



COTTONWOOD  
tucson

April 2010

# Alumni News...

the journey continues

## A Dose of Courage

Mary Ann Radmacher says, "Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the day that says I'll try again tomorrow." Oh how I agree. Having courage in recovery sometimes means doing the next right thing, whatever that might be. For me, courage is the person who sits in the chair at a meeting wanting to drink so bad they can barely stay in their seat. Courage is the person who gets out of bed early in the morning to visit a complete stranger who can't stop killing himself/herself with alcohol or drugs. It's the person who calls their sponsor instead of bingeing on ice cream and cake. Courage takes many forms. In recovery, I believe every person who works those steps, sits in the meetings, becomes honest, chooses sanity over an unsound mind, is courageous beyond understanding. I know a man in the meetings who calls himself a coward. I get what he's saying, but come on... the very fact that he calls himself a coward takes some semblance of courage.

So keep coming back. Coming back to meetings, coming back to counseling, coming back to reality, whatever helps you to live an addiction free life... keep coming back. That resoluteness is the thing hero's are made of.

Be courageous, do not deny that little voice. Try again tomorrow, and the next day, and the next. Remember each time you face your fear, you gain strength, courage, and confidence in the doing.

~ Peace, Sally

## The Use of Journal Writing As a Tool by Charles Gillispie

*"In this poor body, composed of one hundred bones and nine openings, is something called spirit, a flimsy curtain swept this way and that by the slightest breeze. It is the spirit, such as it is, which led me to write..."* — Basho

Basho was a traveling poet and student of Zen meditation. He is most famous for a travel journal he wrote in 1689, *Narrow Road to the Interior*, which describes a trip he took to Northern Japan:

"In which year it was I do not recall, but I, too, began to be lured by the wind like a fragmentary cloud and have since been unable to resist wanderlust, roaming out to the seashores."

Basho's book is full of brief paragraphs, often followed by very short poems, which describe the people and places he encountered, as well as his own moods and perceptions:

*"Autumn—even birds and clouds look old."*

With a little guidance and encouragement we can all benefit from journal writing. Like Basho, we can celebrate and record our journey into the "interior" - the landscape of our struggles, hopes, insights and experiences.

# The Use of Journal Writing As a Tool by Charles Gillispie

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## Therapeutic Journal Writing

James Pennebaker, a professor of psychology at the University of Texas, reports that writing, in –and-of-itself is not necessarily therapeutic. In fact, many of his clients who suffer from anger and depression report feeling worse after writing in journals. The process of writing about feelings , without any direction or structure, seems to exacerbate suffering instead of providing relief.

Dr Pennebaker notes, however, clients do report relief from journal writing under certain conditions. For example, clients who record events and thoughts as well as emotional experiences report greater relief after writing. Combining these three elements of daily life into a cohesive narrative is an essential component of therapeutic journal writing.

Additionally, Dr Pennebaker noted that clients who write for at least twenty minutes a day for three days in a row report greater emotional comfort, after writing in their journals. People in recovery can utilize these findings to receive more benefit from their writing.

## The Use of Sentence Stems and Repetition

Dr Nicholas Mazza, founding member of the National Association of Poetry Therapy ([www.poetrytherapy.org](http://www.poetrytherapy.org)), Believes that structure is a essential component of therapeutic journal writing. Structure can helps us explore uncomfortable feelings while providing positive direction. Dr Mazza favors the use of sentence-stems and repetition to create meaningful poems or paragraphs.

The following journal is copied with permission from the journal of a young woman in treatment for substance abuse. It represents the use of sentence stems and repetition. It was written after the young woman agreed to end a romantic relationship, over the phone, that had been extremely abusive and destructive.

**“I used** to trash my emotional wreckage on those who neither deserved nor understood  
**But now** I peel off the layers and stand naked in the responsibility of my grief

**I used** to stab the dagger into my heart and demand any willing boy to pull it out  
**But now** I’m stitching up the wound and reflecting on the scar tissue

**I used** to play on words to be a puppet for applause  
**But now** I am down on my knees in amends for my guilt

**I used** to die in the apocalypse with every mistake  
**But now** I live in the moment with every experience

**I used** to crave the bittersweet lingering of the past  
**But now** I’m driven by the desire to savor the curiosity of tomorrow

**I used** see God in the pleasures I was granted  
**But now** I see God in the ironic challenges I face

There was a time when I let go of the past for him  
And now, finally, I let go of all of this for me.”

The author reports that she used the sentence-stem and repetition with great reluctance in her journal. She thought the structure would mute her voice and her range of emotions. However, she discovered that the structure helped her stay clear of the habitual thoughts and feelings toward her boyfriend and opened a new avenue of hope and strength. In fact, she reports being surprised by the power that comes out in the entry. She sees a quality of self-esteem she would like to experience more.

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# The Use of Journal Writing As a Tool by Charles Gillispie

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## Considerations for Practice

Journal writing, as a recovery tool, provides a number of advantages. First of all, the journal is immediately available to us, whenever we need it. As we practice therapeutic journal writing, we can develop much needed skills in mood management and regulation. Hopefully, as we become proficient in the use of specific structures, we will discover important information about our barriers to recovery. This material when uncovered, can deepen and enrich the counseling experience for both clients and counselors.

