

University of Arizona  
Recovery thru Integration,  
Support & Empowerment-RISE  
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*This newsletter is for anyone interested in the ongoing and growing RSS Program.*

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**Recovery Support Specialist  
Newsletter**

**Issue #21  
December 2008**



**My Recovery  
By Scott Whitley, RSS**



**Winner of the 2008  
Daniel Moreno  
Recovery Award**

My recovery has been based on hope, support, education and medication. From 1989 to 2006, I had approximately 50 bouts of major depression, never giving up hope.

I was first diagnosed with bipolar disorder in 1989, at the age of 35. I was working on new crops in Mexico when I had my second manic episode, which was the most severe. Although my manic episodes have been mostly controlled since 1990, I have had many episodes of hypomania.

During those many depressions, I never gave up hope. I educated myself by reading, going to support groups and listening to my doctors. I have learned to monitor myself for diminished sleep, racing thoughts and expansive thinking—signs of mania. Part of my self-care was simply saying, “Have you done everything you’re supposed to?” meaning, “Have you taken care of yourself and your meds today?” I have learned that bipolar is the only illness that, when I feel too good, I should call my doctor.

With depression, I have tried over 10 antidepressants but it was discovered that I was treatment-resistant. I went through periods of no more than 3 months of stability until July 2006, when the right medication regime was found. That breakthrough has brought me the best years of my life, since I was diagnosed. I have had the confidence to undertake greater responsibility in all areas of my life.

Even with a major mental illness, I was able to support my mother through the last year of her life, including hospice. My mood never faltered. Recovery is knowing you can depend on yourself.

Through these many years of ups and downs, there have been several constants—the support of friends, peers, my mother, NAMI and humor. With these, I’ve been able to persevere with my illness.

**Advisory Committee**

Angela Dingle-dine  
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CRSS

Dan Steffy

**New of Note**

**Metabolic Syndrome....What's that?**

**Metabolic syndrome is a cluster of medical conditions that occur together, increasing your risk of heart disease, stroke and diabetes.**

Having just one of these conditions — increased blood pressure, elevated insulin levels, excess body fat around the waist or abnormal cholesterol levels — isn't diagnosed as metabolic syndrome, but it does contribute to your risk of serious disease. If more than one of these conditions occur in combination, your risk is even greater.

If you have metabolic syndrome or any of the components of metabolic syndrome, you have the opportunity to make lifestyle changes. Eating a healthy diet, watching your weight, exercising, and asking your Primary Care Physician (PCP) if you are at risk for Metabolic Syndrome are changes that could make a difference.

**Symptoms**

Having metabolic syndrome means you have several disorders related to your metabolism at the same time, including:

- ◆ Obesity, particularly around your waist (having an "apple shape")
- ◆ Elevated blood pressure
- ◆ An elevated level of the blood fat called triglycerides and a low level of high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol — the "good" cholesterol
- ◆ Resistance to insulin, a hormone that helps to regulate the amount of sugar in your body

Having one component of metabolic syndrome means you're more likely to have others. And the more components you have, the greater are the risks to your health.

This information comes from [www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com).

Beth C. Stoneking, PhD, MSW, CPRP  
Beverly McGuffin, RN, MS, CPRP  
BreAnn Currie

Publisher  
Editor  
Page Designer



**Word Hunt**

Find all 16 words

Allocating	Control	Ethical	Quality
Claim	Discovered	Extensive	Responsibility
Cleanse	Education	Lifestyle	Spectrum
Conditions	Empowered	Progress	Vital

V R Z Q R L O R T N O C B F R  
V L D O D D E R E W O P M E L  
M J A A G E H C K L E U S X I  
I N L T N R L D I M R P F T C  
N R O C I E V A I T O I H E I  
O R V L T V Y A C N E V Q N C  
I O R E A O L E S I Z F A S O  
T Y K A C C P I V Q H P W I N  
A B P N O S B Q Z Y E T G V D  
C N B S L I F E S T Y L E E I  
U S X E L D Z E Z I Y W D Y T  
D S P I A D M W G L Z U D L I  
E U T T D R A U O A C V W D O  
X Y G W U A N X F U T F U W N  
R P R O G R E S S Q Q G Y S S

Certified Recovery Support Specialists are invited to join the Advisory Committee.

Please call RISE at 520-626-7473 for the date and time of meetings.

