 2018, Mesa Fire and Medical has responded to more than 960 suspected opioid overdose incidents involving youth and young adults. According to the 2024 Arizona Youth Survey, more than half of local teens reported not recalling any public messaging about fentanyl dangers, while one in three had never discussed opioid risks with a parent or guardian.

“The Council has been clear: the most powerful impact Mesa can make with these funds is to invest in our children,” said Mesa Deputy City Manager Candace Cannistraro. “We know that prevention education plays a vital role in deterring early substance abuse. By working directly with schools, this program helps equip young people with the tools they need to make positive choices.”

The Be Kind People Project will work alongside Mesa Public Schools and other educational partners to deliver evidence-based, age-appropriate content. Materials will emphasize healthy habits, confidence and resilience—protective factors shown to reduce the likelihood of future substance use.

“We are deeply grateful to the City of Mesa for its continued support in helping our schools educate students about the serious dangers of opioid misuse,” said Renee Parker, Director of Community Partnerships for Mesa Public Schools. “Through our partnership and the talent of The Be Kind People Project, we will be able to provide engaging public service announcements that resonate with students and encourage safe, informed choices.”

Mesa is the second-largest recipient of opioid settlement funds in Maricopa County. By strategically allocating resources, the City is ensuring these dollars not only address today’s challenges but also create sustainable change.



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Rooted in Gratitude

Grounding Through Mindfulness and Movement This November

By: Alexandra Daffner



The month of November is an opportunity to embody gratitude not only as a feeling, but as a practice — one we cultivate through yoga, mindfulness, and connection with others in recovery.

Gratitude is more than listing what we're thankful for; it's a state of being that expands our awareness of the present moment. When we move with intention, through yoga poses and our breathing, we reconnect to the abundance already within and around us. Each inhale becomes a reminder that we are supported and each exhale,

a soft release of what no longer serves us.

Gratitude is also a grounding tool. For those healing from addiction, trauma, or loss, finding safety in the body can take time. Gratitude offers a gentle pathway back — not by forcing positivity, but by noticing the simple blessings that exist even in times of hardship. Something as simple as getting outside and appreciating the cooler desert weather, being connected to the rhythm of your breath, or maybe enjoying a good meal with a friend— these are all moments worthy of thanks.

This November, our Spiritually Fit community is focusing on rooted gratitude. On a yoga mat when we balance, we practice trust; when we surrender in child's pose, we practice humility; when we rise again, we embody resilience. Gratitude, like yoga, is a daily discipline — one that reshapes our nervous system, our relationships, and our sense of peace.

Here are three ways to embody gratitude this month:

1. Start your mornings with mindful acknowledgment. Before checking your phone or diving into the day, place a hand over your heart and name three things you're thankful for — even if one of them is simply, I'm still here breathing.

2. Move slowly and intentionally. Dedicate your day, or your yoga practice to someone or something you're grateful for. Imagine sending energy of appreciation out into the world toward that someone or something..

3. Reflect and release. Let yourself release old patterns or expectations. Journal about what you're ready to let go of before the year ends, and express gratitude for the lessons those experiences brought.

November reminds us that gratitude is not seasonal — it's a spiritual fitness practice. When we ground ourselves in presence and approach each day with a thankful heart, we strengthen our connection to others, to our purpose, and to something greater than ourselves.

So as you gather this Thanksgiving — with friends, family, or even in solitude — take a long, conscious breath. Feel your feet rooted to the earth. Offer thanks for this exact moment, for this body, for this breath. Gratitude isn't what we say; it's how we live.

Spending a lot of time in solitude this holiday season? Come be a part of our Spiritually Fit community and join us on a yoga mat!

For class schedules and info visit <https://spirituallyfitco-op.com>



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Embarrassment Isn't Fatal, But Silence Can Be

By Dr. Marlo Archer

If you're like me, you occasionally find yourself jolted out of the relaxation of a leisurely stroll by tripping over something you didn't see. My immediate response is to look back to discover the culprit, and, perhaps, curse whoever left it there to trip me up in my inattentive state. Finding a large crack in the sidewalk, a gnarly tree root breaking the surface of the path, or a child's toy car can offer a face-saving explanation for the stutter-step and restore your dignity among any audience you might have had for your deranged ballet.

