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JUNE 2026

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Inspiring Success on the Road to Recovery

How 'Grit' Defines a Decade of Healing at Scottsdale Providence

By Michelle Sheydayi, Chief Marketing Officer

On the eve of our 10-year anniversary, the leadership team of Scottsdale Providence has done some deep reflection. We've reflected on immense gratitude for the chance to serve our community in the way we have for the past decade. We've reflected on our values and how challenging it has been at times to remain organized around them. But much of what has come up is the concept of Grit. Grit has entered the Zeitgeist as a concept we feel closely defines our company's ethos. The perseverance to sustain effort and remain committed to an end goal or state combined with our passion and belief in it.

Honesty and Accountability

Grit defines what we ask of our clients, and what we ask of ourselves. It is in stark contrast to what we might refer to as "culture of convenience". It requires us to prioritize direct communication, accountability, and honesty.

Our belief is that a "culture of convenience" can never be a safety-led culture. Safety requires depth, presence of mind and spirit, and shared norms and values. We see this manifest in our daily decisions. When a client wants their phone back but they haven't yet completed their life story assignment and we have to make the decision to say no. When a client is best served by experiencing discomfort, rather than appeasement. It manifests in the decisions we make around admissions, how we market our services, who we hire and how we manage our staff and clients. When it makes more sense to scholarship a client for an extra month of treatment, even if it cuts into profits. Inconvenient, surely, but better.

A less challenging culture would require us to let everyone choose their own adventure, even at their own peril, rather than providing them with



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"Grit defines what we ask of our clients, and what we ask of ourselves."

clinically led suggestions that challenge them just enough to their edge to allow for growth. When we started as a company, we had 2 therapists. Our team now consists of 10 therapists, plus a much wider collective of multidisciplinary professionals. With more opinions comes more labor in reaching consensus on the best way to deliver care — which means we must be as committed and dedicated as ever to our common goal.

GRIT continued page 9

When 'Just a Phase' Turns into Opioid Addiction: What Families—Even Professionals—Might Miss

By Kim Humphrey, CEO/Executive Director, Parents of Addicted Loved Ones (PAL)

She sat across from the group and said something that made everyone pause. "I'm a substance abuse counselor—and I missed it in my own child." For a long time, she believed everything was okay. There were small changes—a little more distance, mood swings, a shift in motivation—but nothing that felt outside the range of what families typically navigate. She had the training. She knew the signs. And still, like many parents, she explained what she was seeing in ways that made sense. It's stress. It's a phase. They'll grow out of this.

Until they didn't.

When things finally came to light, the reality was far more serious than she had imagined. Her child wasn't experimenting—they were actively struggling with addiction. It involved opioids, and the risk was not theoretical. It could have cost their life.



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By the time she walked into a PAL meeting, she didn't come as a professional. She came as a parent — overwhelmed and unsure what to do next. Her story is not unusual at **Parents of Addicted Loved Ones (PAL)**. And for those working in the field of addiction and recovery, it highlights something important: even with deep knowledge, it can be difficult to see clearly when it's your own family—or one you're close to.

JUST a PHASE continued page 7



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Publisher's Note

By Barbara Nicholson-Brown

Every June 17th, I'm reminded of Father's Day 1990 — the day my "one day at a time" journey began — and in a few weeks I'll be 36 years sober. Never in my dreams did I think I could go a single day without a drink.

The fun stopped long before I put the bottle down. From my first sip as a young teen to the last gulp in my late-30s, there were always consequences. Whatever my reasons for drinking, they were all wrong. I was never a casual drinker, it was all or nothing.

Through the grace of God, divine intervention, and a firm push from my sister — *(she was the ultimate catalyst for my surrender)* — I finally admitted out loud I needed help. Though it felt like the worst, little did I know at the time it was the very best day of my life. For all the gifts sobriety has given me I am grateful, humbled and blessed to be here.

Congratulations Scottsdale Providence for a decade of providing healing and hope.

A huge thank you to all of our amazing contributors for bringing this issue together.

Happy Pride Month and Men's Health Month!

Together AZ Inspiring Success on the Road to Recovery

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Desert Star

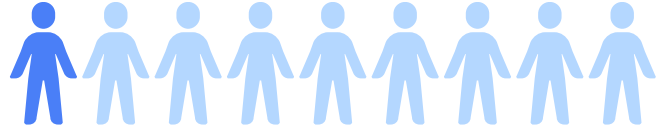


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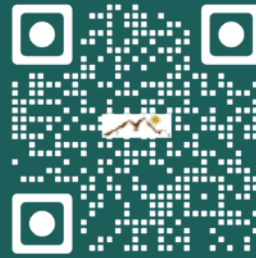


