

Equal Access, Better Outcomes

By Lee Yaiva, CEO Scottsdale Recovery Center

If Only

Imagine peering through the window of opportunity. Your hands contouring the side of your face, your nose pushed up against the window, your eyes fixated on potential possibilities, **"If only."** Your breath fogging the window temporarily and then it dissipates nearly as quickly as your hope does. Imagine that the quality of life was contingent upon accessibility, your hands cupping the side of your face as you think, "if I could afford to go there, I know I'd get better."

Visual observation reinforces that idea, evidenced by smiles, laughter, and community cohesion. Uninhibited joy permeates the room as you sigh, your gaze slowly descends, your head drops and your eyes examine the imperfections of the concrete sidewalk as you walk away. Accessibility recedes with each step, and the reality of your situation is reinforced by internal dialogue, saturated with self-doubt, guilt and shame.

This is the experience of many in pursuit of an improved quality of life, one free from alcohol and substance use. A life free from self-destructive behavior, and the intensity of an internal conflict of two competing forces, and you, the mediator between life and death based on the choices you make. However, those choices are validated by social determinants of health, environmental influence, and inaccessibility.

The Cost of Admission

Fee for service, sliding fee scales, and pre-authorization are introductory words that precede care. It is like a foreign dialect without the aid of an interpreter, with a building sense of urgency to expedite the healing process. This only intensifies the uncertainty and fear, compounded by the physical response to withdrawal.

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"In recovery, you have the opportunity to turn pain to power, trauma to triumph and victimization to victory!"

Bringing Joy!

By Jeniffer S. Rogers



Community 43
Wellness • Community • Purpose

In this vast world that we live in, with all the chaos that surrounds us on a daily basis, things are often forgotten. This has been the case throughout history for a population that grows larger every year.

However, this has changed and continues to get better for a community of individuals in mental health recovery. In 2020, through all of the chaos of Covid, sits a small building in Phoenix, Arizona, off of 16th Street that speaks loudly. Inside its walls are members of a clubhouse called Community 43, which was founded to bring together those of like minds.

Community 43, also known as C43, is unlike your typical behavioral health clinic. What would normally fall on staff, is put in the hands of both its members and Social Practitioners alike.

Side by side, they run the clubhouse, cook the food, participate in all decision making, as well as interviewing potential staff. There is nothing that members and staff don't do together to keep C43 running as smooth as possible. C43 offers its members a variety of opportunities to engage in a purposeful work order day. Members can work on: culinary skills, tech support, maintenance, horticulture, administration, employment, and creative development.

Quietly within the walls of C43 lies one of its members. A brilliant artist with a history that speaks louder than paint brushes and canvases. Miciah Beard enjoys the artists life while at C43.

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CELEBRATE THE POWER OF RECOVERY!

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Publisher's Note

By Barbara Nicholson-Brown

What Recovery Month Means to Me

For me, recovery month is more than a calendar event — and far more than words. It represents healing, hope, and resilience, all forged through patience, honesty, humility, and hard work.

When I first started on this journey, I didn't know what recovery meant. How could I? I had no blueprint and no real understanding that addiction is a disease, not a personal flaw or a moral weakness, despite what I had been told while using. For years, I heard "What's wrong with you?" and that settled deep into my identity.

Everything changed when those discouraging words were replaced by supportive ones: "We're here for you," "Take it one day at a time," and "We are on this road together." Hearing that, and finally believing it, lifted a massive weight off my shoulders.

Real life in recovery still has its ups, downs, laughter, and tears. But today, I know deep in my heart I am never alone. Recovery Month may only be recognized once a year, but I celebrate it all 365 days. Since 1989 September is recognized as National Recovery Month.

Suicide Prevention Month, an annual observance dedicated to sharing resources, promoting mental health awareness, and reducing the stigma surrounding suicide has been recognized since 2008.

A heartfelt thank you to our contributors for making this issue a memorable one.

In Honor and Remembrance 9.11



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We had such an amazing time last year, and this year's event promises to be even better. Don't miss your chance to be part of it!





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Spotlight On

By Dee Williams, VP, MHA-AZ



For Jessica Westmiller, MSW, mental health advocacy has never been confined to a boardroom. For years, her work has placed her alongside firefighters, police officers, healthcare providers, and families during moments when life has suddenly changed, after a death, during a behavioral health emergency, or amid grief, addiction, homelessness, or another traumatic event.

Now, that experience will help guide one of Arizona's longest-standing

voices for mental health.

Mental Health America of Arizona has elected Westmiller president of its statewide Board of Directors, marking a new chapter for an organization that has served Arizona since 1954.

The transition represents more than a change in board leadership. It places a professional whose career has been deeply rooted in crisis response and community behavioral health at the helm of an organization focused on prevention, education, advocacy, early intervention, and access to care.

Westmiller serves as senior crisis intervention program manager within the Chandler Fire Department Operations Division. Her career has centered on a deceptively simple question: *What does a person need after something has gone terribly wrong?*

Chandler's Crisis Response Unit, known as CR288, provides one answer

The 9-1-1-dispatched mobile crisis team operates around the clock, responding alongside fire and police personnel after traumatic events and behavioral health emergencies. While traditional first responders address medical emergencies and public safety, crisis responders help individuals and families begin navigating what comes next—providing emotional support, crisis intervention, resources, and connections to community services.