## **Pantoliano: There is no shame in depression**

**BY STEPHEN HEMELT**

*Adapted from THE DAILY IBERIAN*

The veteran actor, an Emmy-award winner for his work on “The Sopranos” and cast member in films like “The Matrix,” was in New Iberia Friday speaking about his goal of removing the stigma attached to mental disease. Pantoliano said three years ago, around the time hurricanes Katrina and Rita battered Louisiana, his best friend, the man who married him and his wife, committed suicide. Even more startling was the fact no one saw it coming. The jarring incident and his own realization that depression had been affecting him his whole life led Pantoliano to start No Kidding, Me Too!, an organization that tries to break down social barriers through brain disease education. Its goal is to empower those with brain disease to admit their illness, seek treatment and become greater members of society.

“In order to get recovery, more than anything else, you have to eliminate the shame,” Pantoliano said. “There is shame in mental illness. There is no shame in diabetes or heart disease. What I want to do with mental illness is what Elizabeth Taylor and Elton John did with AIDS — eliminate the shame.”

Pantoliano was out front and center Thursday in New Orleans when he joined the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America in releasing a report on hundreds of mental illnesses medicines being tested in human clinical trials or awaiting FDA approval. Pantoliano followed the release with a media tour Friday through Acadiana, where he continued to push the idea that there is no shame in mental illness. “My past will never go away,” he said. “It condemned me to my way of life. I surrendered to my past and my traumas. What I try to do is say, ‘I can control this and I’m going to get over it. I’m not going to feel bad about this anymore.’”

Johnson said 60 million Americans suffer from one form or another of mental disease.

According to its Web site, organizational goals for No Kidding, Me Too! are creating partnerships to ensure a broad-based spectrum of support and input while organizing the creative talents of Hollywood professionals to generate messages for various media and use of celebrity status to ensure the messages are heard. As founder, Pantoliano said his work with No Kidding, Me Too! has been the most rewarding of his professional career.



## **Visualization**

**What is Visualization?**

**Imagining a relaxing scene and feeling relaxed as the outcome.**



**Close your eyes and try to imagine yourself in your favorite place.  
Where it is soothing, safe and relaxing (beach, forest, sofa)**

**Notice the temperature, is there a gentle breeze?  
Look around you, what do you see?  
In the distance what do you see?**

**Look upward, what do you see?  
You can hear the sounds around you, what do you hear?**

**Slowly repeat “relax, relax” silently to yourself.  
Let your breaths slow down. Breathe slowly and deeply.  
Let your tummy rise up as you breathe in.  
Feeling your body relax.**

**When you want  
Count back from 5 to 1  
Open your eyes  
Wiggle your toes and fingers  
Gently stretch.  
Are you more relaxed?**

**By- Kathy Lewis, CRSS**



## The Things That I Have Learned

### Victoria Davis, RSS

In the Institute I learned so many things. I was taught that silence is not deadly but a necessity and the importance and art of listening. I also learned that empowering a person to decide their own recovery path is vital and life changing, and how my own experience can make a difference to someone. But most importantly, I gained a much deeper knowledge of how important our roles as Recovery Support Specialists are today, tomorrow and in the future. I am honored and blessed to be a part of such a necessary movement. Thank you to the trainers and peers for empowering me in my recovery.



### John Sowersby, RSS

East Clinic, LFC

The RSS Institute has given me very useful and valuable tools and strategies for helping people in their recovery process. First and most important I feel is the **person first language**. By not putting labels on people and giving permanence to those labels we help give people hope. They are not “addicts” or “schizophrenics” they are **people with addictions or people with schizophrenia**. I am happy to use this language in my Relapse Prevention group. I tell them we are born people and not addicts. We become addicted and we can become not addicted as well.

Second, I learned about SMART recovery. Although I do not facilitate a SMART group I have used some of the tools from SMART. The Cost Benefit Analysis and the Change Plan Worksheet have been very useful in helping people see the consequences of their addictions and choices.

Third, I learned about what people with schizophrenia go through when dealing with their symptoms. This was an eye opening experience and I feel lucky to know the challenges they face so I can better help people.

Finally, I am happy to be a part of something that has and will continue to change people’s perceptions of people with addictions and mental illness. I believe when we can all feel accepted for who we are then, the challenges we face will become merely small bumps on our path.



## Sharing Recovery

### Delores Van Winkle, RSS

Community Support Specialist, CODAC

Life became unmanageable for me, to the point of not being able to take care of my children or myself. I realized that I needed help. One day, after years of living in the streets and on the edge of life, I decided to call my sister. I was ready to receive help. She took me to receive help, where I was able to cleanse my system of drugs and alcohol.

During the next six months I obtained the mental and emotional tools necessary to live life with out drugs and alcohol. I was resistant at first, full of shame and resentment towards others. This was a program that if I really wanted to leave; I could. I took it one day at a time. Day after day I realized by getting involved in my recovery, taking groups and meetings seriously, using daily structure and follow through required in life, that I could be in control of “my” recovery.

