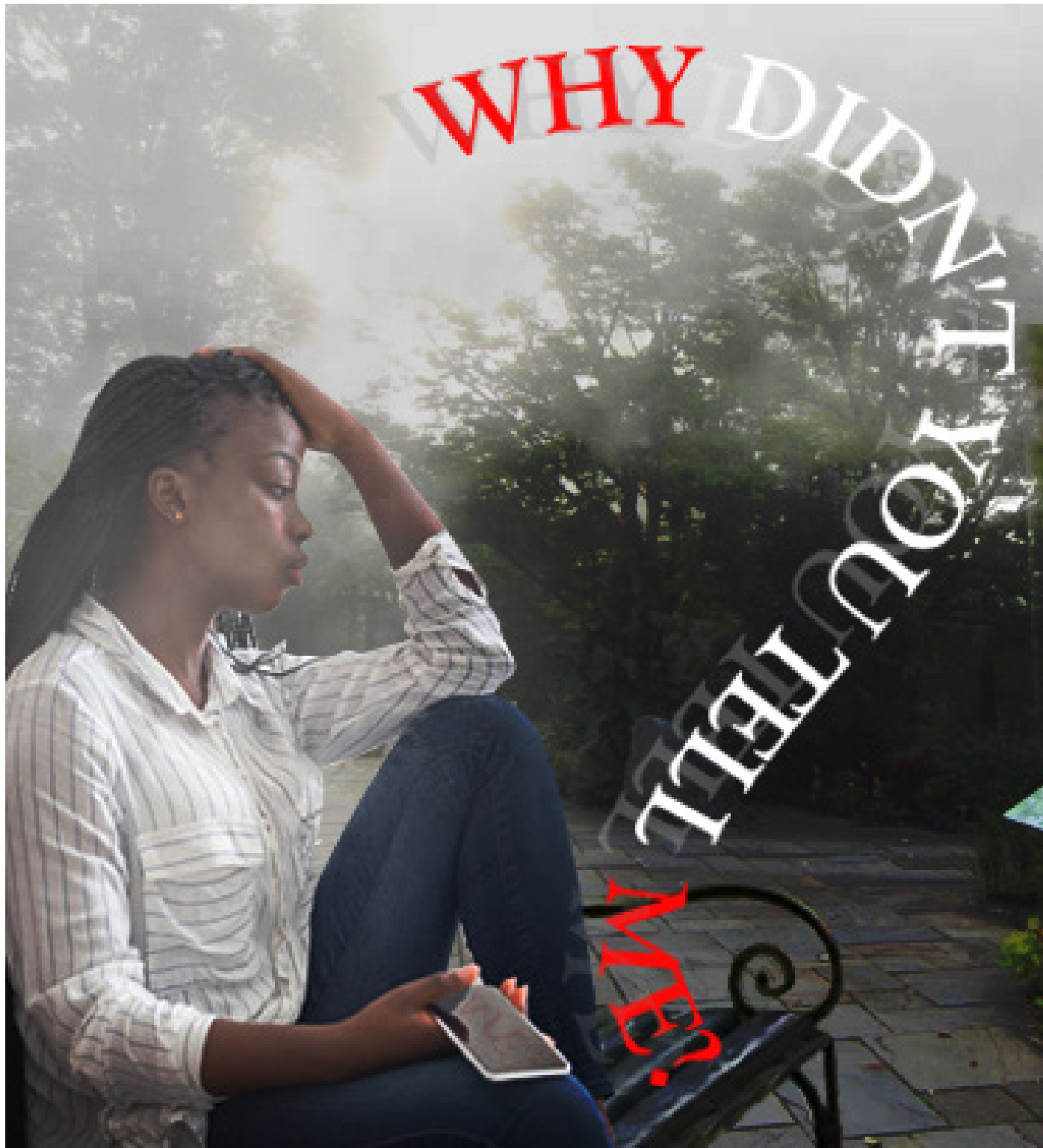




Spotlight On Recovery

Giving a Voice to the Therapeutic Community



R. Graham Publishing Company, LLC

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WHAT MATTERS

BY EXCELLUS O. HYLAND

When I came home quiet,
you charged it as time for self.
To me, you didn't want to hear it.
How I really felt.
My mind screamed for affection,
so my body was the vehicle.
I acted out wanting affection.
So you could tell me, I love you.

Rebel...just because
I lashed out ...and acted out?
I lashed out... and acted out,
to be heard, and not told about flaws.

I'm riddled with self doubt.
The things I feel I can't mouth.
It's hard to articulate my emotions,
but my actions, scream out loud,
showing, bett

Why? Because of what you ask me.
To await an answer, I'd be gone.
You wanted to hear, but it's in my tone,
my frown, and smug face you see.

Resonating from every word uttered.
Exploding out of my expressions,
I have been extremely bothered.
You didn't get that impression?

Why didn't you tell me?
That is a strange question,
at least strange to me.
You asked, "Why?"
Because you weren't listening





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LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

DECEMBER 2021

Dear Friends,

As we close this year, many people will say good-bye to 2021 with a heavy heart. Some may have lost a loved one to Covid-19, gun violence, car accidents, fires, drug overdoses, and suicides. On behalf of Spotlight on Recovery Magazine, I send my condolences to all of the many families who lost someone this year.

I can't help but think that some of these tragedies could have been avoided. It's painful to find out that someone suffering felt alone in a city with millions of people, hundreds of organizations, doctors, and family members. It's inconceivable that we have lost hundreds of thousands over the past 10 years to suicide.

As human beings, we have fears. We fear judgment, accusations, labels, and blame. These fears keep loved ones from sharing their pain with you and others.

This issue of Spotlight on Recovery will be an olive branch that you, the reader can use to reach the one that keeps you up at night. It could be a co-worker, your child, your friend, spouse, neighbor, sibling, or lover. When we are that close to someone, sometimes we can sense that there is something wrong. Sometimes, we are too close that we can't see everything that our loved ones are going through.

Unfortunately, we may not be able to save all our loved ones, but it's worth a try to save one. Always share your suspicion of a loved one in trouble with another member of the family or a relative of their family. If you don't think you have the resources to help, let someone else try.

Sincerely,
Robin Graham
Robin Graham
Founder/Publisher



If you are in crisis, call the toll-free National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255), available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The service is available to anyone. All calls are confidential. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>





WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME?

BY CLAUDEL GALETTE

The world cannot see me for who I really am, and in not being able to view me or anybody else really for that matter, we've let their blindness dictate who we presently think we are. As much as I'd love to because it's so much easier to point the judgmental finger away from myself, I can't just place the blame on them. I became complacent to their way of understanding the people around me also, and in turn, analyzed others the same way. We've been doing this blind routine since the beginning of our time. The funniest thing about this situation to me is how someone is always there it seems daily to remind us how, 'things are not always what it seems.' Yeah, tell me about it. That's so much easier said than put in practice. Look I know things within the scope of my vision possess so much more than the physicality of which I behold. Humanitarians have written poems, books, plays, songs, and even made movies that encompassed the question, 'What If God Was One Of Us?' All this is to outline our impaired way of understanding.

Wait, he was us, two thousand something years ago. We couldn't see that so as the unperceiving do, we threw him up on a cross, then begged for him to return after we realized our error. In fact, most of the narratives in the Bible, are based on the population not being able to see. Adam and Eve couldn't see, it's better to not partake of the fruit, to just trust in the Lord. Cain was blind to his own sacrificial potential thinking Abel's was so much better, had killed his brother. Countless never recognize a prophet when he/she arrives with the very insight they are deprived of. This condition is still affecting us today as Americans who could see who Donald was so we trumped up the presidency. Why is everyone avoiding addressing the issue of global astigmatism?

Remember this, I will not place blame on no one, in fact the responsibility of seeing myself is mines alone, no one can expect another person to know them better than they know their own self. I am so much more, than I was made to believe I was. First off, since

I could remember, it's been crammed in my way of perceiving that Black as a color was bad. I'm not going to sit here and break down all the tedious details of exactly what was said, what was meant. You know exactly what I'm talking about, and who said it, when it was said, to how it was said because it has been said to us as a people numerous times. It doesn't just have to do with pigmentation, it's so much deeper than skin tone. We believed what we heard to the point the fabrication altered our image in the mirror. Now our own eyes beheld disgrace when looking upon our nation instead of the true beauty it reflected. How does glimmering gold turn to rusty metal? With lies, that pull an obese sheet over your eyes, I tell you, devilish lies. All this brings me to ask is, why didn't you tell me?

If I were told, I wouldn't have seen myself in the tainted light I was casted in. I could have seen pass the fairy tales given as my history that commences at a time when they belittled me. My life is worth more than anything here, appraised falsely to appear as though it held more value than my existence but I can't really do the proper self appraisal. I hate what's reflected back in the mirror now. Everyone one around me are only there to get their licks in, to stomp me deeper into my disparity. I'll never amount to anything more than their expectations, I know it. This corner, their insults and judgmental sentiments pushed me into is not so bad, I find solitude here. I tried several times to assure myself that I was more than their accusations but the truth is, I couldn't rise above the slander. The gloom is not so terrible once you get used to it, it's not comfortable, but hey, who am I to seek peace in a world full of chastisement. I'm nobody! Been hearing it all my life, in one form or the other, they've been putting me down. I tried fighting it at first, but the more I got insulted the more accustom I was to being at the bottom of the crab barrel, getting stepped on.

I've finally reached a point where I realized I'm an alien to these insensitive creatures I was unfortunate to be born amongst. I don't belong and they've made me





VOICES INSIDE, LEFT UNHEARD

BY LIZ QUINN

There are some people in your life you do not ever forget. Greg was one of these people. I remember so vividly this heavy-set boy with curly hair and glasses who had a crush on me in grade school. We shared grade school, parts of high school and worked at the same retail store. However, we shared much more than that. We shared our youth and early adult life. I often wonder what might have been.