That work has given Westmiller a perspective on mental health that cannot be developed solely through policy discussions.

"She has seen crisis at the human level."

In describing her work publicly, Westmiller has spoken about strengthening family systems and building resilience for people affected by trauma, poverty, systemic health challenges, and disconnection. Her philosophy also reflects an important evolution occurring throughout behavioral health: Communities cannot simply wait until someone reaches a breaking point before offering help.

That philosophy closely aligns with Mental Health America of Arizona's emphasis on prevention and early intervention.

Westmiller's leadership has also earned recognition beyond Chandler. Arizona State University's School of Social Work honored her with a Public Safety and Behavioral Health Advocacy Award for demonstrating leadership and dedication capable of positively influencing change within the public safety community. Her professional development has included crisis intervention,

Jessica Westmiller, MSW

suicide intervention, Mental Health First Aid, and veteran navigation, while her work has helped build partnerships across public safety and behavioral health. **Those relationships matter.**

Arizona's mental health challenges do not belong to one profession or one system. A person experiencing a crisis may encounter firefighters, law enforcement officers, emergency departments, behavioral health providers, schools, nonprofit organizations, veteran services, and family members, sometimes within the same journey.

Effective mental health leadership, therefore, requires collaboration across the spaces where people actually live and seek help. Westmiller brings that perspective to the MHA-AZ presidency.

As president, she will help guide strategic direction, strengthen stakeholder engagement, and expand efforts to improve mental health awareness and equitable access to behavioral health services throughout Arizona.



2026 SEEDS conference: From left, Dee Williams, VP, CEO Pierluigi Mancini, PhD and newly elected President, Jessica Westmiller

Mental Health America National Interim President and CEO Pierluigi Mancini, PhD, congratulated MHA-AZ's new board leadership and expressed his commitment to continuing the national organization's partnership with Arizona in advancing the shared mission of mental health for all.

For MHA-AZ, that mission carries more than seven decades of history

Founded in 1954, Mental Health America of Arizona is the state's oldest nonprofit organization dedicated to mental health promotion, prevention, education, advocacy, and early intervention. Its continued relevance depends on leaders capable of connecting that history to the realities facing Arizona communities today.

Westmiller's election provides exactly that opportunity.

There is something fitting about a crisis professional stepping into this role. Crisis intervention teaches that we cannot always change what has already happened to someone. **But we can change what happens next.**

That same principle can guide mental health advocacy.

We can strengthen prevention before crisis occurs. We can make resources easier to find. We can reduce the stigma around asking for help. We can build stronger partnerships among public safety, behavioral health, and community organizations. And we can continue creating systems that recognize mental health as an essential part of community health.

Jessica Westmiller has spent much of her career helping people determine what happens next. As president of Mental Health America of Arizona, she now has an opportunity to help Arizona answer that question on a much larger scale.



Learn more about MHA-AZ by visiting <https://www.mhaarizona.org>
Email: mhaofarizona@gmail.com, Phone: 480-994-4407. For emergencies, call 988 or 911.

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35 Years
on the Road to Recovery

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Sober Tailgating and Having Fun During Football Season

By Amy Tilley, PsyD

September is upon us— and that means FOOTBALL! For the next six months, there will be a football game on almost every day of the week for your viewing pleasure. Are you a fan of college football or the National Football League? Do you enjoy watching College Game Day on Saturday mornings or the entire Fox NFL broadcast on Sunday mornings? Maybe you are one of the intense fans that wakes up at 5am to watch the NFL play overseas (there are nine international broadcasts this year). Do you go to games in person and enjoy cheering your team on in the frigid temperatures in the winter?

Tailgating and Triggers

Whatever your viewing pleasures, you will notice a surge in online gambling advertisements. The commercials are tied to the audience of people who enjoy having a good time while watching the game. Sportsbooks allocate massive marketing budgets to reach millions of engaged fans to enable them to place real time wagers. Football is the most watched sport in the world, bringing in many new and vulnerable customers to place a bet on what color Gatorade will the coach get showered in the game, or if the punter will make the game winning field goal.

This can be a trigger for many, especially those in active recovery. For decades, tailgating was associated with drinking and more recently, online gambling. Tailgating is closely tied to online sports gambling. They are deeply intertwined because both involve shared brain reward pathways (dopamine release), co-occurring addiction risks, and potential legal risks and financial hardship due to making poor choices while drinking and gambling.

Thankfully, there is a movement to provide safe and fun environments while watching a game from home or tailgating in the parking lot of your favorite team's stadium. Many organizations and universities have adopted the sober tailgating movement, creating a safe space for everyone to enjoy the pre-game festivities and the game itself, without drinking and gambling. Collegiate Recovery Programs are prominent on campus all year round, and particularly active during football season.

The University of Arizona has Wildcats Anonymous and hosts alternative game day socials and sober tailgates. Look up a chapter in your area to see what events are happening. (<https://collegiaterecovery.org/>)

What about the lead up to the season? Are you a member of a fantasy football league? Do you and your friends get together and host a draft party? This could be a trigger, too. There are several ways to help you prepare for that event, and the long season that follows.

