

Workforce Development News

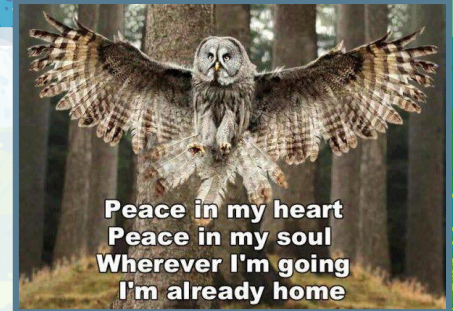
Integrated Healthcare Recovery Support Specialist Institute

Sierra Vista Arizona, April 30, 2015

A Dedication to Tayse Biffle

Ever Present Hope

By Tayse Biffle



My experience of hope began about seven years ago when I left Las Vegas. I was embroiled in substance abuse, alcohol and illicit drugs. I was on and off the street, I was border-line suicidal. I had lost everything, my marriage, my home, personal possessions, all of it. When I got to Sierra Vista, the first ray of hope was that because of the lack of availability, I quit the illicit drugs, the reason did not matter, it was easy. It could be done. I even quit smoking cigarettes. I started feeling better, I helped my uncle finish building some houses he was building and that helped as well.

I had known years before that my dad was diagnosed manic-depressive, and also suffered from alcoholism but I never put two and two together. Though making headway and feeling stronger, I was still having problems with the alcohol mixed with emotional problems, lack of sleep, depression, anxiety, and isolationism.

Through all of this, from the beginning, my mother has been my staunchest supporter, I have been blessed to have her. This mess came to a head about three years ago, while still having issues, I overdosed on Ativan and ended up in a psych ward in Tucson at my own request. This was the true realization of hope as I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder, and have been in treatment since.

There have still been problems and relapses, but now hope is ever present. Now armed with new knowledge, I will endeavor to join the battle of hope for all.



Certified Peer Support Specialist Graduating Class

Back Row (L to R)

Ty Logan, Darla Black, John Marshel Keith, Crystal Soto, Ariadna De La Cruz, Abraham Mullen

Front Row (L to R)

Michelle Steninger, Elizabeth Nieble, Laurie McKenna, Valerie Garmon, Geri Monroe



Certified Peer Support Specialist Graduating Class

Back Row (L to R)

Dee Knoles, Tayse Biffle, Charles Vanenwyck, Randal Ralston

Front Row (L to R)

Norma Nevarez, Theresa Murrah, Heather Richardson, Jose Ramirez



Certified Integrated Healthcare Specialist Graduating Class

Michell Bailey, Albert Regain, Deanna Bellinger

The Importance of Recovery

By Ty Logan

On April 24th, 2008 I decided to make a change in my life and stop poisoning my body and soul with drugs, negativity, and other toxic behavior. Meth and the lifestyle that came with it had really done its toll on my mind, body, and spirit. In the 7 years from that day I've stumbled, fallen, made mistakes, lost jobs, lost friends, lost dogs, failed at relationships, moved, changed, laughed, cried, yelled, and became a father to a beautiful baby boy. What I haven't done is return to that world of drugs and misery. Today I am not better than anyone else, but I am a better human being than when I was yesterday. I honestly cannot remember when I first experienced HOPE, but I definitely remember the time when I realized I no longer felt HOPELESS. I was about a week or so away from my 6-months clean date and my uncle asked me the last time I felt the desire to use. I hadn't even thought about it. I couldn't remember. I'm not saying the desire to use was gone, I just couldn't remember the last time I thought about using drugs. I had a job working as a group home manager with adults with developmental disabilities, I had just recently moved into my own apartment, I was attending NA meetings, I wasn't depressed, and I wasn't thinking about drugs. Such a short span and I was already off and running back into this



world where life was beautiful. I knew then the importance of recovery and the next question was how do I keep and maintain this thing called HOPE?



Rising Above

By Randal Ralston

My personal help on hope first occurred when my mother noticed that something was angering and depressing me and that I was not the same happy go lucky person I use to be. I had gone into a downhill spiral of depression.