After high school time passed and Greg called me to meet up, I was thrilled to see him again. When we dated at age nineteen, he told me that he suffered from insomnia and ulcers. I was shocked. What does someone that age, have to be so stressed about? He seemed to be so relaxed and confident. When Greg invited me to a party at his house, I was eager to be his date and I had a wonderful time. His parties always drew in a large crowd. Although I did not like parties, I always had fun with Greg. I was shy but Greg knew how to bring me out of my shyness.

He was so at ease with people that I wanted to be just like him. I met some of his sisters and brothers when they played softball together. He looked just like his mother. Greg seemed to have the perfect family and many friends. However, no one knows what goes on behind closed doors.

He came to our house often to pick me up. We dated for some time. In that short period time, Greg transformed from a scrawny awkward teenager into a husky handsome man. He was a psychology major and dreamed of being a psychiatrist. Later when I ran into Greg's best friend, he informed me that Greg had dropped out of college because of his ulcers. That was the last I heard of Greg until seven years later, when I attended his funeral. It was a suicide. He was just twenty-six years old.

I cried when I saw Greg's best friend carrying his casket. As the tears rolled down my face, I kissed John and told him I always had a soft spot for Greg. I recall to this day how devastated we all were to attend

his funeral. I found out from his friend that Greg was living a lie. He was pretending to go to work every day, while secretly battling his inner demons. Greg refused to get help after her was diagnosed with schizophrenia. All his life he wanted to help others, yet he could not help himself. This is a tragedy that could have been avoided, with so many friends, and family why did he struggle alone?

Suicide is a subject that hits close to my heart as I think of my former boyfriend Greg. It is a tragic loss of life that can be avoided if people show they care. No one needs to struggle alone. There is always help available. If you do not feel comfortable confiding in friends, psychologists and psychiatrists can help. Mental illness, with the support of medication is treatable, and people can live normal lives.

As I write this, I think of the good times we shared and that last school dance that he made special. He was a smart friendly young kid with a promising future. He did not have to die.

As I have heard said before, suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. Life is filled with ups and downs. Problems come and go. The things that bothered us twenty years ago are long gone. As life goes on, we do not think about what was important many years ago for life is forever changing.

Everyone faces personal battles, but life is a precious gift. We all have a purpose even though we might think we do not. People who appear happy on the outside might be struggling on the inside. The only way we know is to ask. Ask friends and family how they are doing and always be there to listen. Be courteous to strangers, remember to smile and say hello. It could make someone's day.

Life is hard at times and we all struggle. Some struggle more than other. As someone who battles depression, I know that it does help to talk about it. Do not keep everything bottled up inside, there are people





who are here to help.

Always think of the good in your life. Along with the hardship there is always good in everyone's life. When we are down we need to focus on the good in our life, and what makes us happy.

Greg is forever in my heart. I kept the gold

charm he gave me so many years ago that says, "Special Lady." He was gone too soon.

Anyone thinking of suicide please get help; if not for yourself, think of the people you are leaving behind.



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WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME?

BY DANIELLE GRAHAM-KELLEY

Why didn't you tell me?

Why didn't I tell you?
And now you want the truth?
So you can be set free
from what I endured internally?

The truth is you didn't listen.

You never heard my cries.
But I felt your tears kiss the ground
beneath where I lie.

You told me that I was crazy for wanting to slit my wrist.
I just wanted a way out I was done with all of this.

You asked me if I was an addict when I took all those pills.
I just wanted to take my rest, free my soul upon the hills.

You didn't think I would pull the trigger til you saw me lying there.
All that's left of me, a corpse my soul suspended in the air.

Now you're wishing you could've saved me. How you could've done more.
It doesn't have to end this way for the others, please do not shut your door.

Let them know that it's okay to feel the way that they do.
Even if you don't understand what they may be going through.
Never make them feel they're alone. Stand together in the fight.
For a life so filled with darkness you need to be their light.





WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME?

BY ANTHONY TATE

Hello readers,

I pray that my article finds you and yours in good health and spirit.

Why didn't you tell me? I'm real familiar with these words. Back in 2015, when I was at Varner Super Max Prison, I had a neighbor that I had gotten real close to over the last fifteen months. We were both doing the 18-month program. I was there for assault on staff and he was there for a knife charge. We clicked from day one and I grew to love him as my brother and fellow inmate.

We shared a lot of ourselves with one another through that door and talking over the vent. He had lost a lot of family over the years. His mother and father had passed and I wouldn't understand how that affected him until much too late.

I didn't understand the demons that he was fighting every day and night, and on top of all of that he had a life sentence. He wasn't ever going to see daylight again. I couldn't have known at that time that he really wanted to die. He never voiced that to me. I never had any indication that he was capable of taking his own life. People always say, "Look for the signs." What signs? The only sign that I ever knew came from the mouth of the people that were thinking about harming themselves. They would say things like, 'I'm thinking about killing myself or I want to die, or I don't want to live anymore. I didn't know anything about signs like, depression, sleeping a lot, hopelessness, appetite changes, isolation or not sleeping at all, concentration problems, and feelings of guilt. These are signs that I never knew about but they are very important to preventing suicide.

One day he was here and the next day the coroner was bringing him out of his one- man cell on a stretcher. I was hurt and shocked beyond belief - all kinds of thoughts were going through my head.

Why didn't you tell me, so I could talk you out of it?

Was it really that bad?

Why didn't I see that coming?

Most of these questions weren't answered. However, I did find out about all of the things that he was dealing with. His family problems, his life sentence, no family support, the demons that he was fighting every night when the lights went out. His situation got the best of him and he planted that rope made of sheets together and hung them on the vent and took his life.

For many nights afterwards, I asked myself 'Why didn't you tell me?' I could have gotten the chance to talk to him. I would have told him that it's going to be okay. I would have told him that 'he is loved' and that taking his own life is not the way to go. I truly believe in my heart that I could have made him see the light, if only he would have trusted me. Together we could have helped one another.

I truly understand the feelings he probably felt. Prison is a lonely life and at times people on the outside feel just as lonely. I have been on both sides of the fence so I can relate to you. Drugs and alcohol doesn't make it better. I know exactly what an addiction feels like and it's not a good feeling.

Addiction can make you feel lonely, sad, depressed, suicidal, angry, in denial, unforgiving, irritated and the list goes on and on and there isn't one word on this list that's good. It's a dead end my friends, and I'm urging all of you to be a help to yourself or to someone that you might know or love. Be a real friend. I didn't get that chance with my friend, but maybe you will. Talk to them and drill it into their head that there is help out there. There are people that love them and want them to have a good life. Let them know how much you care about them and how important they are to you as a friend and a person. You will save a life, and you won't be asking this question; Why didn't you tell me? Why didn't you tell me?





WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME?

BY BOB R. WILLIAMS, JR.

There are so many things you could have told me, so many things you could have said. You could have told me about life, about living, about loving and about leaving, about hunting and fishing, and - - about you. Oh yeah - - and about God.

Sometimes,...well,...often-times, ...when I search back into my catalog of memories, I can see through all the fog and haze these clear patches of gem-like moments where you missed. The thought was there but maybe you didn't know how to start, where to start, what to say...exactly - - and then, just like that, the moment was passed.

Now, to be honest,..hindsight being 20/20 and all that, ... with the me back then, and my having been so utterly emotionally tattered, psychologically shattered, and so physically battered, angry and stuck in survival mode. Nothing was said.

I could still feel, was still experiencing, all the hurt and pain from way to many painful experiences of the past. No trust, and couldn't see through the turmoil raging in my own mind and in my life. Nothing was said.

Yeah, I'm pretty sure I wouldn't have paid much attention, would've forgot, wouldn't have listened. I think I was that messed up.

All that said, I still wish you would have spoken up because I needed you to tell me all the things you

would tell one such as I. Even though I may not have listened, and...Hey, you never know. I could've listened, I NEEDED to hear what you had to say.

Who can ever know, all that I needed you to tell me. We could come up with hundreds of things that you could have told me, thousands of things you could have said. What I needed may not have been the words you would have uttered, just to have been recognized, and spoken to, with all the love and care of that moment could have been just the right thing to ease my hurts. It may be that I simply needed the experience and the lesson therein.

We have to KNOW with every bit of our being that we'll be ready and prepared. We have to be open to letting the heart have its say, to letting the spirit speak. Those things wrapped up in why didn't you tell me and why didn't I ask, were lessons for the life I would have to live. Now, we'll go back and find them, plus pick them up as they come on this road that is life, so that they can be carried forward and passed on to whomever I may need to one day tell something to, to talk to and speak with...to recognize.

Why didn't you tell me; is now water under the bridge. Lessons can still come from the experience. However, from here on out, when that moment comes, please pounce on it. I don't want you leaving me or this Earth with everything still to tell me.





ALONE

BY NATHAN GILBERT

How are you doing today?

Seriously, how are you doing?

If you are reading this, ask yourself that question.

Good?

Okay?

Everything 's in place?

If that's the case, what about the person sitting next to you or across from you?

How do you think they're doing?

A simple acknowledgement of their presence could be all it takes to lift that person's day. Five-ten minute conversation could change a person's life and you may not even know it. We sometimes neglect the impact a stranger's words may have on us. Don't we read self-help books from strangers or just books in general, which help us reflect on our own lives? What's the difference if you're sitting next to someone and asking them how they are or sharing something? Something so simple can go a long way. Even a genuine, "How are you?" Can show someone compassion.