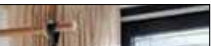
Host a theme party and tell everyone that no alcohol or betting is allowed. Have a fun evening with your friends, while keeping your recovery at



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the forefront. My friends and I have a draft party every Labor Day weekend. We make a whole event of it. The theme is grilling and potluck. Everyone is responsible for some dish or dessert and then we get together in someone's backyard and have a bonfire, while drafting our teams. None of us are very good at picking teams, and money has never changed hands in the draft or throughout the season. One of my friends really loves cats. Once year, she chose her team based on "which player's names sound the most like an animal?" (Ex: Brock Purdy's last name mimics a cat's meow). She did extremely well in the draft and made it to the semi-finals! We do it for pure fun and camaraderie.

Here are a few themed sober tailgating events to host at your home

- ***Tailgate Foodie Cookoff:*** make food the centerpiece of your event! Challenge your group to bring their best gameday specialty: chili cook-off, nachos grande station, build your own hot dog bar, or epic slider or baked potato bar. Have everyone vote on their favorite dish and then crown the “Tailgate Chef” at the end of the game!
 - ***Outdoor Adventure Games:*** in the fall / early winter, before the snow and cold arrive! Set up a mini competition featuring several giant yard games: Cornhole, Giant Jenga or Connect Four.
 - ***Team Spirit:*** create a team spirit station with face paint, temporary tattoos and team beads (note: the beads will dye your neck that color if you wear them long enough—not that I know anything about that! LOL!)
 - ***Rustic Coffee and Cocoa Cabin:*** set up a coffee and hot chocolate station on a distressed wooden tray. Create a cozy theme using mason jars for the drinks. Make sure you have toppings like cinnamon stir tick, dark chocolate shavings, sprinkles, whip cream, marshmallows, peppermint syrup and caramel drizzle to make a fun hot beverage!
 - ***Crafting Table:*** have a variety of paints, markers, sketch pads, stickers, ribbon, paracord, etc. out for your friends to create their team’s logo or a fun sign to hang up during the game.
- 

Getting a group of friends together for football games and fun doesn't have to be a triggering event. Setting boundaries up front and communicating clearly before the event can reduce the pressure and increase your mental well-being. Putting the focus on socializing and connecting with others and enjoying the food can lower your anxiety.

Having regular social events can foster long lasting friendships and create a new community for you. This reduces isolation and symptoms of depression. Having something on your calendar also increases the likelihood that you will show up, as others are counting on you to participate.

Enjoy the football season, the food, the fun, and the connection with all your family and friends. Go Bears!

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** or call **520-638-6000**.



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However, before discussing that, let's dive into his life. He grew up in Tucson, Arizona, where he first discovered his love of art and where his desire for cooking started to boil. Being raised by a single mother wasn't easy, but it allowed him to grow close to her.

Throughout his life he's lived in four states gaining experiences that defined him. He made his way back to Tucson, where in 2010, he entered, dazzled, and won the Iron Chef competition. His love for cooking didn't stop there, as he is no stranger to the food and beverage industry. From prepping and delivering pizza to working for a local Steak and Chop House, which gave him much of the experiences that made him who he is today. But there's more.



He continues to dazzle everyone at C43. “What got you into cooking?” He was asked.

“I think my main interest in cooking from a very young age, is that my mom didn't know how to cook, so I was reading cookbooks before I was ten trying to cook stuff.” He proclaimed.

“Why do you enjoy cooking?”

“Food has the power to bring people together.” He continued, “It's the one thing that everybody has in common, so to have that power is a blessing I think.”

“Can you share with us what your life looked like before it became too much?”

“It was a long journey,” he began, “When I started out I was really rebellious, always getting into trouble, but I slowly got better and learned from my mistakes.” Then, his mother passed away which led him into a downward spiral that brought him to C43.



Completing the mural at AZ Holistic Health

“Beard is a brilliant artist with a history that speaks louder than paint brushes and canvases.”

After coming here, the Creative Design Unit and Culinary became another part of his life that helped to define him. Overcoming difficult situations that changed him, he began producing amazing art that can be seen throughout the clubhouse. Beard has been productive and one of the calmest and most talented people we've known.

For example, last year, C43 experienced what could have been a disastrous Thanksgiving, if Beard had not saved them. With members not knowing what to do or how to prepare the meal, he jumped in and taught members and staff how to cook the turkey, prepare side dishes, and watered their mouths with delicious desserts. Others will usually save Christmas, but for this community, it was Beard who saved Thanksgiving.

Through it all, food became art, paintings became murals that expressed what often gets held inside, allowing him to express to everyone who he truly is and who he has become. His style, his techniques, meant more than he realized.

Bringing joy to others and loving that his art doesn't have to make sense, is just a small part of who he is, that we are privileged to see. But with him, as with others, there is more to than meets the eye. We all try to live life the best we can. To respect and love others as they are, is so crucial today. He had this sound advice to give to us.

“Don't be afraid to ask for help. You don't have to do it alone. There are people out there that can make things easier.” In this busy society where everything speaks louder than us, is a hidden force that often cries for freedom, a force that's visible to those, who aren't.

To learn more and get involved visit <https://community43.org/>

Community 43 is based on New York's original Clubhouse, Fountain House. The Clubhouse International model has been replicated in more than 300 locations in 32 countries and 32 states. It currently serves more than 100,000 people with mental illness worldwide. Thanks to the Stead family's vision, we are able to bring this model to Arizona and share it with the community.

