

The Family Voice



A newsletter by
and for Caron
Renaissance
families

Dear Families and Friends,

We hope you are enjoying the warmth, fresh air, sun and flowers. You have earned it. Summer is finally here, and we are pleased that all of our northern friends have made it through a long and merciless winter. Wasn't winter a wonderful reminder of your resilience and strength?

Wayne Dyer, a motivational speaker and author said, "If you change the way you look at things, things you look at change."

The power of perspective is so relevant to the work of our families. In fact, each submission in this issue of *The Family Voice* carries the power of perspective in its message. Family alumna Alexandra and patient alumna Jessica both share their stories and the perspective that helped their families heal. In Submissions from the Heart, Sandra's perspective helped her diminish unearned shame, and while Bill's perspective eased the process of detachment, Harriet realizes how her own father changing how he looked at things helped her get better and how doing the same may help her daughter. Rev. Laurie Durgan also offers a beautiful reminder of perspective in the poem "The Guest House" by Rumi.

We hope that your journey will be made lighter by the tool of perspective too, and new strength, hope and healing will follow.

With gratitude,
Mary, Yasmin and the team
at Caron Renaissance



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Submissions for the Fall 2014 issue of The Family Voice are due by July 15, 2014.
To make a submission, please visit www.CaronRenaissance.org/TFVSubmissions

Message From A Family Member: Making Amends

By Alexandra A.

At our visit to Boca Raton for the Gratitude Weekend, our daughter asked if she could have 30 minutes with each of us. I thought to myself, this is it - the moment I had been anticipating since she told us a few weeks before on the phone that she'd finished all but one of the 12-Steps. Now she was going to make amends to her parents with the Ninth Step, and this step was going to be for me.

There is a heavy load of pain stored up in me from the years of my daughter's active addiction. I usually have a pretty tight hold on it, but if I loosen my grip, it springs and grabs me around the chest. My breath goes shallow, and my heartbeat jumps into a hard thud. "Trauma," our therapist explained, "we can work on this."

I wasn't convinced we could work on this pain. I felt I had wandered by accident into the war zone of addiction. I was a civilian casualty, and I wanted and felt I justly deserved restitution. By making amends to me, my daughter would remove this pain from my chest. I wasn't too clear on the details, but I imagined it would involve stating the wrongs and injuries, recognizing my pain and asking for forgiveness. It would be very emotional and intense but finally healing. Thirty minutes probably wasn't going to be enough.

My daughter, nervously perched on the chair of our hotel room in the Delray Beach Marriott, started out by speaking about her recovery. She was trying to live an honorable life now, she explained. She said she could not undo the past (too true, I thought), and then she asked me rather formally if there was anything more she could do in her recovery to make amends to me. Caught off guard, I scrambled mentally. This was a trick question. If I thought about it, the hard and successful work of her recovery was, without a doubt, the finest thing she could do to make amends for the past. Furthermore, I couldn't imagine what more she could do in her recovery - she was doing everything that Caron Renaissance and her sponsor had indicated. "I guess not," I answered. We sat in silence for a moment. Was it over? I blurted out, "but what about the pain? It's still there."

She looked genuinely perplexed; she clearly hadn't planned for this question. "Perhaps you should speak to

your sponsor about that," she suggested and then looked away as her phone pinged -- surely a message from her own sponsor asking how she was doing with her parents.

So it wasn't about me after all, and I didn't get my day in court. My daughter didn't fall on her sword again and again in the hotel room to take the pain out of me. In fact, the event wasn't about the past at all. By pegging the amends to her recovery, she had focused my attention on the present, on what she was doing in the here and now, and not on her actions under active addiction.

The pain is still there. I have come to realize that I will have to deal with it myself, not because my daughter hasn't, but because only I can. A good place to start is the premise that I wandered into a war zone. I have learned being co-dependent with an addict is a conscious act. Secondly, what on earth was I doing there without any protective gear? Perhaps the degree of trauma was also about how little I did to protect myself. Looking back, the parent-as-martyr to pain is a model that accomplished nothing for me, nothing for my family and definitely nothing for my daughter. In a case of distorted thinking, that made tragic sense to me. At the time, I believed that if only my daughter was truly aware of the pain she was causing, she would stop using. With each new level of pain and suffering on my part I thought, now surely this time, she would notice. This hadn't been my first tactic to stop my daughter's addictions, but as none of my more rational approaches had had the smallest effect, I ended up with one point of leverage, my own suffering. It also was not a newly acquired tactic. I seem to remember employing it during my daughter's early teen years, well before she took a substance. Have I ever used it with my husband? I think back now to my own father, whiskey in hand, blaming the world, including his own children, for his pain.

None of the counselors at Caron Renaissance will be in the least surprised to read this. When I first heard the phrase "addiction is a family disease," I felt both annoyed and uncomfortable; annoyed because I didn't like the implication that the rest of our family was in any way involved in my daughter's addiction other than as victims, and uncomfortable because part of me suspected that in my case, it was true.

Message From An Alumna: Healing the Broken Hearts

By Jessica M.

I am a part of a professional women's network in Boca Raton that emphasizes personal and professional development in equal measure. One of our members, I'll call her Donna, shared a particularly moving story last week. Donna is both a jazz vocalist and a health coach by profession.

Last week, Donna suffered two heart attacks. She is in her early forties, does not smoke and has no personal or family history of cardiac illness. She is physically fit, a clean eater and enthusiastically advises her clients on how to achieve optimal physical and mental health. Initially ashamed of how her body had betrayed her, Donna humbly opted to tell clients and friends alike about the experience for the benefit of their awareness.

Without blaming or taking pity on herself, she told us of the possible factors that contributed to her cardiac event. She grew up in a house with two parents who smoked, and as a jazz vocalist, she clocked many hours in smoky nightclubs. She has metal fillings in her teeth that are full of mercury and cannot afford to replace them.

I was already captivated by her courage and forthrightness, but I will never forget what came next. Addressing her sisters in business, Donna said calmly "of course, there is a metaphysical component to this. How many times have you heard me say my heart is broken?"

Widowed at 20, remarried and divorced, Donna confessed that there were so many days where she "left her grief in the backseat" and went about her day intent on helping others. "Today, I say my heart is healing." There is no gesture too small to communicate to ourselves and others that we are ready to heal.

I still have a letter that my father wrote me while I was in treatment, in anticipation of the notorious Caron Renaissance Family Program. He wrote, "This will be my last family week." He had already been to dozens of family workshops all over the country, in support of his own father, his brother, his nephew and finally me. My therapist asked me whether I thought he meant it.

It didn't matter. This would be my third personal family week, and that was enough for me. I was done breaking my parents' hearts and ready to heal my own. I was so proud of him though for announcing his intention to heal and move on. Healing is difficult. It demands great faith and meticulous action in letting go of things we don't yet know we can survive without. It hurts more than whatever injured us.

Over two years into my recovery from alcoholism, I am still happily healing. I let go of my chemical dependency (and its requisite associated pathological tendencies), and I have been given the world in exchange. I am so grateful to my family for lovingly letting me go, and to Renaissance for compelling me to heal with all my heart.



Would you like extra copies of *The Family Voice* for support groups, office or even just to have for a friend in need? Your VOICE is being shared with those that need to hear the message.