If you're reading this and things are not okay, you feel lost, alone, at rock bottom? I can tell you that you're definitely not alone. At one point in life, everyone has felt lost, alone, and has hit a certain rock bottom. Do not hold that inside yourself. Trust me, I hit rock bottom many times thinking nobody cares; who wants to listen to my problems? I covered it up with drugs, alcohol, and took all my frustrations out in negative ways. At one point, I didn't want to be alive. I just didn't care. The one thing that helped me was a seminar they held at my school.

These complete strangers came in and told us about their lives. One person was a recovering drug addict. One speaker was molested as a child and one was beaten as a kid. They all thought their lives didn't matter

at one point. The courage they had to come in and talk openly and honestly showed me so much. What really got me was where they were at in life. One became a doctor, one became a chef, and the other one became a motivational speaker. They all suffered a painful time in life, but they all learned that they were not alone. Their stories were able to help so many people. There's always someone to talk to.

My story touches a lot of ground. I was neglected as a kid; beaten, heavy into drugs, overdosed, had close friends and family members die; murdered, overdoses. My parents are struggling drug addicts and alcoholics to this day. All my life, I felt lost, alone and depressed. I kept it bottled up, and vented through drugs and committing crimes. When I started sharing my life, I learned there are people who can relate. People at first glance I just assumed their lives were perfect. It turns out that by me opening up and letting it out, not only helped me, but some of the people who allowed me to talk. They also said things to me that they never shared with others and I would have never been able to do that if it wasn't for that one stranger to ask, "How are you doing?"

Even if you don't feel comfortable discussing whatever it is you're going through, there are people that care, genuinely care about you. You are never alone by yourself so don't feel guilty or anything. Life definitely sucks sometimes; a lot of times. It's a vicious cycle of ups and downs, but never give up on your dreams, your hopes, your purpose and more importantly, never give up on yourself. Whatever you're going through today, tomorrow or even years go, you are strong, beautiful, a ray of light even in the dark times.

Your own self-value is what matters the most. You may not be able to do what that person does, or have what that person has, that's their story. Someone loves them for their story. Just like you're reading this, your story is unique. You survived it. You conquered it. Someone loves you for your story, your strength and your imperfections. Don't allow the past tribulations



to weigh you down, because whoever caused that pain, controls your story. Why allow them to have that? You're the narrator of the story, the author of the story and you have control over it.

I ask you that whatever you are going through, or has you second guessing your true greatness to be here with us on Earth, please allow yourself to get it out. There is so much pleasure on this Earth and even if you don't believe in yourself at this moment, that feeling won't last forever. There are all kinds of people with different stories, different backgrounds, and you never know when or who can help, or vice a versa. Help is always out there. There are people who care about you.

THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO LOVE YOU! Never lose hope. Never lose your purpose. Never lose belief in yourself. Talk to someone if you need to or even need to vent. Let your voice be heard, let your life, be heard.

Be Strong!

Be Beautiful!

Be You!

I send my love and best wishes and blessings to all who are reading this.

SPEAK UP!

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A SEA OF FISHES

BY EXCELLUS O. HYLAND

Hardly ever does a day goes by without somebody having a problem or an issue. The world is full of people that are going through it to be concerned with what an individual (like you) are going through, you think.

You mope and lash out, cry, and act out, but it's always somebody going through it the same, you feel. And there's no way for you to be seen and acknowledged. Thinking there's too many fish in this sea of life. But you got it wrong. It takes every fish in this sea of life to make up the sea. You are relevant and of significance.

No matter how you float or swim, you can get the flow of things or be that big catch. The only time you should think that you are alone is when you journey off from the rest of the fish. When you swim in another direction away from the flow of the school of fishes swimming upstream then you have a problem.

When we assume, we can make an ass out of you and me; me because I wish you would have talked to me, tell me what's bothering you instead of thinking I didn't want to hear your problems, or I can't help you with your issues.

This reflects both ways because any issue, problem, or matter at hand goes both ways. Meaning, you don't have to suffer to be alone and you can share what you are going through to endure, to get back in the flow of life's sea.

True enough there are plenty of fishes in the sea, so many that you don't feel relevant, but you are. Plenty of fish are a few without you. You're special just being a part of this vast sea. Since you are human instead of a fish, staying afloat takes a lot of paddling and struggling to stay on top. As a fish, you're going to stay afloat. Submerging in water and staying down too long, unlike a fish, you could drown. The water itself is the issue or problem, or and when

you get in this sea, you need a lifeguard to help you stay afloat, bring you out of the water. However, when you hold back and don't say anything about what's going on with you, then you are swimming away from the support, which can cause you to get caught on a hook, pulling you up to a frying pan.

There's a flow with the fish as they swim together. They stick together to prevent having problems too big for them to handle alone, and when they are together, they don't have to worry about being hooked. Being in a group gives them the advantage by focusing on the collective instead of being alone. This focus and togetherness can cause us to be strong or at least safeguard us from life's turbulence and dangers, whether physically or emotionally.

Every fish that got caught, faced the sea alone. Being a part of plenty is to be part of something. Something is better than nothing and something is of importance. You have to get with the flow and let yourself be a part of by sharing your problems and issues with me, so we can swim with no struggle and breathe together through your troubles. You are not alone in the sea, but you can speak with me and let's swim together to prevent from getting caught up.

Don't think you are any less than anyone else, or the world is full of people with so many issues that yours are insignificant. You are special. To think different, could lead to being caught on that hook.





WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME?

BY JEFFREY WRIGHT

“Why didn't you tell me?”

Is what I was asked of course.

I respond with, “Tell you what?”

That I'm not as tough as I might appear to be on the outside? That I can handle everything on my own that comes my way, even though the current state of my life provides all evidence to the contrary. That I'm just as capable of working through and overcoming life's hardships as anyone else is all by my damn self.”

I mean - - I was raised to never show weakness. The first time I was punched in the face, I ran inside crying to my mother and father, and all they had for me was, “Boy, don't run in here crying to us. You better get back outside and hit 'em back.” So, that's exactly what I did then, and every time after that. So, tell me, whom was I supposed to tell anything to from that day on?

How do you tell anyone about something you've never learned to identify as being an actual problem, especially since stifling, stuffing, and silencing your inner-pain for your entire life has become the only way of life you've ever known? So much so that you don't feel hurt anymore, you've become the hurt. You don't feel anger anymore, you've become the anger itself. Emotions don't just come and then subside for you anymore. You actually become everything you feel. You become an obsessive-compulsive over every negative emotion you experience that the only temporary relief you can manage to find from all the intense pain seems to be weed, alcohol, or cocaine, but hopefully all three of them if luck would have it. In fact, when it comes times to die, you've said that your plan is to be 'Sooooo high.'

When one learns to stay quiet about whatever is going on inside them during their earliest years, should there be any wonder as to why they never told anyone or grew up unable to discern there was anything to tell, much less anyone who even cared to know?

I thought that living in, and feeling like Hell was normal for everyone here on the planet Earth. I grew up believing that the most intense, excruciating and unbearable pain was to be dealt with solely by the individual suffering from it. Neither my mother nor my father ever talked about their pain, and they never asked me about mine either.

The only thing this type of self-defeating, belief system and distorted thinking have earned for me throughout the years is career criminal status. In fact, the proof of my inability to realize when and to what degree I'm suffering, much less come forward to ask for help from the people capable of providing it, is so deeply ingrained in my false-self, can be found by referring back to the January 2021 edition of *Spotlight on Recovery*, (They Day I Grew Up, Part 2.) In it, I clearly define how this defect of character made it so easy for me to unravel in a time of crisis. Then instead of asking for help, I committed a senseless crime that has me serving a 25-year sentence. My second cousin, ex-girlfriend, and a few other friends all asked once I was behind bars again, “Why didn't you tell me?” Of course, I had no rational explanation for them.

I firmly believe that the emotional abandonment by both parents whom I lived in the same house with until the age of 12 is the source of this defect. Never having anyone at home to model for me what healthy communication between people, who are supposed to love you and care about one another looks like. No one to show me by opening themselves up, and being vulnerable by sharing their fear and pain, and ways to work through it, sent the message to me that I would have to go it all alone. The only place I ever saw families functioning as a team was on T.V. shows like *The Brady Bunch* or the *Partridge Family*. The shows that my parents criticized me for watching, because according to them those shows weren't reality based, and no family actually functioned that way in real life.

So, I died on the inside when I was too young to even know that's what I'd actually done. I've had to





learn how to communicate and develop some semblance of social and interpersonal skills, along with ways to manage and resolve internal and external conflicts within the prison setting.

Doing this helps me to feel differently, and much better than I remember ever having felt since my earliest developmental years.

I've also learned some of my familial and ancestral history during this process, and found out that I was shamed for having the feelings that all children experience by parents who also been shamed by their parents for having the very same feelings. I learned that I can choose not to become another link in a long unbroken chain of the multi-generational, shame-based, adult-children who've never learned how to process, understand, and interpret their feelings in a healthy manner. I come from a race of people who still haven't fully recovered from the trauma associated with the master/slave method of treatment they were forced to endure for too many years during slavery. Unfortunately, this fear and intimidation used by slave masters to manage and control the slaves was adopted by the slaves and became the way Black people raised, and disciplined their own children. During the slavery experience, Blacks were forced to endure, and internalize a type of inhuman inner-strength and resistance to feelings like loneliness, self-pity, sadness, hopelessness, and despair, in order to adapt to and overcome whatever type of cruelty inflicted upon them and they had to do it alone.