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Bringing Awareness to National Suicide Prevention Month

“Start the conversation. Be the difference” — National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

By Abby Rallo, BSN, RN

If life were a book, most of us would skip ahead from time to time. We’d flip past the awkward moments, the painful chapters, and pretend that the chapters where everything falls apart didn’t actually exist. If we couldn’t skip a certain chapter, we would reluctantly push through, hoping that the next chapter is better.

But when someone is struggling with depression, it can feel like they’re stuck in a part of their story that never ends. The pages become heavy, the plot becomes hopeless, and the future feels out of reach. Caught up in the storm or feeling like they’ve hit rock bottom, some may feel like the story would be better if it ended early.

Why Suicide Awareness Matters

Suicide is a major public health concern and one of the leading causes of death in the United States [1]. Research shows that there are typically warning signs before someone chooses to take their own life. Awareness saves lives.

Every year, NAMI recognizes Suicide Prevention Month to raise awareness and encourage each one of us to check on our loved ones, colleagues, or even a stranger on the street. This September, you can make a difference by getting curious about others, starting a conversation, and truly listening. Learn more about how you can make a difference, below:

Recognizing Signs of Suicidal Thoughts or Behaviors

Suicidal ideations are often preceded by signs of depression.

Common signs include:

- Persistent sadness or feelings of hopelessness
- Loss of interest in activities/hobbies that were once enjoyed
- Changes in sleep or appetite
- Fatigue, lethargy, lack of energy
- Difficulty concentrating
- Increased irritability or withdrawal from others [2]

Warning Signs of Suicidal Thoughts of Behaviors

If you suspect someone is struggling with depression, pay special attention to warning signs that they might have suicidal ideas. **Seek immediate help if this person demonstrates the following:**

- Talking about wanting to die or feeling like a burden
- Expressing feelings of hopelessness about the future
- Giving away their belongings/possessions
- Withdrawing/isolating from friends or family
- Sudden, noticeable bursts of energy, especially after a period of depression



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What to Do If You Suspect Someone is Struggling

If you suspect someone is struggling with suicidal ideations, trust your instincts, stay in the conversation, and seek professional support. Listen without judgement and ask questions. Asking someone if they are thinking about suicide does not increase their risk, it helps them feel seen and supported. **Don’t be afraid to ask.**

National Suicide Prevention Month is a reminder that everyone has a story, and every story matters...even the messy ones, the overwhelming ones, and the ones where nothing seems to be going right. This month is a reminder that sometimes the most important thing we can do is to take the time to listen to someone else’s story and together recognize that it’s worth discovering what happens in the next chapter. Because their story isn’t over yet.

Crisis Resources from NAMI

- If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, call or text 988 immediately
- You can also chat with the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988lifeline.org

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



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The Road to Recovery Runs Through Real Life

By Ramsen Kasha, MS, MBA, LPC
Chief Clinical Officer Sahara Wellness Center

There is something fitting about celebrating Recovery Month in Phoenix, where resilience is part of the architecture. We live through 115-degree afternoons, monsoon dust storms, and the annual ritual of pretending that “it’s just a dry heat.” September arrives with a strange kind of optimism. The monsoon clouds have moved on, and cooler weather is around the corner.

For those of us who are or have worked alongside people navigating mental health and substance use recovery, it is a month that carries both celebration and perspective. We celebrate the people who have found their way back to themselves, the families who have persevered, and the professionals and peers who keep showing up. But we are also reminded that recovery is rarely a straight line, and it does not end when someone completes a program.

Treatment is a critical piece of recovery, but it is not the destination. It is a bridge between where someone has been and where they are trying to go. What happens on the other side of that bridge determines whether progress has somewhere to take root. That reality feels especially important in the Phoenix metro area. We live in a sprawling community with tremendous resources, but access varies depending on transportation, housing, insurance, family support or the ability to take time off work. Add extreme heat and a rapidly growing population, and navigating behavioral healthcare can feel like a part-time job.

For someone already struggling with depression, anxiety, trauma or substance use, being told to call one provider for therapy, another for medical, another for medication management, another for substance use treatment and another for case management can be overwhelming. For a person in crisis, it can be like handing someone a map when they really need someone willing to walk with them. That is why integrated care matters.

We have an increasing recognition that healthcare cannot exist in separate silos. Mental health, substance use, physical health, medication management,



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case management and recovery support are interconnected because people are interconnected. We don’t experience life in departments, even if our healthcare system sometimes asks us to.

This is one reason behind the integrated care at Sahara Wellness Center, built around a simple premise: quality care should be accessible to people who need it, and getting help shouldn’t require becoming an expert in navigating the healthcare system. Having multiple services under one roof can reduce handoffs, gaps and delays that interrupt momentum. More importantly, it creates an environment where the person, not the diagnosis or insurance category, remains the center of the conversation.

That philosophy reflects something many of us learn in this profession: people don’t generally arrive with problems that fit neatly into one category. Someone may come to us because of alcohol use and also have untreated trauma. Another may be seeking help for depression while quietly struggling with prescription medications. Someone else may be sober for years but find themselves unraveling after losing a job, marriage or loved one. The presenting problem is often just the part of the story that finally became impossible to ignore. **Recovery asks us to treat the whole story.**

It also requires redefining what progress looks like. Sometimes progress is dramatic: a person completes treatment, reunites with their children, finds housing and starts a new career. Sometimes it is much quieter. It is answering the phone. Showing up for an appointment. Going another day without using. Taking medication consistently. Rebuilding trust one conversation at a time. Those moments are the foundation of lasting recovery.

