

December 2010

Alumni News...

the journey continues



Seeking Spiritual Growth

Life is simple, it's just not easy. Especially when recovering from addiction, or any type of illness, for that matter. Life on life's terms is not always an easy pill to swallow either. However, the alternative is painful beyond belief. I no longer want to turn to food, alcohol, cigarettes, or any mind/body altering substance that stands in the way of my spiritual growth. How many times have I heard that pain is the touchstone to growth? This has been so in my own recovery. It seems as though I am motivated to grow spiritually *only* when I'm in some type of pain, whether it be spiritual, physical, or mental. The pay off for this growth is amazing though. I get through those tough times acquiring strength, happiness, and usually some wisdom. The goal for myself though, is to maintain and nourish my spiritual journey through the joy and happiness as well as the pain. How does one accomplish such a feat? Sponsorship (giving as well as receiving), honesty, willingness, the steps of AA, Higher Power (mostly), meetings, friends, perseverance, faith, and service. These are the requirements I have found that are essential for living life on life's terms. Foremost is seeking, however imperfectly, the serenity and contentment that comes with the belief that there is peace to be had even in the midst of the storm. Expectations dashed, loved ones relapse or even die, beloved animals get sick, marriages fail, jobs lost, all these things are life occurrences that cause pain and suffering. But in the midst of these terms of life we can grow, survive, and be happy. It's as Terri Guillemets says, "Life is not always fair. Sometimes you can get a splinter even when sliding down a rainbow." I can guarantee life will be full of both splinters and rainbows. Abstinence, sobriety, peace and joy can be had through both.

Cottonwood is a unique, life changing, and life affirming experience. Freedom and joy begin with the first step. Let Cottonwood help you begin the journey.

If you have any questions, please contact me at shicks@cottonwoodtucson.com or call 520-743-0411 extension 2517.

Be well, Sally

In Spite of What We Read in the Tabloids, Miracles Happen, by Jeffrey Friedman

I feel a bit frustrated when I hear yet another story of a debauched celebrity who, dodging the fallout of a well publicized behavioral meltdown, runs to one of the boutique rehabs that dot the hills above Malibu, California, eager to repair a damaged and possibly career-threatening media image. Meanwhile, their flacks, running in full-out damage control mode, pass out press releases containing the usual self-serving pseudo-psychological talking points. The suffering of our celebrities, it seems, has become America's newest spectator sport accompanied by a color commentary that has become routine and predictable.

Surrounded by a posse of a sycophantic hangers-on, and leaving bewildered kids, dented SUVs and limping paparazzi in their wake, the train wrecks of entertainment check into posh \$100,000-a-month beachfront rehabs, where they demand—and appear to receive—special indulgence. To believe the tabloids, patients at these places come and go as they please, squeezing in, when they can—between organic facials and extended Rodeo Drive shopping excursions—the odd therapy session where they hang a lip and bemoan the rigors of being rich and famous.

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Later, we read that they have left treatment—often, after only a few days—and returned to a milieu in which they function as sole provider of reflected status and financial support for an entourage whose members live in a penumbra of their stardom. The newly sprung celebrities go home to a troupe of personal assistants and other functionaries whose own career aspirations and instinct for preserving their place on the showbiz gravy train make any healthy confrontation of their patron’s behavioral excess wildly unlikely.

The picture the tabloids paint is a grim one. It’s beginning to look like a trip to rehab has become just another rite of passage for the discontented affluent. A quick and expedient short-term public relations fix rather than what it is: the beginning of a lifelong, and often difficult process of emotional and spiritual growth. So for me, it’s easy to understand how someone who has never experienced the transforming power of recovery can be cynical about the value and efficacy of behavioral health treatment. And yet I think what bothers me most about these tabloid stories is that they trivialize the suffering that I see daily as a therapist at Cottonwood de Tucson, a nationally known treatment center in southern Arizona, a place described as “expensive and sparse” in *People* magazine last year.

Treating the Famous and Less Famous

While I read about the rich and famous going to treatment to save face, I work daily with other less famous patients who struggle to save their lives, but if I reflect on this apparent distinction a little while, I realize a couple of things. First, all that is contained in celebrity lifestyle presents such a barrier to recovery that it would take a miracle for these people to get and effectively use the help that’s out there. The other realization is that the Britney’s, Lindsay’s and Tars, in their own way, suffer as deeply as the patients I serve.