This served its purposes then by helping the slaves survive through all of the brutality, but it has outlived its usefulness today. There are still too many of us who haven't quite figured out how to break free from the emotional and psychological bondage the slavery experience brought with it. In the literal sense, slavery ended about 156 years ago. It's time for the people in this society, both Black and White to realize that the source of so much of the mental and emotional illness existing, and on the rise in this country are due to the blindness of its citizens to see the urgency and importance of coming together. We all need to talk this out and tackle the issues affecting each and every one of us. Talking about things, whatever they are, is

therapeutic, and sets the stage for the healing process to begin. But first -- people have to become courageous and willing enough to talk about even the most disturbing and uncomfortable topics preventing this nation from moving forward.

So parents, let's try and remember in the coming days ahead that "children raised by adult-children usually remain children." An immature and emotionally underdeveloped adult-child lacking its own identity is unqualified for the job nurturing a child to become a fully mature individual who can formulate a healthy self-image and stable identity of its own. If you ever find yourself having to ask your child after the fact, "Why didn't you tell me?" Just know that it's never too late to create a new and different kind of parent-child relationship. Asking them what's going on and then helping them to feel comfortable, and confident enough that it's always okay for them to share with you whatever is troubling them. It is an acquired skill. Learning for yourself, and your children, how to understand, interpret, and then express what you're feeling is an invaluable skill that would enable you to preserve and save the lives of you and your children someday.

From you they would have learned how to identify what's going on within themselves, followed by the desire and willingness to talk with you about it. Thus leading to you talking, hugging, and supporting one another, and you growing beside your children as they mature into becoming emotionally well-balanced adults who know how to feel and express love and soft emotion shamelessly. They will know how to give to, and receive hugs from others, and most of all, be able to hug themselves.

Thank you.





WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME?

BY ALPHONSO TANNER

Hello, how are you?

My name is Alphonso, I know you have your reason's that have you thinking some kind of way, and I will not sit here and tell you know how you feel or understand you. and understand what you're going through. However, if you allow me a few seconds of your precious time and life I will like to enlighten you on something that you will like to know.

First of all you may be in a situation that has you in a aggressive mindset and you've looked at things from all perspectives and angles and feel there's no hope or use of living no more. But love, some people are in worse situations than me and you. Some people have no chance at all. Some people are sick with diseases and so weak they don't have the strength to take a deep breath. Some have had drug problems they can't quit or stop due to the wars that they participated in for this country. Some can't stop using because the pain will come back and the cost of the drugs is more than they receive from the Veteran's check they get only once a month.

Some of them are out their minds from being traumatized by the events that they have been through; being shell-shocked and dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder. Some people like us have suicidal thoughts, that make us feel worthless and lonely in a world that's filled with people that give us the cold shoulder. There are also people who have been so broken they feel like life is not worth living. We can agree on that, right? Now we have this crazy Covid-19 thing going on. Then we're still fighting Cancer and other things that have the human race on its tip toes every time we feel a pain or two. Still, those things are not a reason to give up on yourself, or to put yourself in a worse situation. I know you probably thinking, 'Yeah right say all you can but I made up my mind. So how you going to tell me how to feel and you're not in my situation?'

Well let me enlighten you on something; I too felt that life was no longer needed to be lived or worth living before. At the age of twelve years old, I lost a

very close friend due to an accident of playing with a gun and I couldn't figure out for the world of me why this occurred to me in my life. I was playing football and hanging out and had a good nature high, then this happened. I went into a state of blank fullness. I couldn't eat or think about nothing period. I only ate to stop my stomach from hurting. I would sit in my room and stare into oblivion. I then came to the conclusion that --'The hell with it, life isn't worth living, period.' I saw a way to end it quick and fast. My step-daddy had guns all in the house so I waited until nobody was home and loaded a .38 revolver, all six rounds. Then I stood in the mirror and decided to leave a note, but realized I didn't have to explain my situation to no one. Then just as I clicked the hammer back on the gun, I thought I heard a noise. Then I felt something curl on my ankle so I looked down and it was my mom's dog, Pup-Pup, licking my ankle where I had broke the skin on my ankle and the blood was streaming through my sock. Pup-Pup had tried to lick it that morning but I ran her off. Then I remembered my grandma Ruby telling me that the dogs will lick your wounds to heal you, it's the love they have in healing power. So, I put the gun up after I un-cocked it and picked up the dog. She licked my face and barked. The look in her face told me that she knew I was hurt. Man, this broke my heart. I looked around and realized that we leave her all alone everyday for hours and that's why she's so happy to see someone and here I was being selfish, about to take my life thinking no one cared and this dog was crazy about me.

Since then, I took her to school and to the parks with me. In the midst of it all, I lost both my grandmothers, and my two friends. This put me in a bad spot mentally. I wanted something to numb the pain, so I started to use cocaine, reefer, and alcohol to ignore these sudden blows all at once. That's what helped me ease the pain I was going through. However, little did I know I had people who cared for me who I didn't even know about, this was a blow to me too.





One particular day an older white man who used to fix my go-cart and help me build it up to go faster came by the house riding his lawnmower. He stopped and said "Son, you sit on this porch high as a kite and watching life pass you by. You got to get yourself together. Life is going to happen with or without you." I just told him that "I'll be okay." However, deep down inside, I was a wreck.

Once I started going to a center for drug free living, I received one good counseling session. I reported my suicide attempts to my then counselor who told me that it is selfish to do that or think of that because other people in my life need me to be strong for them. That thought remained in my head until one day, I was awakened by a dream. I dreamt I had actually committed suicide. However, I was revived by a sheet of light, that kept talking to me. I was all sweaty when I did actually wake up because during the dream I was still dreaming while thinking I was awake.

I sat and talked to my son's mom about this strange event and I came to these conclusions on my own.

- 1) I realized I didn't die because my plan was outside the time slot that God had planned for me to die.
- 2) That dog I loved and cared for, had the sense to know I was hurt. She knew I was hurt, in more ways than one.
- 3) The fight I have in me is not over yet. My strength, is to be shared with others like you and me.
- 4) Asking God why people have to die was a question I used to answer myself to further my very own depression. I was only a kid so if God loved me, why did I have to go through this? Why couldn't my life be normal like other kids?

This question is more than asking. The strength in it lies in us keeping it positive and staying focused so we can retain our joy and spread that positive energy.

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WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME?

BY DAVID LEE TIDWELL

I had this friend when I was in the world. She was married and her husband was a good man, when he wasn't drinking. At least once a week, he'd go out, drink way too much, come home and fight. He would hit on his wife, front of their daughter. Now as you can guess, her mom, many of her girlfriends, and us boyfriends of her girlfriends would tell her she should leave, it's not going to get better. We would implore her to think about her daughter. She would just get mad at us, like we were giving up on her husband. It was clear how much she loved him, and like I said, sober, he was a hard-working, no cheating, bill paying, active father, and he was a charmer. So, that's a lot of good right?

However, the fact is most men who hit women in anger, don't stop. They always seem to find "reasons." I know you've heard it. First it's, "I don't hit women, well unless they put themselves in a man's place." Then it seems like the "unless idea," that was never right to start with, grows in reasoning. Unless they hit me, unless they just keep pushing, unless they throw stuff at me, unless, unless, unless, until unless becomes "dinner's cold," "didn't get my beer," "talked back," and on and on.

These same men always seem to be able to charm their lovers with "I'm sorry, I won't never do it again. I was just drunk baby," and so this pattern of abuse is never ending, and sadly neither then is the pattern of what their kids grow up seeing. Due to all the anger, it's really hard to get through to women in love in these cases. As such, most women don't speak out about it.

Therefore, daily, weekly, monthly, what ends up being yearly, we sit on the outside looking in, we see what this pattern of abuse does to their daughter, how I's getting worse for the wife, our friend. I tell my girlfriend, "What if I come at this a different way?" "What if I write a song on this issue and try to reach her without preaching to her about this issue?" This idea ended up working. Through music, I made her see and get what we could no other way get her to understand.

I've played and sang this song many times. I don't know if it's the passion of the issue, or the heart I put into it to try and reach my friend. I was trying to save the lives of her and her daughter, but when I play this song, there were few dry eyes in the crowd.

The song is called, "And the Baby Cries." It's touched a few women's lives and their children over the years. I thought I'd bring it to the readers of Spotlight on Recovery in word form and I pray those that could use the eye opener, read this and begin to see and understand as the mother of this song did in the end, God's grace before it's too late.

Thank you for taking the time to read it. I wish I were there with you, playing my guitar for you.

The Baby Cries (Song)

He comes home late again with whiskey on his breath.
As he walked through the door, well he looked like a wreck.
It didn't take her long to see he was angry once again.
As she laid her baby down, well right then he started in.
And the baby cries, "Daddy, please let it be."
And the baby cries, as daddy knocks mamma off her feet.
And the baby cries, :Mamma why can't we just leave?"
And the baby cries, because of what the baby sees.

With whisky on his breath, she lays the coffee in his hand
As she sits down beside him, he says, "I will never hit you again."
A smile from her lover as she hopes that he is right.
She prays with all her heart, he won't come home drunk again tonight.

From the way he parks, there's no doubt he's been drinking hard.
She shuts the door of her daughter's room, as her man falls down when he stumbles in.
She screams, "Why can't you stop?" as a house of violence, it starts again.
And the baby cries, "Daddy, please let it be."
And the baby cries, as daddy knocks mamma off her feet.
And the baby cries, "Mamma, why can't we just leave?"



And the baby cries, because of what the baby sees.

It's been going on for years, the mother tells her mom, "He won't never change."

The bruises underneath her eyes, shows the violence still remains,

from a one sided love, who hopes that her man will stop.

You can see the fear in her daughter's eyes from her drunken daddy's steady drop.

