

The Ice Breaker

Moms and Dads Against Meth, Inc.

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“I expect to pass through this world but once; any good thing therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now; let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.”

–Ettiene De Grellet

What is Transitional, or Sober Housing?

Rachael has just completed her second 30-day inpatient treatment for drug addiction. At the urging of her counselors, she has agreed to enter a sober living facility rather than returning to her home. After her first treatment, she went straight back to her old life, and within months, she was using meth again.

The descent back into her habit was frightening, but she continued to use meth for two years before she was finally able to admit she needed help. Determined to do anything to stay sober, she put a huge effort into her treatment program. Now, as she prepares to leave the safety of the treatment facility, she is afraid that she won't be able to make a sober life for herself.

Transitional, or sober houses arose out of a need for people like Rachael to have a safe place to ease into sober lives. Newly recovering alcoholics and addicts often return to old behaviors once they return to their everyday lives. They haven't had the time and experience to know how to avoid things that trigger cravings, how to recognize signs of relapse, and how to develop habits of sobriety.

Terms of residency in sober living facilities can range from three months to a year or more. In general, the longer the stay, the best chance of retaining sobriety, but individuals vary.

True recovery requires changes in thinking, attitudes, and beliefs. In the first several months of recovery, the addict is learning about those new attitudes and ways of thinking, but is unused to putting them into practice.

Many experts believe that the best way to get accustomed to thinking and acting in a new way is to be around people who are also learning those new habits. The support of others in recovery is critical to those who are new to the concepts of sobriety. Living day-to-day with other recovering addicts can foster an atmosphere of mutual understanding and reinforcement.

In transitional housing, the recovering addict is subject to house rules which may include a required number of meetings per week, strict abstinence and honesty, sharing of housekeeping duties, as well as work and community service obligations.

Addicts who have been running their lives by their own rules (or lack of them) often find the house rules too restrictive,

and will take any opportunity to break them. Even the tiniest infraction, such as not doing a house chore, can seem like a huge victory to an addict required to follow rules, and they may get a kind of high from their rebellion. That thought process and behavior often results in relapse and eviction from the house.

At some point, the addict must recognize that her old thoughts and behaviors will not work in her new, sober life. In the recovery-oriented atmosphere of sober housing she will have freedom to explore her inner workings and learn from others what it takes to remain sober and how to instill serenity in her life.

Transitional houses are also places to learn about conflict resolution, interpersonal relationships, and the value of fellowship. Most sober houses require that residents attend and contribute to house meetings that cover household topics ranging from chore assignments to meal plans. These meetings offer an opportunity to air grievances, give support and encouragement, and resolve everyday living issues, and are an important component in residents' grasp of life skills.

Many people who are recovering from addiction have led lives outside the spectrum of conventional society. In some cases, addiction has been a family affair, involving parents and siblings, which may have resulted in a chaotic upbringing. Thus, many people in transitional housing experience an introduction to common, everyday skills such as planning and making meals, doing laundry, and housekeeping.

Transitional housing offers recovering addicts nearly everything they need to embark on their recovery journey. The one thing they must have, and the one thing these facilities cannot provide, is the will to succeed. The desire to recover and stay sober is up to each individual, and that has to come from within.

The Butterfly House Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide a safe, sober residence for women in recovery from alcohol or other drug dependency while introducing sober living skills, peer-to-peer fellowship and support and educational experiences that will aid them in the transition back into their families and/or communities.

What Makes a Successful Sober House?

To answer that question, we might need to consider the definition of success. When dealing with alcoholics and addicts, percentages are difficult to pin down, because today's hopeless case could turn into tomorrow's rousing success. It comes down to each individual's understanding of their disease, willingness to change, and readiness for recovery.

In Butterfly House, successes are counted one day at a time, one woman at a time. Because we continue an ongoing relationship with our former residents, we sometimes learn that our failures turned out to be successes in another time and place; conversely, some former residents get out into the world and relapse within months. In some cases, the former resident credits

Moms and Dads Against Meth, Inc./Butterfly House 2009 Annual Report

Vision

Butterfly House, a community outreach project of *Moms and Dads Against Meth, Inc.* is only the first in a succession of much-needed, quality transitional sober living houses for women to be established in the St. Croix Valley of Western Wisconsin.

Mission Statement-Moms and Dads Against Meth, Inc.