If you'd like to share an issue of *The Family Voice* in your community, you can request extra copies by emailing Yasmin at ydoivas@caron.org or Mary at mdavis@caron.org.



Congratulations and Welcome

■ **Kristen Morgan**, MA, CAP, former case specialist in Caron Renaissance's admissions department, has recently joined the Caron Renaissance family department as a family therapist.

■ **Aaron Levine**, LCSW, recently joined the admissions department at Caron Renaissance as a case specialist.

■ **Brian Gong**, M.Ed., former counselor assistant at Caron Renaissance has moved into a primary therapist position.

■ **Evan Emery** recently joined Caron Renaissance as a Counselor Assistant and will be working in the Community Living Program.

■ **Rev. Laurie Durgan** recently assumed the position of Spiritual Director for Caron Renaissance.

■ **Karen Dodge**, Ph.D, recently joined the staff as Director of Neuro Rehabilitation, a new treatment modality at Caron Renaissance. Individuals with a broad range of symptoms such as mood disorders, seizure disorders, ADD/ADHD, substance abuse disorders, insomnia, hypersomnia, chronic pain and post traumatic stress disorders can be effectively and measurably treated with neurofeedback therapy.

■ **Yasmin Dovas**, BA, Director of Alumni and Family Relations, has completed an internship at South County Mental Health Center toward a Master's Degree in Social Work. She was honored as "South County's Friend of the Year" for procuring a donation of 140 Tempur-Pedic mattresses, their largest donation to date.

■ Family alum, **Maxine L.** has been selected to receive Caron's Alumni Parent Award for the Greater New York City Region. This award recognizes a Caron alumni parent for their compassion and commitment to the ongoing recovery process. Maxine has also been a long standing Caron Renaissance family buddy and oversees the Morris County Caron Renaissance Family Support Group in New Jersey. Great work, Maxine! Congratulations from all of us at Caron Renaissance!

Of Interest: Ted Talks.

Check out the two links below to hear Gabor Maté speak on *The Power of Addiction and The Addiction of Power* and Dr. Judith Landau speak on *Family Stories, Secrets and Survival*.

Gabor Maté:

<http://bit.ly/1tfK5LC>

Dr. Judith Landau:

<http://bit.ly/1giUCTM>

CONGRATULATIONS!

Hi Jonathan,

In case you're having trouble placing the email address, this is Sally -- you worked with me about three years ago as part of Renaissance's new college counseling program. (I applied to like fifteen colleges and ended up at Sarah Lawrence.) I wanted to write you because I'm graduating from Sarah Lawrence next week and feeling a little burst of gratitude for the people that helped me get here. I don't know how I'd have gotten back into college without your help, and I definitely wouldn't have been able to choose a place that was such a great fit.

Thank you, really, for all your support and guidance. When I got to Renaissance -- and even when I left -- I didn't think I was ever going to graduate from college, and I definitely couldn't have imagined doing it at four and a half years sober.

I hope you're doing well! I still miss Florida sometimes, a little bit, though not so much in the summer.

All my best,
Sally

A Testimonial

By Michael

After spending time in treatment at Caron Renaissance, inpatient, intensive outpatient and then continuing care programs, I had a good job. But I knew that in order to realize my dreams, I needed to go back to college. Jonathan Saltzburg and the College Bound program helped me to realize this dream. I was in significant disciplinary trouble with the university I had attended previously. Thanks to the advocacy of Jonathan and my primary therapist, (which I guess I did earn) my school was willing to look beyond my past indiscretions and let me return.

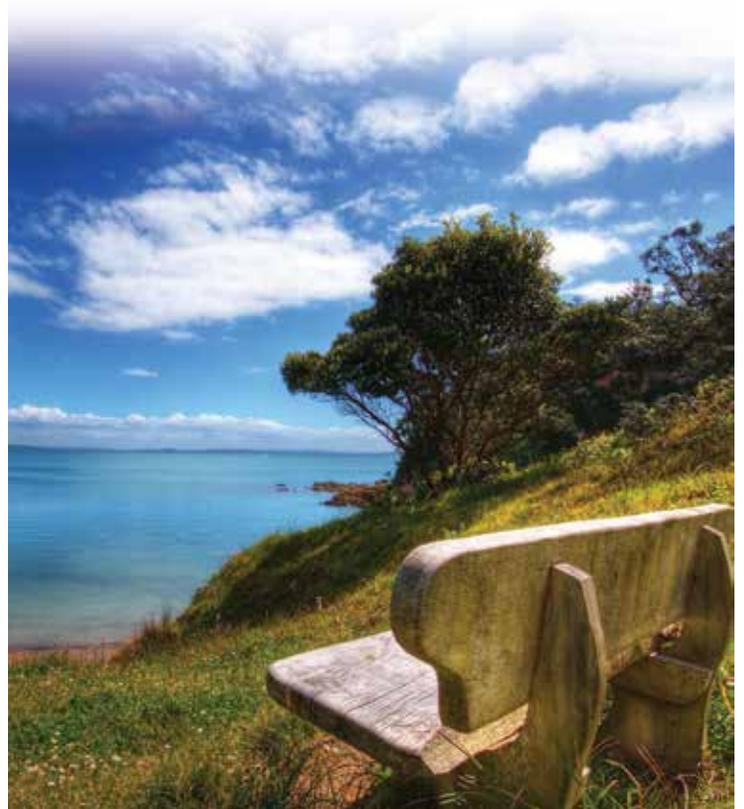
Even more importantly, Jonathan helped me develop a plan for relapse prevention. We set out expectations for my plan including - how many 12-Step meetings I would go to, when I would meet with a therapist, when I would see a psychiatrist, how soon I would get a sponsor, how I could get involved in the collegiate recovery community, ways to stay in touch with him and other parts of Renaissance's treatment team and many other things. Basically, we made a road map of very specific, clearly-defined steps I would take in order to safeguard my recovery and maximize my chances for success upon moving across the country to return to school. It has made a huge difference in my life. Today, almost two years later, I still go to a lot of meetings that I discovered in my first 90-in-90 after moving. I still call on a lot of the supports I made at those meetings and am more involved than ever in my collegiate recovery community. Thanks in part to consulting with Jonathan, my school will be dedicating an on-campus apartment exclusively for students in recovery starting in Fall 2014. I am integrated in and supported by a network that Jonathan helped me to discover. It has helped me to maintain my recovery in college, and to flourish. I am succeeding academically, in athletics, extra-curricular research, employment, romantic relationships and all of the other things I felt my life before recovery so desperately lacked - most of all, happiness and purpose.

Congratulations!

Congratulations to College Bound at Caron Renaissance alumnus, **Corinne**, who has been accepted into the Summer X Games Internship program being held in Austin, Texas. Corinne was our first official Sober Dorm resident at Caron Renaissance and is currently attending college and recently earned the distinction of Dean's list.



Congratulations to College Bound at Caron Renaissance alumnus, **Alex**, who on behalf of the Department of Social Work Student Awards and Recognition Committee, was honored during his university's Department of Social Work awards ceremony this spring. This ceremony recognizes social work students who have demonstrated exemplary performance in the classroom, in the field or in the community.



Submissions From The Heart

To Be the Mom of an Addict

By Sandra S.