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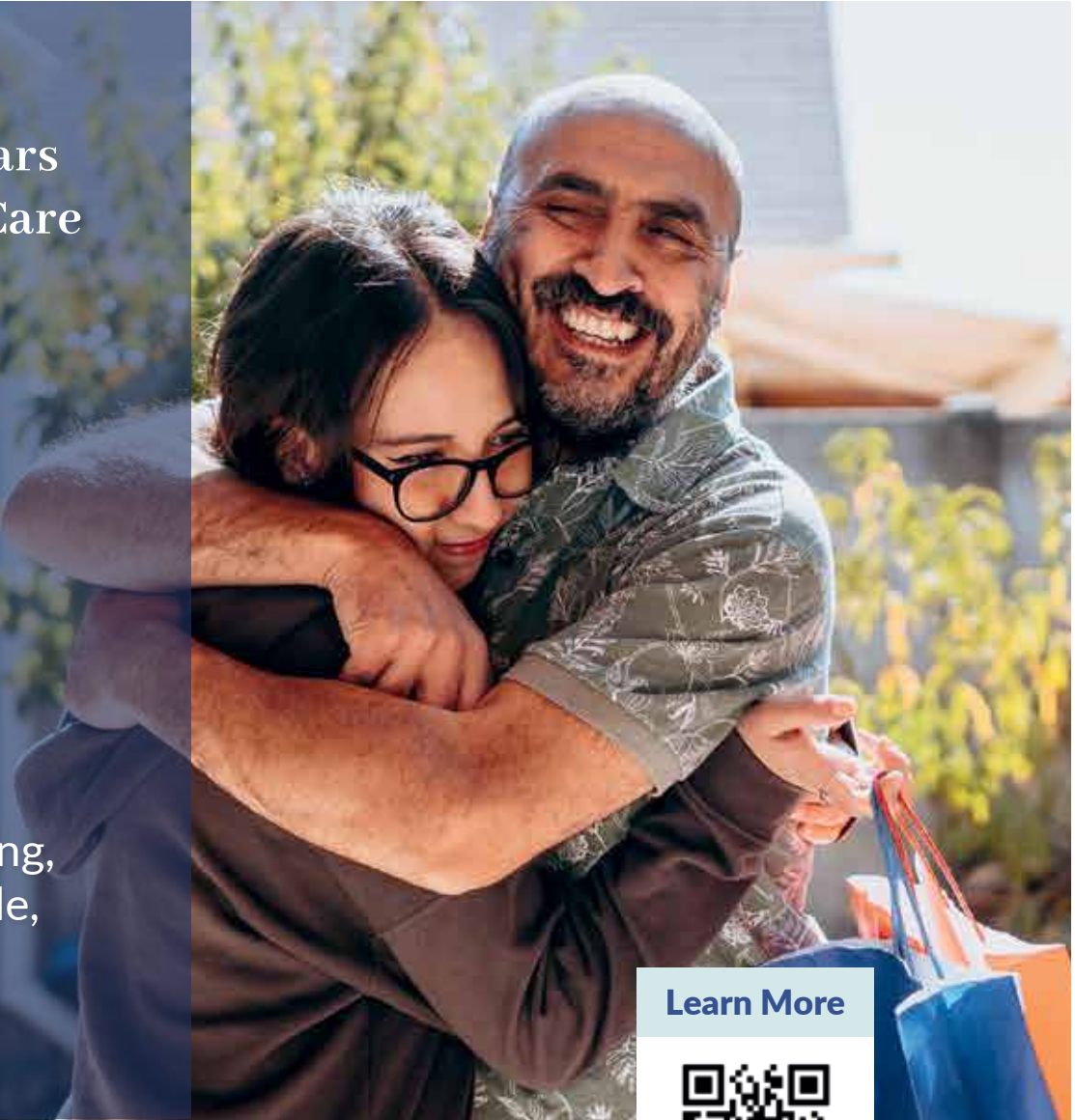


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Spotlight on Advocacy

with Jaclyn Brown



It is a true honor to introduce my friend, colleague, and champion of recovery, Jaclyn Brown. She brings immense passion, dedication, and heart to her vital advocacy work within the mental health and addiction communities. — Barbara

Was there a specific moment or experience when you realized, "I need to be an advocate for this"?

My brother, Marc, passed away in 2018 due to a heroin overdose. Up until his death, I didn't speak on his substance use, as it was his story to tell. However, when he passed away, I didn't anticipate the reactions on social media. Many people were minimizing his life or death. I am the oldest of three, so my big sister instincts kicked in and my first piece of advocacy was his eulogy. I really emphasized — **his manner of death should not define his life.** In the few weeks after his passing, I truly began to understand the toxicity and cruelty of stigma. So, I decided to start educating myself and got into advocacy.

Any one moment in your advocacy work when you realized you were making a difference?

In 2020, I learned more about harm reduction by volunteering with *Shot in the Dark*, which is a local syringe service program. I became the Volunteer Coordinator and ran a site in Tempe on Friday nights with my husband. We had an amazing crew of volunteers from all walks of life: people in recovery, affected family members, students in med school, nurses, people in active drug use, etc. We served about 100 participants every Friday night and I remember a woman who came to the site, and just asked for naloxone. I explained how to use it and that she could always come back for more if needed. I found out a few weeks later she ended up using the Naloxone I gave her and she saved her daughter's life. The cruel irony of this is that — I didn't learn about Naloxone until after my brother passed away. He had pursued treatment multiple times and not a single person mentioned Naloxone to my family. My goal in advocacy is to provide as much information and education as possible, that I wish was available to us when he was alive.

If you could change one thing about the world through your work, what would it be?

I would want everyone to have the gifts of reflection, empathy, and compassion. In our current world, there are so many people who lack these qualities, which leads to more harm and stigma. We are spending so much time pointing fingers that we are completely missing the plot. Identifying the root of the problem with real solutions is much more important than who is to blame. **The past cannot be changed, but we can affect the future.**

Looking at the big picture, what kind of impact do you hope your advocacy work ultimately leaves behind?

I have truly never even thought about this, so this was the hardest one to answer! My advocacy work has evolved over the years; I started as a family advocate and spoke up about the stigma and collateral damage many family members endure. When I was with *Shot in the Dark*, I spoke up about harm reduction and the importance of syringe service programs. In my time at *Mobilize Recovery*, I have spoken up about the importance of grassroots advocacy, organizing, collaboration, and community building.

In the last couple of years, I have prioritized my own healing and in turn, have been speaking up about C-PTSD, EMDR, and late diagnosed neurodivergence. I say all this to say: I hope my work is a reminder that there are a lot of issues worth speaking up about and fighting for.

Tell us about your work with Mobilize Recovery and their role in the upcoming GXC conference this December.

One of my many hats with Mobilize Recovery (and in life) is community organizing. The Global Exchange Conference is held annually, but this year, Mobilize Recovery has partnered with GXC to bridge the clinical and treatment worlds with the advocacy and grassroots worlds. The event will be in Las Vegas, NV at the MGM Hotel and Casino from December 6 - 9, 2026. There will be a dedicated track of advocacy/leadership focused sessions for Mobilize Recovery. It is our first time partnering with GXC, so we are excited to see how this hybrid of worlds will come together. If you would like to attend or learn more, please check out: <https://gxclive.org/>

For someone who feels a fire to change things but isn't sure where to begin, what's the first small step they can take?

I would suggest looking for nonprofit and grassroots organizations that are doing work in your city, in an advocacy area that you are passionate about. Start small and take some time to volunteer with that organization. I believe that learning about the issue through the perspective of people closest to the problem is a great starting point.

Jaclyn Brown is the Owner + CEO of Stay Golden Coaching & Consulting. She is also a Community Organizer for a national nonprofit, Mobilize Recovery. In 2021, she left a 15 year career in the insurance industry to pursue her passions of coaching and advocacy. At Stay Golden, she creates workshops focused on personal empowerment, leadership development, and camaraderie building. Jaclyn hosts her own podcast "Dark and Enlightened," where she has open and honest conversations with guests to shed light on dark and stigmatized topics. She lives in Mesa, AZ and loves hanging out with her husband and dogs, creating art, eating tacos, and binge watching Netflix reality shows to decompress.

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Go Play in the DIRT...It's Good for You!

By Amy Tilley, PsyD

After living in Arizona for 17 years, I was able to move back to the Midwest in 2023.