Our mission is to stop the spread of methamphetamine and other illicit drug abuse through awareness, education, and community outreach activities.

Program Update: Butterfly House

In 2009, *Butterfly House* provided shelter and services for 26 adult women and 4 children. Currently, *Butterfly House* is the only transitional sober living house for women in the St. Croix Valley of Western Wisconsin.

Program Update: Collaboration with Drug Court

In December of 2009, *Butterfly House* began taking Polk County Drug Court Participants into residency. This partnership strengthens the link between *Butterfly House*, Law Enforcement, the Polk County Court System, The Department of Child Protection, The Department of Human Services, The Department of Social Services, the Polk County Mental Health Task Force, and *Moms and Dads Against Meth, Inc.*

Program Update: The Ice Breaker

From July 2005 to mid-2009, *The Ice Breaker* was published and distributed monthly to schools, libraries, law enforcement, drug treatment centers, AODA counselors, jails, prisons, and many individual supporters. Since summer of 2009, *The Ice Breaker* has been published quarterly. The focus of the publication has not changed—to educate the public about the danger and consequence of methamphetamine and other drug abuse. Our past newsletters can still be viewed at www.methawareness.org and www.butterflyhousescf.org.

Program Update: Community Collaborations

In 2009, *Moms and Dads Against Meth, Inc.* formally established cooperative partnerships with several homeless shelters within 2 counties (Polk and St. Croix). Serenity House (Polk County), North Woods Homeless Shelter (Polk County), Grace Place (St. Croix County) and *Butterfly House* share a similar mission: to provide a safe, sober residence. This partnership will allow staff at all houses to exchange information, knowledge, and resources that will benefit the populations we are striving to serve.

Program Update: The St. Croix Valley Sober House Alliance (SCVSHA)

Throughout 2009, *Butterfly House* (women's house in Polk County) and Impact Recovery Center (men's house in St. Croix County) have shared knowledge, resources, and experience in an effort to better serve our clients. Both houses have been utilized by the Department of Corrections and Drug Court in their own counties. We are looking forward to strengthening the alliance even further with the goal of opening more quality transitional sober homes throughout the St. Croix Valley.

Program Update: Service to the Community

Residents and staff of *Butterfly House* and members of *Moms and Dads Against Meth, Inc.* have provided over 3000 hours of service to the community during 2009. Currently, *Butterfly House* is working in cooperation with the new Restorative Justice Program in Polk County to establish

community service opportunities for Restorative Justice clients. "The Books"

Our fiscal year ended on December 31, 2009 with cash in the bank. Considering the state of the current economy, this was a victory for us. One quarter of our operating budget is typically generated by residency fees paid by residents. Employment was even more difficult to obtain for a population that generally has difficulty finding employment in a good economy. Therefore, we collected less in residency fees than the year before.

In 2010, as the economy improves, we anticipate collecting more revenue in the form of residency fees paid by the Department of Corrections as well as fees paid by residents. We also anticipate seeing an increase in revenue from newly-solicited grantors, community donations, and fundraising.

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T.O.A.D.

(Think Over And Discuss)

Topics

Perfectionism and the Addict

One of the saddest ironies of addiction is the addict's demand for perfection in himself, and expectation of it in others.

You might think that a person who sets impossibly high standards for himself is merely a highly motivated, capable individual, but the fact is, perfectionism is a mask that hides feelings of inadequacy, shame, and fear. Addicts are beset with the notion that the only way they can be loved, accepted, or found to be of any worth at all, is to be perfect. Every day is a chance to prove their own perfection . . . and every day presents obstacles and pitfalls to that pursuit. The process can be exhausting, and it should come as no surprise that it leads them to drink or use drugs, which feeds shame and guilt, dragging them down into the spiral of addiction.

When perfection is idolized (as it is for the perfectionist addict), it becomes the *purpose*, rather than the *motivation*. The desire to do a task perfectly will override the need to get it done; thus, it will be started, scrapped, and restarted over and over until it is as close to perfect as it can be (or scrapped altogether, in disgust). In many cases, the addict cannot even *start* a project if she perceives that the outcome is likely to be less than perfect.

Not only does the addict inflict her desire for perfection on herself, she demands it from others. This sets up a cycle of being constantly disappointed by the people in her life, and an inability to place trust in anyone. She criticizes those who fail to meet her expectations, and finds ways to blame others for her own faults and failings, which puts strain on her relationships.

