

## Axiom Care Expands Across Arizona, Building a Continuum of Care for Long-Term Recovery

By Natalie Moreno

As Arizona continues to confront rising rates of substance use disorders, co-occurring mental health conditions and housing instability, 2025 marked a transformative year for Axiom Care. The company has emerged as one of the state’s largest providers of substance use treatment, recovery housing and behavioral health services offering access to safe, compassionate, specialized care for the region’s most vulnerable communities.

In 2025, Axiom Care opened facilities, expanded partnerships, and launched targeted programs to close longstanding gaps in Arizona’s recovery landscape.

What began as a mission to provide accessible, compassionate behavioral health services to underserved Arizonans has grown into a system of care with a deepened commitment to meet people where they are; geographically, culturally, and clinically.

### A Landmark Partnership with the Navajo Department of Health

One of the year’s most significant milestones was the September opening of YHC, the first Navajo Nation owned residential treatment center outside of the Navajo Nation. YHC is operated by Axiom Care in partnership with the Navajo Department of Health (NDOH) and Navajo Division of Behavioral and Mental Health Services (DMHS).

YHC is a strategic initiative under the guiding principle of “Navajo Healing Navajo” to confront widespread sober living home fraud and provide a safe and supportive environment rooted in modern therapeutic practices and Diné traditional teachings. Developed in close collaboration with NDOH and DBMHS leaders, the center, staffed by Navajo professionals, blends evidence-based clinical treatment with culturally grounded practices, ensuring care that respects identity, tradition, and community values.



**YHC**

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*"YHC represents a critical step toward closing the gap in behavioral health and substance use treatment for Navajo members."*

A defining aspect of YHC’s model is its commitment to keeping families together throughout the recovery journey. Unlike many treatment programs that require parents to separate from their children or partners to seek care individually, YHC provides transportation and accepts couples and parents with dependent children, removing what are often barriers to care.

AXIOM continued page 7

## Not Just a Hobby: Understanding the Differences Between Art Therapy and Therapeutic Art

By Kirsten Erby, ATR-BC, LPC

There is a growing focus on wellness activities using creativity as self-care. Making artwork can increase feelings of satisfaction through the reduction of stress and increased self-expression. It can create a flow state similar to that found during meditation and mindfulness activities. While the increase in art as a healing tool can benefit all who use it, the growing popularity of wellness art has created confusion by blurring the lines between creative activity and mental health treatment.

Coloring books marketed as “Art Therapy Coloring” have added to these misunderstandings. The distinction between Clinical Art Therapy and wellness-based Therapeutic Art making is important. While both utilize the creative process to improve well-being, they differ fundamentally in their professional requirements, goals, and the nature of the practitioner-client relationship.



iStock Credit: EoNaYa

Therapeutic art, or art as therapy, includes any intentional creative activity that supports stress relief and a positive mental state. It is *not* psychotherapy and does *not* require a licensed therapist. It can be done independently or facilitated in a group session by artists, life coaches or educators.

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# Publisher's Note

By Barbara Nicholson-Brown

## From Isolation to Community

Reflecting on my years in recovery, I'm amazed how open we have become talking about our struggles and our triumphs. We are no longer wrapped in the dark shame and despair of our addictions. We are sober, recovering people — and I am very proud to say that out loud.

### The Weight of the Secret

From my first drink to my last, I carried the weight of shame, always fearing someone would discover what I thought was a secret. I wasn't kidding anyone; those who knew me could tell in an instant I was drunk.

When confronted by friends and family who cared about my well being, oh how I tried to defend myself. Even when I felt horrible —when hangovers made every noise outside my window sound like a thousand jackhammers in my head—I denied there was a problem. Alcoholism held me captive, and I was fueled by the fear of revealing who I truly was. On rare occasions I agreed with family or friends about my behavior, yet every sentence was anchored by the word "but." "I wasn't planning on getting so drunk, **but...**", "I didn't mean to hurt you, **but...**" the list can go on.

### The Turning Point

I'm not sure if I hit bottom or if my bottom hit me, it doesn't matter. God's timing is always impeccable. What matters is I am grateful to be living and breathing a sober life today.

Early on, I was told to "fasten my seat belt" for a wild ride. I was confused on how this new way of living worked, but those in long-term sobriety offered me a roadmap, held out their hand and said, come on and trudge the road with us! They said if I truly wanted what they had, I needed to become:

- Teachable
- Humble
- Accountable
- Willing

### A Beautiful Awareness

There is always something new to discover in recovery. The awareness we gain never ends if we pay close attention. This journey isn't about getting from Point A to Point B; the road will seem bumpy, overwhelming, and frightening at times, especially in the beginning. But stay — it's worth it!

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Today, the "I know, but..." has been replaced with the ability to listen, and ask, what can I learn from this? In recovery we no longer hide out in isolation; we are here for one another. And as one of the many "works in progress", I'm grateful my Higher Power saw a reason to keep me around.

I have my health, my friends, my family, and my colleagues. They mean the world to me. Thank you all for trudging this amazing road with me.

Next month, *Together AZ* hits a milestone 35th anniversary. We'll be celebrating with a special look at our founder, Bill Brown, whose vision for creating this paper has helped countless individuals discover the life-changing gift of recovery.



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In gratitude and memory of  
**William B. Brown, Jr.**

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Published Monthly Since 1991

Website: WISDIX Graphic images/photos/ iStock.com

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# Spotlight on

*A conversation with*  
**Tony Renello, MBA, MS, LLAC**

Starting a detox journey is a brave and hopeful step toward a life free from alcohol or drugs. Because this is often the very first phase of recovery, it's natural to have questions. We asked Tony Renello of Virtue Recovery to share some practical advice on what to expect and how to can prepare for this new beginning.