My friendships with my fellow Christian brothers deteriorated and slowly faded away because the depression made me a person that was not the same. Depression had taken over my moods and gave me a sad outlook. Depression made me feel like crying and men are not supposed to cry. My depression made me feel like crying all the time. Even in happy-go-lucky times I felt like I was in a downward spiral. I cannot bounce back from the depression. I do have hope now. I try to rise above the depression that has plagued me with suffering and lost time. I need a miracle from God to save me from the depression.

See the Light Despite the Darkness

By Valerie Garmon



My story of hope began at a time in my life when I had abandoned all hope. I had been raped twice, strangled, was close to being killed and even closer to killing myself. I believed my bad choices had destined me to be ultimately destroyed by men. PTSD and being out of shape kept me from regularly attending my martial arts classes, so I joined the SEABHS Focused Fitness program and began training with Rick Abril. I did not realize this seemingly small decision would change my life and redefine my recovery. Rick shared with me how he used bodybuilding to channel the energy from his own PTSD. For a year,

I watched him dedicate himself every single day and saw him compete in the 2013 Copper Classic. I wondered if I could channel my self-destructive energy into breaking my body down and rebuilding it to be stronger than ever. I had found a new goal.

As I started training, a sense of control over my body was restored. I had found the hope I had so freely given away to those who hurt me. My body was no longer an object for people to abuse, including myself. My mood stabilized, which was something even medication could not accomplish. I stopped a 16 year old addiction to self harm that I never imagined I could stop and have now lost close to 90 pounds. The gym turned my physical strength into personal empowerment and taught me that what seems so difficult today will someday be my warm-up if I'm persistent.

This is only the first part of the story. I found hope for my recovery through weight lifting, but I instilled that hope in others at Take Back the Night (TBTN). I intentionally waited until after that event to write this, knowing its impact on my sense of hope would be significant. The worst two hours of my life had brought me there, telling over 100 people that every two minutes, someone in the U.S. is sexually assaulted and I was one of them. There is a quote by Desmond Tutu that states, "hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness." I still have trouble seeing the light at times, but I now know it is there because I could see it in the eyes of that survivor who so bravely told her story last week. I also know I will see it in myself through my body's transformation as I take the stage at the 2016 Copper Classic, wearing teal to represent those who have been sexually assaulted.

I See a Future

By Theresa Murrah



I have walked this road for many years, this road that we call recovery. There have been many detours and many steps back. I am a person with a dual diagnosis. At sixteen my first diagnosis was manic depression, now called bi-polar disorder. I have had a substance use problem for forty-three years. I am now a person with a schizophrenia diagnosis and I still struggle with substance abuse. Even through all those years I kept a small glimmer of hope alive. Maybe, just maybe, I could recover, only I didn't know how. I read once "You are never too old to become the person you were meant to be". I held that hope in my heart. Through this training my small glimmer of hope has become a blazing fire. I am empowered and in control of my own recovery, and I have learned many skills to continue forward. I learned to believe in myself again, something I haven't done in years. I learned to let go of the past and be in the present and see a future full of recovery. I am now achieving something I never dreamed was possible, I am becoming the person I was meant to be. Never give up and just believe there are no limits on how far you can go.

