

# The Ice Breaker

***Moms and Dads Against Meth, Inc.***

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Volume 2, Issue 12      June 2007

“By the time a man realizes that maybe his father was right, he usually has a son who thinks he’s wrong.”

**–Charles Wadsworth**

## ***The thing about dads is . . .***

They’re human. As children, we may think our dad is a personal friend of Superman, endowed with many of the same strengths, but eventually, we will discover that he is just a regular guy. Some people find that to be one of the great disappointments of their lives.

A little boy wrote of his dad, “He can climb the highest mountain, he can swim the deepest sea, but mostly, he just takes out the garbage.” Now, there’s a kid with some perspective!

Men who buy into the societal expectations of strength, pride, and unyielding authority in fatherhood miss out on the joys of raising their children. Fathers should be able to cuddle, laugh with, and play with their children. Fathers should be allowed to experience their own boyhood through the eyes of their children, and far too many don’t understand that.

We often parent our children as we, ourselves, were parented. How many times have we thought “I sound just like my mother, or father” when speaking to our children? If our parents, particularly our fathers, weren’t equipped or prepared to be mature, loving caregivers, we will always seek the love and attention we were denied as children.

Needing the love and approval of an emotionally distant father can lead many people into lives of perpetual disappointment and heartbreak. It is often given as the reason people turn to drugs or alcohol: “I never could please my Dad,” “I don’t think my Dad even liked me,” “My Dad gets all embarrassed and mad when I say I love him.”

The good news is that, as a society, we are learning more about the importance of a loving father in a child’s life. Studies have shown that daughters who have a close relationship with their fathers are less likely to experiment with sex or drugs at an early age. Sons of fathers who are affectionate and playful are found to score high in self-esteem, and low in anger or resentment.

On Father’s Day, many adult children will present their fathers with elaborate gifts or cards, picturing Dad’s joy and big hugs at a family party. Others won’t bother with a gift or card because they believe that the relationship with their fathers is beyond repair. Still others will try to connect with a father who finds it hard to express any positive feelings for his children. It may very well be the most difficult relationship any of us has to deal with, but it also may be one of the most worthwhile.

As an adult child, you have only to reach out to your father and let him know that you love him. You make a decision to love, and you let God handle the rest. As we learn in AA and NA, we aren’t responsible for the outcome, just the effort. Most dads, even the cranky ones, hope they are worth the effort.

## ***Voices from the Butterfly House***

A new feature is being added to The Ice Breaker this month. Women who are living in the Butterfly House will share their stories, thoughts, and feelings with readers as they progress through their recovery program. This month's theme is "Struggling."

### **A struggle for LaRacia**

Hello. My name is LaRacia. I am a 28-year-old meth addict. I have been here at The Butterfly House for 1 month. The house is sooo beautiful, almost like a fairy tale. But in this fairy tale, there are Rules and Reality, and with that begins my struggle.

I am blessed for having very little Meth cravings, which I believe has a lot to do with the supportive atmosphere around me. Pastor Randy's church, Doreen, the girls NA and AA, Mary, Lourie, and all the staff. They are all so great.

Being a meth addict for 14 years, doing what I wanted and how I wanted, I struggle daily with "Rules." Trying to change all my old, negative behaviors into positive ones is hard work. I mean how do you change "the person" you have been for half your life? Well, it's not easy! But with all the support around me and a lot of hard work and maybe even a little drama (ha ha), I'm doing it, and loving it.

### **Elsie struggles with grief**

Hi, I'm Elsie and I am an addict.

I've been an active meth user for what seems to have been "my whole" life. To others, it may seem just a short time.

I am 20 years old. I believe my first use was around age 16 or 15, something like that! But, boy, do I remember that first time! It was a Friday night and a close friend of my brother's told me numerous times "Don't do it, Elsie. You'll regret it for the rest of your life."

But after it passed me, I said, "Whatever." Typical teenager! Thinkin' my brother's friends were babysittin' me! I remember having someone else light it for me, of course, and then I hated the taste, but it kind of made me feel "untouchable"—not bad, huh? Wrong!