Perhaps most importantly, the therapeutic journal can become our record of progress in recovery. In the tradition of Basho's travel journal, the therapeutic journal becomes a mirror reflecting our spiritual struggle, our spiritual accomplishment, as well as our spiritual need.

*Charles Gillispie is a licensed substance counselor at Cottonwood Tucson. He specializes in the use of creative therapy writing as an adjunct to cognitive behavioral therapy.*

## InnerPath Retreats

### Beginnings & Beyond

April 19-23 • May 10-14

### Women's Retreat

Apr 12-16 • June 21-25

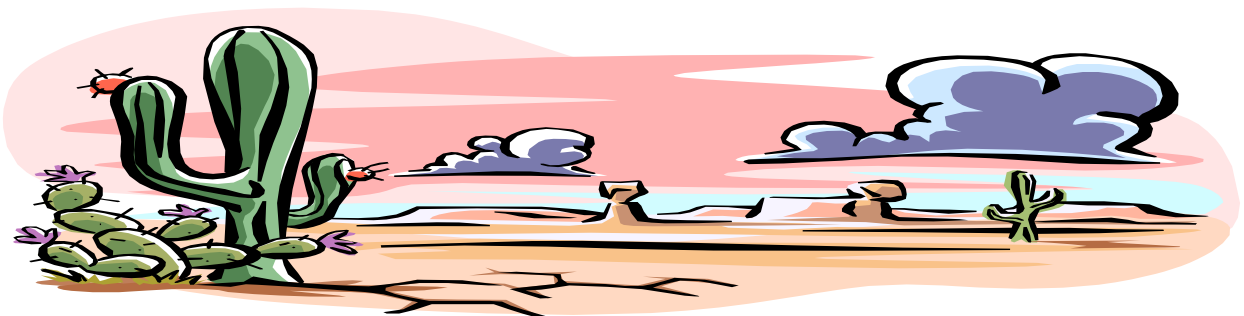
### Developing Healthy Relationships

Dec 2-5

### Developing Healthy Families

5 days: Monday - Friday  
Contact us to schedule

We offer several 4 and 5 day programs for individuals, couples, and families who want to focus on codependency, relationships, communication, grief, loss, trauma, and anger. InnerPath is like a mini-Cottonwood experience where you can come back for a boost to your personal recovery plan. All of our retreats are held at the Cottonwood Nash House, meals and lodging included, and are limited to 8 people. Rokelle Lerner who is a therapist, author, and codependency expert, is our facilitator. Please contact Jana Zeff at 520-743-2141 or e-mail her at [jzeff@cottonwoodtucson.com](mailto:jzeff@cottonwoodtucson.com) for more information about InnerPath.



## Sweetwater Adolescent Program

*Sweetwater* is a 90-day residential program, internationally recognized for the treatment of co-occurring disorders with adolescent females ages 13-17. The *Sweetwater Program* has been designed to help girls and their families recover and make changes necessary to improve the quality of their lives. *Sweetwater* places a strong emphasis on scholastics, offering both structured classroom hours as well as a therapeutic curriculum designed to further the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual growth of each girl. Cottonwood de Tucson's *Sweetwater Program* is a recipient of the **Woodbury Reports, Inc. "Excellence in Education Award"** having been selected on the basis of our excellent reputation for producing positive and consistent results with at-risk young girls and their families. Additionally, Cottonwood Tucson is a proud member of [National Association of Therapeutic Schools and Programs \(NATSAP\)](#). If you and your family are struggling with addiction or depression, please contact us, Cottonwood Tucson (see below) and let us help you and your family experience recovery and health.

## Farmington/Durango Alumni Meetings

Dear Farmington and all our New Mexico alumni,

I am looking forward to the May Alumni meeting. Remember that in May I will be coming a week early because of the Memorial Day weekend. Your meeting topic will be "Emotional Sobriety." We have a great group of alumni who are serious about supporting each other. I hope to see you there, all are invited. The 2010 meetings will be held at the **First Baptist Church at 511 W. Arrington, 87401 in Farmington, NM.** (west side of building)

### 2010 Farmington Alumni Meeting Dates

May 24—July 26—September 27—November 29

7:00 pm- 8:30 pm

## Phoenix Alumni Meetings

The Phoenix alumni are now meeting in a new place. We will be meeting every other Tuesday night at ABC Wellness Office, located at **7219 E. Shea Boulevard Scottsdale, AZ 85260** it is on the corner of Shea and Scottsdale Road. The meeting is from **7:00 pm until 8:30 pm**. The 2010 dates are listed below. Hope to see you there.

### 2010 Phoenix Alumni Meeting Dates

Apr 6 & 20 • May 4 & 18 • Jun 1 & 15 Jul 6 & 20 • Aug 3 & 17  
Sept 7 & 21 • Oct 5 & 19 • Nov 2 & 16 • Dec 7 & 21

For more information, click here [shicks@cottonwoodtucson.com](mailto:shicks@cottonwoodtucson.com) or call 520-743-0411 extension 2517 or toll free 800-877-4520 [www.cottonwoodtucson.com](http://www.cottonwoodtucson.com)