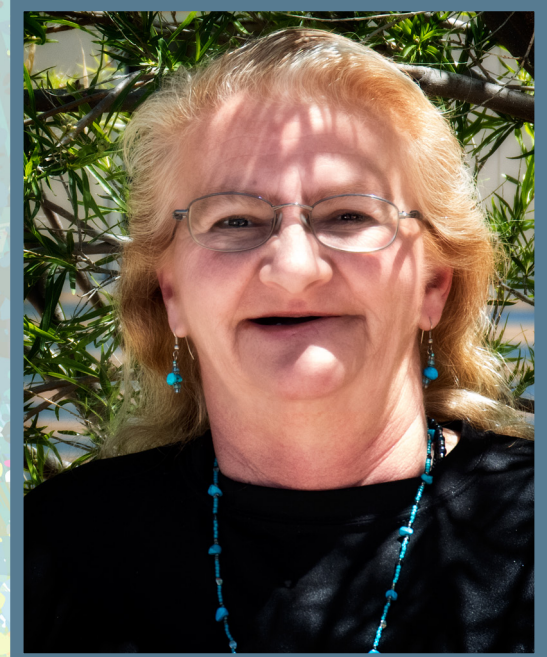
Every Day

By Darlean (Dee) C. Knoles

I am 55 years old and ever since I was a child I knew I wasn't "normal". Kids called me retarded, not because I was dumb, I was actually very smart. It was because I was "strange" to them. My family was proud of my intelligence, but they always let me know that I was very "sensitive" and "special" and I knew these weren't good things to be. Labels have followed me throughout my life, most weren't nice and some even caused people to fear me. Even I considered myself "crazy" and "weird".

Then about 10 years ago I had an epiphany. I still needed to label myself as that's how I perceived things, but instead of being "crazy" and "weird" I began calling myself "eccentric" and "odd". I accepted myself better that way and I discovered others accepted me better as well. People became more understanding and tolerant of my behaviors and I no longer judged myself as harshly either.

Today I simply see myself as being a different and unique person which is really quite normal in that we're all different and unique. As I see it that's exactly as it's suppose to be. I've come a long way in my recovery and every day I like myself a little more ... and that's a good thing!



My Turning Point

By Darla Black



On this journey to experience and achieve hope my spiritual family and my birth and in-law family were accumulating fast. I felt that I had the right to be happily married and healthy. My support system began to crumble before my eyes day and night. I lost my sense of trust in anyone. In my spiritual group I was not aware of the enemies around me. By my own choice my false reality got me in a bad situation spiritually and mentally.

I opened a beauty shop in Sierra Vista AZ, and my business partner had a wig store. We decide to open both businesses in one building to save costs. I made my own choice to go into business with my former business partner. One day she went belly up and wrote a false letter to the Church group I had associated with for 10 or more years. I learned this was too much for me to handle. I prayed and prayed that this attack in the spiritual group would come to an end. I called my former spiritual leader and he took sides with my former business partner, never looking at the contract the former partner had broken with me.

The stress came to a boiling point. In February 2012 my class mate died suddenly. My support system crashed. My husband was by my side to support me. February 2012 was the big break down. In the confusion I did not know who I was. I checked into Palo Verde for mental health help. I was so sick I wanted to end the pain. This was my turning point when I was diagnosed with several mental illnesses. When I woke the next morning I made up my mind. This experience in my life let me know that there was hope in Jesus for my recovery 'one day at a time'. Jesus Christ is the one I look to for my healing, of my whole body mind, soul and spirit. I have a Hope, Jesus Christ is with me all the way. My name is Darla Black and this is my story of hope.

Through Years of Insight

By Michelle Steninger

Since the age of eight, I was convinced my life was hopeless and all I would ever be able to do was struggle to survive. "Living on borrowed time" became a slogan for my life after several brushes with death. Yet I never really saw the reason behind those words. On October 15, 2003, after one such experience in the emergency room, it hit me. As I recovered, I came to realize that God wanted more of me before I go. The spark started with the thought, "what can I do?" I began to focus more on how my life may be important and less on the fact that I was broken.

Being empathetic at an early age allowed me a starting point. I was only truly happy while helping others, and naturally drawn to the medical field. I had experienced first-hand the maltreatment of those struggling with mental illness and began to search for ways I could make a difference. Through years of insight and focused recovery!! I am working on a degree! I have published two books, I am an advocate for the importance of self-expression and I find any opportunity to fix cracks in a pathway that others may want to follow.



Hope and Forgiveness

By Anna-Leigh Paisley

When I was 28, I lost two pregnancies in one year. I was devastated. To complicate my suffering, my husband (at the time) took me to "Babies R Us" to pick out things for each baby. He even went as far as naming the two babies. One being a girl named Brook-Lynne Renee' the other a boy named Sterling Grant. While naming these babies they became real to me. I have always considered him taking me to "Babies R Us" as an intentionally cruel act as well as something to make me unstable or to exasperate the mental health problems I suffered with at the time.