- ***It's normal to feel anxious when starting detox. What are the most common fears people have at the beginning?***

As a counselor, one of the first things I hear is, "I'm scared." People worry about how bad withdrawal will be, whether they'll be judged, or if they'll fail before they even begin. Many are also afraid of losing the one thing that's helped them cope, even when it's hurting them. These fears are completely normal. At Virtue Detox, we remind people that fear doesn't mean weakness — it means you're human, and you're stepping into change.

- ***Detox isn't a "one-size-fits-all" process. How does a person's overall health, the specific substance used, and history of use change the recovery timeline?***

No two people walk into detox with the same body or the same story. Someone's physical health, mental health, what they've been using, and how long they've been using all matter. That's why detox can look very different from one person to the next. At Virtue Detox, we take the time to get to know the whole person, not just the substance, so care can move at a pace that's safe and realistic.

- ***Withdrawal is often described as the body "rebooting" after being suppressed by chemicals. What are the most common physical and emotional symptoms people should expect?***

Withdrawal affects both the body and the mind. Physically, people may feel shaky, nauseous, sore, tired, or unable to sleep well. Anxiety, irritability, sadness, or feeling emotional and on edge are very common. I always tell clients: this doesn't mean something is wrong — it means your system is waking back up. With the right support, these symptoms can be managed and do pass.

- ***Why is medical supervision so important? What are the actual risks of trying to detox alone at home?***

I've worked with many people who tried to detox on their own and ended up scared, sick, or back using just to stop the symptoms. Some withdrawals can be dangerous and even life-threatening without medical care. Medical supervision isn't about control — it's about safety and support. At Virtue Detox, people are monitored, listened to, and cared for so they don't have to white-knuckle this process alone.

- ***What is happening inside the body's systems as it clears out toxins and starts to heal?***

During detox, the body is working hard to find balance again. The brain is relearning how to regulate mood and sleep, the nervous system is calming, and organs begin repairing themselves. It's not instant, and it's not always comfortable, but it is real healing. I often remind people that discomfort during detox is temporary — the benefits of recovery last much longer.

# DETOX



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- ***What are your top tips for staying sober to avoid relapse after detox as one enters early recovery?***

The biggest mistake I see is treating detox as the finish line. Detox is the doorway, not the destination. Staying connected to treatment, building support, learning new coping skills, and being honest about struggles — all matter. Most importantly, be kind to yourself — recovery isn't about perfection. At Virtue Detox, we focus on the whole person and help people leave detox with a plan, support, and hope for what comes next.

Visit <https://www.virtuerecoverycenter.com/sun-city-west-arizona/>

Tony obtained a master's degree in psychology focusing on clinical and counseling psychology, holding a Licensed Independent Substance Use Counselor license through AZBBHE. Tony also holds an MBA in Healthcare Management. He has held many positions in this field, ranging from Program Manager to Chief Clinical & Compliance Officer.



He uses evidence-based practices to bring new innovative treatment methods to any agency he is a part of to create a successful, fulfilling program. Tony has also been the vice president of the Arizona Board for Certification of Addiction Counselors since 2019.

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# Who Needs Sleep?

## Why Sleep Hygiene is Important to Your Health

By Amy Tilley, PsyD

Spring is in the air—and winter is headed out the door. In Arizona, we don't experience much of a true winter (you can't shovel sunshine, after all!). With the month of March comes the return of daylight savings time for much of the country. While Arizona does not participate in this twice a year ritual, it does affect our overall sleep patterns and can have an impact on our physical, mental, and emotional health.

For many people, turning the clock ahead one hour in the springtime (and then turning the clock back one hour in November) really messes with their circadian rhythms. I lived in Arizona for many years and am now back in the Midwest, where we take part in daylight savings time. The "magic" of losing an hour of sleep overnight pays a price for many on our bodies and minds. The sun rises much earlier in the day in March, and we begin to gain an incredible amount of light in the evening. In the upper Midwest, we will see daylight until 9:00 p.m. in the summer!

What does all this have to do with our sleep patterns and how we function throughout the day? Sleep hygiene can play a vital role in helping to adjust to these patterns that most of the country sees twice a year.

### What is sleep hygiene?

It involves establishing a set of daily habits and behaviors designed to improve your sleep quality, duration, and helps you be more alert in the daytime hours. If you have a structured routine for bedtime, you can benefit by experiencing an improved mood, more stable emotions, less depression and anxiety symptoms, and improved cognition. Good, quality sleep gives our brains a chance to rest and our body repairs tissues and heals from the day's activities.

#### Some helpful tips for effective sleep hygiene include:

- Keeping a consistent nighttime routine: go to bed and wake up at the same time each night (even on the weekends). People typically need 7-9 hours of restful sleep to feel refreshed in the morning.
- Keep your bedroom dark, quiet, and cool. Turn down the thermostat at night and use blackout curtains to keep any outside light from coming in

the room. Use a sound machine if you need some type of ambient noise to help you relax.

- Limit technology and reduce your screentime before you go to sleep. This may be difficult to do, but the less blue light you experience before you close your eyes, the better. Dimming the lights in your home can also help your body begin to adjust to darkness and helps prepare you for sleep.
- Avoid caffeine, nicotine, other stimulants, and heavy meals before bedtime.
- Do not have a television in your bedroom. This can be distracting and emits blue light when your body does not need it.
- **Utilize the 15 Minute Rule:** If you can't fall asleep after about 15-20 minutes, get out of bed. Go to another part of your home and engage in a quiet activity, like reading or meditating until you feel sleepy. Do not turn on the TV! This will interrupt your circadian rhythm, by emitting the blue light your body does not need.