My new house came with a few large planter boxes in the front yard. I was so excited to see if I had a green thumb! I decided to try my gardening skills the following Spring. I had moved in August and needed to get settled into a routine before trying out a new hobby. I planted a few flowers I knew would survive the cold spells that happen in early Spring in this part of the country. Within a few weeks, I had a lovely garden full of blooms! I was so happy with my flowers and the pure joy I received from the entire process: going to the nursery to pick out the flowers, getting all the gardening supplies, digging in the dirt, getting my hands messy and being mindful of where I was planting which flowers.

The next Spring, I was given a tomato plant as a gift, and was told, "put it in your front yard and water it daily." It was maybe 8 inches tall when I planted it that May. I had never grown vegetables before in my life and didn't know what to expect. Each morning, I watered it and talked to it (yes, I talked to it, giving it encouragement to grow). It grew little by little, not producing any tomatoes. By the middle of July, I was getting discouraged, wondering why I had no fruit from my labors. I was told not to worry, the tomatoes would arrive in due time and they would be bountiful. Fast forward to mid-August— my tomato plant was about 4 feet tall and equally as wide! It took over my entire planter box and my lovely flowers that were in the front, were drowned out. Within a week of its dramatic growth spurt, I had my first tomatoes to harvest! I was overjoyed! Let me tell you, there is nothing better than a tomato straight from a garden! For the next six weeks, I had more tomatoes than I could handle. I ate them daily, gave them to neighbors, and took them to church. I now have more recipes for tomato uses than you can imagine!

The experience was so rewarding — all Spring and Summer, I enjoyed going outside for a few minutes and tending to my little garden, and reaping the rewards of my dedication! As I was thinking about what to write for this article, I learned that June is gardening month and great outdoors month. What a perfect combination to focus on as Summer arrives and we can enjoy time outside, and with much longer daylight hours.



iStock credit: lovelyday12

Get Out There!

Getting outside and getting dirty is actually good for you—here are the benefits, per *Psychology Today*.

- **Stress and Anxiety Reduction:** Gardening lowers levels of the stress hormone cortisol. Just 30 minutes in a green space can significantly decrease stress and help you feel calmer.
- **Mood Enhancement:** Physical activity in the sun increases the production of serotonin and dopamine, the brain's "feel-good" chemicals and playing in the dirt is fun!
- **Mindfulness and Presence:** Tending to plants encourages a flow state, pulling attention away from digital stressors and toward the immediate sensory experience of the garden. It provides daily structure to your routine, as well, knowing that you need to spend a few minutes outside each day to care for your plants.
- **Sense of Accomplishment:** Nurturing a plant from seed to harvest builds self-esteem and provides a tangible sense of purpose and pride.
- **Cognitive Health:** Regular gardening is linked to improved memory, better concentration, and a lower risk of dementia, particularly in older adults.
- **ADHD Symptom Relief:** Spending time in naturalized settings has been shown to reduce the severity of ADHD symptoms and improve focus in both children and adults.
- **Acceptance and Resilience:** Gardening teaches a "growth mindset" by showing that mistakes are learning opportunities and some factors (like weather) are beyond our control, which helps combat perfectionism.
- **Social Connection:** Community gardens serve as "social glue," breaking down barriers and reducing loneliness through shared goals and knowledge-sharing with neighbors. Find one in your community and make growing your dinner a group effort!
- **Physical Exercise:** Tasks like weeding, digging, and raking provide low-impact, full-body exercise that burns as many calories as a gym workout, contributing to better overall mental health.

- **Improved Nutrition:** Growing your own food leads to a diet higher in fiber and nutrients, which is associated with a lower risk of developing depression. Nothing tastes better than a ripe tomato from your own garden!

What will you do this season to help improve your mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being? Try gardening...start small and pick one vegetable to grow...I did and this year am expanding my garden to add green beans and peppers!

Go play in the dirt in your bare feet and be 7 years old again and proud of your accomplishments! After all, a little dirt won't hurt!

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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Innovations in the Treatment of Trauma:



Through Their Eyes

By Abby Rallo, BSN, RN

Human behavior is not black and white, it's grey. And sometimes, behaviors are survival. Trauma informed care (TIC) is a reminder that each one of us just wants to be heard, seen, and understood. All it takes is a willingness to slow down and truly listen to one another.

On May 27, Via Linda hosted its first annual symposium at Talking Stick Resort, called *Innovations in the Treatment of Trauma: Through Their Eyes*. This all-day, educational event brought together changemakers and empaths in the community to learn what it means to truly see another, through their eyes. All attendees and partners were encouraged to donate to two organizations: 'Not Our Native Daughters' and 'Salt River Community Children's Foundation'. Below is a brief glimpse of what guests experienced during this inspiring CEU event.

Trauma-Informed Care: Where Empathy Meets Evidence

What is Trauma? Trauma is hard to talk about. Which is why the treatment of trauma poses unique challenges. To understand the best approach in the treatment of trauma, it is important to understand what trauma is. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) defines individual trauma as an event, series of events, or set of circumstances experienced as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening. It has lasting adverse effects on an individual's functioning and overall well-being, significantly influencing one's behavior, communication, trust, emotional regulation, and engagement in treatment. What may appear as "non-compliance", anger, withdrawal, or resistance may actually be a protective survival response shaped by past experiences.

Trauma is not just the event, it is the experience that one has as a result of the event, long after it's over. Two people can experience the same traumatic event and be affected differently. Because trauma is subjective, trauma-informed care is necessary.

Trauma Informed Care: Trauma-informed care is more than a treatment approach; it is a cultural shift and a change in language. Rather than asking, "What's wrong with you?", trauma-informed care shifts the perspective to, "What happened to you?", creating an environment that supports healing while reducing the risk of re-traumatization. The 4 R's and 6 Principles of trauma-informed care serve as a framework to understanding how to apply this evidence-based approach with the empathy that all humans deserve:

The 4 R's of Trauma-Informed Care:

Realize: Understand that trauma is widespread and can significantly affect a person's physical health, mental health, behavior, and relationships

Recognize: Identify the signs and symptoms of trauma, such as self-destructive behaviors, insomnia, withdrawal from family/friends, difficulty trusting others

Respond: Integrate trauma-informed knowledge and practices into policies, procedures, communication, and daily interactions

Resist Re-traumatization: Actively create environments and experiences that promote safety and avoid triggering or worsening past trauma. Assume that everyone you face has experienced trauma

The 6 Principles of Trauma-Informed Care:

Safety: People heal best when they feel physically, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually safe

Trust & Transparency: Clear communication and honesty help build trust and reduce fear or uncertainty

Peer Support: Shared experiences and supportive relationships can promote healing and connection

Collaboration & Mutuality: Healing is strongest when care is done with people rather than to them

Empowerment, Voice & Choice: Giving people choices and honoring their strengths helps restore dignity and sense of control

Cultural, Historical & Gender Issues: Understanding a person's culture, identity, and life experiences helps provide more respect and effective care

Through Her Eyes — by Dr. Claire Romero

Dr. Claire Romero took a nontraditional path to her current role as Chief Nursing Officer at Via Linda Behavioral Hospital. From working as a nurse at a gas station to a changemaker in nursing leadership, Claire has always had an innate desire to change the world and make a difference. Throughout her career, she cared for patients in various settings, from wound and ostomy care to labor and delivery, to oncology. Regardless of the setting, Claire felt this need to find the "it" factor. Disheartened by the lack of empathy or understanding that she witnessed from other healthcare professionals who were burnt out or had forgotten why they entered the healthcare profession in the first place, Claire refused to stop searching for "it". After years of searching, Claire realized that the "it factor" is not one thing, but six: The six principles of trauma-informed care.

Claire shared her personal experience, through her eyes, as a healthcare professional, to illustrate that trauma-informed care is not a destination, but a journey. She shared vulnerabilities throughout her career, learning moments, and the importance of staying true to one's personal values and search for the "it" factor. While she may have wanted to "change the world" as a new grad nurse, she now realizes that in order to change the world, it takes a team of like-minded individuals who all want to change the world, too.

Through Their Eyes: Virtual Reality as a Tool in the Treatment of Trauma — by Dr. Aditya Shah

PsyTechVR is an emerging virtual reality-based technology designed to support the treatment of trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) through immersive, clinically guided experience. By creating controlled therapeutic environments, PsyTechVR allows patients to safely engage in evidence-based interventions such as exposure therapy, grounding exercises, and emotional regulation skill development. In alignment with Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) principles, therapists can provide immersive controlled environments specifically tailored to the patient, to implement graded exposure, reduce avoidance behaviors and facilitate emotional processing.

Innovations in the Treatment of Trauma — by Dr. Aaron Wilson

Innovations in the treatment of trauma are increasingly integrating trauma-informed care principles with complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) modalities to provide more individualized, neurobiologically informed care. As Dr. Wilson stated, "Neuromodulation and psychedelic-assisted therapies are reshaping trauma treatment by targeting the neural circuits of underlying fear, memory, and emotional regulation". Emerging interventions such as neurofeedback, Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS), and psychedelic-assisted therapies are being explored for their potential to improve emotional regulation, reduce trauma-related symptoms, and promote neuroplasticity in patients with trauma-related disorders. Wilson emphasizes, "As research continues to evolve, these approaches offer the potential not only to reduce symptoms more rapidly, but also to promote neuroplasticity and deeper psychological healing beyond what traditional treatments often achieve".

When implemented with a trauma-informed framework that prioritizes safety, trust collaboration, and patient empowerment, innovations in the treatment of trauma may enhance engagement in treatment and support more holistic recovery outcomes. As research continues to evolve, these innovative approaches are helping reshape the future of trauma treatment through personalized, evidence-based care. Trauma-informed care starts with you. Are you willing to slow down and listen to the person in front of you? How will you choose to show up for others?

If you missed Via Linda's symposium on May 27th, follow us on LinkedIn for updates on our next event. Prepare to be inspired.

About the Author:

As a purpose-driven optimist, Abby Rallo pairs her experience as an educator with her duty to serve as a registered nurse to provide hope to humans. She is a firm believer that 'giving makes you richer' and even on her worst day, she aims to spread joy and kindness to others. Learn more about how Abby combines her values with innovative, evidence-based therapeutic programming at vialindabehavioral.com



When Knowledge Feels Different at Home

In the *Together AZ* community, there is tremendous experience — clinical, peer-based, and from those who have personally struggled with addiction. But one of the patterns we see at PAL is that applying that knowledge at home can feel very different. We see professionals surprised by what unfolds in their own families. We see parents in recovery who recognize patterns in others, yet feel unsure how to respond with their own children. We see families who understand boundaries and enabling, but find them harder to carry out when emotions are involved. Because when it's your child, it's no longer just a situation to assess—it's a relationship you care deeply about. That naturally shapes how things are interpreted.

Parents often lean toward the most hopeful explanation for what they're seeing. That instinct reflects care. But in today's environment, it can delay the clarity families need.



iStock Credit: Feodora Chiosea

Why "They'll Grow Out of It" Carries More Risk Now

For years, believing a young person would "grow out of it" wasn't always unreasonable. Many did.

But today's environment has changed the risk profile in ways professionals understand—and many families do not. We all know that substances are stronger. Access is easier. And in some cases, what someone believes they are taking is not what they are actually taking.

For families, this creates a difficult reality: intent doesn't always predict outcome like it once did.

Helping Families Move from Guessing to Knowing

One of the most helpful shifts families can make—and one professionals can support—is moving from guessing to knowing. Many parents live in uncertainty. They notice changes, ask questions, and try to interpret behavior that can point in different directions. Conversations may not lead to full honesty. Patterns can come and go. So they stay in a watch-and-wait mode—often longer than they intended.

I've always found it interesting how often people keep guessing—and I understand it comes from fear (it did for me). But in that process, they may avoid tools like drug testing—not as punishment, but as a way to better understand what is happening. When framed appropriately, it shifts the conversation from suspicion to care. And once families have clearer information, they are better positioned to take next steps with confidence.

When the Reality Is More Serious Than Expected

When clarity confirms a deeper issue, the experience for families is often overwhelming. Questions surface quickly: what does support look like? Where are the boundaries? How do we stay connected without reinforcing harmful patterns? Even for those with professional experience or personal recovery, this moment can feel different.

What works in a clinical setting—or worked in one's own recovery — may not always translate directly into a parenting dynamic. The emotional and relational aspects matter. We often see individuals in recovery now dealing with their own children. They understand addiction deeply, yet applying that understanding with their own child brings new challenges. This is where many families benefit from additional support.

Support That Helps Families Put Things Into Practice

Many families will benefit from counseling, and that support can be essential. At PAL, we strongly encourage counseling—particularly when families feel stuck or are clearly struggling to cope. At the same time, ongoing peer support often helps families follow through on what they are learning.