**Once upon a time, I was just a mom;
a regular mom.**

When I held my little miracle in my arms for the very first time, I rubbed my cheek on his fuzzy head and whispered, "Joey, my beautiful son, I will love and protect you for as long as I live." I didn't know then that my baby would become an addict before becoming an adult, or that the addict taking his place would shred the meaning of those words to smithereens.

When my son tumbled into my world, he arrived without an instruction manual, but I was the best mom I could be as someone with good intentions and no experience. I stumbled through parenthood like everyone else — rocking my baby to sleep, kissing the scraped knees of my little boy, setting unwelcome limits for my sometimes testy teen, and hoping I was doing things the right way.

Then slowly at first, came the arrests and the overdoses, the needle marks and the dealers, interspersed with big fat lies. My loving child was turning into a monster, manipulating and using me, twisting my love for him into knots. I was befuddled by this scary new world that I didn't even know I was in and that I knew nothing about. You see, I thought I was still just a regular mom stumbling through regular parenthood like everyone else. (You see, a mother's trust and belief in her child's inner goodness aren't easily cast aside.)

Addiction is a disease, but not even the professionals have it all figured out yet — and they aren't trying to figure it out while in a blind panic, running through the fires of hell with fears and dreams and maternal instincts tripping them up. So I shouldn't feel like a total failure for having missed so many clues and for not being able to love and protect my child as I promised. But I still sometimes do.

My son became an addict in his teens, lured to drugs and alcohol by a culture that glorifies substance abuse. It is the same culture that later, so ignorantly and harshly, passes judgment. I am judged for helping or fixing or pushing (or not helping or fixing or pushing enough) the sick child of mine who won't be helped or fixed or pushed. I am judged for overreacting and under reacting, enabling and letting go and most hurtful of all, as a mother whose love must be somehow flawed.

Once upon a time I was just a regular mom, stumbling through parenthood like everyone else. Then I had to figure out how to be the mom of an addict. I had to figure out how to love my child without helping to hurt him, how to grieve the loss of my child who's still alive without dying and how to trade shame and blame for strength.

To be the mom of an addict is to be an ambassador of truth and understanding.

No more shame. No more silence.

Autobiography in Five Short Chapters

by Portia Nelson
Submitted by Steph B.

I

I walk, down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I fall in
I am lost....I am helpless
It isn't my fault.
It takes forever to find a way out.

II

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don't see it.
I fall again.
I can't believe I am in the same place.
but, it isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.

III

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it is there,
I still fall in....it's a habit.
my eyes are open.
I know where I am.
It is my fault.
I get out immediately.

IV

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.

V

I walk down another street.

Submissions From The Heart

By Bill R.

I just couldn't imagine that one of my children would ever become addicted to drugs or alcohol. After all, I have been in recovery now for over 24 years. My children have never seen me drunk or high, but they know I am in a program and don't drink. I always had this notion that this alone would make sure they were respectful of all substances. While my wife and I never told them they couldn't do anything, because we felt that would be almost daring them, I just naively believed they would somehow be able to maintain control and never reach the depths that I had earlier in my life.

Then our younger son went off to college. While I knew both of our sons had tried a few things including drinking and smoking pot, they both seemed to be able to manage that within their lives. College is where the slow crawl turned into a high speed chase to addiction. His grades were terrible. He would come home often, and my wife would tell me money was missing from her wallet. Then she would tell me she thought checks were missing. I guess that even though I have been in recovery and sponsored multiple people over the years toward recovery, I really had my head in the sand. I would often accuse her of jumping to conclusions and maybe not being sure of how much money she had to begin with. I really was in a state of denial.

My wife and I both spoke with our son. Eventually I realized that he had been stealing from us when I noticed ATM transactions and then saw some checks where I knew the signature did not belong to my wife. We confronted him, and he admitted to taking the money and that he was using it to buy drugs. We arranged for him to go to a county-run rehab immediately. He went for 30 days. When he got out, I went to meetings with him, tried to introduce him to some people and would often talk about the program with him. I wanted so badly for him to just get sober, not because of anything other than my own feelings. He just did not want to get clean and sober and because he was still living in town and had access to the wrong people, places and things, there was simply too much of a temptation. He was back doing the same things and causing all kinds of havoc in our home. I was often at odds with my wife because I just wouldn't accept the fact that my son was an addict. I was also reminded by my sober network that as a family member, I was uniquely unqualified to help my son.

So much to my initial dismay, we all agreed that we needed to hold an intervention and let him know that unless he went to another rehab- a better rehab - and got clean, he couldn't live here any longer. This intervention

included his older brother and younger sister along with my wife and me. Our son agreed and seemed as though he was ready this time (I'm still not sure I was ready). Our older son had known of a place one of his friends went to in Florida, and he suggested he go there.

We put our son in a detox for five days and during that time made the arrangements for him to go to Caron Renaissance. We picked him up from the detox and drove him straight to the airport.

There was no coming home. We really didn't get to communicate with our son during his initial time due to Caron's policy. However, we had some contact with his counselor and our family counselor.

We were told of his progress but we were also told that this was a family disease, something I knew intellectually but never really grasped in my heart. We anxiously awaited the trip down for the family workshop so we could see our son and what was going on at Caron Renaissance. Those few days were absolutely amazing and enlightening. We saw our son begin to regain his color, weight and personality. We saw him start to be the young man we actually had lost a couple of years prior. The biggest thing we learned from the counselors at Caron Renaissance was that while he seemed to be doing well, we needed to remain cautiously optimistic. In other words, stay the course and don't get ahead of ourselves. The initial feedback we were given when he was first admitted to Caron about expecting phone calls to come but not to answer them was so hard to hear, but we were committed. We also understood we needed to let go and let God. They gave us rules about setting up times for our son to call us and to hold him accountable. He also had to get a job and support himself. All of this went completely against our (or should I say my) instincts, but we were able to maintain our position.

Today, some 20 months later, our son has a job where he is working hard and is happy. He has a steady girlfriend, bought his own car and pays his own insurance and cell phone bill. He got an apartment (after a time at a halfway house) with a couple of other men in recovery and, he works the program. The time he spent at Caron Renaissance was well worth it, and I think I truly understand, finally, that no matter how badly we want it, we cannot get anyone else sober. They must want it and only they can do the work. It took this stay, the turmoil we went through and the heartache encountered for me to realize it wasn't about me, it was about my son and how badly he wanted to get clean. The people and the program at Caron Renaissance gave us all the tools to live, and with the grace of God, one day at a time, we'll all continue to grow.

Change is Pain

By Harriet

As a teenager, in my most colorful foot-stomping moments that would have befuddled even the best arbitrator from Amnesty International, I sometimes blurted out an uncompromising directive to my mother that was aimed at my father. "He has to change! He can't keep saying these things. He makes no sense," I'd say. In return my mother always gave the same reply. "He's never going to change. It's up to you to change. You're young, he's old. You change!"

