



COTTONWOOD
tucson

April 2011

Alumni News...

the journey continues

The Gift of Desperation

Several times recently I heard people refer to desperation as a gift. Although I have felt desperation in my life, it was a long time ago, so I wanted to know the correct definition. Desperation means to despair. Despair means to lose hope. Being without hope is an awful way to live. Years ago despair was a way of life for me but I found hope the day I came to AA. I've never lost it since. Why would one feel that losing hope is a gift? I can only share my experience and that is when I lost hope there was only one way my life could go. That was up. If I had any other alternatives, if I had any more smart (or not so smart) ideas, if I had even a glimmer of hope I may not have darkened the doors of AA. The four hideous horsemen—Fear, Bewilderment, Frustration and Despair were my constant companions. These feelings kept me stuck in a life of disease and obsessive thinking. I had no way out. So I came to recovery not sure of what I would find. I was blessed, because I found hope the first day. I found people just like me, saying things aloud that I was ashamed of thinking. They laughed the serious, awful experiences in my life out of context. They told stories of their own despair and pain. I was shocked but I was also home. I walked in feeling lower than ever, despairing of never being happy again. I came to that meeting thinking my life was over but after an hour I left tearful but changed. So if desperation brought me into the rooms of AA I guess it was the biggest gift I've ever been given. I live everyday knowing I have a debt to pay. The debt is giving back to others what was so freely given to me. Life has never been so good. Today desperation is not in my reality. I have hope. I believe that where there is breathe there is hope.

If desperation is a part of your life Cottonwood can help change that. Many people who come here find hope. Let us help you. Cottonwood is a life-changing experience, .

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

Be well, Sally

Michael Jackson's Death Highlights the Alarming State of Celebrity Medicine By Jeffrey C. Friedman, LISAC

Well, the last reviews for Michael Jackson are finally in. Toxicology screens taken in the wake of the singer's recent and highly publicized death confirm what many had been expecting – that his abuse of the powerful anesthetic *Propofol* killed the King of Pop. And even as we are learning the correct pronunciation of propofol, I fear that we are also seeing a sadly reoccurring pattern here: A celebrity dies, suddenly and unexpectedly of - oh, let's say a "heart attack," and a few weeks later, an autopsy finds that the overuse of prescription drugs either contributed to the death or killed the star outright. And then, right on cue, another practitioner of "celebrity medicine" is hauled before the medical board and charged with the indiscriminate over-prescribing of controlled dangerous substances. In Jackson's case, no fewer than nine doctors – from Florida to California – have now become the focus of investigations into their questionable prescribing practices.

The story is a frighteningly familiar one. Even before Elvis's personal physician, Dr. George Nichopoulos, wore the tires off his Cadillac making pharmacy runs to fill unending requests from the singer's PDR wish-list, we find stories of doctors whose main function seems to have been catering to their celebrity patients' drug hunger.

Michael Jackson's Death Highlights the Alarming State of Celebrity Medicine

By Jeffrey C. Friedman, LISAC

John F. Kennedy often traveled with the original Dr. Feelgood, Max Jacobson, who stood by to give the president regular shots of his preferred pick-me-up, an amphetamine/vitamin mix. Years later, when Wynona Rider was busted for shoplifting, police found that the actress had 37 open prescriptions written by 20 different doctors. The ensuing investigation also ensnared the hapless Courtney Love. In the last year, two of Anna Nicole Smith's doctors were charged with supplying her with potentially lethal cocktails of prescription narcotics, hypnotics and anxiolytics. And now we mourn the untimely drug-related death of the Michael Jackson. *O.K., cue the coroner, get medical board into makeup, and, roll cameras for the doctors' perp-walk.* The story has become as tiresome as it is predictable.

