

# Recovery Steps & Stories



REMEMBER: THIS NEWSLETTER IS FOR YOU, BY YOU!!!

“Recovery steps and stories” seeks articles, photos, original artwork, poetry, short stories, and jokes or just about ANYTHING you would like to share with peers. We’re especially interested in personal stories of recovery to help spread the word that RECOVERY IS FOR EVERYONE!! If you would like to contribute something for future issues, please contact Bonnie Holeton—you can talk to her in person at the Main office (lower level) or call her by phone—call the Main Office at 815-963-0683, ext. 246.

## STEPPING STONES CARES

**Stepping Stones of Rockford is who we are.** Improving lives, one step—one smile, one successful outing, one moment of kindness—at a time, in the community is what we do.

Here's to reading the paper and drinking coffee without interference from symptoms of mental illness.

Here's to finding and keeping the job of choice. Here's to decreasing the frequency and intensity of those symptoms.

Here's to feeling acknowledged and accepted, in this community and in life.

Here's to improved lives, one glorious step at a time!



## WHAT DOES RECOVERY MEAN TO YOU?

It seems that everyone in the mental health field is talking about recovery. Despite all the conversation, many of us are uncertain of what RECOVERY means. Most people do agree that whatever it is, Recovery is a process not a destination. For many of us it is something we will need to work on throughout our lives. Recovery is very different for each of us. Whatever your situation may be, perhaps the most important fact about Recovery is that it only happens when the individual takes charge of their own life. Recovery is the process of regaining control over our own lives. When we take more control of our lives by making our own choices & decisions and setting our own goals: we must accept another principle of Recovery: personal responsibility.

Recovery cont.

The goals we set, the choices & decisions we make all have consequences in our life. Being responsible for consequences is major part of Recovery. Take a few minutes...Look at your life and think about what Recovery means to you. Think about your goals, choices and direction in life. What can you do to help your own Recovery? Who can you turn to for support and help? Talk to staff, friends or family members, many of these people can be extremely helpful and supportive in your Recovery. In the end, you are the driver for your own personal recovery story. Make a difference in your life today. It's never too late nor too early to get started.

Send a story to Bonnie about something that interest you to add to this newsletter.

## WHAT P.T.S.D. MEANS TO ME

...BY ANONYMOUS

With PTSD. I feel as if I've become a strong individual. Most days when I feel weak, I will use what I have learned from WRAP. It is not easy for me to get through my hard days, but I am having more good days than bad days. I am doing my best to realize the difference between what is real and what is not real.

I like to think of this experience of PTSD as something positive. I know I have had a hard past but it has me look at the situation in a positive way. Even though I can't go back and change my past, I can take it because it has made me a very strong person. I could not have gotten this far without the help of my support team.

PTSD has taught me a lot. The willingness to forgive and to not make the mistakes that have happen in the past. I cannot keep going around feeling guilty about something that was not my fault. It's not about what I did that was wrong and I am not making excuses for the people who hurt me, I am trying to let you know that it is not your fault or mine. Lift your head, be confident and never let anybody take your pride and self-esteem ways from you. For all the hatred, anger or regret you have put yourself through, I believe that you can do and be the best because that is what I have done.

Take the time to hear, teach, give and maybe inspire someone who might be going through the same situation because the most important thing is to give people a hand, hug, support understanding and love.

From the Desk of the Recovery Support Specialist Bonnie H.  
Five tips for good Mental Health

**Get plenty of sleep** - Sleep is really important for our physical and mental health, it helps to regulate the chemicals in our brain that transmit information. These chemicals are important in managing our moods and emotions. If we don't get enough sleep, we can start to feel depressed or anxious.

**Eat well** - eating well isn't just important for our bodies, but it's also important for our minds. Certain mineral deficiencies, such as iron and vitamin B12 deficiencies, can give us a low mood. If you find you are a particularly stressed or anxious person you could try limiting or cutting out caffeine as this can make you feel jittery and more anxious.

**Get plenty of Sunlight** - Sunlight is a great source of vitamin D. Vitamin D is an important vitamin for our bodies and brain. It helps our brain to release chemicals which improve our mood, like endorphins and serotonin. Try to go out in the sun when you can, but make sure you keep your skin and eyes safe. 30 minutes of sunlight a day is ideal. During the winter, some people become depressed because they aren't getting enough sunlight. If possible sit in front of a window to catch the rays.

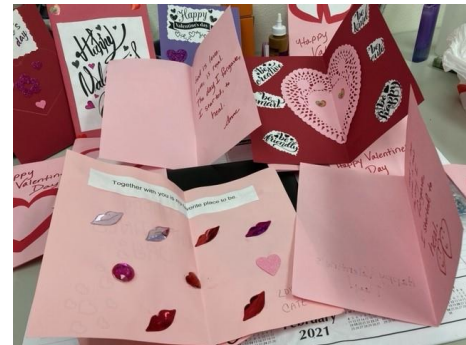
**Manage stress** - Stress is often unavoidable, but knowing what triggers your stress and knowing how to cope is the key to maintaining good mental health. Try to manage your responsibilities and worries by making a list or a schedule of your activities and give yourself time to relax. Try to avoid burying your head in the sand and tackle the problem face on. If you find you are having trouble sleeping, or are waking up thinking about all of the things that are stressing you out, write them down and reassure yourself that you can deal with them in the morning.