*"Good, quality sleep gives our brains a chance to rest and our body repairs tissues and heals from the day's activities."*

Not getting enough sleep or not feeling rested when you wake up can have significant impact on your overall functioning. A decline in your physical health can be a clue that you are not getting enough rest. Your body may say "STOP" by getting physically sick with the flu, bronchitis, pneumonia, or another ailment that forces you to rest. Your mental health can decline, especially if you notice an increase in symptoms of depression, anxiety, stress, or a reduction in your cognitive ability to focus or remember certain tasks that need to be addressed. When you don't get enough sleep, your body stays in high alert mode and produces cortisol, which causes your heart to beat faster and muscles to tense. We need our bodies to slow down during sleep so we can get adequate rest.

If you feel that you are not getting adequate sleep and your sleep hygiene needs improvement, talk with a doctor about your concerns. It may be helpful to keep a sleep diary so that you have a record of your patterns and symptoms when discussing treatment options with your provider. A medical team can help put a treatment plan together to help address sleep concerns, including a referral for a sleep study.

Therapy can also help and is an important component of the treatment plan. Cognitive behavioral therapy is a great place to start establishing new routines for sleep and rest. EMDR may be a helpful tool, especially if you are experiencing vivid dreams that are disrupting your sleep. Seek out a mental health care provider to help you on your journey to better sleep hygiene and better sleep hygiene practices.

*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. Visit [desertstarARC.com](http://desertstarARC.com) or call 520-638-6000.*





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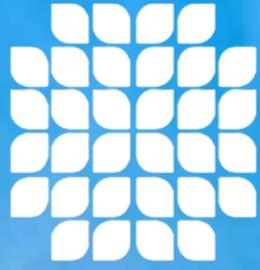
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## The Meadows Launches “Unbroken,” a Specialized Trauma and Addiction Program for Military, Veterans, and First Responders



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The Meadows, a nationally respected leader in trauma and mental health care announced the launch of **Unbroken** at The Meadows, a specialized treatment program designed exclusively for active-duty military members, veterans, first responders, public safety professionals, and their loved

ones experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and substance use disorders.

*“Those who dedicate their lives to protecting others often carry an invisible weight,”* said Meadows President Jaime Vinck, MC, LPC. “Unbroken was created to meet military members and first responders where they are, with care that understands their culture, respects their service, and provides the clinical depth necessary to address trauma and addiction together.”

*“Unbroken helps those who dedicate their lives to protecting others heal from trauma and substance use while honoring the identities shaped by service.”*

**Unbroken** at The Meadows is an evidence-based program fully integrated with The Meadows’ comprehensive clinical offerings and tailored to the unique demands of service-driven roles. The program is led by Bill Reynolds, PA-C, a 30-year U.S. Navy veteran and experienced psychiatric and medical leader. During his Navy career, Reynolds served in a wide range of operational environments, including submarine service, combat support roles with the U.S. Marine Corps, and as medical officer for a U.S. Navy SEAL Team. He brings firsthand understanding of the challenges of military service, along



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with years of experience working with first responder communities, and deep expertise in post-traumatic stress, addiction medicine, and military-informed psychiatric care. Reynolds is also the founder and primary architect of several nationally recognized treatment programs for first responders, active-duty military personnel, and veterans.

“Participants arrive at different points in their journey,” said Bill Reynolds, PA-C. “Some are highly functional while privately struggling. Others are at a breaking point with trauma, substance use, and emotional exhaustion affecting work, family, and personal safety. Unbroken provides a secure, mission-informed therapeutic environment that fosters trust, confidentiality, and peer connection among military members and first responders with shared experiences.”

Treatment begins with a thorough assessment and individualized care plan, which can include, trauma-focused individual and group therapy, addiction treatment, cognitive-behavioral therapy, equine-assisted therapy, physical wellness programming, family work and systemic support, along with aftercare planning and alumni engagement.

The program is also supported by The Meadows Brain Center, integrating neuroscience-informed therapies such as neurofeedback, EMDR, and biofeedback to support nervous system regulation, trauma processing, and restore emotional and physiological resilience.

“Unbroken reflects our belief that symptoms are not signs of weakness, but natural responses to prolonged exposure to trauma and stress,” said Vinck, MC, LPC. “By combining trauma-focused therapy, neuroscience-informed care, and peer support, we help participants reconnect with themselves, their families, and their sense of purpose.”

Unbroken helps those who dedicate their lives to protecting others heal from trauma and substance use while honoring the identities shaped by service. Participants leave with stronger coping skills, improved emotional regulation, and the clarity needed to return to their families, careers, and communities with confidence.

“At The Meadows, protecting the protectors means more than treating symptoms,” Reynolds added. “It means caring for the whole person, honoring their service, helping them heal, and supporting long-term recovery.”

To learn more about **Unbroken**, visit [TheMeadows.com](http://TheMeadows.com). For more information on all of Meadows Behavioral Healthcare's treatment services, from inpatient to outpatient and virtual levels of care, call **800-244-4949**.



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KEYNOTE ADDRESS



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Presented by Matthew Griffin

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*YHC staffed by Navajo professionals, blends evidence-based clinical treatment with culturally grounded practices.*

YHC represents a critical step toward closing the gap in behavioral health and substance use treatment for Navajo members. For Axiom Care, the partnership reflects a broader commitment to expanding access while preserving cultural integrity through respectful collaboration and sustainable, community-driven solutions.

### Accessibility To a Full Continuum of Care in Apache Junction

Substance use treatment is often fragmented and an overwhelming process for individuals seeking help. A person looking for help may enter an observation unit, then transfer to detox at another facility, then move to residential care somewhere else. Each transition means new providers, new paperwork, new environments, and new opportunities to disengage.

Pinal County and Axiom Care saw a need for accessibility in the East Valley in one central location. Axiom Care has worked to remove those gaps and accessibility, with the opening of a new 60-bed residential treatment center on the same campus in October 2025.

“We really wanted to create our vision of a campus of care here where people can enter into our system and be served and spend their entire stay here on this campus.” Said Vern Johnson, Founder of Axiom Care.