Looking back on those six months; I remember how difficult it was for me. I remember the positive approach by staff letting me know this is “my” program. I needed to do the work and they would support me along the way. Coming to the realization of what life can become was the first step to recovery, allowing myself to be the solution.

Four years later I have full custody of my son from the State, my two daughters are back in my life, and I am pursuing a new career and going to college for the first time in my life. Institute 15 helped me gain the tools that I need to show others the “hope” of recovery.

### Jennifer Alexander, RSS

Southwest Case Management, LFC

What I learned from the 15<sup>th</sup> RSS Institute is that we all still have so much to learn. I learned that it really doesn’t matter what stage of recovery we are in, we all have something significant to offer. I learned that in offering others hope, we give that same gift of hope to ourselves. I learned that I really don’t like to do role plays, but they helped me to see myself better through how others interpret me, allowing me to build on my strengths, as well as those areas I need to grow more.

I learned that I have a new philosophy, which is, I would rather empower others than enable them because in doing so I empower myself to have more time for my own recovery. I could go on and on, but the truth of the matter is I find great joy in all of the things I learned, because in tandem with all the things I already own inside of me, I am empowered to help others live, experience and achieve life, and for me watching others grow and recover is the greatest learning experience of all.



## Applying Knowledge Learned in the Institute to My Job

**Susan Peters, RSS**

Mothers Caring About Self, COMPASS



What a privilege it was to be able to attend the 15<sup>th</sup> RSS Institute! I learned so much that helps me on my job. I work at MCAS (Mothers Caring About Self) as a Recovery Support Specialist. MCAS is an intensive outpatient program for pregnant or postpartum mothers. My job is to support them as they work to get clean and sober and, in many cases, reunite with their children.

At the Institute, I learned about the recovery model that is used in the mental health field now. It was very encouraging to me to see the change in thinking about those who may be diagnosed with a mental illness and/or substance use.

I learned how to put the person first no matter what the diagnosis. I learned about listening and focusing on a person's strengths. I learned about Motivational Interviewing (MI) which helps the person claim their own answers. I learned about the stages of change and how MI can help a person to progress along these stages to recovery and maintenance. I learned about the SMART Recovery techniques that help a person in their thought process and brings about change. Just to name a few.

These tools help me to encourage the women I am here to support. I focus on their strengths. I use the MI to empower the women so that they can find their own answers. I am now co-facilitating a SMART Recovery group at MCAS and leading other groups.

I am going to the weekly practicum which helps me to process how to best deal with the problems that arise as I put the things I learned at the Institute into practice. I am deeply grateful for the trainers wisdom and support and trust that I will continue to learn from them long after my time is finished at the Institute.

## My Journey Back To the Beginning

**Lanette Ioane, RSS**

Community Support Specialist, CODAC



What type of job do I apply for when I have such a hodgepodge of experience? What do I really want to do? Most important to me was what would I be good at? That was the million dollar question I needed to answer. I didn't want to go back to school but I knew I had extensive experience in substance abuse and psychiatric disorders, but how could that help me, those were experiences I lived with most of my life. Then I was introduced to the RSS Institute and my journey began.

To help others like me by sharing my experiences through the mazes of "The System" what a concept! I knew recovery was possible, I am a living example, but the Institute gave me the confidence and the knowledge to be successful. I knew nothing when I arrived at class that first day and by the end I was able to talk the "lingo" as well as know where to find the answers to any question asked. The teachers were top quality and a force to be reckoned with. I felt like I could ask them any question and they would answer me, I even argued a time or two or three...but they would let me finish and have me explain why it was right...or wrong...whatever the case.

The most important tool I took away from this is my "network". I now have fifteen people I can contact if the need arises. The people that went through the Institute with me helped me in ways too numerous to mention. We laughed, we cried, and we grew. These people who were once strangers to me have become a part of a new family. My journey back to the beginning was made special by the people of the RSS Institute and for that I will always be eternally grateful.



## Institute 15



Dan Steffy playing  
the flute



### The Panel

John McElroy, CRSS,  
COPE  
Yvonne Portillo, CRSS,  
COMPASS  
Patricia Porras, CRSS,  
LFC East  
Arnold Aguila, CRSS,  
SEABHS



Back Row from Left to Right: Sarah Briggs, John Sowersby, Herbert Todd Boughn, Bud Blanchard, Zachary Hoffman, Lanette Ioane, Shawn Kurtzweg, Venetia Taglialatelia, Samuel Nagy

Front Row from Left to Right: Susan Peters, Sarah Miller, Theresa Lewis Files, Victoria Davis, Shirley Jean Peterson, Jennifer Alexander, (standing) Josie Rodriguez, Delores Van Winkle