

The Ice Breaker

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There is no greater joy nor greater reward than to make a fundamental difference in someone's life.

-Sister Mary Rose McGeady

Methamphetamine scanner could aid many agencies

CDEX, Inc. has developed a scanner that can detect even minute amounts of methamphetamine on clothing, toys, and other surfaces.

The Meth Scanner identifies trace quantities of methamphetamine on all surfaces while in a continuous scan mode. The Scanner, weighing less than 1 1/2 pounds, is battery operated, handheld, non-intrusive and requires no operator interpretation of results. At a recent trade show in Nevada, CDEX, Inc. CEO Malcolm Phillips said, "We have received great cooperation from law enforcement agencies in Nevada, Texas, Missouri and Arizona in refining the Meth Scanner. We will put it on the market as soon as we finish the sensitivity testing in the next several weeks and it will be ready for delivery during the first quarter of the 2008."

The CDEX Methamphetamine Scanner uses the same basic technology employed in another CDEX product, the ValiMed[™] Medication Validation System. ValiMed uses Enhanced Photoemission Spectroscopy to quickly validate high-risk medication admixtures, as well as returned narcotics, to provide an increased level of patient safety. ValiMed compares a medication's spectroscopic signature to the expected signature from the CDEX Medication Signature Library and returns an easy to understand "validated" or "not validated" result, requiring no user interpretation. ValiMed is being used in hospitals across the country.

The Meth Scanner will be of help to law enforcement agencies, as well as social service agencies, such as Child Protection Departments. Law enforcement officers will be able to use the scanner to provide more evidence for arrest and prosecution, making for stronger court cases. Social service workers will use the scanners to detect if meth has been used around the children in a home, which will help them to make fact-based decisions in custody cases.

Realtors and landlords may find the scanner an invaluable tool in identifying properties that need the extensive cleanup experts advise for "meth houses."

There is no question that smoke, dust, and chemicals from meth manufacture and use can permeate an environment. The dilemma facing many agencies is what hazards are created by even a little exposure to meth. Being able to easily and immediately test for the presence of meth on walls and household objects will go a long way toward reducing the number of people affected by inadvertent exposure to meth.

For more information on the CDEX Meth Scanner, visit www.cdex-inc.com or contact Malcolm Philips (mphilips@cdex-inc.com).

Whose side are you guys on, anyway?

It's a question we hear from time to time: "Sometimes you write about the 'poor addicts and prisoners' and other times you write about what a 'good job' the police are doing, busting people. So whose side are

you on?"

How does one take sides in such a murky issue? We'd like to see meth gone. We'd like to see every addict get treatment and go on to productive, happy lives. We'd like to see children in homes that are safe and with parents that are not addicted to any dangerous substance. We'd like to see people make better choices. Wouldn't everyone like to see those things?

Unfortunately, that's not the reality we're dealing with. In the real world, police are arresting people, trying to get the drugs off the street, and also trying to get to the cartel that is supplying and selling the drugs. Addicts continue to seek and purchase the drugs because they are addicted and they see no other way out. Children of addicted parents continue to suffer because the household money goes to drugs, and they are neglected or abused.

So, in *The Icebreaker* we publish stories about law enforcement issues, personal accounts from addicts in recovery, warnings about new trends in illicit drug use, and information about addiction and recovery. Each month, we send this newsletter out in the hope that someone will find an article or story that inspires them or helps them to understand the disease of addiction and the issues faced by social agencies and law enforcement.

We hope that we're on the solution side in this conflict.

Voices from the Butterfly House

Renee shares a powerful message of hope

My name is Renee and I am an alcoholic and addict. I came to the Butterfly House on September 25th and I am writing this as I prepare to leave 3 months later. Today is December 26th..... Actually I have already left—I started this a few days ago. I wanted to let those who struggle with addiction, or love someone who does, know how my life has changed and a huge part of that is due to staying at the house for 3 months.

First, a little background about me. I am 43 years old and have struggled with addiction from the day that I took my first drink at age 11. My drug of choice is alcohol and for many years it would take me places I could never have imagined. By the time I arrived at the house I had been to inpatient treatment 8 times, numerous outpatient programs, and many visits to detox. The legal consequences are 3 OWIs, Hit and run, leaving the scene of an accident with bodily injury, 2 Operating after Revocation and thousands of dollars in attorney fees and fines. I spent 4 months in jail (I thought I am not the type of person who goes to jail) well, if you break the law, you go to jail; so I am the type after all....