She lays her baby in the bed. He's on his way home, and he's late again.

Her daughter cries, "Mamma, let's just leave. Do we really got to be with him?"

The pain hits the mother's heart, as now she starts to

finally understand.

It's not just that mamma's life the whiskey's hurting in the end.

Yet that baby cries, "Daddy, let my mamma be."

Still that baby cries, Watching daddy knock mamma off her feet.

Must that baby cry? "Mamma we're never going to leave."

As that baby cries, "Does no one care, what's our babies see? "

See your baby cry, and love her enough to leave

See that baby cry, and love her and you both leave.

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WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME?

BY DENNIS MINTUN

About three years ago, out of the blue a cousin I hadn't heard from in over 25 years started emailing me through Jpay. He told me he'd found out from my grandmother that I was in prison in Idaho.

Now, I had been in prison since 2002, but most of my immediate family had disowned me, and told friends and other family members that I had become a "hermit."

Over the nearly 20 years I'd been in prison, only my now deceased aunt, my grandmother, and my mother have stayed in contact. My aunt and grandmother got into serious fights with the rest of my family for telling me about other members of the family, and how they were doing (I'm not 'part of the family,' so don't deserve to know). My mother writes short letters every few months, telling me about the weather (she lives 90 miles away), and the feral cats they feed. Nothing personal. Nothing about the family I once was very close to.

When Wayne first began to email me, I told him about my Chapel group and how we put on shows, and concerts for the prison population. I told him I used background tracks I bought from Jpay for that. He told me he'd always enjoyed my singing when I was younger. From that time on, every month he would put \$20 on my Jpay media account, so I could buy more accompaniment tracks. When my small tablet broke, he even bought me a new, larger one.

About six months after he began to write to me, he told me my mother had found out. She warned him that I was an "evil homosexual" who'd been disowned by his family. Having been around when I was growing up, Wayne had seen some of the abuse I had endured. Having been close to my mother, he often tried to intervene to no avail. Often, Wayne would offer to babysit me on the weekends, in order to give me a little reprieve. I was Wayne's ring bearer at his wedding when I was seven years old.

A few years after that, Wayne had a son, David.

I didn't get to see David very often, since they lived in Canada. However, when we were together we had a lot of fun.

Then, something happened. My family wouldn't talk about it, other than to say Wayne had gotten a divorce. A lot of the family stopped talking about him, although he still visited my grandparents once or twice a year (sometimes I had a chance to hang out with him).

One of my other cousins told me Wayne had been having an affair... with a young man. Wayne never came out and said he was gay at the time, but when he told me about my mother calling me an "evil homosexual", he joked that he knew there was something about me he liked.

Then, about 2 years ago, he began to confide in me. He told me he started to email me because his own son was in prison, and - knowing my family - he figured I didn't have many people to talk to. The family didn't know about David being in prison. They all thought he was working outside the country.

Then, Wayne told me that he, too, had gotten into similar trouble like me. His was in Canada, so he only got a misdemeanor, rather than the felonies I got. Fortunately for Wayne, none of our family ever found out about that.

About a year ago, Wayne had a minor heart attack. When he didn't write for awhile, I told him I'd been worried. He said he'd always try to stay in touch. Then, this last December, he was out of touch again. When he finally wrote, he told me he and David had been really sick, from Covid-19. Then, he said he was much better, and promised to stay in touch. I chided him for not telling me sooner.

A few days later, I got a letter from Mom. After telling me about her cats, she casually told me Wayne had died from Covid-19.





I have not written back to my mother. I was so angry, and upset. The last time I wrote, I had teased him for not telling me he was sick. However, what I really wanted

him to tell me was what nobody in my family ever has..."I love you, and care about your life." Although, of all people, I knew he did.

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Congratulations to Spotlight on Recovery Publisher Robin Graham, on winning Second Place in the Arts and Poetry Contest at the 12th Annual International Conference on Stigma. Robin Graham's poem, "In The Quiet Of My Mind," was among 70 art, poetry and video projects submitted to the contest. The Conference was hosted by Howard University from November 15-19, 2021.





WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME?

BY PAUL KNIGHT

Dear Readers of Spotlight on Recovery, this article is upon a question to you; as to “Why Didn’t You Tell Me?”

Why didn’t you tell me that when I was growing up, that life is an experience of practical acquaintances or others in our life and through those acquaintanceships, one could make good or bad decisions?

Why didn’t you tell me that by not sharing my innermost thoughts and feelings of worry or mental suffering that self-destructive thoughts would come?

Why didn’t you tell me that I have the power to overcome all negative attributes through positive ones?

Why didn’t you tell me that there are some things in this world that one will have to accept, even though they don’t want to?

Why didn’t you tell me that once Momma is gone, there will be no more Momma?

Why didn’t you tell me that life and freedom is a gift, and that until one is deprived of either, the understanding of the loss, will be lost?

Why didn’t you tell me to be a realist, is accepting things in their true nature, and dealing with them as they are?

Why didn’t you tell me that for a person to truly experience the full joy of love, one must also experience the grief and pain of love?

Why didn’t you tell me that upon a loved one, or friend not sharing their pre-existing medical illnesses or a victim not sharing their facts of being abused, that

within their minds, it is to spare us the shock, grief, and pain?

Why didn’t you tell me that fairytales was really a falsehood?

Why didn’t you tell me that I had to accept responsibility for the wrong doings of my actions?

Why didn’t you tell me that prisons could be an outcome of those actions?

Why didn’t you tell me about the possibility of spending 40 years in prison?

Why didn’t you tell me that I had enough time for the system to make me do some time?

Why didn’t you tell me that I have the ability to see through muddy water, to see dry land within this prison environment?

Why didn’t you tell me that by losing my freedom that I would be subjected to totalitarian control upon every aspect of my existence?

Why didn’t you tell me that one day if I was a model inmate, I could be free?

Why didn’t you tell me that if I speak of these experiences that maybe I could help another stay free?

Why didn’t you tell me of any of these things so I wouldn’t have to write and ask why?

I’m still wondering, why didn’t you tell me momma, dad, grandma, grandpa, aunt or uncle; someone, anyone, should have told.



WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME?!

BY EFRAIN PEDRO MORALES, JR.

“Why didn’t you tell me ... ?!” is what we’d typically expect to hear when disclosing something of a sensitive nature, or a personal secret quite embarrassing or even dangerous to admit. Yet, as we bear our heart to confide a secret, we instead receive a visceral reaction, with sometimes a scalding rebuke that makes us regret opening up to anyone thereafter. Many folks share this sentiment. In a dramatic read, from Thomas Hardey’s Tess of the D’Ubevillers, “Tess must choose whether to reveal her past or remain silent on the hope of a peaceful future.” (A Question About Jesus—Uncommon Stories—Why Didn’t You Tell Me?; 9/11/17 www.marthabrehm.com & www.goodreads.com).

YOUTHS & ADULTS:

Consider the following examples: At age 6, I suffered a traumatic episode that left me with severe Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD); then scholastic learning problems due to a form of Autism. Understandably, other kids my age were cruel in their assessment: “Retard” ... “Dummy” ... “Loser,” is the typical salt on the wound(s) that made me self-isolate and become more introverted. Teachers used the word “challenged,” to convince mom that I should be sent in for Electroconvulsive Therapy—a common method expeditiously used back then, (even to attempt conversion of gay kids into HETERO-sexual).

Parents, as keen as they sometimes are, assume it a phase or bad habit, faking it, or lack of study, etc., to account for any shortcomings or oddities. To disclose to a parent can be even harder for kids--and even adults; especially if the afflicted doesn’t even know what is actually going on at an internal level. Worse, is the easy solutions that don’t as easily remedy the underlying

dilemma (Misunderstood & Misdiagnosed; the title of my book on Autism is available at www.lulu.com).

Then there was my discovery-phase of same sex attraction during adolescence—ultra-taboo in the 70’s—80’s, that for many youths isn’t something they’d want to tell parents. Luckily, although mom did say, “Why didn’t you tell me?” I had a very understanding mom (SEE “You’re Still My Son,” Spotlight on Recovery, 2014 Fall issue).

For adults, it is often difficult to disclose the carryover of an alternative lifestyle into a heterosexual relationship. Many bisexual men find it almost impossible to divorce themselves from what became second nature to them once they tried and liked gay sex. “Why didn’t you tell me...?” a wife would ask in shock when told or catching the husband in the act with another man (See: Chapter 3: The Coming Out Experience, www.pewresearch.org).

The stark truth is that no matter how brutally honest or not we are, the perception of the other person, whether subjective or not, can either mitigate or alter it in a trajectory less than favorable. Nevertheless, “Nothing ventured, nothing gained” is the adage that comes to mind when desirous of change through liberating transparency.

RELATIONSHIPS:

A fact is that relationships fail mostly due to a lack of forthrightness (e.g., “You never told me you were convicted of a crime before we got married and had children, and that’s not fair!”).

At the risk of offending traditional and/or conservative sensitivities, I’ll disclose a most embarrassing Christmas



day at a family get-together with neighbors invited. My new gay boyfriend, Tito was startled by a fist to the jaw, from my uninvited bisexual ex-boyfriend, Daniel.

This happened in front of shocked spectators that were then unnecessarily privy to my partially closeted secret.

“Why didn’t you tell me, Pedro?!” cried Tito in angst. Suffice it to say, that things weren’t exactly the same thereafter.

PUBLIC:

I would concur that the worst fear is having someone breach our confidence by airing sensitive information that can bring about alienation, or worse. By the same token, there are many public figures that have opted for transparency. Go to <https://www.hrc.org/news/biweek-celebrating-public> to read about 5 public figures that shared their stories openly, like YouTube personality Lilly Singh coming out as bisexual: “Throughout my life (my identities) have proven to be obstacles from time to time,” wrote Singh.