One day I was complaining about this in the van ride to ACTS and Samantha the Peer

Support Ambassador said "have you ever thought that it was his way of coping with the loss?" This was my ah-ha moment! I had never thought about it from that standpoint, but at that moment the babies became ours, not just mine. I forgave him on the spot. Although it will always be hurtful, he had every right to grieve. I then began to have HOPE! If I could forgive him about this then I have HOPE I could forgive him about other things that had happened during our marriage.

Thank you for this writing assignment; it helped me fortify my forgiveness.

Dream and Hope

By Geri Monroe



Hope took a long time for me to find. When I was a child, I did not do things that other children did. You see I wanted to be an adult. I wanted to move out of my parents' home so I wouldn't be around my dad. Unlike other children I had no dreams of what I wanted to be when I grew up. I became a mom at 16 years old, and still no dreams, but I did hope that my son would grow up to have fun and a good life. My daughter came 4 years later. I was still very depressed, still no dreams. To make a long story short, I started to hope when I went to Camp Wellness. I began to dream for the first time in my life. I realized I could go back to school and learn. In 2 months I will be a Priestess and in 2 to 3 years I will open a Temple. Now I have passed the RSS test and will receive my certificate that could open more doors for me. I don't know if dream and hope go together, but I think so and now I think the world is mine to do what I can.

Overcoming Challenges and Barriers

By Patricia Jamie Rivers

Finding hope has been an arduous and most difficult process for me. Ever since I can remember even as a little girl in 13 different foster homes and then an abusive adoptive home. I have always had this boding sense of death and dying. I have always wanted to die because I believed I was only created for pain and suffering.

Along my journey I have had numerous suicide attempts and hospitalizations. It wasn't until the last hospitalization this past fall (2014) that I began to sense the spark of hope starting to form. While I was in the hospital I attended this group and the therapist gave us homework to complete. We were asked to write a good bye letter to someone in our lives. I wrote two letters, one to my biological mother whom I've never met and one to my imprisoned biological brother. I actually shared those letters with the class and when I was finished there was not a dry eye in the place, not even the therapist. Then something amazing happened, I allowed various members of the group to give me a hug. It was the first time in my life that I felt validated and not alone.

Also at this same hospital one of the Behavior Health Technicians shared my same faith and we had conversations that uplifted me. I did a lot of writing during this hospital stay and I shared some of my writings with him and he encouraged me to write more.

The furtherance of my sense of hope occurred when I attended Camp Wellness in February 2015. The staff were truly an inspiration to me. As they shared their stories of where they came from, I began to sense that I too could live a victorious life and overcome my challenges and barriers. One particular staff member in my age range shared with me how she had been incarcerated, went on to earn her degree and is working in a rewarding position. I also started to feel hopeful about being healthy during the times of physical activity. My hope has waxed and waned, but my hope was further ignited by coming to this Recovery Support Institute. I actually started to believe in myself and to recognize my strengths and have learned some new tools for my own journey as well as for others. I believe I will become a contributing member of society as a Peer Support Specialist. After all the overarching message of recovery is hope and I am part of the 100% of people with whom recovery is possible.

My Hope

By Charlie Vanenwyck

What is life without hope? Nothing at all. Part of my problem started when I was young. The teachers did what they could to teach me, a child with ADD, but only one problem, I have autism also.

Hope has always been my happiness. Hoping I would get a cool teacher that wouldn't mistreat me. I was diagnosed with autism in high school. By then I had discovered the drug marijuana. Later I unfortunately tried cigarettes, and lets not forget about pills. I often hoped I would just be OK after popping some random pill.

After a wicked overdose I lost interest in pills. I eventually stopped taking my medication. I only know how much I hoped the withdraws wouldn't kill me and they nearly did. I traveled the country after that, I worked for the carnival, and hoped I wouldn't become a victim of it's chaos and violence. Then I visited my family in NY. There I joined the army and got kicked out a few months later for having contraband. I moved back to Arizona hoping to find new opportunity.