2 divorces, jobs lost, bills unpaid, reckless lifestyle and physical side effects too many to list. The most painful thing I had to do was to give permanent placement to my ex-husband of my 2 beautiful children, Brooke, 17, and Blake, 11. They are the love, joy and hope of my life, and my disease left me alone without them. My alcoholism had progressed to becoming number one in my life, replacing everything. The big book of Alcoholics Anonymous says it's cunning, baffling and powerful and I underestimated the power of active addiction. Today I have respect for anyone who has had an addiction touch their lives.

Relapse was a common thing for me and there were so many times I felt the utter despair and hopelessness that every addict feels. I am fortunate to have this be a part of my story; I understand now that every thing I went through was for a purpose. When I completely surrendered on September 17th (my sobriety date) I could begin to live again! So, to those of you who have relapsed, never give up, miracles do happen, I am a testimony to that. Back to the Butterfly House and my stay there.....

I have to admit that at first I thought: *what have I gotten myself into!* I'm sure Doreen thought that I would not stay, actually, I'm *sure* she thought that (LOL!). I had been to St. Croix Falls before, both times on my way to Hazelden so I was familiar with the area. I loved the house and the fact that it was so close to the river. I knew that 2 of the girls were under 25 and one older than me. I had been to so many treatments before that I was used to getting to know roommates, we worked out just fine. Those who know me know cats are not my first love and there was Harley, one cat I could handle, then Kitty came. Put it this way, I bonded with Harley and we will leave it at that..... I eventually got my own room and that was sweet! I do like my own space and it was nice. The girls at the house have all taught me lessons that are very valuable. Each one is different but our journey in recovery is the same. I am grateful for everyone that stayed at the house during my 3 months there. The awesome thing is we all worked through whatever challenges we faced through trial and sometimes error. I don't have any siblings so I believe the experience was a taste of that.

I am inspired by the commitment that went into bringing the Butterfly House from dream to reality. The advisory board all gave of their time, support and just plain old hard work to get this going, I am forever grateful. Doreen, or "house mom," as I like to call her (keep in mind we are very close in age), is amazing, what more can be said? Thank you for all you did and I could go on and on but you know what you did for me. The St. Croix Falls recovery community has touched my heart and I will remain connected to them. I plan on going back to the house for a weekend a month to stay connected. I was once told by a sponsor "You never know how many lives you touch by sharing your experience, strength and hope." My hope for all who come to the Butterfly House is to believe in the peace and serenity that you will find when you come to a point of surrendering to the disease and let a Higher Power guide you.

Peace,
Renee

Editor's Corner

Handling Disappointment

After months of planning and looking forward to a family reunion, we had to cancel our trip at the last minute. I was so crushed, I wanted to curl up in a ball and cry. The first few days, I allowed myself to wallow in all the anger, grief, and self-pity I could muster. I was a miserable person and miserable to be around, but I felt that I had a perfectly good reason for it.

About the time my son and husband began to take on my bad attitude, I realized that allowing myself to hold onto that deep disappointment only made matters worse. I was getting more depressed every time I thought of all I had missed, and there seemed to be no way out of the pity pit I had dug for myself. I needed to find a way to deal with my disappointment.

The word disappointment describes itself: DIS, to separate or take apart, and APPOINTMENT, a pending event or experience. It's a separation of what we expect from what actually happens. The negativity of disappointment exists only in our mind. It is not the event, but our interpretation of it that gets us so out of sorts.

Consider a high school football game, both teams are looking forward to the game, both with the aspiration of winning, but one of those teams will face the disappointment of losing. It will be hard to take, and the players may be experiencing all kinds of negative emotions. A wise coach will lead his team to take the loss as a learning experience, a chance to work at winning the next game, giving his players hope.

In dealing with disappointment, one should:

- * Stay calm. Don't overreact to the situation, and don't take your pain or anger out on others.
- * Find a safe way to let your emotions out. Write it down in a journal, vent to a good friend, take a walk or run.
- * Ask yourself if the disappointment you feel is worth getting upset about. You might surprise yourself by realizing it's not that big a problem.
- * Think of ways to avoid this kind of disappointment in the future. Could you have studied harder? Was the job you applied for really right for you? Can you improve your skills?
- * Don't beat yourself up over losses and setbacks. Everyone has to deal with them, and losing from time to time doesn't make you a loser.

The real danger in allowing disappointment to fester is in losing hope for a better outcome in the future. Human beings need to have something to look forward to. Sometimes, after a huge disappointment, we have to work really hard to find a ray of hope, but it will be worth it when we do.