It’s helpful for me to keep this in mind while I go about the business of helping suffering people face and feel their own pain and gain insight into their particular destructive patterns. Only after this is done can the treatment process nudge toward more adaptive beliefs, attitudes and behavior. This part requires, at least on the part of the therapist, some degree of skill, commitment and patience. From the patient’s perspective the treatment process is way more difficult. For many who have lived, often for years, in a forlorn state, the very decision to try for a better life can involve the element of risk. Patients often fear that yet another life failure could result in an even more damaged sense of self worth and an even more precipitous descent into hopelessness. Even when patients are able to summon the willingness to take risks necessary for a fruitful engagement in treatment, they can find it frightening to let go of self-defeating coping habits while new, more adaptive ways of living are still awkward and unfamiliar. Psychotherapy, if skillfully practiced, works well, but it often works slowly and is almost always a messy and painful task. Reaching the point of critical mass in the healing process is best accomplished in an environment of encouragement and compassion, and it sometimes takes months before a person’s recovery reaches a self-sustaining point. And even when treatment is successful, positive results don’t always come according to the clinicians expected timetable.

Timeframe and details aside, there is overwhelming evidence that treatment does in fact work. While miracles can be hard to quantify, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration’s National Outcome Measures show that treatment results in improvement in every life domain measured, including: abstinence from alcohol and other drugs of abuse; decreased symptoms of mental disorders; and improved functioning in all major areas, including getting and keeping a job and staying in school. The same study reports that those who have completed treatment also have decreased involvement in the criminal justice system and a better ability to find and keep safe and stable housing for their families and themselves. That’s what miracles sound like when measured in the dry, public sector language of the National Institute on Drug Abuse. For a more personal take on the value of behavioral health treatment, please consider the words of a grateful mother who recently sent a thank-you note to one of the family therapists who work at Cottonwood:

“We are still floating. None of us will ever be the same. Our son is doing great—happy and clean out in California. He told me the other day that he had gotten a sponsor. The sound of his laughter has returned to us. We have gotten a miracle.” I wish you one too, Britney.

Jeff Friedman, LISAC, CCGC is a primary therapist, research associate and gambling counselor at Cottonwood de Tucson. He wrote this article in 2008 and it was featured in Counselor Magazine, opinion section.



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.

Phoenix Alumni Meetings

Dear Phoenix Alumni,

I look forward to seeing and encouraging you as you continue your journey in recovery. We meet every first and third Tuesday night of the month at the **ABC Wellness office**, located at **7219 E. Shea Boulevard Scottsdale, AZ 85260**. The meeting time is from **7:00pm until 8:30pm**. The 2010/2011 dates are listed below. Hope to see you there.

2010/2011 Phoenix Alumni Meeting Dates

Dec 7 & 21 • Jan 4 & 18 • Feb 1 & 15

Farmington/Durango Alumni Meetings

Dear New Mexico alumni,

I am looking forward to the January 2011 Alumni meeting. We have a great group of alumni who are serious about supporting each other. The 2011 meetings will be held at the **First Baptist Church 511 W. Arrington, Farmington, NM. 87401**(west side of building) The meeting time is from **7:00pm until 8:30pm**. I hope to see you there, all are invited.

2011 Farmington Alumni Meeting Dates

Jan 31 • March 28 • May 23 • July 25 • Sept 26 • Nov 28

Tucson Alumni Meetings

Dear Tucson Alumni,

Just a reminder, that your Cottonwood Tucson alumni meeting meets every Wednesday from **6pm until 7:30pm at the Cottonwood Campus**. On the first Wednesday of the month you can come early (5pm) and have dinner (\$5 per person). You may also bring one guest. This is a great opportunity to show your sponsor or a family member a small piece of the recovery process here at Cottonwood. We have a presentation on the first Wednesday of every month. The Cottonwood staff will present different topics to help with your journey towards wellness. Every third month we feature an alumni speaker and we have a short meeting afterward.

Please come and support your alumni meeting. The bond Cottonwood alumni have is unique. I'm hoping you will always remember that together we can do what we could never do alone.

Keep Coming Back!

InnerPath Retreats

Beginnings & Beyond

1/24-1/28 • 2/14-2/18

Women's Retreat

1/10-1/14 • 4/11-15

Developing Healthy Relationships

2/10-2/13

Developing Healthy Families

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 for more information about InnerPath.

Cottonwood Tucson Employee of the Month

And the winner is:

Craig—great attitude. Craig takes the time to explain things to us. Pleasant young man. He was the best shopping buddy I could have asked for! He was very patient with me. Always professional and caring. Represents Cottonwood well.