*Ocotillo Campus Ribbon Cutting*

At Axiom Care’s Ocotillo Campus in Apache Junction, individuals can enter through observation to be medically assessed for the level of care they need, transition directly into on-site detox, then progress into residential treatment with the continuum of care on one campus, with no cost transportation across Maricopa and Pinal Counties. Here they have access to Axiom Care’s residential programming, behavioral health therapy, medication-assisted treatment (MAT), and residential treatment programs.

This integrated model reduces administrative delays and emotional stress while strengthening engagement. By minimizing transitions and maintaining continuity of care, Axiom Care improves stability during the most critical phases of recovery. Axiom Care approaches addiction as a long-term health condition that requires structure, accountability, and support.

“When transitions are smoother, engagement improves,” said Christi Kleckner, Executive Director of the Ocotillo Campus of Care. “Having one campus that provides all levels of care helps patients stay motivated on their journey to recovery.”



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Axiom Care is accredited by The Joint Commission and credentialed with all AHCCCS managed care organizations, ensuring access to Arizona Medicaid members. Treatment plans are individualized around each person’s medical, behavioral, and social needs, while workforce development and creative healing initiatives help individuals rebuild purpose and independence.

The goal of the Ocotillo Campus of Care is to meet people where they are and help them on their journey through their services of observation, medical detox, residential treatment, with long-term access to intensive outpatient care, behavioral health therapy, re-entry and workforce development.

### A New Path Forward for Veterans

Recognizing the unique challenges faced by Veterans, Axiom Care at Victory Place launched in November 2025. This 60-bed transitional housing program is designed to serve Veterans navigating challenges related to substance use disorders, mental health conditions, trauma, and homelessness.

The Veteran-centered program provides structured housing with access to intensive outpatient treatment for up to 90 days. Clients receive therapy, peer support, psychoeducational groups, and aftercare planning while stabilizing housing and independence in life skills.

By combining housing with intensive outpatient care, Axiom Care at Victory Place reflects a growing recognition that recovery depends as much on the environment and support as it does on treatment itself. This helps fill a critical gap and offers veterans a dignified, sustainable path forward.

### Visionary Growth

Axiom Care’s expansion in 2025 was guided by three priorities; removing barriers to care, integrating services under coordinated systems, and expanding access to long-term recovery for underserved populations.

As Arizona’s behavioral health needs continue to evolve, Axiom Care’s integrated model offers a framework for sustainable recovery support. In 2025, Axiom Care created a coordinated network where individuals can enter care, move through treatment, and transition toward independence without losing support along the way. For the more than 4,000 served by Axiom Care last year, that difference can mean the stability needed not just to begin recovery but to maintain it.

Reach out at [Admissions@AxiomCareOfAZ.com](mailto:Admissions@AxiomCareOfAZ.com), call **602-835-0660** or visit **[AxiomCareOfAZ.com](https://www.AxiomCareOfAZ.com)** to learn more.

## Art Therapy from page 1

Art therapy is a mental health treatment delivered by a Master's level trained art therapist which integrates counseling theory and creative processes to address specific mental health concerns. To become a registered art therapist (ATR) after graduating with a master's degree, art therapists complete a minimum of 1,000 hours of direct client contact with 100 hours of clinical supervision from a board certified registered art therapist (ATR-BC) or an independently licensed mental health clinician (LPC, LCSW).

Art therapists take into consideration the diagnosis and psychosocial history of their clients to create treatment plan goals. They are paying attention during sessions not just to the image created and verbal expressions of the client, but also to the client's choice of art media, amount of energy used to create artwork, sensory needs and other non-verbal communication expressed during the process of creating. Art therapy is not a theoretical orientation as art therapists may design a session or intervention based on many different counseling theories.

For example, a cognitive behavioral art therapist may focus on creating artwork with a goal of identifying cognitive distortions while an art therapist working from the lens of attachment theory may focus on using art to identify and repair attachment injuries.

As of 2017, art therapy is a title protected profession in the state of Arizona. This means that only those with active national credentials through the Art Therapy Credentialing Board (ATCB) can use the title "art therapist." This may call into question for some the difference between a counselor who uses art and an art therapist. For a clinician using art, the art is used to facilitate dialogue and is used as a supplemental activity to aid verbal communication. The material choice is often guided by what is available and uses common art materials. In the setting of art therapy, the imagery is seen as a reflection or extension of the client; a visual language to communicate inner experience.

The artwork becomes less something to talk about and exists as a communication bridge between client and clinician. Materials used in art therapy sessions are chosen for their physical properties (media dimension variables) and how those properties relate to emotions and treatment plan goals. Art therapists work with an understanding of how to use certain materials to encourage grounding, emotional release, or increase cognitive analysis.



iStock Credit: netrun78

**"There are benefits to art making in a wide variety of settings and understanding the differences is essential in finding the most beneficial path."**

There are risks for counselors untrained on the nuances of media dimensions as the suggestion of the wrong material can lead to emotional flooding when containment was indicated, or increasingly "stuck" thinking patterns when emotional processing or sensory experiencing would create more progress.

There are benefits to art making in a wide variety of settings and understanding the differences is essential in finding the most beneficial path. There are a few questions that can be asked to discover what art experience is going to be a best fit. What do I hope to get out of this session? What level of support am I looking for?

The intent of an art therapy session is structured around a treatment plan with clinical goals (i.e. processing PTSD, reducing symptoms of depression, relapse prevention) while the goals of therapeutic art can be more open ended and centered on relaxation or satisfaction. In art therapy, a trained clinician can help to decode symbols and work through 'stuck' emotions that cannot be expressed in words. A therapeutic art class may provide support with the art material, but not the emotional content. The art created in art therapy is a documentation of therapeutic work and progress, and not intended solely as a satisfying "product," while the art created in a therapeutic art setting can lead to increased feelings of competency and pride through learning a new craft or skill.