I played cards and Mancala the whole time, sittin' on a floor, took a drink of water once and the next thing I knew was it was Sunday around noon! I didn't get up more than once to switch legs and stretch.

Crazy stuff! November 28th about, I was running around as usual, gettin' high, you know! Well, I was keepin' in contact with my brother, Marty J., because he was going through tuff times, with a breakup, and moving and being lonely! I would have dropped anything for my brother—anything!!

He really was my everything, my Big Brother, my inspiration, my guard, my hero. I thought he was my twin! One day I wanted to *be* Martin! I love him so much! He was, and is, so cool and the best! Nobody messed with me cuz they knew I was Marty's little sister! Out of respect for him!

Well, November 30th rolled around and Mom called me and told me Marty killed himself. I threw my phone in hopes it would break and Mom didn't really say that. Right? Still with me here? O.k., me too!

So anyways, no words could explain the complete devastation I was going through—NOTHING! Never!

My brother was dead! My Martin was dead!

They say that your heart can't really hurt by love and that it's all medical—but that's b.s.! My heart hurt so bad, I felt someone was squeezing it! Squeezing and squeezing!

I went outside and thought I was dying—I screamed and screamed Marty's name—so hard, maybe in hopes he would hear me!

Right about now, I feel like wrecking something! Destroying something! Anything!

If I only felt a third of what Martin felt that night he did it, I would have done it too! If that makes sense.

But I did see the part of it that screamed "What's the freakin' point?" People say that committing suicide is selfish and a "p\*\*\*y's way out."

I just call it hurt and depression—the feeling of unlovability! The face of pain.

I'll back every choice my brother ever made, even if it's wrong, I don't agree with his suicide, but I'll be damned if anyone ever looks down on him for what he did!

I may never forgive him, but he will remain my encouragement to keep going, my hero, my inspiration, and always my Big Brother.

**I know that I can, but my**

**Weakness defeats.**

**My faith seems to fade,**

**Seems only trouble it meets.**

**Days go by, and trust me, I try.**

**So my mind escapes me,**

**Therefore forces my cry.**

**Shall I be named “huge”**

**As murders of mind I killed**

**My own faith, one day at a time.**

**What is hidden I feel, I’m**

**Hunting to destroy,**

**My “habit” it plays**

**My weakness as a toy!**

**Elsie**

## **B. Struggles with her past**

Who would’ve ever thought I’d end up in Wisconsin? I’m a city girl! Whose meth addiction got me into some trouble. I ended up doing time in prison and that’s where I realized exactly how much life really means. Addiction is a funny thing. I never knew it could actually make me a stronger person. As they say, when one door closes, another opens.

I lost everything. I mean EVERYTHING. I lost my job, my house, my clothes, my car, I even lost my son. Coming out of prison was a hard transition for me. Where was I going to live? Who was going to hire me? Should I go back to the Cities? Can I stay away from meth, or will I fall back into the old lifestyle that I was so used to?

My first week was scary. There were a lot of temptations and everything seemed so different. I had heard about the Butterfly House through a couple of good friends. When I first moved in, I was so excited! The house is beautiful, and just what I needed to transition back into society.

But then, well, there came the rules. As an addict, I made my own rules. I argued that these rules are unfair and shouldn’t apply to me. I can set my own rules, I thought. I felt it as a personal attack. Even though they told me they were doing these things to make me a better person.

I wanted to leave, I wanted to use, I wanted to just flat-out rebel! But I didn’t. This program of recovery is a process. To live by the “just for today” has gotten me through many 24 hours. I came to believe that this house and the people involved in this house are here to help me and see me succeed.

Meth might have torn me down, but recovering from it has built me up. I have clothes on my back, food in my mouth, a roof over my head. I even have a job! Friends that love me for ME, and not because of what I have. Real friends. I have a relationship with my son again.

I am truly a stronger, healthier person. Sure, there are still struggles. But as a good friend once told me, “Nothing worth having comes easy.” And life and sobriety is definitely worth having!

BJMD

## **Step Twelve:**

*Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.*

Long ago, a woman in her early thirties attended an Alanon meeting where an older couple mentioned that they had been Twelve-Stepping the day before.