It is one thing to understand boundaries. It is another to carry them out consistently in real situations. In environments like PAL, families return week after week, learning alongside others facing similar challenges. Over time, they begin to apply what they are learning and gain confidence in how they respond. Not every family is ready for a meeting.

For those individuals—and for the professionals guiding them—PAL's YouTube channel has become an accessible starting point. It offers practical, evidence-based education on topics like boundaries, communication, and understanding addiction in a way that can be explored privately.

A Shift That Can Change the Direction

One of the most helpful concepts families learn is this: while they may not be able to control their loved one's choices, they can learn to shape how they respond. For the counselor who shared her story, this became a meaningful turning point. Not her professional knowledge alone—but learning how to apply it differently as a parent. Over time, that shift created more stability. It helped her establish healthier patterns and engage in a way that supported both her child and herself.

Why This Matters for the Families You Serve—and Your Own

We all know that addiction does not remain limited to any one type of family. It appears in families with strong values, education, and professional experience—really, any background. And it often begins in ways that look manageable.

For those working in this field, this creates an opportunity to support families earlier—especially when they are still trying to understand what they are seeing. Sometimes the most helpful step is helping families move toward clarity, practical tools, and support.

If This Is a Family You Encounter—or Your Own

Whether this reflects a family you are working with—or something closer to home—there are resources designed specifically to support families. Parents of Addicted Loved Ones (PAL) offers no-cost meetings nationwide, along with online options and educational resources, including its YouTube channel. Families do not need to have everything figured out before they engage. Many begin in uncertainty and find direction over time.

More information is available at palgroup.org, (<https://palgroup.org/>) including a meeting finder at palgroup.org/meeting-finder, (<https://palgroup.org/meeting-finder/>) and PAL's YouTube channel. (<https://www.youtube.com/@ParentsofAddictedLovedOnes>)

Because whether a family is certain what they are facing—or just beginning to question it—the support they receive early can help shape what happens next. No family should have to navigate this alone.

Kim Humphrey is CEO / Executive Director of Parents of Addicted Loved ones (PAL). He is a Retired Police Commander City of Phoenix, Speaker, Trainer and Public Safety Consultant.



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Rethinking Masculinity: Clearing a Path to Men's Mental Health

By Ramsen Kasha, MBA, MS, LPC

June is Men's Mental Health Awareness Month, giving us an opportunity to focus on a topic often overlooked: the ways cultural expectations of masculinity can make it harder for men to seek help. Conversations around "toxic masculinity" have gained prominence, but the label itself can sometimes alienate the very men who most need support. A more productive approach is to examine specific traits. Traits like emotional suppression, hyper-independence, rigid stoicism, and aggression that, when extreme, create barriers to mental wellness. This shift in language can open doors to care while honoring the complexity of men's experiences.

Society has celebrated certain stereotypically identified masculine traits like courage, independence, and resilience. However, these qualities carry unintended consequences when taken to an extreme. Many men grow up learning that vulnerability is weak or that they must handle life's challenges alone. Eventually, these lessons can shape behavior in ways that limit emotional expression and discourage seeking professional help. The traits themselves are not inherently harmful. It is the rigid expectations around them that can create risk.

The statistics are staggering. Men are nearly four times more likely to die by suicide than women, yet they are significantly less likely to engage in therapy. According to the American Psychological Association, societal pressures coupled with the stigma surrounding mental health contribute to this gap. By focusing on specific behaviors rather than labeling masculinity as "toxic," we create language that is less judgmental, more actionable, and more inviting for men to consider change.

Take **emotional suppression** for example. Many men are socialized to "tough it out" or "man up." Often, men are taught the only appropriate emotions for them to feel are happiness or anger with all other emotions getting lumped in as "feeling bad" or worse yet, feeling "ok." This severely limits the emotional vocabulary and can create a barrier to healing even if the person is involved in a therapeutic environment. While resilience is valuable, chronic suppression of emotions can lead to increased stress, anxiety, and even physical health problems. Men may feel isolated, believing admitting vulnerability signals weakness. By framing this as a pattern to watch rather than an inherent flaw of masculinity, we give men permission to explore feelings safely and seek support when needed.



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Hyper-independence is another trait with a double edge. Valuing self-reliance can foster problem-solving and accountability, but to an extreme, it can discourage men from reaching out for help. Therapy, peer support, and open conversations about mental health may be seen as signs of failure rather than strength. Reframing help-seeking as a courageous choice, rather than a betrayal of identity, can change the way men view mental health care.

Anger and aggression are often highlighted in discussions of masculinity. Expressing anger is a natural human response, yet when left unchecked or done unhealthily, it can damage relationships and exacerbate mental health struggles. Encouraging men to channel emotions constructively without implying their identity is flawed can reduce stigma and promote healthier coping strategies.

Language is critical. Phrases like "toxic masculinity" can feel accusatory, shutting down dialogue before it begins. It can create a feeling that it is the "masculinity" that is toxic as opposed to the behaviors. When we (regardless of gender) perceive judgment, we are more likely to disengage, leaving mental health initiatives less effective. Shifting the conversation to focus on specific behaviors and cultural pressures allows men to reflect and respond without feeling attacked. This creates a more inclusive space for intervention and growth.

Practical steps can reinforce this approach. Workplaces, schools, and communities can normalize peer support for men. Highlighting real stories of men seeking help and thriving can challenge stereotypes and show vulnerability as a sign of strength. Mental health professionals can emphasize that addressing traits is about skill-building and resilience, not rejecting masculinity. These strategies make mental health care more approachable while reducing fear of judgment.

Ultimately, the goal is to create environments where men feel safe acknowledging struggle and seeking support. By examining traits rather than labeling identity, we make mental health care feel less threatening and more empowering. Men can maintain courage, independence, and determination while also embracing reflection, emotional awareness, and connection.

Men's Mental Health Awareness Month is a reminder that mental health is a universal concern, not a gendered weakness. Positive as well as "toxic" traits exist regardless of the gender, as does the need for support and healing. By focusing on behaviors and cultural expectations, we dismantle the invisible barriers that keep men from seeking help. Encouraging men to prioritize emotional health strengthens not only individuals but families, workplaces, and communities.

Seeking help is not a sign of weakness but rather an act of courage. Recognizing traits that can limit well-being allows men to live fuller, healthier lives. By shifting the conversation from labels to behaviors, we create pathways to care that are welcoming, inclusive, and empowering. The challenge is clear: redefine strength, expand the definition of masculinity, and make mental health a priority for men everywhere.