At stake in these heated discussions were not rules, curfews or allowances. On those matters we seemed to have reached unspoken agreements that were short on transparency, but caused no harm. The issues that really mattered to me, that I wanted my father to see from my point of view just because I loved him, were subjects like the Vietnam War, pre-marital sex or what he referred to in an eye-popping, red-faced way during high-velocity dinner conversation, as my 'scumbag generation.' Never mind that he had been a Lt. Colonel in World War II or a self-made doctor who pulled himself from rags to riches. Those factors were distant weather reports in my demand for climate change, effective immediately, to maintain everlasting peace at mealtimes.

How was it, I wondered after each of these fruitless arguments with my mother, that anyone could reach a golden stage in life where change was not possible? Decades later as empty nesters, I realize I have long held on to the notion that this would be a tranquil time of life; when my husband and I could live contentedly, him and me, as we are. Our children, launched into the world with wide eyes and interests and motivations, would return home for inspirational visits.

But that's not how it happened. Instead, thanks to the lifestyle our youngest daughter chose, we were thrust into a sub-culture we had little knowledge about: the world of addiction. Since her arrest 14 months ago and her tentative admission that she needed help, the word change has taken on new meaning for both of us.

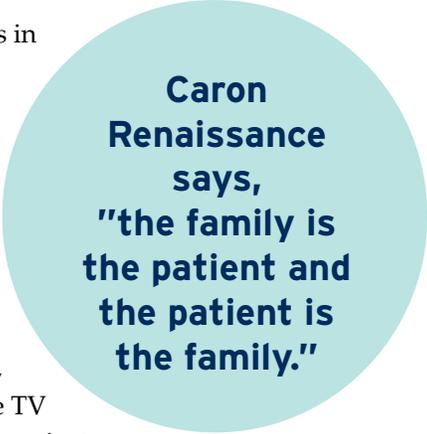
My husband likes the saying, "there's no change until there's change." Our daughter's third residential treatment center, Caron Renaissance, says, "the family is the patient and the patient is the family." We have been told many times by the therapists and some families

who have been through Caron Renaissance that if our daughter doesn't see palpable changes in her family, she herself won't change. But what does that mean? Could my mother have got it all wrong? Could I actually change at my age, at my stage in life?

If quantifiable changes in my husband and me truly mattered to our daughter's recovery, then the outcome of her early efforts is no surprise. Despite all the meetings we attended, the counseling we sought, the books we read, the TV shows we watched, the private consultations I set up, the websites I browsed, plus calls with her therapists and house managers, nothing changed. The heart of every phone call was much the same as the calls we took from her in college. We always told her we loved her and rallied around whatever efforts she reported to us. All the peripherals in her new life – bits of pocket money, legal logistics or sage advice about completing college – did nothing for her recovery. Her request for our involvement in the minutia of her minimum wage life should have been a red flag. Our meetings reinforced this fact, as did our therapists and all the collective wisdom we absorbed on every media platform. But nothing motivated me to refuse her calls, despite the fact that she and I conceded that we spoke too frequently. Instead, I often looked forward to her name popping up on my phone. I loved being on this journey with her, the journey that would heal her, and therefore heal me. I did not understand how damaging the pleasure I got from this relationship could be.

By her tenth month in recovery, we watched helplessly as our daughter's health deteriorated. She had medical problems and hospitalizations. She lost her appetite, lost her working hours; was asked to leave her halfway house while convincing her therapist that she was perfectly fine, despite failing to make or keep appointments.

What happened at Caron Renaissance needed to happen to our entrenched family. Through group, individual and family therapy, pain was imprinted on what used



Caron Renaissance says, "the family is the patient and the patient is the family."

(Continued on next page)

Submissions From The Heart ... continued

to be the pleasure channels of our relationship with our daughter. The pain was intentional and stabbing, implanting permanent wounds around a burgeoning, raw "no-go" zone deep inside. It destabilized my husband and me. Understanding as my mother must have done, that parents who've lived a life of self-determination don't change easily, Caron Renaissance uses methods of catalyzing change that feel swift, random and shocking. At Renaissance, we were lurched out of our complacency. Until then, we viewed our daughter as a college student who fell down the rabbit hole of drugs. But Renaissance offered an alternative narrative: we were compelled to view her as a drug-seeking criminal who managed to attend college classes.

To embrace this truth and the natural consequences of her actions, I imagine our daughter's self-worth must have plummeted to a depth that no previous recovery program had demanded of her. Grappling with the meaning of her criminality would have destroyed the foundations of her good-girl-college-student-gone-wrong identity. Before Renaissance, she and we colluded in this way of describing her situation to ourselves and others. Renaissance forced her to see this as distorted thinking. Now, through the vocational program, she is obliged to share her recovery with potential employers. She is forced to encounter a level of honesty that frightened her in the past, in part because it frightened us. We shared the same fears and in doing so, no one got better. Until Renaissance, the narrative we held on to about our daughter simply perpetuated her delusion and our willingness to sweep her anti-social behaviors under the rug.

As our family treatment at Caron Renaissance continued, we were asked to complete voluminous pages about our family of origin. Were there any insights that could help us on our own journey of recovery?

When I was 20, I had a nervous breakdown, or perhaps it was more of an existential crisis. At that time I was studying in Sweden; I wanted to see for myself if their extensive social welfare system – animatedly criticized by my father – in

fact had any merit. Hitchhiking in Finland in the dead of winter during Christmas time, I ended up in the ER of the university hospital in Helsinki. In today's terms, what I had would probably be called a panic attack. I didn't know it then, but this was the start of my own, much-needed journey for change and growth. Evidently, being hospitalized and cared for by doctors was part of an agenda bigger than I could control. A second panic attack hit me six months later in the peak of a Chicago summer while at home with my parents before returning to college. As a result, a cardiologist had me wear a heart monitor for a week. My father was extremely concerned. I could see pain in his eyes when he searched my face for clues about my condition, wondering if my mental health might be compromised. Unless we were discussing the usual family topics – Vietnam, pre-marital sex, or my scumbag generation – he was a man of few words.

So when he blurted out one day that perhaps I might want to try transcendental meditation, I was completely taken aback. "You mean with Guru Maharaji? You mean that kind of meditation?" I said. How could my conservative father promote something that became an icon of my scumbag generation – meditation as the path to enlightenment? I thought of all the orange-gowned Hare Krishna converts selling sweets on street corners – many of them former drug users. Did my father not know that many people of my generation who got into meditation had been into drugs beforehand? Did he not realize he was buying into a fad promoted by my scumbag peers?

But that didn't matter to him. What mattered was that a report in the Journal of the American Medical Association condoned transcendental meditation as a powerful antidote to problems of high blood pressure, anxiety, sleeplessness, lack of concentration – and a whole host of other maladies.

Up until that moment, I believed my father had little time to consider my needs, outside of the three unresolved world problems that cropped up at every meal. But in his desperation to help me, by suggesting transcendental meditation, my father crossed a divide. When he did that, the impossible happened. My father changed, I got better.

**"There's
no change
until there's
change."**

The Caron Renaissance Alumni Department - A Therapeutic Alliance for a Life in Recovery

By Yasmin Dovas, BA, Director of Alumni and Family Relations

For nearly 25 years, Caron Renaissance has had the support of its alumni, paying their recovery forward to the new patient. From aftercare services, continuing care groups or ancillary events offered throughout the year, such as the Christmas Morning Breakfast and the Gratitude Dinner, Caron Renaissance alumni embody the spirit of the "interdependent position."