Understanding the differences between art therapy, art used by a therapist, and therapeutic art is important in order to make informed choices about treatment and program selection. Respecting these different options ensures that those in need of clinical help are able to find the right professionals while ensuring that the arts remain accessible to all for wellness.

Kirsten Erby has been an art therapist for 13 years and works in private practice in Phoenix, AZ. She is committed to educating the community about the profession of art therapy. Kirsten also runs The Painted Elephant, an LLC which provides creative networking and team building events. She is passionate about promoting all forms of healing through creativity, from self-care activities to community building to psychotherapy. When she is not working she is hiking, creating art and spending time with her family. Kirsten can be reached at [kirsten@thepaintedelephant.com](mailto:kirsten@thepaintedelephant.com)

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# The Legacy We Inherit *and* the One We Choose to Leave Part 2

By Tian Dayton, PhD, TEP



*In Part One, we explored how intergenerational pain travels—not as a story, but as a state—moving through attachment wounds, cognitive distortions, nervous system dysregulation, and the quiet, unconscious ways we recreate what we never fully processed. In this second part, we see the importance of grief in lightening some of the pain that drives process addictions so that we can build resilience and experience post-traumatic growth.*

## The Central Role of Grief (Lyrical Version)

No conversation about intergenerational healing is complete without grief. Grief is not a side road or a setback on the path of recovery—it is the path. What we do not weep, what we are never given permission to mourn, does not disappear. It settles into the body as tension, as anxiety, as depression, as compulsive striving or quiet despair. Grief is the way frozen pain begins to thaw, the way what has been held too long finally finds movement—through tears, through anger, through the honest language of the body.

When grief is allowed, something softens. What has grown rigid in us loosens. Defenses that were once essential begin to relax, not because they were wrong, but because they are no longer needed. We learn—often to our surprise—that feeling our pain can be safe, that it does not have to exile us from connection. In the presence of others, our sorrow becomes recognizable, even shared. The nervous system is given a chance to complete experiences of feeling and meaning-making that were interrupted long ago.

And grief, when it is held and witnessed, does not diminish us. It does not break us open in vain. It gathers us back into ourselves. It integrates what was split off for survival and returns it to the whole. In this way, grief does not weaken us—it quietly restores our capacity to be fully, honestly human.

## Process Addictions

There is another way unhealed pain travels through generations, and it is quieter, more socially acceptable, and often harder to recognize. We tend to think of addiction only in terms of substances, but many of the most persistent expressions of unresolved trauma are process addictions—compulsive behaviors that regulate the nervous system without ever truly resolving what hurts. They grow out of the emotional dysregulation that is so central to trauma, black and white thinking, feeling and behavior.

These are the sneaky ones. Overeating. Under-eating. Overworking. Underworking. Overexercising. Collapse into inactivity. Overgiving. Perfectionism. Compulsive caretaking. Emotional intensity in relationships. Doom-scrolling. Shopping. Gambling. Food. Sex. Even chronic busyness. On the surface, many of these behaviors look functional, even admirable. You seem thin and wear clothes well, have lovely things or you're a great earner. You're super fit. But underneath, they sometimes can have a compulsivity to them: they soothe, distract, numb, or stimulate a nervous system that doesn't know how to rest.

Process addictions are not necessarily about weakness or lack of willpower. They are about regulation. When early environments didn't teach us how to tolerate discomfort, uncertainty, or emotion, we find ways—often very creative ways—to manage those states externally.

The behavior becomes a shortcut to relief. And because the relief is temporary, the behavior repeats. Over time, the nervous system comes to depend on the process itself, not because it brings joy, but because it brings momentary quiet.

This is where choice begins to feel harder. Not because we don't want to choose differently, but because the nervous system is already activated before we're aware of it. By the time the urge shows up, the body is seeking relief, not reflection. Choice requires space. Process addictions collapse that space. They offer speed instead of presence, discharge instead of digestion, action instead of meaning.

Healing doesn't begin by ripping these processes away. That would only create more threat. Healing begins by understanding what the behavior has been doing for us. What feeling does it manage? What moment does it help us avoid? When we approach process addictions with curiosity instead of judgment, we begin to restore choice—not by force, but by expanding the nervous system's capacity to stay present without needing to escape.

That's when the North Star comes back into view. The work becomes less about stopping a behavior and more about learning how to stay with ourselves—our bodies, our emotions, our relationships—long enough to make meaning instead of acting it out. And that, quietly and steadily, is how choice begins to widen again.

LEGACY continued page 14

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## From the Mat

# Making Your Own Luck: Recovery, Yoga, and the Courage to Begin Again

By Alexandra Daffner

Each March, symbols of luck appear everywhere—four-leaf clovers, rainbows, and the promise of hidden treasure at the end of a long journey. St. Patrick's Day invites us to reflect on luck, to hope for good fortune, and to believe that something beautiful may be waiting just ahead. But in recovery, we learn something deeper: luck is not something we wait for. It is something we help create.



Recovery is not luck—it is courage. It is showing up on the days when motivation is low. It is choosing breath over avoidance, and presence over escape. It is the quiet, often invisible decision to keep going.

Yoga teaches us this same truth. When we step onto the mat, nothing external has changed. The room is the same. The body is the same. But something begins to shift internally. We breathe. We notice. We soften. Over time, these small moments of awareness begin to change how we experience ourselves and the world around us. What many people call “luck” is often the result of these small, consistent actions. The willingness to pause. The willingness to listen. The willingness to stay.

In early recovery, it can feel like stability, peace, or joy are things that happen to other people. It can feel like you missed your chance. But yoga reminds us that every moment is an opportunity to begin again. Every breath is a reset. Every time you choose to stay present, you are strengthening something within yourself that cannot be taken away.