Will I ever live this down?

Once back firmly on your feet, assessments are made. Is anything broken? Am I bleeding? Did I rip my clothes? Where did my hat fly off to? Who saw that? Is anyone laughing? Will I ever live this down? How did this happen? Whose fault is this? How did I miss that? Why don't they have this part blocked off? How will I prevent the next person from tripping over this same thing?

It's obviously a huge relief to find that all your limbs bend properly, you haven't just torn the \$85 hiking pants you JUST bought, and that your keys, although they did fall out of your pack, are back in your possession, assuring convenient transportation away from this debacle. However, it is also generally a huge relief to look around and realize that really, no one saw this happen, especially if no obvious cause for the fall is determined, other than one's own clumsiness or the slight decline in balance you're experiencing from no longer being 15 years old. Or 20. Or 50.

Once back on the path, headed safely back from the adventure, if there's no evidence of the event, you get to decide whether or not you'll share the story with anyone. I'm guessing many people simply never say a word of it to



iStock Credit: AndreyPopov

anyone, letting the event pass without any fanfare. Of course, there's nothing wrong with keeping such a thing to oneself, but not sharing potentially embarrassing stories could eventually be quite dangerous, possibly even fatal.

One philosophical thought experiment asks, "If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?" I offer the following twist - If you make a mistake and no one is around to see it, does it make an impact?

What if this isn't the first time you tripped over nothing while hiking alone? What if it happens quite regularly? Keeping the information to yourself could prevent you from alerting a physician to the start of some rather treatable condition you're developing. What if it wasn't tripping, but getting mildly disoriented on your walk? If you're walking your neighborhood and temporarily forget which way to turn to go back home, that can be embarrassing, too.

People often let that happen a time or two or ten without letting anyone know. What if it's not a walk, but rather, a drive? Oh sure, everyone gets turned around from time to time, but what if that's happening more and more? Do you tell anyone, or just keep driving, hoping you always meander your way safely to your destination. What about falling asleep while watching TV? That seems normal, right? Not embarrassing? Why does everyone deny it's happening when confronted? Now put that sleepy person behind the wheel, alone, slightly disoriented, and raise the speed limit to 75. *Now the failure to tell anyone could be fatal to you or others.*

Apply this to the wide variety of less-than-intelligent choices we can make over the course of a day or a lifetime. To keep an embarrassing mistake to oneself could put a variety of people in physical or emotional danger. Folks who aren't disclosing past mistakes on job applications are sometimes being found out later and fired, despite performing the job adequately.

I'm aware of lots of people whose secret mistakes are now being uncovered by genetic tests like *23 & Me*, with devastating emotional consequences for individuals and families. There's often a line between "operable" and "inoperable" when it comes to tumor development. No one ever died of embarrassment, but people have surely died of not sharing embarrassing information in a timely manner.

If you're holding something embarrassing, please find someone to tell before the embarrassing condition moves across the line from merely mortifying to actually mortal.

Dr. Marlo Archer is a fellow of the American Society of Group Psychotherapy & Psychodrama and a Certified Supervisor with the International Deliberate Practice Society, actively engaged in training the next generation of experiential healers.





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Choose Gratitude

By Dina Evan

Earlier this year, we lost our friend, colleague, and monthly columnist, Dina Evan. Though she has transitioned to greater places, her spirit and her words remain with us. Two powerful questions she always asked: "Are you doing what you came here to do?", and "What is this here to teach me?"
This month, I want to honor her legacy, her thoughtful words, and share her enduring wisdom on gratitude once again. Thank you, Dina. — Barbara

This time of year we are reminded to be enormously grateful. However, we may be looking like deer in headlights, wondering what is coming next. Is it more financial insecurity, fewer jobs, more violence, more illness, shootings, crime, fraud or lies? We have a potpourri of what feels like worries and looming catastrophes to choose from. Is there any surprise we are worried, exhausted and on sensory overload?