The alumni department functions as an extension of the Caron Renaissance clinical philosophy. Whether integrating patients into the community through service work, 5k walks/runs, 12-Step meetings (some led by alumni), bowling nights, spirituality retreats, drumming circles or the Gratitude Dinner Weekend, patients are encouraged to immerse themselves into the community and the local alumni fellowship. This, in turn, allows the patients opportunities to foster their own self-esteem, humility or simply experience fun in recovery.

The dependent position is challenged

While at Caron Renaissance for treatment, the alumni department offers opportunities for the patients to recognize that "when patients experience honest, realistic views of their self-worth and begin to assume responsibility for their own behaviors, it facilitates the development of personal integrity – congruence between one's inside world and outside world." (*Road Map to Recovery*) This spirit is demonstrated in the monthly community service commitments that both patients and alumni participate in at Boca Helping Hands, Habitat for Humanity and more recently, Boca Raton's Boating and Beach Bash for people with disabilities. Service work challenges feelings of entitlement or grandiosity, and contests the belief that success or failure is due to someone else's behavior or circumstance, imposed upon them. Some of the most powerful feedback from patients comes when they experience a moment of gratitude for their own circumstances, choose to step out of the victim role and recognize all they can be grateful for. For example, one patient complained that they only had \$90 on their Publix card for a week's worth of groceries. After volunteering at Boca Helping Hands Soup Kitchen, that patient realized they had served the only hot lunch a family would eat that entire week, thus removing the blinders and experiencing an *attitude of gratitude*.

The dependent position is weakened

Weekend passes with alumni, in addition to the many events offered by Caron Renaissance, provides opportunities for our patients to build their identity in recovery and learn how to be a friend. Going to a meeting or lunch with an alumni or sober support teaches each new patient how to trust another in recovery, begin to develop healthy emotional intimacy and, most importantly, ask for help when needed. The false sense of pride or ego prevents some from embracing this idea, but it ultimately allows each patient to challenge old behaviors and begin to internalize an ego structure that can regulate feelings through these new interpersonal relationships. These character building blocks remain long after treatment. The only expectation is that we ask patients to do unto themselves and others as they would have done to them. As alumni serve our patients, their duty will be to one day pay that service forward to another when they have the chance.

The dependent position deteriorates

When the therapists and alumni encourage patients to engage in *fun in recovery*, the patients begin to experience how estimable acts lead to self-esteem; placing actions before feelings. Many times, patients lead their decision making by how they feel, where we encourage patients to take action and let the feelings follow. It's a process of acquainting themselves with the many possibilities in recovery and remaining open to change. It has been my experience that patients never fail to surprise themselves over the natural "high" that comes with doing service work or the sense of accomplishment, especially after a 5k race. Being open to something new and brave enough to lean into the discomfort is all a part of establishing ego identity, taking responsibility and developing personal integrity.

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Program Spotlight: The Alumni Program ... continued

The dependent position disintegrates and re-integrates as the interdependent position.

When alumni come back to the residence and pick up their aftercare buddy for pass on the weekend, the patient is given an opportunity to experience what fun in recovery feels like. For many, the idea of having “fun” may be distorted or synonymous with feeling high or drunk. Fun on pass with alumni is not only surprising for some, but becomes a ‘sober reference’ that they carry throughout their recovery. Thus, the patient identifies less as a ‘victim’ and more as an active participant in their life, taking ownership over their choices and responsibility for their actions.

The interdependent position is strengthened and becomes a way of life.

“The development of personal integrity begins with patients accepting that the choices they make in responding to life’s events, made consciously or unconsciously, are entirely their own.”

While Caron Renaissance’s goal is to create a therapeutic alliance with family members during treatment, it is the alumni department’s goal to create a therapeutic alliance with alumni and family members after treatment with one message in mind: **recovery for life**. The alumni department’s mission is to serve our alumni and support their commitment to recovery. Through aftercare activities, the Family Buddy program and our growing number of Caron Renaissance Family Support Groups, alumni and family members are leading newcomers by example. The unwavering support alumni lend to each other and the newcomer is the backbone to Caron Renaissance’s philosophy and facilitates the patient’s development towards a stable, functional self-identity, an enhanced feeling of self-worth and a genuine acceptance that recovery is an opportunity to earn a full and rewarding life, one day at a time.



Caron Renaissance
ALUMNI AND FAMILY GRATITUDE DINNER

The Caron Renaissance Body Image Group

(Integrated with excerpts from *The Psychodynamic Approach to Addiction Treatment: The Biopsychosocial Model Revisited*, by Sid Goodman, Executive Director of Caron Renaissance and author of the *Road Map to Recovery*)

By Susan Anstis, Family Therapist at Caron Renaissance

A 22 year old male, we'll call him Bill, was unable to continue his academic pursuits after two failed attempts and withdrew from college. He had a series of hospitalizations for treatment of depression and an eating disorder.

Similar to any compulsive behavior, whether it is drug addiction, gambling, sex addiction, body image, food preoccupation and related compulsive behaviors can be symptomatic of ego/developmental deficits. These core psychological vulnerabilities, include an inability to experience, label, process and manage the emotional self, profound dependency needs, a failure to take proper care of one's self and serious deficits' in self-concept.

Bill's parents naturally supported his need for care and saw that he received medical and psychiatric services. While a successful high school student, Bill always seemed to doubt his abilities and seemed socially withdrawn. Bill's parents carefully guided his academic and social challenges and were readily available to support his needs. Despite their support and efforts, Bill seemed unable to sustain self-comfort or emotional gains. In fact, he seemed to need more emotional support from parents, yet displayed anger, blame and hostility toward them. In return, his parents began to feel that they were failing Bill and to compensate, tried to do even more for him.

Obsessive and compulsive behavior or addictions provide retreat from a perceived hostile or difficult world, aid in developing a delusion system about the outside world and the individual learns to manipulate and objectify others, reining others in to care for or rescue them. Ultimately, the cycle of dependency creates self-loathing compensated by narcissistic entitlement and reactive grandiosity. Maladaptive behaviors increase and defense mechanisms trap the individual. Soon the addiction takes on a life of its own, becoming a functionally autonomous process. The secondary gains of having other than just the immediate retreat from discomfort takes shape and repetition compulsion is kept alive: "Why should I stop? My game is working!"

Bill began to address in group therapy with others having similar compulsions that he never felt he met the perceived expectations of his parents. He believed he would never be as successful as them but could not perform without them, which was magnified by their constant guidance. He came to realize his sense of inadequacy played a large role in his isolation socially, furthering his sense of failure and depression. In addition, Bill saw his parents in frequent conflict and divorce seemed imminent. Bill's eating disorder became one source of comfort and mastery in an otherwise internal and external chaotic environment.

Both men and women attend the weekly Body Image group and engage in interactive activities and therapies that foster positive self-image, challenge distortions and the relationship with self and others, address self consciousness and inadequacies and break the cycle of self-destructive, compulsive behavior. Body Image group members discuss disruptive life events and preoccupation with negative thoughts that create anxiety and interrupt everyday pleasures, social and sexually intimate relationships. Through introspection rather than societal, environmental and cultural messages, patients work to shift their thoughts about how they believe they are seen by others in society and create realistic ideals and personal acceptance. Each patient is taught to build internal strength and increase self-worth through therapeutic activities that expand awareness, build skills in managing anxiety and that support individuation/separation.