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Having an executive leadership board composed of people in long-term recovery, and sharing nearly 300 years of collective lived recovery experience within our staff at large, we know intimately the beauty that results from the shedding of old ideas, narratives and beliefs. And we know this only comes as a result of rigorous emotional, mental and spiritual work, without shortcuts. The temptation in growth is to scale by simplifying — to flatten clinical decision-making into protocol so everyone can move faster. We have tried to do the opposite. The slower path of conferring in real time about the right care for a specific person is harder. We believe it is also better.

So the larger questions become, are we “treating” our clients or co-creating a recovery experience with them? How can we continue to address the reality of emotional suffering through socioemotional skills and resilience? How does the external act upon the internal, and vice versa?

Witness to Positive Growth

We expect miraculous growth and change, and often are witness to it. Not because we are forcing it, but because we consistently hone and adjust the program, culture and environment to apply pressure and support in the direction of positive, life-affirming change.

When our community is faced with staggering rates of anxiety, depression, personality disorders, substance use, loneliness, grief, existential concerns, lack of purpose, lack of belonging — our response must be more thoughtful than a xeroxed packet and a recovery movie. Treatment must ask something deeper of the providers; we must be willing to answer that call. Looking back on the past 10 years, we can reflect candidly on our successes and failures to live up to that greater vision.

This is part of why where the field has gone over the last decade matters — because we should examine the choices that distinguish good treatment from convenient treatment. We should start the conversation of where we fit in the greater landscape. Even in Arizona, experiencing a 40% growth in licensed centers since 2019, it’s hard to feel like we have begun to make a dent in the problem at large. There is still so much work left to do. When we first opened our doors, the concept of primary mental health treatment wasn’t even in the collective discussion. There was a sharp divide between substance use disorder treatment and primary mental health treatment centers. Dual-diagnosis or co-occurring treatment usually meant integrated psychiatry and not much more. It was a big differentiator if a facility understood or addressed trauma. Much of the available treatment consisted of a 12-Step-only curriculum. Only the most esteemed centers looked deeper.

Our decision in 2018 to expand our services to include primary mental health care and comprehensive dual-diagnosis treatment was our response to the complex realities our clients were carrying. Treating a client with both Substance Use Disorder and Borderline Personality Disorder with only 12-Step just wasn’t an option. We built out a full MH curriculum and split these groups for greater individualization. This was a newer concept to us but became our standard in short order. Inconvenient, surely, but better.

Today, the industry at large has changed. Most facilities offer psychiatry or medication management. Many facilities offer some level of trauma psychoeducation or process work. The industry continues to move in a positive direction of integrative and comprehensive care. 12-Step Facilitation is now viewed as a fundamental element of a greater treatment plan. Looking at the whole person instead of just the one piece that is manifesting in dysfunction is becoming more of a standard in the field. This is how we have been able to address such a diverse client population successfully.

Clients — Our Greatest Teachers

Our clients have been our greatest teachers in this way. In the beginning, most clients were satisfied with some process groups, psychoeducational groups and 12-Step meetings. This was the standard 10 years ago. If you provided any level of individualization, you were really knocking it out of the park. Today’s clients are much more savvy and sophisticated. Not only are clients exposed to more psychological concepts and therapy speak in the culture, but they come into treatment with a higher level of agency and desire for how they want their treatment to go.

Our founder, Dan Nichols, LCSW, always likes to remind us that client self-determination is the most foundational principle, and that we also have an obligation to assist our clients using our best practices, skills and wisdom. And to do this effectively, it always comes down to rapport and relationship which is a byproduct of a genuine safety-led culture. Again, there are no shortcuts.

"Providence began as a name we adopted because of the meaning “divine guidance or care”. We saw something miraculous in true change and healing, and have a relentless belief in it."

What the next ten years will ask of us, we suspect, looks a lot like what the last ten did. The willingness to say or do the harder thing when the easier thing is available. All practices with direct analogues to personal recovery. We are more clear about what good treatment demands, and we are more committed than ever to paying that cost on behalf of the people who walk through our doors. Providence began as a name we adopted because of the meaning “divine guidance or care”. We saw something miraculous in true change and healing, and have a relentless belief in it. Ten years in, our striving has become a discipline. Nationally, more than 1 in 5 adults are struggling with mental illness, and yet we are still witnessing the miracle of healing, and we are still doing the tough work to make it possible.

Learn more at <https://scottsdaleprovidence.com/>

Michelle Sheydayi serves as Chief Marketing Officer at Scottsdale Providence Recovery Center and holds a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and a Graduate Certificate in Nonprofit Management and Leadership from Arizona State University. Since 2017, she has worked in the behavioral health field. As an experienced and dedicated leader, Michelle adheres to a philosophy of compassion, integrity and service when working with individuals facing challenges related to substance use, trauma, or mental health concerns. As a person in long term recovery, she is most passionate about seeing clients reconnect with their authentic selves during their recovery journey.





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Pride in the Pines 2026

A Community Gathering — Just Like It Began
June 20th | Noon | Thorpe Park, Flagstaff

When Pride in the Pines began 30 years ago, it was a grassroots gathering in the park — powered by volunteers, small businesses, and community members who believed visibility mattered.

That spirit still lives here.

While this year's footprint looks different, the heart remains the same. We anticipate strong community turnout throughout the day, and with a more focused production, local vendors and sponsors will have even greater visibility and connection. This 30th anniversary is not just a celebration. It is a statement: **Pride in Flagstaff matters.**

The 30-Year Moment

For 30 years, Pride in the Pines has brought Northern Arizona together in celebration, visibility, and belonging. This year, we return to our roots.

In a more challenging funding climate, the Flagstaff Pride Board made the responsible decision to scale back the festival footprint while preserving what matters most:

- Community
- Visibility
- Safety
- Connection

Rather than cancel or compromise, we chose intention.

Pride in the Pines 2026 is a celebration of resilience — a reminder that Pride in Flagstaff has always been powered by people, not production.

<https://flagstaffpride.org/pride-in-the-pines/> Tickets are free, on-line reservation requested.

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Exploring the Benefits of Music Therapy

Music therapy is more than just listening to your favorite tunes to lift your spirits. It's a structured form of therapy used by trained professionals to address various mental health and substance use issues.

What is Music Therapy?

Music therapy is a clinical and evidence-based practice that uses music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship. Certified music therapists use music to help their patients improve their mental, emotional and physical health. This form of therapy can involve listening to music, songwriting, lyric analysis or even playing instruments.

How does music therapy work?