“Oh,” she said. “Is that like the Texas Two-Step they did in Urban Cowboy?”

After the group exploded in uproarious laughter, someone gently explained that the couple had been part of an intervention group that was convincing an alcoholic friend to get treatment.

*Boy, was my face red!*

After that, a kind young man in the meeting said that Step Twelve was kind of like a dance. You needed to know all the steps, have a good sense of balance, and a little grace wouldn't hurt. I've never forgotten his description.

Step Twelve is the culmination of all we have learned along the way. It is the “put your money where your mouth is” step that reinforces the person's decision to stay clean and live in serenity by spreading the truth of recovery.

“Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps” describes what has been happening inside the person in recovery. Everyone experiences it differently, and recognizes it at different times in their recovery, but most agree that at some point, profound changes in their thinking and acting became apparent.

A part of that spiritual awakening is the knowledge that it is a gift to be shared with others who are stuck in the mire of addiction. The apostle James said “faith without works is dead,” and although scholars continue to debate the phrase, most agree that James was calling the faithful into action. It is not enough to believe in a Higher Power, to pray, and meditate, and keep it to yourself. Real faith translates into action, from missionaries in far away lands, to the person who drives a neighbor to church every Sunday. We must reach out to others to share the gift, and to keep it active and alive within ourselves.

### **What's the message?**

“You get high too much” is not a helpful statement. The person who hears that has probably heard it a million times, from friends, family, and possibly even strangers. It doesn't offer any alternatives or help, and it mostly falls on deaf ears.

What about “I was where you are, and I found a way out. It doesn't hurt nearly as much as I see you are hurting now.”? It offers a glimmer of hope: *someone has been through this and survived; someone knows how this feels; someone seems to care enough to reach out to me.* You may have heard a similar message yourself; how did it make you feel?

### **Ways to carry the message**

First and foremost, *live your truth.* You are the message. The way you live, the way you are working your sobriety program, and the way you present yourself to others are all part of your Twelfth Step outreach. Just stepping out the door every day and into your life can be like a billboard advertising serenity, if you are truly living it.

Second, look for other ways to *show* rather than *tell* other addicts what you have discovered. Volunteer to show up at your NA meetings early to make coffee and set up chairs. Greet newcomers and make them feel comfortable. Volunteer for causes such as Habitat for Humanity, your local food shelves or homeless shelters, look for opportunities through your church. Get out there and *be the change you want to see in the world!*

Another great option is to volunteer to be a sponsor. Working one on one with another addict can be a rich experience for both of you. By working with your own sponsor, you allowed her to reinforce her own recovery, why not allow someone to help you in the same way?

Taking on the responsibility to be someone else's sponsor will challenge you in ways you never thought of, but it will prove to be well worth the effort. What better way to bring home the truths of the Twelve Steps than to review them with someone who is just starting to embrace them?

If you should run into difficulties you're not sure how to handle, you can always turn to those more experienced with sponsorship for advice. In AA and NA, there is always someone to go to for help, and in that wacky, wonderful way that God has ordained, they will be helped by helping us! Don't you just love

that our Higher Power has a great sense of irony, not to mention a terrific sense of humor!

### **The message goes unheeded**

It will happen and it will be rough. You spend time with another addict, helping him find his way. You put forth a lot of effort, but he doesn't seem to be working as hard as you would like, and one day, he relapses, and then blames you for his failure. It's a huge blow to you, and you wonder what was the point. It's a painful lesson we all must learn: we can only be responsible for the *effort* we put into things, not the *results*. In reaching out to him, trying to help, you reinforced your own recovery; remember him in your prayers and move on.

### **The long and winding road . . .**

And so you continue, *to infinity and beyond*, as Buzz Lightyear would say. You practice NA principles, in other words, your code of conduct, and the truths you live by.

You examine yourself for lapses of judgment, ethics, and behavior. You admit your failings and mistakes and make amends where possible.

You continue to rely on your Higher Power for knowledge of His will for you, by keeping in touch through prayer and meditation.

You live your life in a way that makes you feel good about yourself. You reach out to share what you have learned.