In yoga philosophy, there is a concept of practice without attachment to outcome. We show up not because we can control the result, but because the act of showing up changes us. Over time, the nervous system learns safety. The mind learns stillness and the body learns trust.

From the outside, this transformation can look like luck. Opportunities appear. Relationships improve. Peace becomes more familiar. **But those who walk the path of recovery know the truth: these changes were built, breath by breath, choice by choice.**

This St. Patrick's Day, consider that perhaps you are not waiting for luck—you are creating it. Each time you care for yourself, each time you choose healing, each time you return to the present moment, you are laying another stone on the path beneath your feet.

Yoga does not promise the journey will always be easy. Recovery does not promise that every day will feel light. But both offer something more powerful: the reminder that you have the ability to participate in your own healing. Luck is not something reserved for the fortunate few. It is something that grows wherever there is willingness, patience, and self-compassion.

This month, trust that every breath you take with awareness is moving you forward. You are not simply hoping for change— you are creating it!

**See you on the mat!**

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## Scottsdale Serenity A Place of Healing and Hope

Located in the heart of Scottsdale, Arizona, Scottsdale Serenity Rehab is a compassionate residential treatment facility dedicated to helping adults reclaim their lives from substance use and co-occurring emotional challenges. This isn't just a clinical setting — it's a nurturing environment where individuals are treated with dignity, empathy, and respect as they begin a journey of deep healing.

The peaceful, home-like atmosphere is designed to provide comfort and safety, giving clients the space they need to focus fully on their recovery without judgment or fear.



At the core of Scottsdale Serenity's approach is personalized, evidence-based care that meets each person where they are. Their team of experienced professionals creates individualized treatment plans that address the whole person — mind, body, and spirit — not just the symptoms of addiction. Clients work through a structured residential program with a blend of therapeutic modalities, including one-on-one counseling, group therapy, trauma-informed care, and holistic wellness practices like yoga, meditation, and art therapy. This combination supports emotional resilience, self-discovery, and meaningful, long-lasting growth.

What truly sets Scottsdale Serenity apart is its humanistic focus: recovery is approached as a personal transformation, not a checklist. Every step — from confidential assessments and insurance support to ongoing guidance with family involvement — is handled with compassion and genuine care.

Clients are encouraged to explore healing at their own pace while feeling supported by a dedicated team that values privacy, connection, and lasting well-being. For many, Scottsdale Serenity becomes more than a rehab — it becomes a place of hope, renewal, and the first real steps toward a brighter future.

Scottsdale Serenity accepts most commercial based insurance policies; the admissions department can be reached 24/7 at **480-906-2067**.

Visit <https://scottsdalserenityrehab.com> to learn more.

# What's so Bad about My Comfort Zone?

By Dr. Marlo Archer



iStock Credit: Daniil Dubov

Many of us had very uncomfortable childhood experiences. Some of us didn't get enough sleep because of noisy neighbors or siblings. Others came home from school to empty houses and had to make their own dinners.

We might barely get settled into a neighborhood, make friends, and then have to pick up and move again. We might not be sure of which version of Dad was going to come home, if he came home at all.

Childhood stressors disrupt the normal maturation process and can keep us in a constant state of alarm. Living with continual fear, worry, and uncertainty takes a toll on the body and the development of the brain. This discomfort can damage our DNA and shorten our lifespan. Is it any surprise, then, that we seek substances to escape uncomfortable childhoods?

When an uncomfortable child discovers the numbing effect of drugs or alcohol, they often feel relaxed in a way they seldom experience in their day-to-day life. When a little bit of weed can drown out a mother constantly telling you that you're worthless, using seems like a no-brainer. When drinking with friends is fun and takes you away from the reality of your broken home, what teen in their right mind wouldn't choose that over going home to listen to Dad carry on about Mom being out late with the girls again?

Drugs and alcohol provide comfort. Until they don't. Eventually, they fail to give the same good feelings they gave earlier and you have to use more and more to get the same effect. That's one avenue for addictions to develop. Once addicted, the substances themselves cause just as much trouble as the original family trouble caused, if not more.

***"Drugs and alcohol provide comfort. **Until they don't.** Eventually, they fail to give the same good feelings they gave earlier and you have to use more and more to get the same effect."***

So, we get sober. We give up the crutches and walk on our wobbly legs and it hurts. Feeling isn't fun. Cleaning up all that mess isn't incredibly enjoyable. The 3rd Step is hard. The 4th Step sucks. The 9th step sucks harder. Meetings are a hassle. Sponsors are annoying. Who's got time for all that reading and writing? But you do it and you collect your chips. 1 year, 2 years, 5, 8, 12, 17, or is it 18? Oh heck, who cares, it's a lot. In fact, it seems like enough.

## How much of this is enough?

You might decide to cut back on sponsoring or stop making phone calls. You might drop from 5 meetings a week down to 2, keeping at least the one that will remember to give you your medallion on your next anniversary. And, since you're already at 17, or 18, it makes sense to get at least to 20. Yeah, 20. That should be enough.

Twenty years of sobriety can feel comfortable, maybe even easy. You've been doing all the things long enough that most of them have become second-nature. You rarely even attend massive drinking events. Few of your friends, if any, use any illicit drugs anymore. Your home group notices if you're not feeling well and sends you get well bouquets. You enjoy frequent hugging. Your disagreements are civil. You work out conflicts with the people you choose to remain in your life. Ahh, finally, some comfort!

Then, along comes your sponsor with some sort of suggestion like that it's time for you to get out of your comfort zone and volunteer to speak at a large meeting

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or sponsor more people or lead a workshop. You recoil in horror, thinking, "What's wrong with my comfort zone? I've worked long and hard to get here. Why must you try to ruin it?"