Music therapy works by engaging areas of the brain involved in emotion, cognition and motor functions. When you participate in music therapy, you may engage in activities like composing songs, playing instruments or analyzing lyrics, which can help process emotions, enhance communication and improve focus. Music has a unique way of impacting neural pathways, which can lead to therapeutic changes.

Types of Music Therapy

Some of the types of music therapy include:

• Receptive music therapy

In receptive music therapy, patients listen to music selected by the therapist. This type of therapy helps people relax and reflect, allowing them to express feelings and thoughts more freely. It's often used to help reduce anxiety and stress.

• Active music therapy

Active music therapy encourages patients to participate in music-making. This can involve singing, playing instruments or even writing songs. The process of creating music can be cathartic and empowering, providing patients with a sense of accomplishment and self-expression.

• Neurologic music therapy

This specialized form of music therapy focuses on the neurological aspects of music perception and production. Neurologic music therapy is often used to treat cognitive, sensory and motor dysfunctions that result from neurological diseases or injury.

• Benefits of Music Therapy

Music therapy has been shown to significantly improve mental health outcomes. It can help reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety by providing a safe space for expression and by fostering a sense of connection and understanding.

• Enhanced emotional expression

For many, expressing emotions verbally can be challenging. Music therapy provides an alternative means of expression, allowing people to explore and communicate their feelings through music.

• Stress reduction

The soothing qualities of music can help lower stress levels, leading to physiological benefits such as reduced heart rate and improved mood. Music therapy sessions often incorporate relaxation techniques that can be practiced outside of therapy to manage stress.

• Support in addiction recovery

Music therapy is increasingly used in substance abuse treatment programs. It can help someone in recovery by enhancing motivation, providing a constructive outlet for emotions and reducing cravings and withdrawal symptoms.

• Cognitive and motor skills improvement

For those with neurological conditions, music therapy can aid in the improvement of cognitive functions and motor skills. Rhythmic elements of music can help with coordination and timing, making it a valuable tool in rehabilitation.

• Is Music Therapy Effective?

Research supports the effectiveness of music therapy in a variety of settings and for different conditions. It is particularly beneficial for people who may not respond well to traditional forms of therapy.

Practical Advice for Incorporating Music Therapy

If you're considering music therapy, here are some practical steps to get started:

1. Consult a Professional: Seek out a certified music



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therapist who can tailor sessions to your specific needs.

2. Set Clear Goals: Work with your therapist to establish what you hope to achieve through music therapy.

3. Be Open to Experimentation: Music therapy can involve various activities. Be open to trying different approaches to find what resonates with you.

4. Integrate Music into Daily Life: Use music as a tool for relaxation and emotional regulation outside of therapy sessions.

Music Therapy Can Be a Positive Part of Treatment

Music therapy offers a unique and effective way to support mental health and substance abuse recovery. By engaging with music, people can experience improved emotional expression, reduced stress and enhanced overall well-being. If you or a loved one is struggling with mental health or addiction, consider exploring the benefits of music therapy as a complementary treatment option. Located in Phoenix, Arizona, Valley Hospital provides inpatient and acute care mental health services to people looking for help. Offering a wide continuum of care that includes stabilization in a crisis, inpatient treatment and outpatient treatment, we're ready to meet you where you are and help get you where you want to be. Call us at 602-755-9317 to talk to our admissions team and get started on your recovery.

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From the Mat

Blooming Without Burning Out

By Alexandra Daffner

In Arizona, June arrives with intensity. The temperatures rise quickly, and everything around us seems to demand more energy. For many people in recovery, this season can feel emotionally familiar. The pressure to keep going, keep improving, and keep holding everything together can become overwhelming. But recovery teaches us something important: growth does not have to come from exhaustion.



Mindfulness and yoga remind us that healing is not measured by how much we can carry or how hard we can push ourselves. Sometimes the most powerful growth happens when we slow down enough to truly listen to what we need. **In yoga, balance is not about perfection. It is about awareness.**

Some days we feel steady and grounded. Other days we wobble, lose focus, or feel emotionally drained. The practice is not about never falling out of balance. The practice is learning how to return to ourselves with compassion instead of shame. Recovery works the same way.

Yoga gives us practical tools for this journey such as, breathwork to regulate stress, movement to release tension stored in the body, stillness to reconnect with ourselves, and lastly, community to remind us we are not alone.

June can become an opportunity to pause and ask honest questions:

- What has been draining me lately?
- What has been helping me heal?
- Where am I forcing instead of flowing?
- What would it feel like to support myself instead of constantly pushing myself?

Mindfulness allows us to notice these answers without judgment.

Even a few intentional moments each day — taking a deep breath, stretching gently, sitting quietly, or stepping outside for fresh air in the early hours before it heats up — can help calm the nervous system and reconnect us to the present moment. These small practices create space between reaction and response. In recovery, that space can change everything.

It is often in the pause that we remember:

We do not need to earn rest.

We do not need to prove our worth through struggle.

We are allowed to care for ourselves while we heal.

The desert teaches us a powerful lesson this time of year. Desert plants survive the harsh heat not by constantly fighting against it, but by adapting wisely. They conserve energy, root deeply, and respond to the season with patience. Recovery asks us to do the same. Maybe this month is not about doing more, but rather becoming more intentional with your energy, your habits, and your healing.

This June, give yourself permission to bloom slowly. Honor your capacity. Stay rooted in your recovery. Sustainable healing is always more powerful than burnout. You do not have to rush your becoming. See you on the mat!

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In addition to school supplies, participants will receive free dental and health screenings, haircuts, kids' activities, community resources, and a surprise visit from beloved Arizona Diamondbacks mascot. This family-friendly event is open to everyone and aims to help students head back to school feeling prepared and confident.

Early arrival is strongly encouraged, as supplies and giveaways will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis.

For those looking to support the event during the month of June, donations can be dropped off at Texas Roadhouse 5086 S. Power Road, and at Mesa PD Substations, addresses listed on the flyer below.

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From Homeland to Omland Security

Ever since that dreadfully tragic morning of September 11, 2001, Americans have discovered what hundreds of millions of people around the world have known for years: *As a human being we are far more vulnerable than we'd ever feared to imagine ourselves to be.* Even before three jet airplanes deliberately crashed into buildings in both New York City and Washington D.C., you've been vulnerable.

But vulnerability is not necessarily a bad thing at all. In fact, it can even be a good thing, so much so that I've often given my life coaching and business coaching clients the following--apparently contradictory--affirmation: "My strength lays in my vulnerability." This surface contradiction has puzzled many of these people.