As behavioral health professionals, we are not simply treating symptoms or managing crises. We are helping people build lives in which recovery can survive. That requires collaboration, fewer silos and more communication between providers, primary care, peer support, housing organizations, families, employers and community resources. It requires warm handoffs instead of phone numbers scribbled on discharge paperwork to check a box. It requires understanding that relapse does not erase months of progress and that asking for help again is not failure. Most of all, it requires humility. We are privileged to work with people during some of the most difficult chapters of their lives. We do not write the ending for them. We get to help create the conditions in which a different ending becomes possible. **That is worth celebrating.**

During Recovery Month, we celebrate milestones we can see and the thousands of smaller victories happening quietly behind closed doors. We celebrate the person with five years sober and the person who made it through their first five days. We celebrate the family learning how to support without enabling and the peer who reminds someone their worst day does not have to become their whole story.

Recovery is not a finish line. It is a process of becoming, rebuilding and reconnecting. In the Valley, where we know something about enduring difficult conditions, perhaps that is the message worth carrying into September. People can recover. Communities can recover. When we make quality care easier to find, easier to access and easier to stay connected to, we give recovery a much better place to grow.

Ramsen Kasha, MBA, MS, LPC, has been in the field of addiction treatment and mental health since 2000. He is Chief Clinical Officer at Sahara Wellness Center.
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Many times, we dictate our worth in response to things that we have done or said. Our minds, a whirlwind of costly mistakes, ill-advised choices, and displaced responsibility. Looking desperately for ways to self-sabotage, looking for ways to manipulate your way out of an opportunity at the reclamation of life. An opportunity of a lifetime that will create a lifetime of opportunities is at your fingertips; separated only by an internal conflict, a throwback to behavior that is not conducive to the way you were raised, nearly eliminating self-worth and assuming the role of judge, jury and executioner. You have established self-induced boundaries that you have violated with prejudice, enacting the “twinkie defense” with impunity. “I would never do that.” “Who drinks at 8 o’clock in the morning?” “I would never stick a needle in my arm; besides, I am afraid of needles.” The finely threaded fabric of time, dissecting your life with surgical precision but making a valiant attempt to stitch your life back together.



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"Imagine peering through the window of opportunity. Your hands contouring the side of your face, your nose pushed up against the window, your eyes fixated on the potential possibilities, "If only."

You’ve paid the price with your pride, dignity and self-respect but it’s not enough to cover the cost of admission. Until now....

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At Scottsdale Recovery Center, we recognized the disparity and the inequities impacting marginalized, underserved populations, the chasm for which many of us has fallen. The social determinants of health that have had a profound impact on your life and stunted personal development. And an industry that has created a revolving door with antiquated interventions and modalities that have perpetuated hope, a passive wish for an enhanced quality of life.

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Skilled and trained professionals that operate within an organization worthy of a “Michelin Star.” Metaphorically speaking, think of them as Chefs disguised as trained clinicians, behavioral health professionals with lived experience who are ready to serve up anything on the menu. **Confidence. Self-worth. Identity. Love**, the notoriously unemployed emotion, especially as it relates to us.

The opportunity to recover your pride, dignity and self-respect. The elusive identity you have run from for so long is made possible by simply creating accessibility.

The buffet is one of the only places you have to pay up front, and you already have. The invaluable currency when learning that life didn’t happen to you, it happened for you.

At Scottsdale Recovery Center, we are so certain that no matter who is on the other side of that windowpane, they are worth the investment. YOU are worth the investment! We are supremely confident that we will fill not only fill the void, but you will leave satisfied and content.

Inclusion

The ability to adopt lingo in correlation to experience is contingent upon your ability to break down the language barrier. You may hear an individual say, “when I get out,” rather than “when I successfully complete the program.” “I think” rather than “I know.” Access has removed the physical barrier but becoming a linguistic peer creates inclusion.

Be a Champion of Your Life

Many of us have paid the price for our addictions, a costly investment that has spanned years, maybe even decades. However; you now have the opportunity to become a part of a movement, a culture, a member of a tribe with a specific dialect and language that you now understand fluently. Inclusivity without reserve, the full embrace of love and acceptance that is established on equity and reciprocity. We all stood outside that windowpane, seeking acceptance and accessibility. You now have the opportunity to enact lived experience — to turn pain to power, trauma to triumph and victimization to victory! To become a champion in your own life. More importantly, to give what you now have. At Scottsdale Recovery Center, we have left the light on specifically for you!

Usability

Being information rich but utilization broke has created repetition while failing to produce anticipated results. This may not have been your first experience, but we strive to ensure it is your last. Excuses have always comforted your incapacity and by enacting the skill set acquired at Scottsdale Recovery Center. You will be at capacity, and your cup will run over before it ever runs dry. You can’t lose with the stuff we use!

Learn more at www.scottsdalerecovery.com

Lee Yaiva is a proud Hopi from the Village of Soon-gopavi in Northeastern Arizona and a member of the Water Clan (Patkiwungwa). He is the CEO of Scottsdale Recovery Center, the owner of HNIC, LLC, the founder of Reztoration Health and Healing 501(c)(3), and serves on local and national boards that ensure equitable access to high quality care. With 20 years of expertise in behavioral health and addiction treatment, Yaiva is known for blending clinical acumen with business insight, driving innovative solutions to address evolving trends in therapeutic interventions and service delivery.