**Contentment in recovery is sweet, lovely, and should be very brief or it could turn into complacency which can lead to self-righteousness, smugness, conceit, arrogance, and ultimately, relapse.**

Recovery is dynamic, not static and will slip away if not attended to properly. Stepping out of our recovery comfort zone is absolutely essential if we are to maintain our recovery. Recovery has the odd property that in order to keep it, you must give it away.

If you find yourself enjoying a rare moment of complete bliss in recovery, please, do savor it. Enjoy it. Wallow around in it, but then find a way to share it with someone or it will be gone.

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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# Among youth and young adults, signs of nicotine addiction persist



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Despite a decline in youth e-cigarette use in the past decade, signs of nicotine addiction persist among those who vape, and many are struggling to quit. A Truth Initiative study of teens who vape indicated that 76% vaped within 30 minutes of waking up, indicating a concerning level of nicotine dependence. New research also shows that the share of middle and high school daily e-cigarette users who attempted to quit but were unable to do so rose from 28.2% to 53% between 2020 and 2024.

There has also been a significant increase in dual and polyuse of tobacco and nicotine products among young people aged 15–24 years, potentially exposing youth and young adults to higher amounts of nicotine and increased negative health effects.

## Quitting nicotine can help young people improve their mental and physical health

According to the Truth Initiative survey, 62% of 18–24-year-olds who use nicotine reported that they want to quit within the next year to improve their physical or mental health. Quitting nicotine is an important step in taking control of health and wellness, especially for young people. Nicotine use can harm developing brains, and nicotine addiction can amplify feelings of anxiety, depression, and stress — a particular concern for young people already struggling with mental health. According to previous Truth Initiative survey data, 90% of young people who quit vaping said they felt less stressed, anxious, or depressed.

In a world where young people are dealing with financial stress, anxiety related to social media, and concern about an uncertain future — living nicotine-free can help them take back control while gaining hope, confidence, and peace of mind. (Source: <https://truthinitiative.org>)

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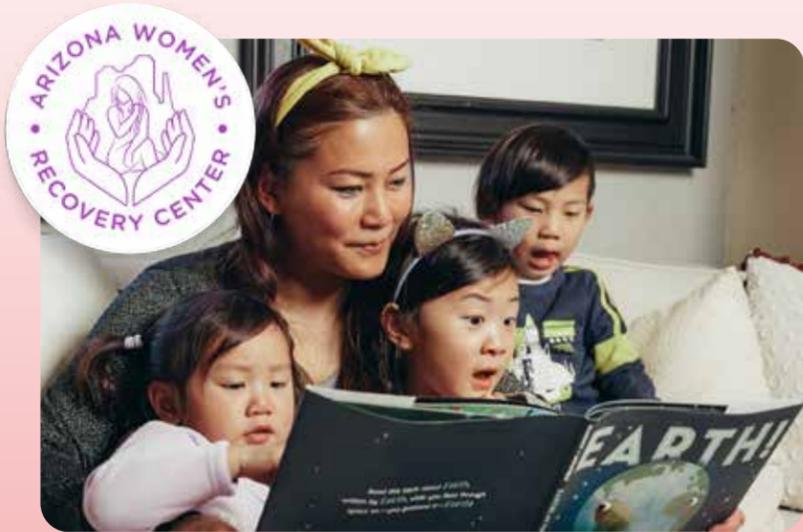
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## Crossroads Earns Joint Commission Accreditation for Multiple AZ Locations



The Crossroads Inc., one of the largest Arizona-based substance abuse treatment providers, has earned Joint Commission accreditation for multiple Valley locations. The accreditation includes Crossroads Chandler and Crossroads at Pure Heart in Glendale, as well as its Crossroads Aftercare Program (CAP) at the Phoenix

corporate office, reinforcing the organization's commitment to high-quality, safe, and evidence-based care.

The accreditation, awarded in January 2026, recognizes Crossroads for meeting rigorous national standards for patient safety, clinical excellence, and operational effectiveness. The Joint Commission is widely regarded as the gold standard in health care accreditation, evaluating organizations through comprehensive on-site surveys and ongoing compliance requirements.

"Achieving Joint Commission accreditation across multiple locations is more than a credential. It reflects the high standards of care we strive to provide every person who walks through our doors," said Executive Director Chris Riley.

*"This recognition affirms the work of our clinical teams and our commitment to ensuring safety, dignity, and quality care for those seeking long-term recovery."*

Joint Commission accreditation demonstrates an organization's ability to deliver services that meets nationally recognized benchmarks, including staff qualifications and training, medication management, emergency preparedness, patient safety, and continuous quality improvement. For those seeking treatment and their families, this designation serves as an important indicator of trust, accountability, and clinical excellence.

Crossroads provides comprehensive, client-centered treatment tailored to each stage of recovery, including residential, outpatient, and transitional programs for men, women and veterans. With more than 50 years of experience, Crossroads has built a reputation for accessible, affordable, and effective treatment services. To learn more visit [www.thecrossroadsinc.org](http://www.thecrossroadsinc.org)

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## Resilience and Post Traumatic Growth

Resilience is often misunderstood. We tend to think of it as toughness, grit, or the ability to push through. But true resilience is not about muscling our way past pain. It is about adaptation with awareness. It is the nervous system's capacity to bend without breaking and, over time, to return to itself after stress.

Many people who grow up in difficult environments are already resilient in one sense. They survived. They adapted. They functioned. But survival resilience is not the same as restorative resilience. Survival resilience keeps us going; restorative resilience allows us to soften. And for many people, softening feels far more dangerous than strength ever did.

Post-traumatic growth does not arise from trauma itself. Trauma alone does not make us wiser, kinder, or deeper. Growth emerges from what happens after—from meaning-making, from repair, from grief that is allowed to move, and from relationships that offer safety rather than repetition. Without these conditions, trauma simply loops. With them, something new becomes possible.