Many feel as if our families are missing in action because they are overwhelmed and can't take on another single thing. This adds to their feelings of overload and guilt for not showing up, avoiding contact and not being able clear what is on their plate. **What are we to do?** In many of my columns you have read my favorite most powerful question... **"What is this here to teach me?"**

No healing can begin without the bravery to ask that question. The answer is not so difficult We have to get real and honest with ourselves. We have to be thankful we have a voice with which to speak up, and a brain with which to select candidates who are truthful and unwilling to compromise our human inalienable rights. We need to get thankful we have values and compassion, consciousness and truth to speak up, stand up and do something, even if it is something small — because a hundred small somethings create something big. We can talk about our values and beliefs and share awareness with those who seek to know and learn.

Many people have difficulty feeling metaphysical beliefs have any value. But did you know science has proven how powerful they are and how powerfully they work?

Every time you have a negative thought or belief come up in your mind if you repeat aloud or silently any one of these three words, three times, it tells your mind/brain not to retain that thought or feeling and it stops empowering it with energy.



iStock Credit: Denis Novikov

The words are **delete/delete**, or **erase/erase**, or **cancel/cancel**. **Choose any one of these words and start using it.**

You will discover that negative thought arises less — if at all. In doing so you stop adding to the fear out there and inside of your own brain.

Instead, start adding energy to what you want with statements like:

- Abundance and prosperity flow to me freely
- My body is experiencing only health and wellness
- Only loving energy can have any effect on me in any way
- Only peace thrives on this planet
- My family is safe and connected in compassion

Every fear you neutralize, and with every good feeling you empower, you are healing yourself, those around you and the planet. Right now we are stuck in fear, but the thing we can be most grateful for this Thanksgiving is that we don't have to be. We can take our power back and begin creating what we want without giving the responsibility to someone else, regardless of who they are, or what position they hold.

What might happen if we decided to be so grateful that for us, ethnicity, gender, color, sexual choices, or any difference simply does not matter at all and we will show love and acceptance to everyone. No one, elected or not, could control us regardless of who they are. We would be more energized and we could stop being afraid to feel. We could walk barefoot in our grass and be grateful for the lawn. We can be grateful that by every smile and hand up, every value you share that you are **walking and living on purpose** and **doing what you came here to do**. That is a lot to be grateful for!

Pregnant and Struggling with Substance Use?



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Just Keep Going

By Alan Cohen



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One of the questions I hear most often in coaching and seminars goes something like this: “The life I have been living does not stimulate me any more. I sense that I have outgrown my relationships, or job, or lifestyle. I feel bored, and stuck. I know there must be more for me, but I don’t know how to reach or manifest it. I am in a kind of void, lost in space.”

*"There is a right place for each of us.
To claim it, we must live authentically,
in harmony with our values and intentions."*

IMAGINE that you are at a party in one room of a large house. You have been in this room for a while, and the people and conversations that once stimulated now feel stale. You step outside the room into the hallway, where you hear voices from another room down the hall. Unlike the room you just left, these conversations are stimulating, and you feel drawn to them. But the room is a distance away and it will take you some time to get there. What can you do in this kind of limbo position?

- **Tap into faith**
Trust that your discomfort is temporary; it has, in fact, motivated you to reach for more. The same universe that gave you the desire to upgrade, and the hint of new possibilities, will give you the ways and means to achieve what you want. Let divine order and divine timing guide you.
- **Focus on the attributes of the room you are headed toward, and live them**
Embody the traits that match what you wish to draw unto you. When you are aligned with your goal in word, feeling, and action, the Law of Attraction will accelerate you joining with everyone and everything that belongs to you by right of your consciousness.
- **Just keep going**
Don’t stop or turn back because the old and familiar seems safer. Take baby steps if they feel easier. When you gain momentum through conscious, chosen movement, you will hasten your journey.

Perhaps you have some old relationships you have outgrown, and you feel guilty about not cultivating them anymore. Remember that there is no private good. If something is truly good for you, it will be truly good for others. Maybe your old acquaintances will find people who match their interests more than you do. The universe functions in perfect balance, joining people who belong together.