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From the Mat

Yoga and Recovery *A Practice of Coming Back to Yourself*

By Alexandra Daffner

September has a way of inviting us to pause. Summer begins to wind down, routines return, and we naturally start thinking about what we want to carry with us into the season ahead. It also happens to be a month that shines a light on two things that are deeply meaningful to us: **National Yoga Month and National Recovery Month.**

At Spiritually Fit, we see the connection between yoga and recovery every single day. Not because yoga is a replacement for recovery, treatment, or community — but because it can be a powerful tool within that journey. Recovery asks us to build a new relationship with ourselves. Yoga asks us to do the same.



For us, one of the most powerful lessons yoga offers is the practice of coming back. Coming back to the breath when the mind wanders. Coming back to the body when we feel disconnected. Coming back to the present moment when we are consumed by the past or anxious about the future. Recovery can look a lot like that too.

There may be days when everything feels steady and hopeful, and there may be days when simply getting through the next hour feels like an accomplishment. Yoga reminds us that we don't have to be perfect to practice— we just have to return to basics.

For someone navigating recovery, reconnecting with the body can be especially meaningful. Years of substance use, trauma, stress, or emotional pain can change the way we experience ourselves physically. A yoga practice can create an opportunity to notice what is happening inside without immediately needing to fix, numb, or escape it.

That might mean noticing a racing heart and taking a slower breath. Feeling tension in the shoulders and allowing them to soften. Sitting with discomfort long enough to realize that it can change. This is where mindfulness becomes such an important part of the conversation.

Mindfulness doesn't mean having a perfectly quiet mind

It means learning to notice what is happening without immediately reacting to it. In recovery, that pause can be incredibly powerful. Between an emotion and a reaction, between a craving and a choice, there can be a moment of awareness—and sometimes, that moment is where change begins. And perhaps most importantly, neither yoga nor recovery is meant to be done alone.

At Spiritually Fit Co-Op, some of our most meaningful moments happen when people simply practice beside one another. There is something powerful about walking into a room carrying your own story and realizing that everyone else has one too.

We don't have to know every detail of someone's journey to offer them compassion. We don't have to have the same story to share the same breath. Community reminds us that healing doesn't have to happen in isolation.



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As we celebrate National Recovery Month this September, we also want to celebrate something that doesn't always get talked about enough: recovery is about more than what we are moving away from.

It is about what we are moving toward.

Toward connection.

Toward purpose.

Toward self-trust.

Toward a life that feels worth being present for.

Yoga can be one small part of that process.

Whether you're brand new to yoga, years into recovery, supporting someone you love, or simply looking for a healthier way to navigate stress, September is a beautiful reminder that you can begin again at any moment.

One breath. One choice. One day at a time. And if you fall out of rhythm, you can always come back.

At Spiritually Fit Co-Op, we invite you to make that return part of your recovery practice. Join us every Thursday at 7:00 p.m. for Y12SR (Yoga of 12-Step Recovery) and every Saturday at 5:00 p.m. for our donation-based Hot Yoga for Addiction Recovery (HYAR) at our Scottsdale studio.

See you on the Mat!

Enroll for your class today at <https://spirituallyfitco-op.com>

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Courage to Change

By Stephen Weis

Most people who have spent any real time in the recovery space have heard the Serenity Prayer. God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. You hear it in church basements and treatment centers, see it on coffee mugs and wall hangings, in rooms full of people trying to put their lives back together. It has become so familiar that it's easy to let the words wash over you. But sit with them long enough and they stop being a prayer you recite and start being a question you have to answer. **What can't I change? What can I? And do I have the wisdom to tell the two apart?**

I have worked in the healthcare industry in some capacity for almost two decades. And it was inside the industry that I saw the gaps — the moments where someone reaches out for help and the support isn't there. Instead, they fall through the cracks. I watched it happen many times, and for a long time I wondered what could be done to change it.

I have always been an entrepreneur at heart. I'm wired to look at a problem and ask how I could move the needle — not just to patch it, but replace the system that keeps producing the same heartbreak. That instinct was always there. But an instinct isn't enough. Seeing a problem clearly is not the same as having the courage to ask God for His grace to do something about it. What changed everything for me wasn't just my ability to see the gap. It was the fire to close it, and the people around me willing to build alongside me.



Back in 2018, that fire became personal — my cousin passed away from addiction. And I wondered, would he still be here today if the support was there? In that moment, something in me settled into a conviction I have not been able to shake since. Access cannot be a barrier when lives are on the line. When someone finally reaches the point where they are ready to ask for help, readiness is everything — and the response has to be there to meet it.

With the support of a founding team who believed the same thing, we began to build. Not a product, but a better way for people to get in the door when they need it most, and to be met with real care once they're inside. We called it Bumblebee Health. It was fueled by heart before it was ever fueled by anything else.

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It has been one of the greatest blessings of my life to watch what happens when you step into a real need and simply meet it. Because it never stops with one person. When someone begins to heal, that healing ripples outward — into a marriage, into a family, into children who get their parent back, into a whole network of people who love them and had been holding their breath. You don't always get to see the ripple. But you know it's there. That's what keeps us dedicated to this work, and to growing it, because we believe everyone deserves to be met with dignity and availability at the moment it matters most.