The occasional prosecution of celebrity doctors has done little to stem what appears to be an unending supply of doctors eager to engage in the practice of celebrity medicine. These are physicians who, in thrall to the light, heat and glitz of the celebrity lifestyle, appear indifferent to professional ethics, and willing to ignore federal controlled substances laws, and even their famous patients' health and emotional well-being, to gain, with the stroke of a pen, entre into the star's glamorous inner circle. The line between personal physician and celebrity hanger-on has become frighteningly ill-defined. Highly trained physicians, willfully blind to clear evidence of addiction, become medical enablers, yielding to the manipulations of their pop-star patients – even to the extreme of prescribing controlled substances in assumed names to avoid the scrutiny of state prescription drug monitoring programs. It seems like today's celebrities are less at risk from shady street corner drug dealers than they are from their own physicians.

Maybe it's the doctors' own sense of grandiosity or the misguided belief that "I alone am qualified to handle this patient's care." Or perhaps Dr. Nichopoulos stumbled onto the truth when he told the Tennessee Board of Medical Examiners at his 1995 license revocation hearing: "I cared too much."

"Dr. Nick" probably knows better than most how hard it can be to resist the unending medication demands of a charismatic drug abusing celebrity, like Elvis or Michael Jackson. It is well known that addicts can be highly skilled at manipulating doctors for drugs – adept at feigning painful maladies while being ever vigilant for the smallest sign of psychological weakness in their intended target. A star-struck doctor in the sights of a drug-demanding idol of pop is like the proverbial sitting duck.

At Cottonwood Tucson, where I work as a chemical dependency counselor, we get our share of high-profile patients. In the seven years that I have been at Cottonwood, I have worked with musicians able to fill huge stadiums with screaming fans and studio execs who have the power to green-light hundred million dollar blockbuster movies with a nod. And, you know, when all the pleasantries are over and the character armor falls away, it becomes starkly clear that these household names suffer just like you and I do. Same pain, same worries, same insecurities. When the icons of pop lose loved ones, they grieve just like us. And when celebrities suffer from addiction, getting clean and sober involves for them the same pain and apprehension as it does for everyone else. Dr. Bernice Roberts, a Cottonwood addictionologist knows this well.

I sat down with Dr. Roberts the other day. She had just come from a meeting of The Arizona Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), where she sits on the board. Her take on the King of Pop's death was sobering but hopeful. "I can imagine how Michael Jackson must have suffered," she said. "Dependency to opiates and sedatives is a progressive disease... eventually addicts have to use lethal amounts of drugs just to feel normal."

Dr. Roberts also lamented the fact that addiction medicine specialists were not consulted by Jackson's physicians despite clear evidence that his abuse of prescription drugs was out of control. She noted that ASAM offers doctors in all medical specialties consultation and support in helping their addicted patients confront their addictions, safely manage the detoxification process and find the treatment necessary to regain physical health and emotional balance. "No one needs to suffer or die from addiction," Dr. Roberts said, "regardless of whether it is the King of Pop or the King's most humble fan."

Jeff Friedman, LISAC, CCGC is a primary therapist, research associate and gambling counselor at Cottonwood Tucson, where he works with chemically dependent patients. He wrote this article in 2009 and it was featured in Counselor Magazine, Volume 10 opinion section. He may be reached at jfriedman@cottonwoodtucson.com



InnerPath Retreats

Beginnings & Beyond

4/18-22 • 5/3-27 • 6/27-7/1

Relationships Retreat

12/1-4

Women's Retreat

4/11-15 • 6/20-24 • 7/25-29

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.

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 2011 dates are listed below. Hope to see you there.

2011

Phoenix Alumni Meeting Dates

April 5 & 19 • May 3 & 17 • June 7 & 21

July 5 & 19 • Aug 2 & 16 • Sept 6 & 20 • Oct 4 & 18 • Nov 1 & 15 • Dec 6 & 20

Quote of the Month

HOPE IS THE WORD WHICH GOD HAS WRITTEN ON THE BROW OF EVERY MAN.

~VICTOR HUGO

Farmington/Durango Alumni Meetings

Dear New Mexico alumni,

Hi alumni, I am looking forward to the May 23, 2011 Alumni meeting. The topic this month is, “**Listening With Your Mind, Body and Heart.**” 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

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 or speaker on the first Wednesday of every month.

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!