Why would anyone want to air their most personal secrets? - - some would wonder. Interestingly, a positive to self-disclosure is: The disclosure reciprocity is the dyadic effect - - when one person discloses personal information, the other is likely to reciprocate (<https://medium.com/athyna/how-self-disclosure>).

A downside is that a lack of self-disclosure can often make it difficult for other people to really get to know them, (<https://www.verywellmind.com>).

IN GENERAL:

According to www.talkspace.com, “People keep secrets for a multitude of reasons. Maybe they feel embarrassed or shame about something, they feel they might get in trouble (with the law or with a person), or they feel like their relationship with somebody might be destroyed should the big secret be revealed” (How Keeping Secrets Can Impact Your Mental Health – www.talkspace.com).

Others feel volunteering information can open the door to blackmail of sorts, or the coercion of favors. This was a tactic used on me for nearly a decade when in my childhood: “If you tell on me, I will tell everyone

you like it and you’re gay; then you won’t have any friends.” To a kid already feeling loneliness, shame, confusion and fear, it was what kept “Mums the word” in my vocabulary.

I have said it myself, “Why didn’t you tell me?”, when my granny and mom were suffering mental and physical problems. I didn’t find out until later that Auntie Gladys was just sparing me the additional worry at a time when I was indisposed and tormented by my own demons and non.

Therefore, it really isn’t linear or plain black and white. Yes, there are gray areas we aren’t always privy to, but at the end of the day dare we ask ourselves, would I have disclosed something as potentially damaging? If we in fact love someone dearly, to rupture such a harmonious balance can in fact have a ripple effect upon others as well (offspring, etc.). Exercising extreme caution, timing, and wisdom in presentation can also make all the difference—especially when there are others who can be dramatically impacted by sudden change. “Knowledge is power,” but it is also dangerous in the wrong hands and at the wrong time. Measuring a person’s propensity for an emotional outburst that can turn violent/temperament, is a rule of thumb for the disciplined wise person. And if still in doubt, put it in prayer to a higher source.

CLOSURE & HELP:

Closure can come in many ways when in distress, or when feeling confused and alone. Many try gain closure by drowning out the frustrations of life or temporary problems in a bottle of booze to no avail. The issue(s) don’t go away for long, but are often compounded by that quick splurge into mind-altering substances--the consequences thereof can last a very long time. I know because I felt 20 long years of consequence before truth sunk in: mostly in finding faith.

Part of my closure came by way of a dear longtime friend, Pastor Peter Ventura. He didn’t judge or condemn; instead he provided emotional support via sound doctrine and encouragement.

Better yet is that pastors generally will not breach confidentiality.





The same goes for therapists that can help unravel tough inner dilemmas. Years back my PTSD and Autism were causing me a lot of grief, but did not seek out a psychologist or a psychiatrist for fear of being perceived as mentally unstable. This, however, was the furthest thing from the truth. Once I worked up the nerve to see a psychologist, I was finally able to unravel the other part that I hadn't fully confided in my pastor about. The good news is that, even if you choose not to see a therapist in person, and are not in immediate crisis but still want someone to talk for emotional support, there are Counseling Hotlines you can reach contact. One is www.opencounseling.com.

CONCLUSION:

In hindsight, I can think of numerous instances when the timid and shy boy I was should have told

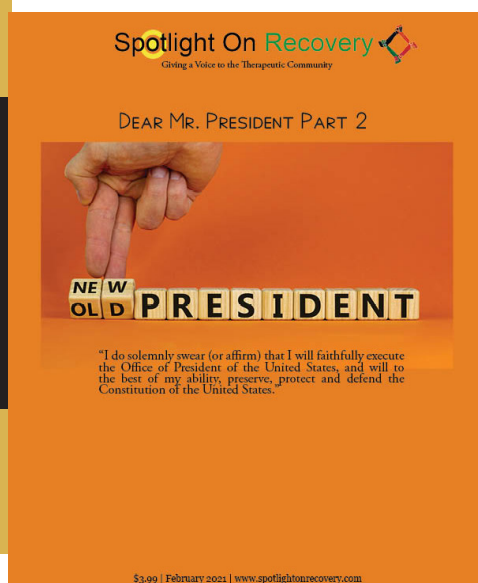
someone something. I can also contemplate the unpredictable outcomes. Clichés that suddenly comes to mind, "If there is no risk there is no reward" ... "Nothing great comes without risk."

As liberating as this may have been back then, perhaps it isn't absolutely necessary that I become an open book to all; especially considering privacy laws and the right to avoid providing fodder to the precarious that scour public domain information.

At the end of the day, however, honesty is indisputably virtuous when qualified with discretion and discernment added timing, it can go a long way. Suffice it to say, that friends and family will no longer be asking me, "Why didn't you tell me?" after reading this Spotlight on Recovery article.

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HOW TO DEAL WITH A LOVED ONE WHO IS DESPONDENT OR SPIRALING OUT OF CONTROL

BY JULIE SULLIVAN

Do you have a friend, parent, sibling, or other loved one that is severely depressed, angry, or addicted somehow but can't recognize it for what it truly is? Should the answer be yes, you may be sitting there feeling helpless as to what to do. But do know this, we have all been there in our lives, at least once before. So, with this said, do realize you aren't alone and that there is help available. Listed are some crucial steps to be used as a guide to assist you.

They are:

Some People Who Are In Pain Can't See Past Their Pain

Some people in pain can't see past their pain because they are blinded by it or living in denial. However, those who do tend to see the pain, see it clearly, and know what it means are the loved ones. It can prove to be a not-so-great position to be in when someone you love is obviously in pain and not acknowledging that pain or doing anything to combat it. A big part of you wants to reach out and help them, but another part is guarded because you don't want them to think you are trying to tell them what to do or how to live their life. Therefore, dealing with a loved one who is despondent or spiraling out of control is something that can be a challenge and is personally heart wrenching at the same time.

Hope Does Indeed Float

It is an awkward spot to find oneself in when a loved one is sad or losing control. However, hope is the one thing that should be held onto at all times. Hope does indeed float. So, with this said, never lose sight of this fact. Holding on determinedly to hope is the very first step in the help process.

Spirals Can Take On Many Forms

Before you can begin helping someone that you care about, who is despondent or spiraling out of control, you need to educate yourself on the issue of spirals and know that they can take on many forms. These spirals can be anything from attitude to recklessness to a substance to beyond. They can also be a mixture of different things, all at the same time, and make it all the more difficult a situation. However, one thing about spirals is exact, and that is the fact they have linked symptoms. Signs of a spiral are indications that a real problem is taking place that needs to be addressed right away.

Approach Your Loved One With Calm And Patience.

No matter what kind of problem your loved one is going through, the best way to handle the situation is calm and patient. Approach your loved one with this calm and patience. Let him or her know that you genuinely care about them and that you are not judgmental at all. You are also standing beside him or her and will always be there, out of love and concern only. It's as simple as that.

Don't Just Tell A Loved One To Get Help; Offer Them Your Support.

Once you have recognized there is a problem with a loved one, the next step is clear, and it is not just to tell them to seek help. It's to become support as much as possible. People who are facing issues don't want to feel alone when seeking professional help, which is why you must put yourself in their corner out of love and concern. Just be there to care. You can even offer to drive them to sessions if they would like you to wait in the waiting room when they are done seeing a therapist





or psychiatrist.

Life Isn't Perfect, and Neither Are People

Life is not about being something perfect. If anything, it can be the opposite sometimes and the best way to deal with a trigger that is causing one to lose control is to realize this. Life is far from perfect, and so are people. Life is prone to get out of control sometimes, and the only way to get the power back is to fight for it. When you can successfully rise above any issue or threat, you are regarded as strong because you are not letting the issue keep you down. You are getting up and challenging it. Personal determination is what inspires one to fight back. Therefore, with this said, fight back with all your might in every way. The same can be said about someone helping someone they love, who is experiencing difficulty. Challenge yourself to be the best support possible for your loved one facing a problem that seems bigger than him or her is. Your determination to be their rock will help them to be their rock too.

Take Action, and Don't Let It Be Just Mere Words

After you have personally examined what the problem is that your loved one is going through. It is best to get as much information on the subject of what the issue is as much as possible. Get as much education and insight that you can on the problem. It is the first step in helping your loved one stop spiraling downwards and get some control back in life. Taking action means what it means. Don't let it become just words and broken promises. Give all the help you can, and give your loved one the encouragement that they need to make a life-changing decision to get help from a professional therapist or psychiatrist. Let your loved one see that they are powerful and can get the control back in their life if they want to. Birds were meant to fly, and humans weren't meant to be grounded. They should always soar and be happy. Tell him or her that they have