One hot summer day Dee and I went to a restaurant where we were seated beneath an air conditioning duct. After a while, we felt pretty cold. We wanted to ask the waiter to reseal us, but we had already been served our appetizer and we felt guilty to bug him. But we asked anyway, and the waiter kindly complied. A few minutes later an elderly couple was seated at the table we vacated. As soon as they sat down, the man breathed a deep sigh of relief and said, “air conditioning—just what I needed.”

There is a right place for each of us. To claim it, we must live authentically, in harmony with our values and intentions. There is a new room down that hall that we would all like to enter. And so we will.



Alan Cohen, M.A., is the author of 30 popular inspirational books, including the bestselling A Course in Miracles Made Easy and the award-winning A Deep Breath of Life. He serves as Founder and Director of the Foundation for Holistic Life Coaching. Website: www.AlanCohen.com

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"My addiction had grown into something I could no longer control. Then I found Teen Challenge. Now I have a new life, free from drugs!" TCAZ.ORG

The faith-based solution to the drug epidemic.



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The Great American Smokeout 2025 is an annual event that encourages individuals across the United States to quit smoking and start a healthier, smoke-free life. Organized by the American Cancer Society, this event provides support, resources, and motivation to help people overcome the addiction to tobacco and reduce the harmful health effects associated with smoking.

What is The Great American Smokeout?

The Great American Smokeout is a nationwide campaign aimed at raising awareness about the dangers of smoking and inspiring smokers to quit. It emphasizes the benefits of quitting, such as improved health, increased life expectancy, and a reduced risk of cancer and other diseases.

When is The Great American Smokeout 2025?

The Great American Smokeout is observed on the third and will take place on November 20th, providing a platform for individuals, communities, and organizations to come together in the fight against tobacco addiction.

How to Participate in The Great American Smokeout

Participating in The Great American Smokeout involves taking steps to quit smoking and supporting others in their efforts to quit. Here’s how you can get involved:

- **Quit Smoking:** If you smoke, use The Great American Smokeout as an opportunity to quit. Seek support from friends, family, or quit-smoking programs.
- **Support Quitters:** Encourage and support friends or family members who want to quit smoking. Offer assistance, understanding, and encouragement.
- **Spread Awareness:** Share information about the harmful effects of smoking and the benefits of quitting on social media and within your community.
- **Organize Events:** Communities, workplaces, and schools can organize events, workshops, or educational sessions to raise awareness about smoking cessation.
- **Access Resources:** Utilize resources provided by the American Cancer Society, such as quit-smoking guides and helplines.
- **Share Success Stories:** Celebrate the success stories of individuals who have quit smoking and are enjoying a smoke-free life.

History of The Great American Smokeout

The Great American Smokeout was first held in 1977 in California and later became a nationwide event. It was initiated as a way to encourage smokers to quit for at least one day and to raise awareness about the harmful effects of smoking on health. Since then, The Great American Smokeout has become a powerful platform for promoting smoking cessation and has contributed to reducing smoking rates in the United States.

Relevant Hashtags

When sharing your support for The Great American Smokeout 2025 and participating in discussions about quitting smoking on social media, consider using these relevant hashtags:

#GreatAmericanSmokeout #QuitSmoking
#SmokeFreeLife #TobaccoFree #HealthyLiving
#GASO2025 #TobaccoCessation

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Captain Marvel and Your Word of Power

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” —John 1:1

“We must be careful with our words; we’re like superheroes and words are like our superpowers.”
—Dianna Hardy, author of *Eye of the Storm* series of fantasy books

If you think comic books and movies about superheroes have nothing whatsoever to do with your spiritual development, think again. And please read on.

It's no secret that the life of the comic book hero, the mere boy Billy Batson, was changed by the Word. The orphan child was initiated with a secret word of power and transformed into the extraordinarily powerful Captain Marvel. His powerful word inspires Christians who believe in the Word and for anyone who ever thought or chanted mantras from the Vedic tradition of India.