After moving back to Arizona I had several jobs, working for various different companies and for private parties. My favorite was the *Good Enough* mine tour in tombstone. I had to give that up due to job stress. I went back to the hospital hoping for help putting the voices, demons and hallucinations to rest. After three visits I got



put on disability and it helps. I also get my medical marijuana card renewed. I hope that it will not interact with my ability. It does not do much to my joy and happiness. They seem to work well together. I hope to recover from my schizophrenia at least a little. I still feel like just the shell of the person I used to be. I hope some day to fill that shell with a person again. I hope to research marijuana uses and see if it can cure more than just my fibromyalgia.

I am Grateful

By Norma Nevarez

Hope can give someone the courage to move forward to meet their goals. When I had my episode I really hoped that it would stop. I hoped that I wouldn't loose my sanity, and thank goodness I didn't. I saw things move around and I really hoped that I wouldn't end up in a mental institution or worse. I really hoped that I would get to normal and gain my sanity. As time passed by it got easier and I was so hopeful that I would regain my sanity. I'm grateful that I did regain my sanity. I'll never take it for granted.



A Feeling of Peace

By Ariadna De La Cruz



This story is only one of the few that I have experienced in what I call my great journey, I would like to ask you to read it with an open mind and an open heart. I would not dare to ask you to believe it but rather just enjoy it for what it is, just another story that only makes sense to the protagonist, me.

One night in early January of 2013 I decided to make a list of the endless medications I have taken since I was diagnosed with a mental disorder in 2006. Wondering why after trying without questioning every single one of them, none had worked. It was either take the meds and not be able to function, or deal with the horrible

symptoms of the depression and still not be able to function.

I had been in both, individual and group therapy since the beginning of my diagnosis; took many workshops on various subjects such as codependency, sexual abuse to name a few, and even volunteer full time as a personal assistant to the psychologist I was seen at the time and nothing seem to help me feel better.

It felt like there was no way out and feelings of hopelessness took over my soul; I cried myself out and ask God with all of my heart to help me! The main reason for my pain was the complete loss of hope; a feeling of emptiness, loneliness, not knowing what else to do or where else to go.

I cannot remember for how long I screamed and cried for help, all I remember is I fell to a bottomless dark hole for what it seemed to be an eternity, I don't really know.

What I do know, is that right after an amazing warmth took over my entire body and a voice was talking to my heart letting it know, somehow, that everything was going to be fine, that I was being loved and accepted just as I was. This voice made me remember what it felt like to be back home in the arms of my father. It made me feel at peace.

I'd hardly told this story to anyone, perhaps because of fear of judgement or who knows, but that was the moment that HOPE came literally back to my heart, right after God took me in his arms and reconnected with my soul. Do I think I am cured? The answer is no, not yet but...I will.

A Work in Progress

By Crystal Soto

I would like to start with synonyms of “hope”: aspiration, desire, wish, expectation, ambition, aim, goal, plan, design, and optimism. Another strong synonym which continues to aid in my road to recovery is “expectation”. I realized back in 2002 that I expected too much from others to help me when I should have been expecting more of myself. I had finally expressed my thoughts of killing myself (point of extreme hopelessness) to the one person I “expected”–or hoped–would and could possibly help me–my mother. Her words to me, “just do it already” really turned me in another direction–and a firm realization/confirmation that the only person that could truly help me was me. Of course I didn’t really want to end my life. I just needed guidance, help, and a purpose.

After the birth of my first daughter in 2006, I had more purpose—more hope—to live a more positively fulfilled life in order to be a better example for her. I had to work on my own healing in order to break the vicious cycle of mental illness and substance abuse that has plagued generations of both sides of my family.