So I elaborated. Just to stay alive, you depend on each breath that you take through your nostrils and each beat of your heart every moment of every day and night. Both of these are provided for you by an invisible Higher Power. Could you possibly be more vulnerable than that? As if that isn't enough, you're continually reliant on the powerful force of gravitation that keeps you from being hurled into outer space since, in point of fact, you are living on a spaceship that endlessly circles the sun. So what I explain is that once you realize that you're vulnerable and yet taken care of powerful cosmic forces, you can surrender to them—and that, in a nutshell, is what spiritual development is all about. I'll come back to that shortly.

Since that fateful 9/11, we've had our danger measured by orange and red alerts posted by the Department of Homeland Security. I propose a breakthrough way of measuring vulnerability: get in touch with your inner



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Om-Land Security. What, you ask, is Om-Land Security? By this I mean getting connected to that which is eternally safe deeply within you. The more you do that, the more your color-coded alerts will shift from orange or red to white — as in the pure white light of Truth.

I say these things not to frighten you, but to enlighten you

I'd like you to realize your safety in this lifetime on earth and in the larger universe as a whole depends not on agencies governmental, but on governing your mental life. The best way to govern your mental life is to bring your mind to its peaceful source where your strength and eternal safety rests. The asanas you practice on your mat in your Saturday morning Hatha Yoga class were originally part of a spiritual program that was taught to Arjuna, a military leader in India. He learned, ever so eloquently, from his teacher Krishna, of the invincibility of the inner Self: The great guru told his student that, *"Weapons cannot cleave him, nor fire burn him; water cannot wet him, nor wind dry him away."*

Having taught Transcendental Meditation for several decades and the Higher Self Healing Meditation that I founded, as a variant of it, in 2012, I can say with absolute certainty that these meditation techniques can bring you to this place of deep safety at the silence of your mind where your individual mind emerges out of the universal part of your inner Being.

Americans are at a crossroads, the so-called proverbial fork in the road. One way on that fork leads through the Department of Homeland Security, which can whip you into a panic of frenzy and terror. The other part of that fork, the Department of Omland Security, can settle you into the peace that sets you free. So do you want to take your direction from D.C. (as in Washington) or T.C. (as in what meditators call Transcendental Consciousness, a state of pure joy)?

Now, more than ever, is the time for you to choose.

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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	
Horizon Recovery Center	480-219-7098	horizonrecovery.com
Hushabye Nursery	480-628-7500	hushabyenursery.org
The Meadows	800-632-3697	themeadows.com
Mens Teen Challenge	520-792-1790	tcaz.org
Mental Health America of Arizona		mhaarizona.org
Mercy Care 800-631-1314	602-222-9444	mercyareaz.org
NorthSight Recovery	833-787-9718	northsightrecovery.com
Psychological Counseling Services (PCS)	480-947-5739	pcsintensive.com
Scottsdale Providence	480-210-1734	scottsdaleprovidence.com
Scottsdale Recovery Center	888-663-7847	scottsdalerecovery.com
Scottsdale Serenity	480-906-2067	scottsdalserenityrehab.com
Sharon Youngblood	520-331-1483	
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	konnectwellness.org
Valley Hospital	602-952-3939	valleyhospital-phoenix.com
Via Linda Behavioral Hospital	480-476-7210	vialindabehavioral.com
Virtue Recovery Center	866-338-6977	virtuerecoveryuncitywest.com
Teen Challenge AZ	602-708-9475	tcaz.org

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
Gam-Anon 602-303-7876	National Hotline 844-475-4213
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	

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

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.

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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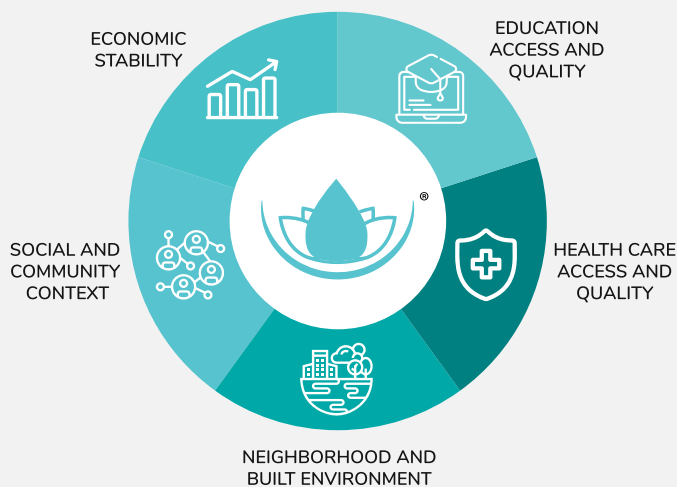
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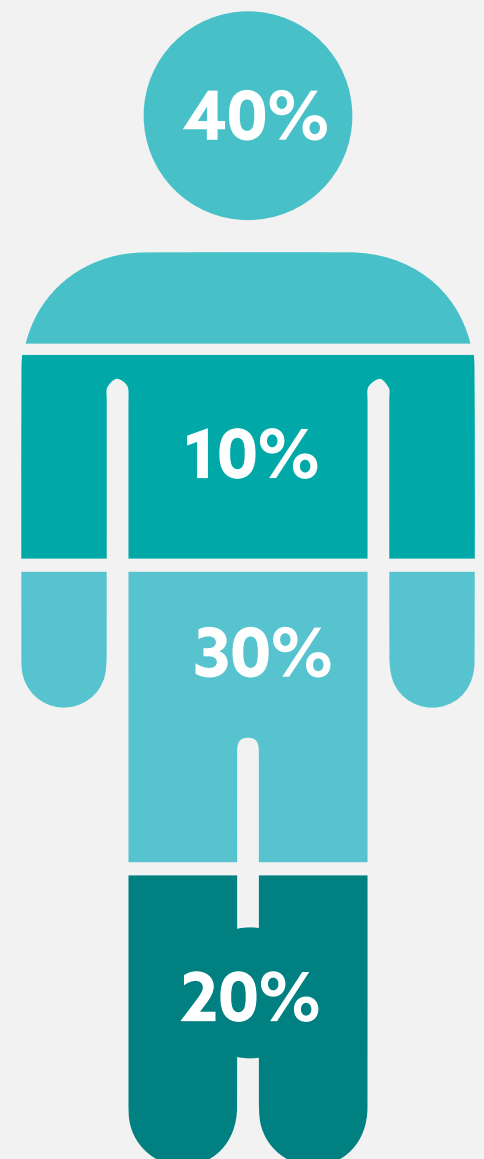
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