We still have a long road ahead. I know that. This is not a finished story, and I'm not interested in pretending it is. But it is a road worth walking — each day, each door, each life. To accept what we could not change would have been the easier path. We chose the other one.

The courage to change the things we can.



Stephen Weis is Co-Founder & CEO of Bumblebee Health. Need to know more about Bumblebee Health? Visit www.bumblebeehealth.com

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Could Your Sleep Be Affecting Your Mental Health?

By Christina Ressa CIT



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People often think their anxiety is getting worse, their depression is getting deeper, or they're becoming more irritable without ever stopping to ask one simple question which is **"how am I sleeping?"** Many people overlook this question. We often focus on eating healthier, exercising more, or finding ways to manage stress, but we rarely consider that poor sleep may be quietly making everything feel harder.

As a counselor-in-training, I've had many conversations with people who are exhausted, overwhelmed, struggling to focus, or feeling emotionally drained. While sleep isn't always the entire answer, it's often an important piece of the puzzle that many people have never considered. Sleep isn't "rest." While you're asleep, your brain is hard at work processing emotions, organizing memories, and preparing you for the next day. It's almost like your brain is doing overnight housekeeping. When that process is interrupted night after night, it becomes much more difficult to regulate emotions, cope with stress, think clearly, and feel like yourself.

Have you ever noticed that after a poor night's sleep, you're more impatient with your family, more emotional, or more easily overwhelmed? Small problems suddenly feel much bigger. You may struggle to concentrate at work or feel like you're constantly walking through a mental fog. That's not a coincidence. Your brain simply isn't functioning at its best when it hasn't had the opportunity to recharge. Over time, chronic sleep deprivation can contribute to anxiety, depression, and increased stress. For some people, poor sleep may be pouring gasoline on symptoms they're already trying so hard to manage. Unfortunately, mental health and sleep often create a cycle; for instance, poor sleep can worsen anxiety or depression, and anxiety or depression can make it even harder to sleep.

One of the biggest obstacles to healthy sleep is something many of us do every night without thinking much about it — is scrolling on our phones. If you're lying in bed checking social media, watching videos, or answering one last email, you may be unknowingly telling your brain that it's still daytime. The blue light from screens can delay your body's natural production of melatonin which is the hormone that helps you feel sleepy. At the same time, your brain stays stimulated by everything you're reading and watching, making it much harder to truly relax. Instead of ending the day with a screen, try giving your mind permission to slow down. Reading a book, journaling, drawing, listening to calming music, practicing meditation, or simply sitting quietly for a few minutes can help your brain transition into sleep mode. If you do need to use your phone in the evening, turning on Night Shift or blue light filtering settings can also help.

Naps are another area where balance matters. A short 20–30-minute power nap can be incredibly refreshing. It can improve your mood, increase alertness, and help you finish the day feeling more energized. But longer naps can make it much harder to fall asleep that night, creating a frustrating cycle of poor nighttime sleep followed by daytime exhaustion. If you find yourself needing long naps every day despite getting what should be enough sleep at night, it may be worth talking with your healthcare provider. Sometimes excessive daytime fatigue is your body's way of telling you that something else needs attention.

One condition that often goes unnoticed is sleep apnea. Many people have it without realizing it, especially if they live alone. Sleep apnea causes breathing to repeatedly stop and start throughout the night. Even if someone spends eight hours in

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bed, they may never reach the deep, restorative sleep their body desperately needs. They often wake up feeling exhausted, struggle with memory or concentration, experience morning headaches, feel irritable, or find themselves falling asleep during the day. Many people assume these symptoms are simply part of getting older or living a stressful life. Sometimes, though, the real problem is an untreated sleep disorder. The good news is that sleep apnea is treatable, and many people notice significant improvements in both their physical health and emotional wellbeing once it's addressed.

The encouraging part is that improving your sleep doesn't have to involve making huge changes overnight. Small habits can make a meaningful difference. For example, try going to bed and waking up around the same time each day and even on weekends. Aim for 7 to 9 hours of sleep whenever possible. Limit caffeine later in the day, avoid alcohol or nicotine before bedtime, create a cool, dark, and quiet sleep environment, and build a bedtime routine that helps your body recognize it's time to rest.

If there's one thing to remember after reading this article, it's that: sleep is not a luxury; sleep is one of the foundations of both physical and mental health. If you've been feeling anxious, emotionally overwhelmed, exhausted, or mentally foggy, don't assume that's simply who you are or something you must push through. Ask yourself how you've been sleeping. Sometimes improving your sleep won't solve every problem but it can be one of the most powerful places to start. Your mind and your body work together. Remember, when you care for your sleep, you're also caring for your mental health.

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Resonating with Spiritual Teachers

As a full-time life coach since 2001, I’ve worked with hundreds of clients to clarify their sense of purpose and to help them make great strides in their spiritual development. I told them that all authentic spiritual traditions lead aspirants to the same place — the infinite here and now. That’s what enlightenment truly is — the awareness of the infinite within yourself and, in time, the infinite all around us.

Recognizing that they felt a gap between where their limited consciousness was at present and where it could be in the future *viz a viz* the enlightenment described above, these clients have often asked me how they should go about closing that gap. What I’ve so often told so many of them is that spiritual techniques and paths are not one cookie-cutter approach which is right for one and all.