The Body Image group addresses the following psychological difficulties as seen in the form of food, exercise and eating compulsions:

- *Anorexia nervosa* - a disorder of self-starvation
- *Bulimia nervosa* - the rapid consumption of large quantities of food in a short period of time followed by purging or self induced vomiting used to control weight gain
- *Body dysmorphic disorder* – the patient has a distorted view of their appearance

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Clinical Spotlight: Body Image Group ... continued

- *Binge eating* - a form of mindless compulsive eating
- *Anorexia athletica* - when a patient over exercises with one of their goals to control caloric intake.

It is not uncommon among addicts to have co-existing addictions or display Addiction Interaction Disorder, replacing one addiction with another. Many Caron Renaissance patients present with more than one addictive behavior or drug of choice and for some, eating disorders and body image issues are among them.

Cognitive behavioral therapies, as well as guided and mindful meditation, art therapy and other interventions are used in group with the patient to address body image issues and related compulsive behaviors. Patients take a look at the negative images they create for themselves, challenge distorted beliefs and are encouraged to engage in positive and realistic goals resulting in a healthy body and mind. Likewise, a balance of nutrition, exercise and healthy living are part of the Caron Renaissance recovery process from body image issues.

Bill's parents naturally agreed to do whatever was necessary to help their son. They soon learned their own clinical commitment toward personal and systemic awareness, acceptance and change was the key. Engaging in their own therapy and working closely with Bill and his treatment team, they all came to identity reality vs. distortion, set appropriate boundaries that support individuation/separation and manage related anxieties through adaptive approaches.

A psychodynamic approach is necessary with body image and eating disorders just as it is with other compulsive behaviors and addictions. The work of therapy is to address the developmental deficits, identify and address the antecedents of the addictive behavior, challenge distortions and expand adaptive approaches to manage related anxieties all while supporting the individuation and separation process of the patient. A thorough history of patient and each family member is essential. At Caron Renaissance, family members are educated and engaged with the clinical team to support clinical interventions and must be open to challenge their own parallel pathology and generational dynamics, which if left unaddressed, will inadvertently fuel the relapse cycle.

Given the time needed, Bill continued with clinical support and lifestyle changes, redefined and pursued new goals and sustained a support network that included outpatient therapies and recovering friends and social activities.

Ultimately, the goal of the Body Image group is for the patient to gain a positive body image and acceptance of reasonable goals and happiness resultant of internal strength and improved self-esteem. Accountability in and integration of Body Image group into the full array of Caron Renaissance services is essential toward this end. Disturbing the defensive structure of addicts and reversing maladaptive responses to developmental deficits will need to embody not only a specialized group, but removal from the relapse environment, engagement of family and significant others, constant and consistent behavioral feedback from the collective team of clinicians, accountability toward self-care and adult responsibilities, a range of intensive therapies addressing patient and family member pathologies, spiritual recovery and a 12-Step compliment to therapy.

Bill's continued success will remain dependent on his and his parents maintaining awareness of their specific ego deficits, and practicing adaptive behaviors for healthy adult-to-adult interactions void of the dependency and enabling cycle and rich in self-esteeming acts and ongoing support.



SEASONS OF GRACE: Reverend Laurie Durgan's Message

The Guest House **by Rumi**

**This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.
A joy, a depression, a meanness,
Some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.
Welcome and attend them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
Who violently sweep your house
Empty of its furniture,
still, treat each just honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.
The dark thought,
the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.
Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent as
a guide from beyond.
Welcome difficulty.
Learn the alchemy
True Human Beings know:
the moment you accept
what troubles you've been given,
the door opens...**

This profoundly beautiful poem was written by thirteenth century Persian poet and Sufi Mystic Rumi. It gives us a timeless message about the power of acceptance, a message that those of us in recovery must embrace, live and carry to others.

"Acceptance is the answer to all of my problems today." (*The Big Book p. 417*) It is easy to forget that we must accept ourselves before we can accept anything or anyone else. We often think "I shouldn't feel like this," or ask, "Why do I have to feel this way?" We deny, suppress and resent painful feelings. It's easy to welcome a happy visitor who comes in peace. It seems almost impossible to welcome and attend to a visitor that is so painful to be with, yet, in these words of wisdom, we are told the pain is not coming from the visitor, but rather from the way we greet the visitor. I keep this little reminder on my desk, "What I resist in me persists in me."

Resistance is a door closer. We can't heal something if we don't acknowledge and accept its existence in us. Rumi is gently urging us not be afraid of the visitor, but to trust that there is a Power at work in our lives that seeks to help us, not hurt us. It is a Power that seeks our attention by sending the visitors, that we may be guided to our spiritual home, self-love and acceptance where we belong.

Many of us have come to understand that our addiction (to whatever) sent many honored guests packing - shame, guilt, loneliness, fear, self loathing - guests that cleared us out and swept our houses clean of everything, making room for a happiness we couldn't have imagined and lives we couldn't have even dreamed of.

The truth is we are spiritual beings capable and **worthy** of all this and more in recovery. Acceptance begins the moment we surrender, the moment we pick up that white chip or key tag, the moment we ourselves say for the first time, "I'm an alcoholic/addict and my name is _____.", and the door opens.

-- Laurie



The Family Voice will begin a regular section each issue titled, *SEASONS OF GRACE: Reverend Laurie Durgan's Message* devoted to spirituality, including special thoughts from our Spiritual Director, Laurie Durgan. If you have comments, or would like to submit related material, please contact Yasmin Dovas, ydovas@caron.org or Mary Davis, mdavis@caron.org.

Letters and Emails...

Hi Laurie,

I was at Caron Renaissance for two weeks for Family Restructuring and was fortunate to be there on Spiritual Friday. My husband and I joined our son and his group as they worked with you on March 21st. It was the group session where you handed out angel cards and then the group gave them to each other.

Your openness, encouragement and acceptance really struck me. I watched the group, and you seemed to really engage them and make it comfortable for them to share. As I told Jason (my son's counselor), you were able to open the discussion and throw things out to the group that enabled them to look at possibilities and not feel constricted. Things that they may have never considered as spiritual - allowed them to open up to possibilities. (ex. the skywriter over your house with a certain message (to you), the migration of whales, etc.) They were definitely eager to participate as you stirred something within them. I was hoping to see you again before I left but did not get in touch. We will be back in May, so maybe we will see you then.

My son sees the Rabbi and has been talking to him. I had also mentioned to Jason that when asked, my son said on a scale of one to five, you were a five, and he really liked you and what you had to say. So hopefully, you will be leading a group that my son is in again! (Jason said that he may ask my son if he wants to meet with you as well).

Anyway, I just wanted to thank you for a special experience, and I'm glad we were part of it.

Take care,
Eileen

Hello Robert,

Today is 12 years for me. What a gift I have been given. Thanks to you, McNally and Mary, I have a great life. I met the man of my dreams, have two more beautiful daughters and just celebrated my fourth wedding anniversary with Chris. It's been a roller coaster but wouldn't trade any of it for where I was headed. I really wish I had my intake picture with pink hair for throwback Thursday. (lol) I really appreciate all the help you have given Chris and me. You are a HUGE part of what I am celebrating today!! We love you!!! Thank you so much for everything! Enclosed is a pic of Chris and me at our wedding and also of Chris, Jasmine and Sophia.