One of the first signs of post-traumatic growth is not positivity—it is choice. The pause before reaction. The ability to feel without immediately discharging or numbing. The growing sense that you can stay with yourself through discomfort without abandoning yourself or controlling others. These are nervous system achievements, not personality traits.

Over time, resilience shifts from endurance to presence. People begin to recognize their internal states earlier. They recover more quickly from rupture. They no longer need to reenact pain in order to feel alive or connected and when they regress, they feel sick inside. Boundaries become clearer. Self-compassion becomes possible—not as a concept, but as a lived experience in the body. And violating boundaries feels yucky.

Post-traumatic growth often shows up quietly. It may look like choosing a different partner than you once would have or being different with the same person. Apologizing without collapsing into shame. Resting without guilt. Allowing joy without waiting for the other shoe to drop. These are not small changes. They are signs that the nervous system has learned something new about safety and trust.

And here is the intergenerational piece that matters so deeply: when resilience is embodied rather than forced, it becomes transmissible. Children learn not just how to survive stress, but how to recover from it. They learn that emotions can move and settle. That conflict can be repaired. That life can be challenging and meaningful at the same time.

This is how the legacy shifts. Not because the past was erased, but because it was metabolized. Not because pain didn't exist, but because it was held, grieved, and integrated. Resilience, in this sense, is not heroic. It is human. And post-traumatic growth is not about becoming extraordinary, it is about becoming more fully ourselves.

## The Messy Beauty of Choosing Differently

Breaking intergenerational cycles does not mean you will never make mistakes. It means you begin to notice them sooner. You feel them stir in your body before they harden into action. You repair more honestly. You apologize with less defensiveness and more truth. You reflect more deeply,

not to punish yourself, but to understand. It means choosing awareness over automaticity, connection over control and responsibility over blame.

**This is messy work. But so is passing on pain.**

**The difference is that one kind of mess leads to freedom.**

When you orient toward recovery—like a North Star—you may never arrive at some mythical state of completion. But you will know, in your body and in your relationships, that you are heading somewhere kinder. You will feel it in the way your shoulders soften, in the way your breath deepens, in the way conflict no longer feels like something you have to shut down, run from or scream at.

**And that direction matters.**

**Not just for you—but for everyone who comes after.**

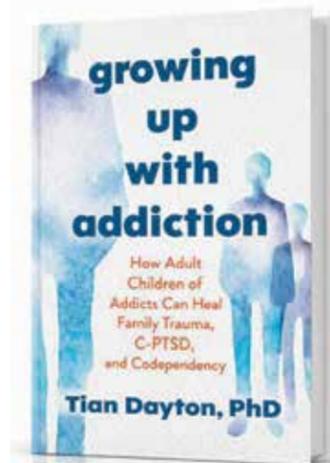
This is what I write about in *Growing Up with Addiction*. I look at recovery through the lens of both mind and body, trying to pass on what I have learned by living inside several generations, by being a daughter, a mother, a grandmother and by spending more than forty years as a psychologist working in the fields of addiction and recovery. What time teaches you, if you let it, is that healing is rarely dramatic. It is quiet. Incremental. Earned.

One of the clearest signs that recovery is real is not how eloquently we can talk about our past, but how differently we respond in the present. Recovery shows up in the pause before reaction, in that small, almost sacred moment when we feel our body activate and choose not to hand the wheel over to an old pattern. We begin to recognize what belongs to now and what belongs to then. Our responses carry less urgency, less distortion, less emotional weight from history.

- **We listen more fully.**
- **We repair more quickly.**
- **We set boundaries without collapsing into guilt or armoring into aggression.**

Dr. Tian Dayton is a clinical psychologist, certified trainer in psychodrama, sociometry, and group psychotherapy, and Senior Fellow at The Meadows. She is the creator of Relational Trauma Repair (RTR) and author of fifteen books, including *Growing Up with Addiction* and *Treating Adult Children of Relational Trauma*, and a former professor of psychodrama at NYU. A recipient of multiple national awards, she has appeared as a guest expert on major media outlets.

Learn more at [tiandayton.com](http://tiandayton.com) and [relationaltraumarepair.com](http://relationaltraumarepair.com)



Tian Dayton's latest book, *Growing Up with Addiction* was released on March 3, 2026.

Visit <https://www.amazon.com/Growing-Up-Addiction-Children-Codependency/dp/1649634242>

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Horizon Recovery Center	480-219-7098	horizonrecovery.com
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Mens Teen Challenge	520-792-1790	tcaz.org
Mental Health America of Arizona		mhaarizona.org
Mercy Care 800-631-1314	602-222-9444	mercycareaz.org
NorthSight Recovery	833-787-9718	northsightrecovery.com
Psychological Counseling Services (PCS)	480-947-5739	pcsintensive.com
Scottsdale Providence	480-210-1734	scottsdaleprovidence.com
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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 foodaddicts.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

## Additional Resources

ACT Counseling & Education	602-569-4328	actcounseling.com
AZ. Dept. of Health	602-364-2086	
AZ Holistic Approach Counseling	602-529-1967	
Arizona Opioid Assistance Helpline	888-688-4222	
Birches Health	833-483-3838	bircheshealth.com
Eric's 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	
NotMYKid	602-652-0163	
PAL Parents of Addicted Loved Ones	palgroup.org	
Recovery Café	480-530-7090	
TERROS Health	602-685-6000	

### EDA Meetings

Sat. 10:30 am New Freedom Meeting – Pigeon Coop. 4415 S Rural Rd, Ste 8, Tempe AZ. Step and big book study.

Thur. 7:00 P.M.

New Happiness Meeting  
Crossroads  
2103 E Southern, Tempe. Rotating format- Step, Topic, Big Book, Speaker.

### 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

### 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

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