

Workforce Development News

Integrated Healthcare Recovery Support Specialist Institute

Sierra Vista, February 1, 2018



Certified Peer Support Specialist Graduates

Back Row left to right:

Joseph Rand, Megan Hellickson, Pippin Penn, Norman Bessette

Front Row left to right:

Lori Vaillant, Koreana Zmuida, Penny Hook

My Journey of Recovery

By Joseph Rand, CRSS



I was at a low point in my life. It seemed that I couldn't hold down a job. I was hearing negative voices, unbidden and disturbing in nature. People like the pizza boy coke dealing man, who I thought were my true friends at the time, turned out to be evil people who

betrayed me. These evil people were putting me down, trying to make me feel like a joke. They even made a fake Facebook account mocking me. I was in a dark place.

Finally, I decided to start going to SEABHS in November 2016. After all, people were calling me "mental". When I met the people at NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness), I began to see that not everyone in the world was a piece of feces. There were good people out there who understood me, who were kind, and wanted to help. I started to experience...hope. This was when I can say my journey of recovery began.

I began to go to NAMI meetings and SEABHS appointments. I could really relate to the people there. I began to understand my condition and to see that I was just a person, like everyone else. I could recover, and people cared. I would recover. I am still learning, but I am glad I'm on this path now. When you see that there are people out there who truly want to help, you gain hope and your cynicism begins to melt away. Mine is not completely gone yet, but it will be.

My Personal Experience of Hope

By Koreana Zmuida, CRSS



My personal experience of hope came five years ago, when Jesus touched my life with the importance of being with a community of other Christian believers (In His church). At the Assembly of God church in Benson, I was encouraged to discover my spiritual gifts. I

was told that everyone has a spiritual gift, whether you are a person with mental illness or not. I was encouraged to use my spiritual gifts in the church and in my community.

My hope of recovery was fulfilled when I saw how God saw me, instead of seeing myself only as a person with mental illness. Jeremiah 29:11 is one of my favorite scripture: "For I know the plans and thoughts I have for you, says the Lord, plans for peace and well-being and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope." Jesus has expanded my personal life to see through His eyes instead of my own. Being in the reality of Jesus is my reality because He has given me hope to live a life of full potential, and He gave me hope for my future. My journey of recovery is possible because of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I am so thankful for the opportunity of the IHRSS institute because taking the course has refined my skills and belief in the hope of recovery. I want to incorporate my love for my Christian faith and my love for people with mental illnesses and substance use disorders. I want to get a pastor's credential and an RSS credential to minister to people who live with the challenges of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. I want to encourage them to come to my church for inner healing through art therapy. With the group's input, I want to call it: Creative Gang for Jesus.

My Personal Experience of Hope

By Lori Vaillant, CRSS

About 3 months into my recovery, I started attending intensive outpatient treatment and NA and AA meetings regularly. I met a lot of beautiful people in recovery, just like myself. Many had years of being clean and sober, which I admired. They inspired me. These people made me realize there was hope for me as well.

After a couple of months, I found myself mentoring a few other people who were now new to these fellowships and programs. I suddenly found myself to be an inspiration to others, just by being myself. Caring about others, sharing my experiences, listening, and lending my help, heart and love whenever possible. What an honor! I enjoy being a part of another person's recovery. This helps me along in my own journey of recovery.



Hope, Faith in Something Not Seen

By Penny Hook, CRSS

Hope is the faith in something not seen. Hope is not giving up, keeping faith of chance or change. To me, hope is to give someone who is hopeless a thought or word of encouragement to help them make a change in their life. Other people in my life have given me hope to make change, and another chance to forgive myself for the events that happened in my life because of my substance use disorder. That little bit of faith that my life would change made all the difference in the world, and now I try to pay it forward with other people and loved ones in my life, by just giving them a little bit of hope .



Hope

By Norman Bessette, CRSS

Hope; a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen. A feeling of trust. When I first began my journey into recovery, which I now expect and trust, my life was far from that. I was incarcerated and on my way to prison. I had been in constant pain for years. Through my substance use disorder I had fallen to a point where I was alone, unemployable, and homeless - completely broken. I was physically, emotionally and mentally hollow. I had no desire to live, but I could not die. I was hopeless. This was my bottom. The day was October 2nd, 2016.

October 3rd, 2016, I woke up in jail and I reached out to God and asked for help. Not financially or with a jackpot prayer, but with a prayer to relieve me from active addiction and cease my unbearable pain. Something happened that day. The pain stopped. I started to take responsibility for what had gotten me there-me.

What happened from that day forward has been nothing short of a miracle. I admitted my life was unmanageable and that I was powerless over my disease. I have a relationship with a 'God' of my understanding and I turned my life and my will over to him. I was released from jail on December 5th, 2016 into a residential recovery home. Since that time, I have transformed my life into a thing of amazing proportions. I have gained a newfound freedom; a life free from active addiction. I have become healthy, employable, empathetic, caring, emotionally stable, and most importantly, happy.



The peers that have come into my life throughout my journey have been amazing. They empowered me to believe in myself and regain control of all aspects of my life. I am in recovery in all parts of my life. Through my service work in N.A. and my community, I have realized that the greatest gift I could possibly give is the gift of peer support. I have a deep passion for helping other people find their own road to recovery, and coaching them on their journey towards an amazing life. I believe if you have a physical, mental, emotional, or a substance use disorder there is HOPE. I am living proof that a life in recovery is possible.

SUCCESS

By Pippin Penn, CRSS

My personal experience of hope began a long time ago. I do believe that it is partly what helped me survive many years of homelessness. No matter how terrible things were at times, there was always an intuition that my Creator would rescue me somehow. Deep down, I believed He had something greater in store for me. My life changed when I went through an experience that scared me to the foundation of my soul. It was an impossible situation with no way to escape. Nevertheless, I am here because my Savior came to rescue me. I thought my miracle and new sense of freedom, forgiveness, and safety were all too good to be true. It took a while for it to sink in, but once it did, I began walking in God's power and not my own. Hence, SUCCESS. I now see blessings where my burdens once were. I am thankful for my life. I am setting fear to the side so I can embrace the courageous heart that I truly have, and pursue my purpose.



Hope

By Megan Hellickson, CRSS



I don't even know where to begin; it seems like so many memories blurred together. There was the time when I realized that my drug addiction was out of control, when I was beginning to lose faith. I knew that was due to the addiction, yet I could not control the thoughts from occurring. I built up the courage to tell my mom that I had a problem and needed help. I think that what led me to the point in my

life that I am now was the moment when I realized that I actually could possibly quit using. After I had gone to the hospital and had to have the meth out of my system long enough to have surgery I remember thinking, "Okay, this is one of the hardest parts. I might actually be able to handle this physically."

The mental moment came later. I had been clean four months and was finally starting the Intensive Outpatient Program with SEABHS. I experienced open discussions with my fellow peers, along with learning to have fun and beginning being social with NA meetings, and making Sober and Clean friends. This was my new way of life, and it had to be if I wanted to accomplish the things I was beginning to think of as potential goals. Goals such as having full custody of my children, being an example to them and showing them that there is always hope to change things, to turn things around.

This Institute is part of those goals, part of being that example for my kids. During the time I have been in these classes, I have seen even more examples of hope. Hope that I can live a life beyond my substance use and anxiety, and actually use these things to help others. The idea is so exciting to me, and it takes some of those feelings of guilt and shame, and makes me hopeful instead.

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Workforce Development News

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UA Workforce Development Program promotes recovery and expanded opportunities for people with mental illness, substance use, and dual diagnosis by employing a collaborative approach to advocacy, service, education, and research.

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