You have learned the beautiful, intricate moves of the Twelve Step dance! Keep dancing!

## ***A Letter to M.A.D.A.M.***

***Editor's Note:*** *The letter below had no signature or return address for us to answer it personally, but we're hoping that the answer given below will be helpful to the writer and others who wondered the same thing.*

I just got done reading the *May Ice Breaker*. I read all about the "Butterfly House." I do believe it is a wonderful thing. My question and concern is: don't the males deserve help also?

I have noticed everything revolves around mostly just females with addictions. Is there no help for the males? Does everyone look at them as "real losers?" Sure, my son is currently serving time, but when he gets out, there is no place for him to go. Sure, he has family, but I know going back to his wife will be unhealthy. Being Wisconsin likes keeping you in their state doesn't help either. Being all his siblings and me live in different states.

I'm sure this will go unanswered. But at least you all know my concern about the addicted males in your community.

Thank you.

## **M.A.D.A.M.'s Answer**

Thank you for bringing up the question!

Actually, the reason we decided to create the Butterfly House just for women was because Minnesota and Western Wisconsin have a number of halfway and transition homes for males, and few, if any, for females.

The Discipleship House of Amery is just one of the many places where a man may go to reinforce his recovery after jail, prison, or a treatment facility.

The chaplain at the prison, AODA counselor, or probation officer should have information for your son about what places have space available when he is released.

Most of these facilities have strict codes of conduct and rules to follow, requiring that residents commit to a one-year stay, or longer. Many of these homes follow faith-based recovery guidelines and principles, which have proven to be very successful.

We certainly hope that your son is able to reinforce his recovery in one of these homes once he is released.

In the event that he can't find room in a transition home for men, he can certainly get in touch with M.A.D.A.M. for information on Narcotics Anonymous meetings, finding a sponsor, making sober friends, and advice on how to pick up and start over again. We realize how difficult the transition can be for both women *and* men, and we want to help *everyone* stay free of meth and other illicit drugs.

### *Editor's Corner*

MTV's "The Real World" opens with the line "see what happens when people stop being polite, and start getting real." It certainly could apply to our experiences last month in The Butterfly House. For the first week or two, our new residents were excited to be there, happy to follow the rules, attend meetings, and get to know each other. . . Then we all started "getting real." We encountered the need to add some rules about mail and cell phones, and to say the rules met with resistance is the understatement of the year!

There was drama, melodrama, and even a little comedy. Things calmed down and flared up again over the next couple of weeks, and we all discovered that we had a lot to learn about recovery, people in recovery, and all the issues that go with it.

As I write this, things have calmed down considerably. The resident who was the most upset by the new mail rules actually apologized to us and thanked us for an unforeseen benefit of the new rule. Rules, especially new ones, are challenging for everyone. For chemically dependent people, who have flouted laws and societal rules for a long time, it is especially hard to knuckle down and follow regulations. Willful self-indulgence has been a way of life, and it's learning a whole new way to think and act by submitting to a Higher Power.

We won't give up on them or let them give up on themselves. As you have read their submissions for this month, we hope you'll think a kind thought and say a prayer for these wonderful young women, who have a tough job in front of them.

### ***Help Wanted***

We are searching for someone to live with our residents at The Butterfly House. The ideal candidate will be a woman with at least a few years of sobriety and a desire to help other women (this is Twelve Stepping at its best!). This will not be a paid position, but we can offer free rent for a beautiful room and bath in a lovely Victorian home. While we have plenty of support for daytime help in the house, what we really need is someone who can be there in the evenings and overnight, so this is an ideal position for a college student or an AODA intern. If you, or someone you know would be interested in this opportunity, please e-mail us at [madatmeth@yahoo.com](mailto:madatmeth@yahoo.com), or call and leave a message at 725-417-1218.

### ***Work Wanted***

Our Butterfly House residents need jobs! While two of our three current residents have work, we would like to see our third young lady in a job, and to have job prospects for our future residents. Potential employers can e-mail us at [madatmeth@yahoo.com](mailto:madatmeth@yahoo.com).