Love y'all,
Amber

Hey Davida,

Just dropping you a note to say that I don't think a day goes by that I don't think of you. Sometimes I find myself smiling at the thought of some of the things you have said that have stuck with me. Your messages, though delivered straight-forward, remain with me as very tender and caring. Hoping you are doing well.

Fondly, Laurie

Hi Joe,

First of all, Ellen and I would like to thank you and your staff for all the help, kindness and support you have given us in our support of our son.

It looks as though his stay has come to an end; he has moved out of your complex and will be finishing up Feb. 20th with Ashley.

Again, you and your staff have been nothing short of wonderful, and I am prepared to tell anyone who asks.

Best Wishes,
Gary S.

Letters and Emails...

Hello Yasmin,

It is good to hear from you! My husband and I are doing well – we attend a local parent group every week and have built a wonderful support network of friends since we attended Caron! It is almost two years since we attended Family Restructuring at Caron Renaissance and not a day goes by without us drawing on the lessons we learned – we think of the staff there often, particularly Abe, Susan, Davida and Ed. We are eternally grateful for all the wisdom they imparted. We think you folks are the best! Please do give them our warmest regards and let them know that we are doing well.

Our son continues to live in the Delray area, and he is working and supporting himself. He has good days and bad days, but he is managing his own affairs with the help of his support group, which is huge progress!! He expresses his gratitude to Caron Renaissance for all the life skills he has acquired from his stay there.

We had a family Christmas together after four years! Things are not perfect, but for now, they are good enough - we are living our life well - trying to embrace the ebbs and flows life offers by focusing on the bright side of things!!

How are you – hope things are well! I remember our conversations regarding the cultural challenges immigrants face due to the social stigma around addiction issues, and I am mindful of offering help and support to anybody who is struggling in the immigrant community, as I am aware how much isolation adds to the distress one is facing. Thank you for having that conversation with us and sharing your story with us!

My husband and I are more than happy to be family buddies to anybody who needs us – our story may be a very difficult one for people to hear, as our journey has been rather rugged. There is no resolution yet in the traditional sense. Our son has not embraced sobriety the way we would like him to, but we see progress, and we are patient and not interfering. Because we love him deeply, we are allowing him to choose his own path to sobriety. He is 22 years old and has all the tools he needs to cope with his addiction. We are developing confidence in ourselves as parents and him as an adult to manage his life. We could not have done this without the help of the professionals in this field and our support group!

We can certainly share our story with the family and be of some support during this difficult time.

Best, Meera

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Hello Robert,

It has been a long time since I last saw you in early 2001, shortly before my son was discharged from Renaissance. We met in your office, and you reviewed his status with me and strongly urged me to contact a therapist who practiced as an independent therapist and interventionist in my area. This, in addition to encouraging regular participation at my Al-Anon parents' group weekly meetings, was truly great advice. I saw my therapist regularly for years thereafter. When she moved to Florida, we continued to work by phone approximately every six weeks. We called our conversations "50,000 mile checkups."

She was a source of strength and truly kept me centered and focused on me and not fretting about what was going on with my son. "He has his recovery to deal with and you have yours." I introduced many of the parents in our Al-Anon group to her and some saw her directly and continued with phone chats like mine after she left the area. One of her signature pieces of advice, which became my mantra, was "Wait ... until you're asked". Just button it up and listen. Then talk only when you're asked and even then don't say much and don't ask questions. And never give unsolicited "advice." Just wait until you are asked and watch a miracle happen. You simply can't do much damage, such as controlling behavior, if you

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don't talk. You will notice, over time, that your kid begins to tell you things because trust is being established that you will not judge. You will learn lots of stuff, some of it you may not want to know, but it's all good. The less you ask for, the more you will receive; counterintuitive, just like the disease of addiction.

The mantra has spread to others in the group since I have repeated it so many times and now jokingly it's mentioned that Home Depot has begun carrying a special type of hypoallergenic duct tape that is suitable for pasting across your lips and won't remove skin when peeled off.

She left me a voice message one day last September saying that we wouldn't be having our normal six week phone chat that week because she was on her way to Houston for some treatment but she would contact me when she was back. Her voice was very weak. I had no way to contact her except to send an email in November that was not answered.

I just found out today that she passed away last October, and I feel a true loss. As you said back in 2001 "see her and work with her ... you have much to learn." You were right.

I have spoken at a number of Al-Anon meetings in my area and always work in the "Wait ... until you're asked" theme as the most powerful, yet hardest, thing you can do when dealing with your addicted loved one. My suggestion is to try and apply the duct tape for ten days and watch what happens to your life in just this short time.

Attached is a poster I put together in August 2009 titled "The Circle of Insanity" for family members dealing with addiction. These are sayings that I have picked up over the years and are attributable to others. My contribution was to collect them into one place, title the poster, and add the circle logo in the upper right corner where everything begins and ends with fear.

In our parents' group, this poster hangs next to the 12-Step poster at every meeting. Most meetings are opened by the group taking turns to vocalize each of the 18 sayings and/or the 12-Steps; sometimes both. Many members have them pasted on their fridge and reduced them to wallet size to carry in their wallets. Notice that the book-end sayings are due to her.

My feeling is that this poster can now be considered as part of her legacy because it has helped so many in our group to understand and to work on their own recovery.

I hope you are well, Robert, and thank you for your work with my son. He has located his soul, misplaced those many dark years, and now functions at a high level. He appears to be at peace and serene. Duct tape works wonders.

N.M.



The Circle of Insanity

1. Wait ... Until You're Asked
2. 3C's: You didn't Cause it; You can't Control it; and you can't Cure it ... so don't Contribute to it
3. Without Consequences there is no Healing
4. The Most Loving thing You can do for an Addict is to Allow Them to Experience the Consequences of their Actions
5. Enabler -One who Hinders the Addict from Experiencing the Results of their Behavior
6. Whenever You give Unsolicited Advice, You Diminish Someone
7. Let Go or Be Dragged
8. Remember ... "I Refuse to be an Actor in Your Drama, when I did not Audition for the Part"
9. Change only happens with the Pain of Holding On is Greater than the Fear of Letting Go
10. Remember ... "It's only Pain"; Honor the Pain; Give it all the time it needs; It has much to teach you
11. The Less You Ask for ... the More You'll Get
12. Great Conversation Replies: "Uh, huh", "Oh", "I See", "No Kidding"
13. When You're Not Sure What to Say, Apply the "Phil Test"
14. The Most Important thing You can Say to an Addict is -Nothing
15. Never give an Addict Money for Any Reason, let them Buy their Own Drugs
16. The Question is not whether the Addict Wants to go to Treatment but are they Willing to go to Treatment
17. Importance of Al-Anon: The Family Relapses First
18. Wait ... Until You're Asked

Dear Davida,

I recently learned you are changing jobs in what seems to me to be a good promotion. The news prompts me to offer congratulations and to write an overdue note.