People who take disappointment well have a few character traits we all can learn from:

- * They view life as a challenge, or a puzzle. They take pride in solving the problems that come along, and they try not to view them as deathly serious issues.
- * They tend to "play the hand they're dealt" rather than waste time complaining about the state of things. Given a problem, they're more likely to find a way to solve it than try to find a way for the problem to belong to someone else.
- * They know when to take a look within to see if they are creating or exacerbating the problem. They know they can't control others' behavior or emotions, so they focus on what they are actually able to act on: their own behavior.
- * They often have a relationship with a Higher Power. Many people who have dealt with great disappointments and obstacles will point to one source from which they received courage and strength through their trials: their God.

It's one thing that we can be assured of in our lives, there will be disappointments, both huge and small. How we deal with them could be a testament to our character.

We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

Word of the Month: Joy

We all use words to praise, to express love, to hurt, to vent our anger, and to try to make others understand us better. We've chosen twelve words that we think can have both very positive and very negative connotations, and we'll take a look at both sides each month.

Give not over thy soul to sorrow; and afflict not thyself in thy own counsel. Gladness of heart is the life of man and the joyfulness of man is length of days.

Ecclesiastes

The United States Constitution endows us with the right to the "pursuit of happiness" and we Americans embrace that right for all we're worth. The pursuit of happiness can lead some of us to great success in business and our personal lives, and drag others into a pit of addiction and despair. It's all in our choices, our beliefs, and our personalities. Many people pursue happiness all their lives, only to find that it invariably seems to be just out of reach. In those cases, one has to wonder what their concept of happiness actually is; are they setting their hopes on *things* to make them happy?

Joy is to be happy in the moment, as it happens. Joy is watching a sunset and wanting to applaud, happiness is feeling free to do it. Joy is smiling at a baby in the supermarket, happiness is having the baby smile back. Joy is listening to your child talk about his interests, happiness is seeing his dreams fulfilled. Joy is bidden to come to us, happiness follows along.

We wouldn't have to be in pursuit of happiness if we just allowed more joy into the little moments of our lives.

This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of Nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.

George Bernard Shaw (1856 – 1950),

Man and Superman, Epistle Dedicatory

When you jump for joy, beware that no one moves the ground from beneath your feet.

Stanislaw J. Lec (1909 – 1966), "Unkempt Thoughts"

There's a sobering thought for those of us who would be joyful individuals. It seems there's always someone who takes another's personal joy as threatening to his own contentment. For that type of person, nothing will be right until he makes you feel foolish and shameful for being happy, for taking joy in your everyday life. The best thing would be to avoid this kind of person, but many times, these people are entrenched in our lives: an in-law, a boss, a co-worker, and we can't avoid them or the rain they can bring to our parade.

In those cases, you may need to keep your joy on the "downlow", so to speak. Joy will stay with you, even if you must keep it quietly in your heart.

Grief can take care of itself, but to get the full value of a joy you must have somebody to divide it with.

- Mark Twain (1835 – 1910)

Find a kindred spirit to share your joys with, and, for heaven's sake, don't jump for joy until you are sure you'll have a safe landing!

Short is the joy that guilty pleasure brings.

-Euripides (484 BC – 406 BC)

I'm sure Euripides is right about this, I just don't believe that he could have been referring to chocolate!

Change your Mantra: Positive affirmations can work

A *mantra* is a chant, song, or poem that is used to focus the mind for meditation. The word brings a mental picture of Tibetan monks chanting in prayer, but the fact is, we all use mantras, whether we meditate or not. They are the thoughts that run unbidden through our minds. For those mired in addiction and shame, the mantras are not useful or healthy: *I'm a mess; I hate myself; Why can't I just stop?; What's wrong with me? I'm such a loser.*

Addicts suffer those thoughts over and over again, like a daily beating, with no sense of ever being free of them. Even in recovery, those mantras will return to torture and tempt the addict to relapse. A mind and soul with a negative mantra cannot know peace.

How do we change our mantra from self-defeating diatribes to positive affirmations?

In Alcoholics/Narcotics Anonymous, the answer starts in Steps Four and Five, in which the person in recovery makes a fearless and searching moral inventory of himself and then admits to his Higher Power, to himself, and to another person the nature of his failings. In searching through all those dark nooks and crannies of his disease, he will have found the source of every negative mantra he has used . . . and in Step Six, he will ask his Higher Power to remove all those defects of character, which should give him a sense of having a clean slate. It is a perfect time to replace those old, negative mantras with ones that reflect his new commitment to sobriety and serenity.