I was on a “clean” road to recovery with the help of medications and counseling but relapsed a few times up until about 2014 during my pregnancy with my second daughter. There were many pivoting factors that led to the realization that not only am I the only one to help myself but I actually have the power to accomplish my own recovery. Some of the factors were: not being on medications due to my pregnancy; having to stop self-medicating with illegal drugs due to CPS being involved



(due to a self-hospitalization for suicide ideation during my pregnancy); but one of the most inspiring factors that led me to be very hopeful that I can recover and I have the power and ability to make changes was attending a Peer Support Specialist class through the local support center, as well as going through a cognitive behavioral therapy/group/class in which I learned I can change my thought process and reactions. And now, while attending this RSS class, I am 100% hopeful I will make a 100% recovery. I am a work-in-progress.

A Good Life

By Cindy Carmichael

In 1999-2000 I was diagnosed with mental illness and Multiple Sclerosis (MS). At first I wanted to give up, but then I started to go to groups with other people who had MS also. I thought, if they can live a happy life

with MS so could I. I also went to groups for people with mental health issues. Most of them were able to move on, and have a good life despite their mental illness. That was a turning point for me. I decided from that point on I was going to stay hopeful that I could have a good life in spite of my mental illness. Now 15 years later my hope is still strong for myself and for others.

Hope

By Heather Richardson



When I was nineteen I met an older guy that I thought was perfect. He let me move in with him, gave me a car and money when I asked, I thought I was the luckiest girl ever. At age twenty I became a mother. My hoping of becoming a good mother was now going to be put to the test. I got my GED and went to school to become a Certified Nursing Assistant and got a good job at the Hospital. Hoping to make enough money to be able to move out of the extremely abusive relationship where I was living. I was also abusive and one night it all caught up with me and I was put in the back of a police car and charged with Domestic Violence. I was very lucky to have two wonderful Grandparents that gave me the choice, either leave the father of my daughter and we move in with them, or they take my daughter.

Moving in with my Grandparents was the best decision I made. Being able to leave the relationship I was in; but more importantly the environment my daughter was in when we left. My daughter is now sixteen and I have since married an awesome man that loves my daughter as if she was his own, we have had a daughter together. I now hope for my daughters to grow up and be strong independent woman that get an education and never have to depend on a man to make them happy.

To wish for a particular event that one considers possible:

When I was young I always knew that I wanted to be a mom. I had hoped to be a good one, not like the one I had. Growing up I missed a lot of school because I would stay home to take care of either a sick little brother or sister, so by the time I was in High School I didn't have enough credits to graduate.

A Clear and Wonderful Thing

By Laurie McKenna

The presence of hope is a clear and wonderful thing. It is interesting for me to ponder on hope because when I think back over the past 5 years or so, I can see that hope had slipped into a corner. It was no longer infused in my every thought and waking moment as it had been in the past. Life can be upside-down and hope is a grounding, calming force. I didn't know it as it was happening-that my hope was in the shadows- practically consumed by fear and doubt. I kept going and going. Battling every battle. I mistook yearning and effort and denial for hope.

This past year I lost all hope. I actually recognized that I had no hope in me! It was the most frightening day. In October my car overheated on Highway 80, the car that I had just gotten repaired- the car that I had to borrow money from my 81 year old mother in order to buy. I had just lost a major contract – the final straw to my withering way under performing website business. It had been a pile up of small catastrophes since April 2014.

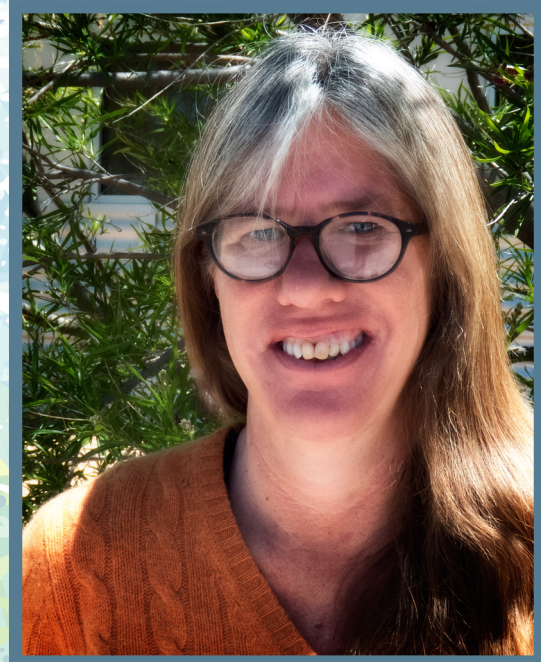
There I was on highway 80 with my car overheated. The thermostat had pinned I screamed and screamed and cried hysterically at the steering wheel, "No no I have to get outta here!! I have to get outta here!! I have to get outta here!!!!". My crying and terror was the fear that I was stuck forever with nothing! Nothing forever. I had blown all my chances I had squandered my life I was a loser! I was that person before I got sober who didn't even know how to take care of herself. This was hopelessness.