The demand for perfection places an enormous burden on the hapless soul who demands it. It is a rigid, unattainable, unreasonable goal, especially for one with so few defenses to fall back on when it is not achieved. The façade of perfection can only uphold for a time before it begins to crack and break apart. The perfectionist addict begins to think "What's the point? If I can't be perfect, why try at all?"

It is at that "I give up" place that the addict will seek to

self-medicate with alcohol, drugs, or other obsessive behaviors. Even healthy pursuits, such as exercise, can be a form of self-medication for the addict, if the behavior is compulsive and intrusive to everyday responsibilities. Self-medication then leads to self-recrimination and shame, and the cycle continues.

That cycle can be broken when the perfectionist addict realizes that the answer lies in the unconditional love that comes from a Higher Power. It is a love that cannot be earned, nor can one be unworthy of it . . . It is always there, ready to heal and help.

If she can apply that same unconditional love to herself and others in her life, she will begin to recognize her own worth. If she can learn to accept her own humanity, with all its frailties and flaws, her need to be perfect will become a desire to be whole.

“Remember that fear always lurks behind perfectionism. Confronting your fears and allowing yourself the right to be human can, paradoxically, make you a far happier and more productive person.” –Dr. David M. Burns

Editor’s Corner

The Toad Topic reminds me of my school days. I can remember working on a report or essay, writing so carefully (and I’m referring to my penmanship, not the content) so that it would look perfect. One little slip of the pen, one letter out of place, and I would crumple up the paper and start over again. It was an exhausting process and it certainly didn’t teach me much about writing techniques and style, not to mention how little time I devoted to research of the topic. One day, reading a note the teacher had written in the margin, I realized that my pursuit of perfection had distracted me from the objective: writing to engage and inform the reader.

I took that lesson to heart, and it has served me well over the years. It’s a good thing, too, considering that so little emphasis is placed on good penmanship in these days of typing our innermost thoughts to the world on the Internet.

Even with that lesson learned, I continued to impose impossible standards on myself in other areas. Best science project? No. Best dancer? No. Best dress in Home Ec? No. Only when I went back and analyzed where I had gone wrong did I learn to cut myself some slack. Was I so interested in science that it killed me when my crystals refused to grow? Not really. Did I enjoy dancing despite not being the best? Sure! And after 40 years, I still remember that pretty pink dress with the tiny marks where I had to rip out and redo the sleeves; I wore it a lot, and felt pretty in it.

It’s not that we shouldn’t try to do our best at whatever we take on, but to understand that our best is not necessarily going to be anyone’s idea of perfection. By all means, strive to do your greatest work, but be kind to yourself and accept that sometimes, your best efforts might fall short.

Most of all, don’t try to hold yourself up to anyone else’s idea of perfection. Only you can “do you” in the way that works and is comfortable. Understand that only God is perfect, and we are loved and appreciated by Him, despite (and maybe even because of) our many flaws.

The Internet has become the modern-day equivalent to the village green, in terms of information passed on to others. Jokes, videos that range from ridiculous to inspiring, little-known facts about all aspects of life, and opinions galore. Sometimes we have to weed through a lot of goofy stuff to get to things that actually have some merit. The quotes below are gems that have been buzzing around the cyber green.

“You suppose you are the trouble. But you are the cure. You suppose that you are the lock on the door. But you are the key that opens it. It’s too bad that you want to be someone else. You don’t see your own face, your own beauty. Yet, no face is more beautiful than yours.”

–Rumi


“Look back and thank God. Look forward and trust God. Look around and serve God. Look within and find God! God closes doors no man can open and God opens doors no man can close.”

–Unattributed

“Women are like teabags. If you want to know of their strength, watch what happens when they land in hot water.”

–Unattributed

Butterfly House Cookbook
Good Food and Wise Words



**Nourishment
For the Body, Mind,
& Spirit**

Shocking! Cookbooks are STILL available!

“Hey!” said one pleased recipient of a cookbook. “That Asian salad recipe is in here!” We promise that recipes for many of those tasty dishes you’ve enjoyed at potlucks and luncheons are in this book! To order your copy for a \$10 donation plus postage, go to www.butterflyhousescf.org, or call 715-417-1216.