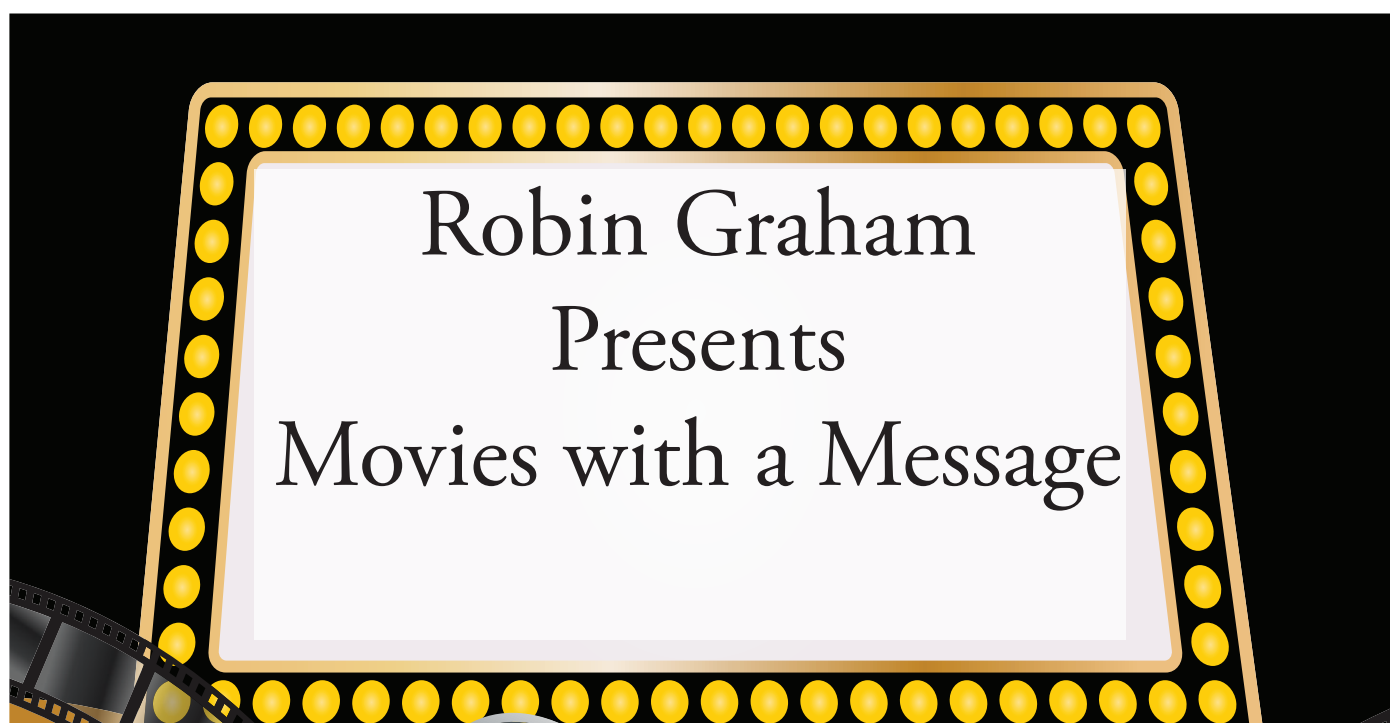
the guts and determination to get control back. Actions talk louder than words, so speak up, and let them be heard.

Don't Allow Loved Ones To Be In Denial

Living every day in denial can be the most negative of all things. Don't let someone you love dwell in rejection; if they have a problem, anything states the facts about their situation. The facts are the only way to go. They are also positive in delivery. Sure, no one wants to hear that they have an issue, but there is evidence of it. It must be revealed, it is the only light to fighting the darkness that your loved one is living in each day. No one can dispute the facts. The facts are a powerful reality all their own. They are the one way to fight denial, which is damaging and crippling. The only way to stop the spiraling down is by taking a stand, and that stand is to free him or her from the grip of denial.

Leave The Door Open and Be Sincere

The only way of getting a loved one to help themselves is by being there to care. You should be sincere and watching from the heart of yourself. When you speak from the heart, you can't go wrong, and by telling the truth. You are doing what must be done the most. Of course, you can't force someone you love to get help, but you can offer encouragement and lots of positivity. These two things alone work wonders in their way. As an act of love, a voicing concern will indicate to him or her that you care about them 100%. Let your loved one know that the door is open. They won't be walking alone. You will be walking beside them if they choose to go through the door. It is their decision to make. "I'm here if you need me, and always will be!" Trust me, and you, in turn, will trust that you make the best decision possible for you!



Join us on January 24, 2022 for Robin Graham's Movie's with a Message. **Early registration begins December 27, 2021.** Movies With a Message is a group discussion about great films that provide thought povoking messages to the audience.

There will be two discussion groups on January 24, 2022. The first group will meet at 1 p.m., and the second group will meet at 7 p.m. Each group will have 12 participants.

Please sign up early at 9602robin@gmail.com. Add your name, e-mail, group time you want to attend, and city & state. You will receive the title of the film to watch on your own using Amazon rentals or regular cable programming. Zoom links to the discussion groups will be sent on January 24, 2022, at least 2 hours before log in time.





SPOTLIGHT ON RECOVERY NEWS

Last November, history was made when Kamala Harris became the first woman to be elected Vice President of the United States.

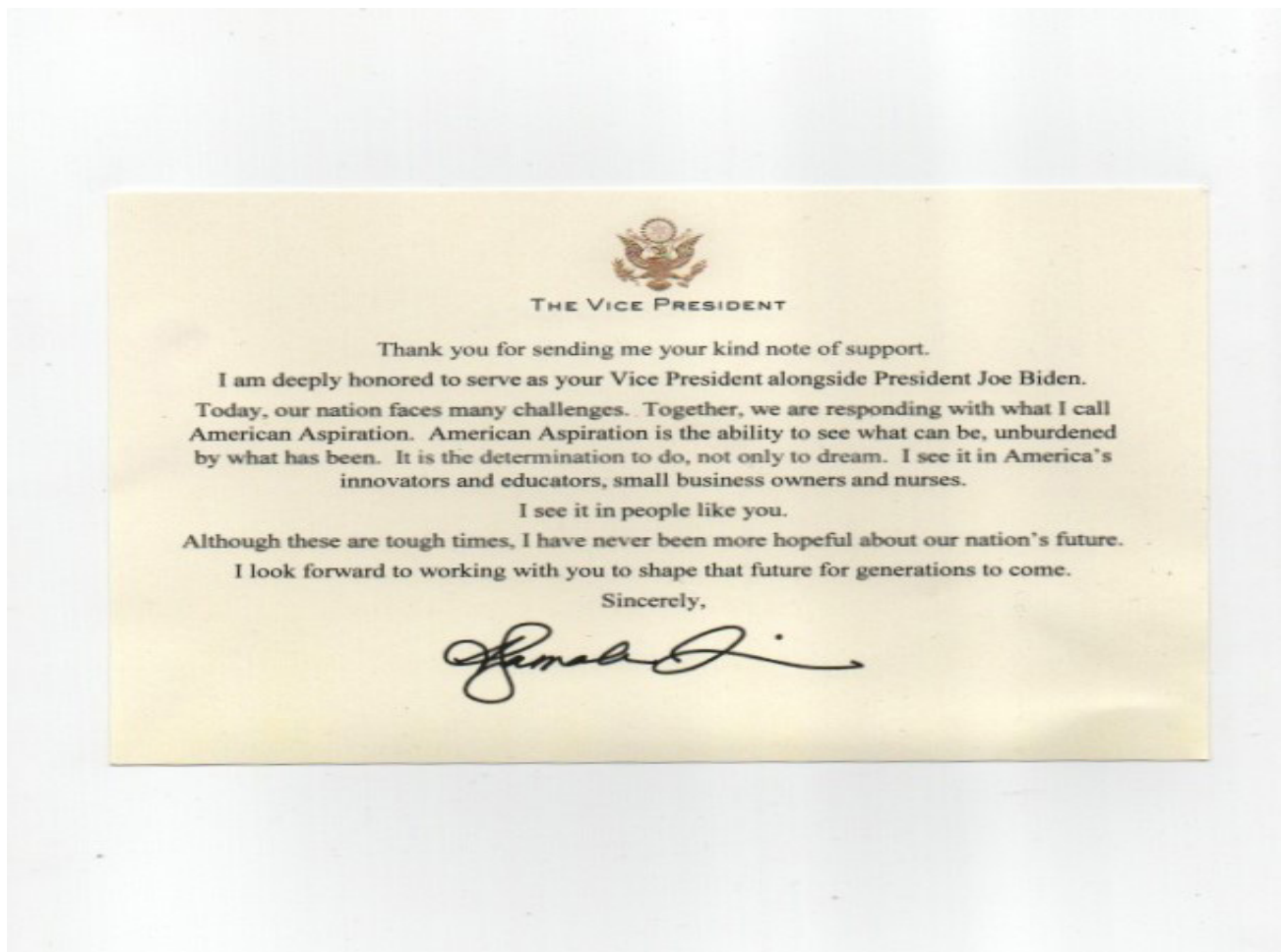
Spotlight on Recovery Magazine published Dear Mr. President, Part 2 and promptly sent copies of the February 2021 issue to President Biden and Vice President Harris, congratulating both on their accomplishment.

Both the President and Vice President have been very busy over the past 10 months. However, I received a postcard last month from Vice President Harris, acknowledging receipt of what she calls my “support.” Yes, I would call it the same, as all the contributing writers and I felt proud to welcome both President Biden and Vice President Harris to the White House.

In Dear Mr. President, part 2, We also voiced our opinion about some of the issues we are facing in our prisons and in our communities. Below is a copy of the postcard I received from Vice President Harris, with her Vice-Presidential seal and her signature.

I wanted to share this incredible moment with my contributing writers and staff who make Spotlight on Recovery possible.

– Robin Graham





CHRISTMAS FROM A DISTANCE

BY ANTHONY BILLINGS

Once again, it's that time of year,
Behold to all Christmas is finally here.

A day of fun and joyful tears,
best spent with all your family near.

This is the season to go and give
Lots of love, along with gifts.
The chance to spread some happiness
To fellow adults as well as kids.

Although some will be alone,
far from the place, that we call home.
Blocked by seas or walls of stone
or any circumstance that is our own.

Nevertheless, you will be on our mind,
in memories we keep inside.
In those we search and then we find,
the thoughts of you that we rewind.