Little Billy was selling newspapers on Manhattan street corners, when a stranger invited him to follow him. Perhaps if he had parents he would have known better than to take candy from strangers, let alone follow them into lonely subterranean passages. In the underground of New York’s subway system, he met an old wise man who initiated him into the secrets of ancient wisdom. His unusual name was SHAZAM, unusual only because it was truly an acronym for six great gods and heroes: Solomon, Hercules, Atlas, Zeus, Achilles, and Mars.

The wise man, if ever there was an archetype for such a one, taught Billy how the uttering of the mantra SHAZAM will transform him from a boy into the strongest man on earth.
When he fights crime, he invokes SHAZAM and gains the ability to

fly, along with many other superhuman remarkable talents that have been chronicles in the Vedantic tradition by the sage Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras.

The superhero Captain Marvel debuted in Whiz Comics #2 (February 1940) created by artist C.C. Beck and writer Bill Parker. His popularity was so great it eclipsed even that of Superman. The next year saw Republic Pictures’ serial Adventures of Captain Marvel. In 1953, Fawcett stopped publishing the hero’s stories over copyright infringement by DC Comics, which claimed they were copying Superman. It took 19 years, but Fawcett licensed rights to DC which turned the character into SHAZAM! He found his way into other media like TV and motion pictures.

Captain Marvel isn’t alone among superheroes who have used the power of words to awaken great abilities. Martian Manhunter, the hero from the planet Mars, intones cei-u. The Red Dragon speaks the Chinese po she lo, enabling him to gain powers and abilities far beyond those of mortal men.



iStock Credit: IvelinRadkov

Magic words are widespread today, too. Ask your yoga teacher how to chant OM. If you’re drawn to the Dalai Lama, you might use the Tibetan Buddhist chant Om Mani Padme Hum. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi’s Transcendental Meditation uses a mantra silently. TMer’s say that what they do isn’t chanting, but enchanting. As the founder of Higher Self Healing Meditation, I use a basket of mantras to work from, too, to help people go from the noise of the world to the silence of their Self.

To the Batcave

While I’m not encouraging you to venture into New York’s subways. The orphan is a metaphor for one disconnected from his or her source; namely parental. To the extent that Enlightenment hasn’t yet dawned in your own life suggests you’re orphaned from the highest in you, disconnected from your spiritual source.

Meditation is a marvelous way to meet your Captain Marvel. So commit to finding your own SHAZAM mantra to help you transform from your individual self to the universal Self within you. Once you’ve learned it, practice it. For to ever so slightly tweak the proverb: “Practice makes perfection.”



MAKE REGULAR CONVERSATIONS PART OF THE ROUTINE.

Know the risks of underage drinking and be prepared to talk about them.

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www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov

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PEP20-03-01-026



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Resources & Support:

: Suicide Crisis
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Recovery Partners — Contributors

ACT Counseling & Education	602-569-4328	actcounseling.com
AZ Women’s Recovery Center (AWRC)	602-264-6214	azwomensrecoverycenter.org
Aurora Behavioral Health	877-870-7012	auroraarizona.com
Axiom Care	602-782-9500	axiomcareofaz.com
Birches Health	833-483-3838	bircheshealth.com
CBI, Inc.	877-931-9142	communitybridgesinc.org
Copper Springs	480-418-4367	coppersprings.com
The Crossroads	602-263-5242	thecrossroadsinc.org
DaVinci Consulting Services	480-606-8602	davinciconsultingservices.com
Denova	602-230-7373	denova.com
Desert Star Addiction Recovery Center	520-638-6000	desertstarARC.com
Dr. Marlo Archer	480-705-5007	DrMarlo.com
Gifts Anon	480-483-6006	
Hushabye Nursery	480-628-7500	hushabyenursery.org
The Meadows Behavioral Health	800-632-3697	meadowsBH.com
Mens Teen Challenge	520-792-1790	tcaz.org
Mercy Care 800-631-1314	602-222-9444	mercycaarez.org
NotMYKid	602-652-0163	notmykid.org
Psychological Counseling Services (PCS)	480-947-5739	pcsintensive.com
Rachel Rubenstein	480-994-9773	RubensteinCounseling.Services
Revive Recovery Center	480-405-5396	reviverecoverycenters.com
Scottsdale Providence	480-210-1734	scottsdaleprovidence.com
Scottsdale Recovery Center	888-663-7847	scottsdalerecovery.com
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Sierra Tucson	800-842-4487	sierratucson.com
Spiritually Fit- Co-op	602-809-0854	spirituallyfitco-op.com
Brough Stewart, MC, LPC, NCC	602-316-3197	
Steps to Recovery/Konnect	928-649-0077 Opt. 1	konnnectwellness.org
Valley Hospital	602-952-3939	valleyhospital-phoenix.com
Via Linda Behavioral Hospital	480-476-7210	vialindabehavioral.com
Virtue Recovery Center	866-338-6977	virtuerecoverysuncitywest.com
Teen Challenge AZ	602-708-9475	tcaz.org