About 4 weeks later my left knee blew up. I had tried in every way to get the train back on the track. I was working for a restaurant- it felt like a deja-vu I could not stop thinking that this was what I was doing in 1985 or 86... working too few hours in a restaurant kitchen.

The knees said "We won't do this".

Doctors visits. My head said "Hey you have a body!" My other knee blew up in November. Each morning I went out to my back yard, hobbling in pain, barely walking and I just stood there and cried.

The flashbacks to the car breakdown episode- the complete outpouring of anguish and despair the terror of having now 2 knees that



would not behave as knees got me to ask the doctor if he can refer me to mental health services. I was afraid I would just stop caring. My boyfriend was of no support. He had called me an invalid. Rage came up in me when I heard that word.

I got a counselor and within 5 minutes of walking in that door I had hope. It was restored. It's an all or nothing thing. It's all there now. It's still coupled with doubt and anxiety but it is SO present.

Although I have had great tidal episodes of hope in the past- that have changed my life's direction, gotten me sober and lifted me through frightening times, I think I need to stick with thinking about the infusion of hope in the every day- in the moment after moment living. Hope is linked to my spirituality. Its best to keep it in the front seat with my intellect in the back. My intellect can be Hopes enemy as easily as it can be it's ally. Hope comes with a basic knowing that I am good and others are good and that life is full of wonder that is due deep appreciation, that my gifts can bring me everything I need. It's that simple.

Regaining Hope

By John Marshal Keith

My personal experience of hope was actually around my hospitalization for attempted suicide. I had been clean for a couple months and it seemed as if the second I quit the drugs and cleaned myself up everything just turned against me. I believed all my current friends were fake and turning against me. Everywhere I looked I thought the people around were conspiring against me or plotting my downfall. I had attempted suicide many times in these months but all attempts were subtle so no one around would notice.

Finally in the middle of my so called friends I finally had enough of feeling unwanted. I went out side with my ex-girlfriend who at that moment was severely intoxicated. Shortly after we stepped outside we began to argue and it didn't take long before she was screaming for me to kill myself. In that

moment all hope in the friends were gone and all hope in myself left also, so I promptly began to hack into my arm with the razors from my wallet. After a few minutes I began to go at my neck. I walked away hoping to bleed out, but in the next few minutes I was completely surprised with what happened.

When my ex had returned to the party without me everyone questioned her where I had gone. When she told them 'nothing' the entire party stopped what they were doing and began to search for me. They promptly found a trail of blood and followed it directly to me where they found me lying unconscious behind some trucks. They immediately called my sister for help.

When I woke up I had suddenly regained hope in the world. The people I thought were plotting and scheming actually cared and had been keeping an eye on me for months. They actually cared enough to be suspicious of her and look for me, then get me to a safe place and save me pretty much till my sister arrived. At that moment it shocked me, I guess you could say hope was shocked back into me.

Hope, Love and Faith

By Jose Ramirez



For me hope is love, hope is faith, and where there is hope it resembles faith, and where there is love you can feel the harmony of hope that one day I will be able to accomplish the things I am hoping for. And if I keep my hope, that hope is going to make me stronger. It will be my strength to continue on going forward. Everything can be possible. Everyone needs hope. Hope is what keeps us looking forward. Without love, without faith and without hope nothing is possible.

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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.

wdp | workforce development program

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Visit Our Website at:

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