We all wish we were there and
could be with the members of our family.
Side by side and full of glee,
while gathered around the Christmas tree.

So dry those tears off your face,
we're not gone, we're just away.
And on behalf of all who cannot say,
Have a very Merry Christmas Day!



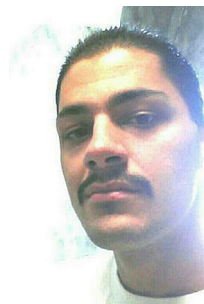


ABOUT THE AUTHORS

ANTHONY BILLINGS About the author: Anthony Billings, was raised in the small town of Susanville, California. He earned his A.S. Degree in General Business and an A.A. Degree in Social/Behavioral Sciences through Coastline Community College. In 2017, he was one of only 51 incarcerated individuals who was awarded the ASG Merit Scholarship.

His favorite hobby is creative writing, which he has been involved in for almost 20 years now. He has over (50) published pieces to his credit, including some that have gotten top placement in poetry and essay contests.

Using creative writing as an outlet has not just led to achievements, but has also given him a purpose. He has encouraged others to pick up writing too while also inspiring those that have read and found meaning in his words. Anthony has discovered a craft that has proven to be positive, productive, and life changing, and he can't wait to see where it takes him next.



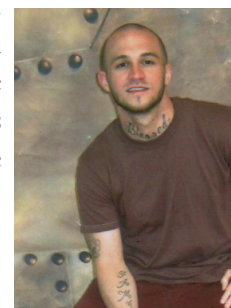
CLAUDEL GALETTE About the author: I was born in New York in the early 70's, but I grew up in New Jersey. My parents immigrated from Haiti in the late 60's. I moved to Florida in the early 90's and been back and forth between here and New Jersey since. I have a degree in Paralegal Studies, which I attained in 2001 from a community college in Dania Beach, Florida. I'm currently serving a ten year sentence with a projected release date in March of 2023. I write as an outlet of expression, hoping my articles inspire someone in need of mentoring.

NATHAN GILBERT About the author: My name is Nathan Gilbert. I am 29 years old. I was raised in a small town called Biglerville, PA, right outside of Gettysburg, by my mom who battled her demons. I had the support of my uncle and grandmother who stepped in to assist.

Growing up, I didn't have the best of role models, the first time I was drunk, I was nine years old. I fell into a bad crowd. I was always fighting and into drugs and alcohol. I always tried to do the right thing, but already had a background and not too many people believed in me.

Despite my hardships in life, I did manage to graduate from high school. At the end, I still found myself mixed up with the wrong people and a revolving door of prison. After my fourth time in prison at the age of 24 and facing serious time, I decided to make a change a move forward. I found a voice in my writings, and began a new outlook on life. I hope my writings and my story inspire people who read them. If you would like to correspond with me, please write to me at:

Smart Communications/PADOC
SCI: Houtzdale
P.O. Box 33028
St. Petersburg, FL 33733



DANIELLE GRAHAM-KELLEY About the author: My name is Danielle Graham-Kelley, I'm a Brooklyn native. As a mom of 4, with a career in education, while working on my second Masters, it's a blessing when I can find time for my passions such as writing poetry. I hope that my words can speak to the hearts of many and be an inspiration to all.



EXCELLUS O. HYLAND About the author: Excellus O. Hyland, who is from Miami, Florida, has been a contributing writer who is celebrating recovery every day after serving 23 years in prison. Excellus is living life to his full capacity. He is the author of “The Badass Witch,” A Romance Novel about the Power of a Woman. His book is available on Amazon.

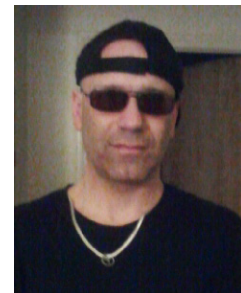


PAUL KNIGHT

About the author: I grew up in Florida in a small town called Zellwood, Florida , which is outside of Orlando, Florida. My family did not have material wealth our cravings come from the gifts of love from my mother. I have a close-knit family, four brothers, three sisters, my grandmother, aunts and uncles on my mother’s side and a step-father. We were full of love, unconditional for real. That was our wealth. But, I blew it with wrong decisions in helping another to break the law in robbing a store. We got away and a week later, he turned himself in and told them it was all my idea and the court system gave me 45 years with three mandatory sentences. The guy who confessed did not receive one day in prison. This is my 40th year. I learned to read and write in 1986, at Florida State Prison. I now have a paralegal diploma and a diploma in the Law of Business Organization. My momma died. Then I lost my grandmamma, an aunt, an uncle, and older brother. I have two sisters left and three brothers.

DENNIS MINTUN About the Author: Dennis Mintun has been a regular contributor to Spotlight on Recovery Magazine since 2013, under the pen name of “Cougar Newquist.” Because he uses the mistakes of his own past to help others overcome theirs – everyone knows who “Cougar” is. Dennis runs a thriving chapel group that focuses on personal empowerment. He has written articles, stories, and poems for various magazines, and has fiction and non-fiction books at PrisonsFoundation.org.

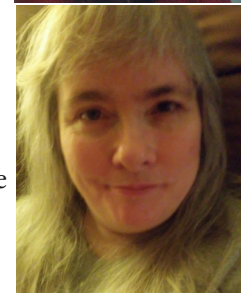
EFRAIN MORALES, JR. About the Author: Efrain Morales, Jr., whom has published abroad in newspapers, newsletters and magazines, including Spotlight, is also a Certified Braille Transcriber. He is the author of Misunderstood and Misdiagnosed: Living with a Disorder, and Am I Really a Monster? He is currently finalizing a Fantasy Fiction book, titled Leena & the Keeper of Magics.



LIZ QUINN About the Author: Liz Quinn is a Freelance Writer living in the Pennsylvania area. She has been freelance writing for various newspapers and magazines since 1996. Some of the magazines she has been featured in include: Lifestyle, a local magazine that covered the Bucks County area, Skope and Spotlight on Recovery. She has also published four poems. She received her B.A. from Holy Family University and Master’s in Science Communications from Drexel University.



JULIE SULLIVAN About the author: My name is Julie Sullivan, I love writing and have loved it for as long as I can remember. I wrote my first poem at the age of 5, I’ve been writing on and off now for several years. I have authored one book on travel to New Orleans, that was published on Amazon in 2018. I hope to write more books in the future. My hobbies range from cooking to reading to music to movies. I’m in my mid-50’s and reside in Louisiana.



ANTHONY TATE About the author: About the Author: Anthony began writing for Spotlight on Recovery last year. We are excited to have this new talent amongst our team of writers. Anthony says, “I’m from a place called Hope, and I would like to hear from you. I am a very humble man.”





To correspond with Anthony Tate, write to:

Anthony Tate #098521
 East Ark Region Unit
 P.O. Box 180
 Brickeys, Ark 72320

Anthony also says, to his Mama, Donnie, Adrian, and Jewel, thank you for the support.

ALPHONSO TANNER About the author: Alphonso Tanner has been a contributing writer for Spotlight on Recovery Magazine since 2017.

To correspond with Alphonso, please write to him at:

Alphonso Tanner #X05549
 Blackwater Correctional Institution
 5914 Jeff Ates Road
 Milton, Fl 32583

DAVID LEE TIDWELL About the author: My name is David Lee Tidwell. I am a prisoner in the Arkansas Department of Corrections. I have five kids, four girls, one boy, and six grandkids. I'm 47 years old. In the free world, I owned my own business for 20 years. I am also a singer and songwriter as I was in a band for 17 years. To correspond with me, write to:

David Lee Tidwell, ADC#141699
 Varner Super Max – CB 3-01
 Grady, AR 71644

BOB R. WILLIAMS About the author: Bob Williams, Jr. has been on

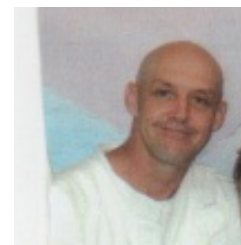
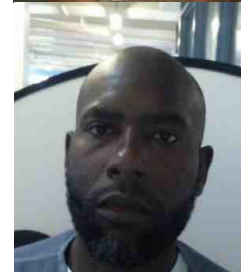
California death row for 27 years, in essence, since his arrest at the age of 18. He is an artist who paints in watercolor and now writes. He is currently working on two books. One on a new History of Krav Maga and the other on, The History of Mythology, Philosophy, Metaphor, etc. of the Japanese Sword – The Katana. His dream, is to one day get out of prison and to work with youth who have suffered trauma and abuse, and who have found themselves in the juvenile system. Bob says, "Really! I want to change the world!"

JEFFREY WRIGHT About the author: I have recently become a very proud member of the Spotlight on Recovery writing team, and spent a great deal of my time contemplating and writing about ways to help ex-offenders successfully re-integrate themselves back into society.

As a repeat offender, who is currently serving 25 years for first-degree bank robbery, I strive to play an active role in drawing more attention to the psychosocial factors contributing to the problem of mass incarceration. I believe prisons should be more clinical and far less penal in nature. This change ensure that young boys and girls who enter the system can be properly diagnosed, and never become repeat offenders who forfeit the majority of their adult lives, going in and out of prison.

I'm a poet, essayist, and novelist working to become a widely read published author. I'm open to corresponding with anyone who has ideas about re-integration, restorative justice, and social issues. I believe anyone can make a difference no matter what their circumstances may be. Send your correspondence to:

Jeffrey L. Wright #209168
 CCI
 900 Highland Avenue
 Cheshire, CT 06410





COMING SOON!
SOMETIMES, WE JUST HAVE TO LAUGH!
JANUARY 2022

SOMETIMES,

WE JUST HAVE TO

LAUGH!