From the perspective of age, it seems to me that along life's path, each of us strives to make a difference during our time on earth, whether in our job, our role as parents or children, as friends and for some as spouses. There are so many ways to make a difference; none is necessarily better than any other, so long as we try.

It also seems to me that even among the most in-their-own-eyes self-reliant, know-it-all, stubborn of us (of course, that usually but not always applies to men!), our ability to make a difference is enhanced by a little help along the way. You are one of those whose offer of a helping hand makes a difference -- a real difference.

You have an obvious gift and temperament and desire to work with those whose lives, directly and indirectly, have been disrupted by substance abuse. I remain in awe (and I don't use the term awe lightly) watching you and your colleagues at work at the family program we attended. Awe in part of how you worked but greater awe at how obviously attuned you were to the individual needs and shortcomings of each of the residents with whom you worked, to give them every opportunity to work to get their lives back on track.

Selfishly, I feel my son has been so blessed to have you as one to give him a subtle (and I'm certain on some occasions, not so subtle) nudge back onto the path of realizing his potential to become a man of integrity. Whatever he becomes ultimately will be the result of what he does and doesn't do. But watching him, while understanding there is always another challenge tomorrow, I remain optimistic (even if cautiously so) that he now has an opportunity I feared had been lost to live a life that allows him to show his many wonderful qualities and deal successfully with those that are less so. As a parent, seeing this young adult now given (and yes, this time it is something he had and continues to work hard for, it was not given to him) an opportunity to live a good life brings great joy.

You are clearly a talented professional, and I'm guessing there are many other parents and family members who appreciate all you have done to point their loved ones along the high road path to living a life of integrity. For me, there is no guessing involved; I know all you have done to help my son along the way to the life I hoped he would have. Thanks for all you have done.

Congratulations on your well-deserved promotion.

-- J

Yasmin,

I just wanted to tell you again how much I like *The Family Voice*. The Spring issue was excellent. I really like the letter on the cover; so true.

E.H.

Letters and Emails...

Hi Ryan,

Hope things are full of a-ha moments down in sunny Florida!! Don't even get me started about the weather here.

I'm sure Tempany has filled you in with my son's journey in Savannah. He had a bump but got through it and it made him stronger. He's got a great sponsor and some great supports down there. He was home for Christmas, and my brothers and sister were amazed at the change in him.

The reason for my email is to first apologize for being such an awful patient to you. Everything you did and said helps me everyday. Secondly, it is because our lovely son is back to lazy son. Though he fully admits to being lazy (job seeking and studies), I no longer blame his addiction on genetics. I blame HIM. I will not look at want ads in Savannah. I will not hound him about his grades, and until he pulls his weight, I will not financially support him. In fact, if he doesn't step it up, he's looking at taking out student loans. I know what you're thinking, "Maureen is a bona fine bad a\$#". Yup that's right, and I have you to thank. The most frustrating part is that we all know what he's capable of.

The final reason for my email was to thank you. Thank you for my many a-ha moments and for turning me into a bad a\$#!!!!!

Please tell Tempany I'm sorry we didn't get to visit over Christmas break while we were down there, but my parents had us on a schedule daily. He did take one of his sober supports to Delray for a day to show him around, and his friend couldn't believe how huge the meeting was!!!

Best wishes,
Maureen

Dear Jen,

I've rewritten the sloppy letter I wrote on the plane ride home. As hard as you work, I felt it was disrespectful of me to send something so messy.

Thank you for all you are doing for us. You are opening my eyes to my own bad habits. I will continue to work on my recovery.

It was so difficult to look at my daughter's drawing of her dad's grave marker, but I realize that we all had to face that and the way it affected each of us. My daughter is beginning to change, and I believe she now wants to recover. She told me she would like to stay in Florida, and I hope she does. There is much hard work to be done and coming back to her old environment offers nothing. I've told her several times that she can't come home, and she accepts that.

I appreciated the support I received from you and Davida as I expressed my intent to work on detachment and recovery. My other daughter said she didn't realize how much she needed family therapy until she experienced the family program and is so happy she decided to attend.

Thank you, Jen, for being so tough on all of us and for all you are doing to save lives.

Joyce

We want to hear from you!
Please send your updates about
life after Caron Renaissance
to ydovas@caron.org

Caron Renaissance Family Support Groups

Caron Renaissance Family Support Groups are designed to encourage and provide a place for ongoing support for families who participate in a loved one's treatment at Caron Renaissance. The Caron Renaissance Family Support Groups are led by Caron Renaissance family members and serve local families as needed. More detailed information about each group is listed online at www.caronrenaissance.org/CRfamilysupportgroups.

Palm Beach County, FL
Every Tuesday and open on the last Tuesday of each month

Morris County, NJ
2nd and last Thursday of each month

Bergen County, NJ
2nd and last Wednesday of each month

New York, NY
2nd and 4th Thursday of each month

South Jersey/Philadelphia
1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month

Washington, DC
2nd Sunday of each month

Caron Fellowship Groups

Caron Fellowship Groups are similar to 12-Step meetings in that Caron alumni and families meet to support their ongoing recovery using an agreed-upon meeting format. Below are lists of ongoing Fellowship Groups. More detailed information about each group is listed online at www.caronrenaissance.org/fellowshipgroups.

Berks County, PA
2nd Tuesday of each month

Boca Raton, FL
(Students in Recovery)
Every Tuesday

Boston, MA Area
2nd Thursday of each month

Central N.J. Area
1st Tuesday of each month

Dallas, TX Area
2nd Tuesday of each month

Long Island, NY
Quarterly

New York, NY
3rd Wednesday of each month

Northern Virginia Area
Quarterly

Philadelphia, PA
3rd Wednesday of each month

Princeton, TX
3rd Tuesday of each month

Richmond, VA
Dates vary

Washington, D.C.
2nd Thursday of each month

Westchester, NY
Quarterly

Westport, CT
3rd Tuesday of each month

Caron Parent Support Groups

Parent Support Groups are designed to give parents, whose children have been impacted by addiction, a place to find support and encouragement. Below is a list of ongoing Parent Support Groups. More detailed information about each group is listed online at www.caronrenaissance.org/parentsupportgroups.

Atlanta, GA
1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month

Bergen County, NJ
Every Tuesday

Boston, MA
1st Thursday of each month

Central NJ
1st Tuesday of each month

Honey Brook, PA
1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month

Kennett Square, PA
Every Thursday

Lehigh Valley, PA
Every Thursday

Limerick, PA
Every Wednesday

Nassau County, NY
Every Thursday

New Haven, CT
1st & 3rd Wednesday of each month

New York, NY
(Adult Siblings Group)
2nd & 4th Tuesday of each month

Newark, DE
1st and 3rd Thursdays of each month

Northern Virginia
4th Thursday of each month

Philadelphia, PA
2nd and 4th Thursday of each month

Plymouth Meeting, PA
Every Monday

Reading, PA
2nd and 4th Sunday of each month

Southern NJ
2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month

Suffolk County, NY
Every Monday

Washington, DC
1st and 3rd Thursday of each month

West Chester, PA
Every Tuesday (Newcomers every Monday)

Westport, CT
3rd Tuesday of each month

If you need support and would like to talk to alumni of Caron Renaissance, please contact Yasmin Dovas at ydovas@caron.org.