Additional Resources

AZ. Dept. of Health	602-364-2086
Arizona Opioid Assistance Helpline	888-688-4222
Ericks House	855-894-5658
Desert Drug Dog	602-908-2042
Hunkapi Programs	480-393-0870
Kid in the Corner	kidinthecorner.org
EMPACT/La Frontera	800-273-8255
I Am Teen Strong	480-396-2409
Mental Health Center of America	602-704-2345
PAL Parents of Addicted Loved Ones	palgroup.org
Recovery Café	480-530-7090
TERROS Health	602-685-6000

TUCSON	
ACA	aca-arizona.org
AA	520-624-4183
Al-Anon Info Service	520-323-2229
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
Narcotics Anonymous	520-881-8381
Nicotine Anonymous	520-299-7057
Overeaters Anonymous	520-733-0880
Recovery in Motion	520-975-2141
Sex Addicts Anonymous	520-745-0775
Sierra Tucson	800-842-4487
Suicide Prevention	520-323-9372
Teen Challenge	888-352-4940
The Mark Youth and Family Care	520-326-6182
Workaholics Anonymous	520-403-3559

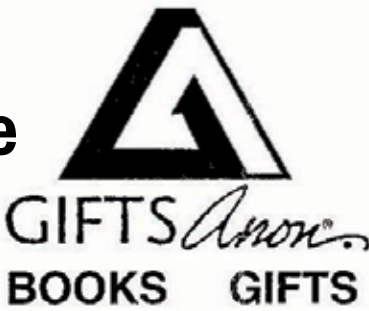
In Tucson —Refuge Recovery

Wednesday, 6:00-7:00 pm, Red Tree Meditation Center, 1234 E 16th St. Tucson.
Saturday, 5:00- 6:30 pm,*Palo Verde room* Saint Philip's in the Hills Episcopal Church. 4440 N Campbell Ave., Tucson

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
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
Crisis Help Line – For Any Kind of Crisis	800-233-4357
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
Fentanyl Anonymous	520-338-9307
Food Addicts food addicts.org	435-764-1461
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
Teen Life Line	800-248-8336

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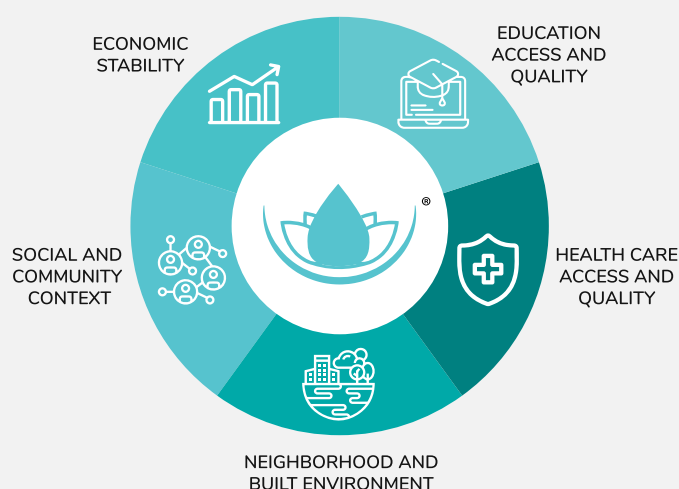
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