Understanding Affirmation

To affirm something is to make it solid, strong, unassailable. An affirmation is simply a spoken declaration, in the present tense, which creates a desired reality. We tend to believe what we hear, especially if it comes from a trusted source, such as ourselves. If we berate ourselves in the quiet of our minds, it resonates just as loudly as if someone shouted it across a crowded room. It is shameful to be told you are a loser, even if you're the only one who hears the insult.

Affirmations can be used to override those negative mantras from our past. You do not even have to believe the affirmation when you first begin using it. Your subconscious mind will accept the new beliefs as truth without analyzing them. With regular repetition, your new mantra will cause your thinking and sense of self to grow and expand in a healthy creative way.

Choosing an affirmation

Healthy and positive affirmations can be found in many places: meditation books, magazines, and even some television shows. To choose which affirmations will most benefit you, consider your thoughts after reading or hearing them. Choose an affirmation, if after reading it, you think: "If I really believed that, my

life would be a lot better.” or “I wish my life were like that.” Ghandi’s “Be the change you want to see in the world” could become “I *am* the change I want to see in the world.” Choose one or more affirmations that you find apply to you, or develop your own.

When developing an affirmation, always use the present tense. *I am healthy, I am well, I have a good job*, as if the condition already existed. Use only positive words in your affirmations. For example, *happy, peaceful enthusiastic, warm*. Avoid using negative terms such as *worried, frightened, upset, tired, bored* even if you’re negating them (don’t say “I’m not unhappy”; say instead, “I feel good.” Use the first person: *I, me, or your own name*. The affirmation should create a strong picture of you, successful in whatever way you desire, right now. Use your imagination to envision how you want your life to be. Imagination can be a powerful precursor to reality!

Using your affirmations

Once you have developed your affirmations, repeat them several times first thing in the morning and before going to sleep at night. Repeat your affirmations over and over again when you are relaxing or meditating. Repeat your affirmations at any time during the day when you are not concentrating on something else. For example, when you are doing the dishes, vacuuming, stuck in traffic, waiting in line at the grocery store, you can keep your mantra running through your mind. The more you repeat your affirmations, the sooner they will begin to reflect reality. Reinforce your affirmations by writing them over and over again while repeating them silently or out loud. It can help to repeat an affirmation in an overly loud tone of voice. Diminish the volume gradually until you are repeating the affirmation in a whisper and finally saying it silently inside your head. (This is an exercise best done alone, lest you scare your neighbors or your boss!)

Questions

Sometimes, we ask ourselves questions. *Why did I say that? How can I be so lazy? Why did I start drinking?* The questions serve no other purpose than to give us another reason to berate ourselves. We affirm those negative views with negative answers: *Because I’m a jerk. Because I can’t get off my fat butt. Because I’m a drunk*. We need to change the questions to reflect our positive affirmations: *What can I say to make it better? How can I become more proactive? What am I going to do to stay sober today?*

Working on your self-esteem

Your new mantra should be bolstering good feelings about yourself, but we often find flaws in our physical appearance that can affect our self-esteem. Try the *mirror technique*. Take a few minutes each day to look at yourself in the mirror and find things to love about each part of you. *I love my eyes, they help me see the beauty in the world, they express what I’m feeling, they’re a nice shade of brown. . .* etc. Only positives allowed!

Banishing the intrusive negatives

When the negative thoughts reappear, you must make them go away so that they don’t override the good that your affirmations are doing. Try imagining that negative voice getting quieter and quieter, being drowned out by your affirmation, which gets louder and louder, or try picturing the thought swirling away from you as your affirmation swoops toward you. An easier way to visualize being done with the negative thinking is to write it down, crumple it in your hand and throw it in the trash. You’ve just reminded yourself and the universe that you are done with that way of thinking!

Keep it handy

Affirmations fit everywhere! Bring it to mind while you’re exercising, jot it down on your grocery list, e-mail it to yourself for a pick-me-up later in the day, put a Post-it note in your lunch bag. . . The point is to keep it with you and use it often!

Integrate it

Once you are accustomed to using affirmations, try integrating those positive thoughts with actions. *I have a good job* could translate into actions you can take to find more to love about your job, *I am happy with myself* could translate into finding ways to help others to love themselves. After a month of using your affirmation, it should become a habit. Now you can change affirmations to suit the changes in your life, in your thinking and feeling.

It’s as simple as “change your mantra, change your life”—give it a try!