Intellectuals often gravitate to spiritual teachers who speak to intellects. They might prefer a sage like the great J. Krishnamurti from India or George Gurdjieff, the unorthodox Russian master. Those who are very emotional might be drawn to heart-centered teachers of Bhakti Yoga which involves devotion to a guru or God. Those who are very active often find teachers stressing Karma Yoga, the way of action, as a path they deeply resonate with. Those strongly connected to their bodies might like tai chi instructors whose method involves a great deal of physical movements. Ditto for hatha yoga teachers whose classes rely on the wide use of postures, known as asanas in Sanskrit.

As a writer of humor books (15 in total, but who’s counting?) and a standup comedian, I respond wonderfully to people with a very good sense of humor. And that includes gurus, as well.

So, it’s not surprising that I resonated deeply with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, whose Transcendental Meditation attracted the likes of such superstars as the Beatles, Oprah Winfrey, and Jerry Seinfeld, among millions of lesser-known people around the world. The Indian sage was known to the media in his halcyon days as “the Giggling Guru” because he laughed a lot. He said that “life is bliss” and “the purpose of Creation is the expansion of happiness.” I resonated deeply with this teacher of cosmic truths with a comic flair.



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This story will illustrate my point. It was the middle of May and I was sitting in a huge tent on the beach in southwest Spain with a thousand others where, every day, Maharishi was “reproducing” himself, cultivating us to become teachers of his Transcendental Meditation. I was 19 at the time. One of my colleagues walked up to the microphone and began to describe his diet. (The sage never demanded of his charges they eat in a particular regimen.) It was the ‘70s, and a lot of odd eating programs were much in vogue. This fellow happened to be eating macrobiotically and described his very austere diet in great detail, filled as it was with seaweed, kelp and tofu, and devoid of anything resembling sugar. After he outlined what he put into his body, he asked the Master what he thought of his food intake.

Maharishi considered the question for a few seconds, while two thousand eyes focused on him, two thousand ears waiting for his sage advice. The only sound one could hear was the roaring of the Atlantic outside the tent. Then he asked, a childlike lilt to his reply,

“What, no, ice cream?”

At that moment, every throat in the tent roared with laughter, drowning out the crashing waves. The oldest man present in the tent was Maharishi, but he had just demonstrated the youngest spirit.

Translation:
Enlightenment means freedom, play and joy. And laughter.

The cosmic had become the comic.

I have since taught meditation to many hundreds of people throughout the world. But all these years later, I’ll never forget that the guru had me at “What, no ice cream?”

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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
Ericks House	855-894-5658	
Desert Drug Dog	602-908-2042	
Hunkapi Programs	480-393-0870	
Kid in the Corner	kidinthecorner.org	
EMPACT/La Frontera	800-273-8255	
I Am Teen Strong	480-396-2409	
Mental Health Center of America	602-704-2345	
NotMYKid	602-652-0163	
PAL Parents of Addicted Loved Ones	palgroup.org	
Recovery Café	480-530-7090	
TERROS Health	602-685-6000	

TUCSON	
ACA	aca-arizona.org
AA	520-624-4183
Al-Anon Info Service	520-323-2229
Anger Management	520-887-7079
Behavioral Awareness Center	520 629 9126
Co-Anon Family Groups	520-513-5028
Cocaine Anonymous	520-326-2211
Cornerstone Behavioral Health	520-222-8268
Cottonwood Tucson	800-877-4520
Crisis Intervention	520-323-9373
Narcotics Anonymous	520-881-8381
Nicotine Anonymous	520-299-7057
Overeaters Anonymous	520-733-0880
Recovery in Motion	520-975-2141
Sex Addicts Anonymous	520-745-0775
Sierra Tucson	800-842-4487
Suicide Prevention	520-323-9372
Teen Challenge	888-352-4940
The Mark Youth and Family Care	520-326-6182
Workaholics Anonymous	520-403-3559

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-
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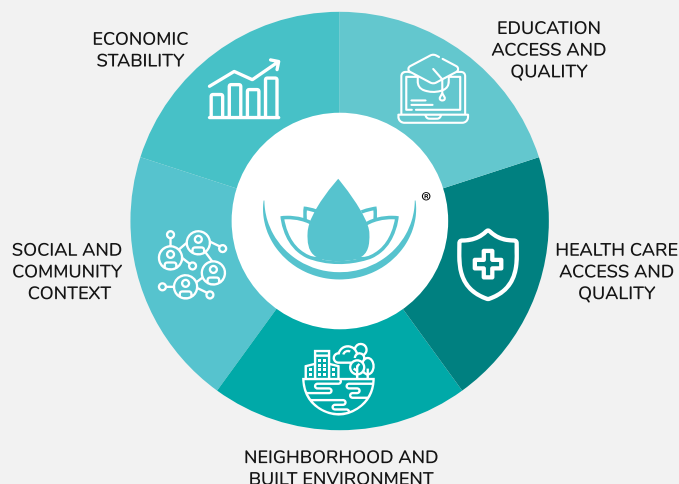
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Our patient-centered approach leverages a wide range of resources through our social determinants of health resource center to provide physical, behavioral, and social support. The goal is to achieve better care coordination, well-being, and health outcomes, all while incorporating the patient's preferences, choices and ultimately achieving health equity.



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