**Exercise and activity** - Exercise and activity are essential to maintain good mental health. Being active not only gives you a sense of achievement, but it boost the chemicals in your brain to help put you in a good mood. Exercising can help eliminate low mood, anxiety, stress and feeling tired and lazy. It is also linked to living a longer life.

You don't need to run a marathon or play 90 minutes of basketball: a short walk or some type of gentle activity will do the trick.

## VALENTINE'S TO THE ELDERLY

This was a campaign from Senator Syverson office to fill the long term facilities in our area with Valentines. It was explained to me that this was a huge success and I am glad Stepping Stones was able to participate in this gift for the elderly. Thank you all for participating and making the beautiful cards.

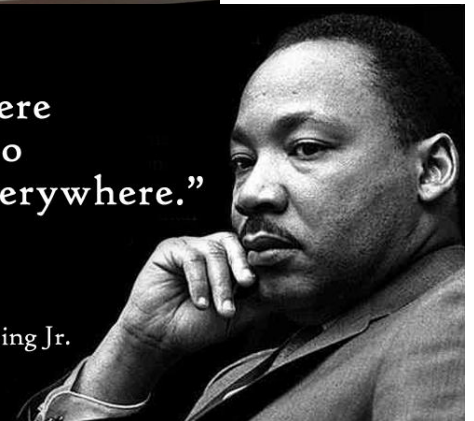


## Celebrating Martin Luther King, Jr

Did you know that Martin Luther King Jr was a vegetarian? That he was a Star Trek fan? That he and his father were both born with the first name Michael, but later changed it to Martin? In 1964 King was presented with the Nobel Peace Prize in

**"Injustice  
anywhere  
is a threat to  
justice everywhere."**

—Martin Luther King Jr.



Norway; King vowed to use his prize money to further the civil rights movement. King earned a doctorate from Boston University in systematic theology in 1955. Did you know he spent his honeymoon at a funeral parlor, because he had a friend who owned it that offered to let him use it for his honeymoon. King has was a Grammy...Yes a Grammy, for his spoken word album "Why I oppose the war in Vietnam." Martin Luther King Jr. was born on January 15, 1929 in Atlanta, Georgia; the second of three children. He married Coretta Scott King on June 18, 1953 and had for children with her. King was assassinated on April 4, 1968. –H.M.

Here are some of the common misconceptions people make and what you need to know.

**Myth:** *Having a mental illness means you are "crazy."*

**Fact:** It's plain and simple, **having a mental illness does *not* mean you are "crazy."** It means you are vulnerable. It means you have an illness with challenging symptoms — the same as someone with an illness like diabetes. While mental illness might alter your thinking, destabilize your moods or skew your perception of reality, that doesn't mean you are "crazy." It means you are human and are susceptible to sickness and illness, the same as any other person.

**Myth:** *People with mental illness are violent and dangerous.*

**Fact:** Within the last few years, the U.S. has had an increase in mass violence. Whenever these tragedies take place, the media is quick to judge the suspects and label them as "mentally disturbed" or "mentally ill." In reality, **hate is not a mental illness.** Only [5%](#) of violent crimes in the U.S. are committed by people with serious mental illness.

The unfortunate truth is that individuals with mental illness are more likely to be [victims of violence](#) than perpetrators. There is no reason to fear a person with a mental illness just because of their diagnosis.

**Myth:** *People with bipolar disorder are moody.*

**Fact: Bipolar disorder does not cause mood swings. It causes cycles that last for weeks or months.** People so often throw around the term "bipolar" to describe the weather. When they say this, it downplays the seriousness of the condition and creates misinformation about what bipolar disorder actually is.

[Bipolar disorder](#) causes you to have episodes where you experience mania (high energy, rampant thoughts, inability to sleep, grandiose ideas or perspectives, etc.) and depressive states (feeling very sluggish, sad, suicidal, having low self-esteem, inability to concentrate, etc.) These extreme highs and lows take turns, but do not change or swing from moment to moment.

**Myth:** *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is only a military man's disease.*

**Fact:** [PTSD](#) is *not* just a military man's disease. **Anyone can have PTSD.** A rape or sexual assault victim, a domestic abuse victim, a survivor of a natural disaster, someone who's suffered a loss or even a person who did not face any violence or physical threats themselves directly, but happened to witness someone else who did (i.e. vicarious trauma).

The symptoms include having flashbacks of that event or events, nightmares/night terrors,

anxiety/panic attacks, taking precautions to avoid reminders or “triggers” of the event, reacting in a way as if the event is re-occurring, etc.

**Myth:** *Psychiatric medications are bad.*

**Fact:** People tend to believe that psychiatric medicine is harmful. That, or they believe that psych meds are simply “happy pills” and “an easy way out” for those with mental illness to avoid dealing with their problems. Again, this is simply not true.

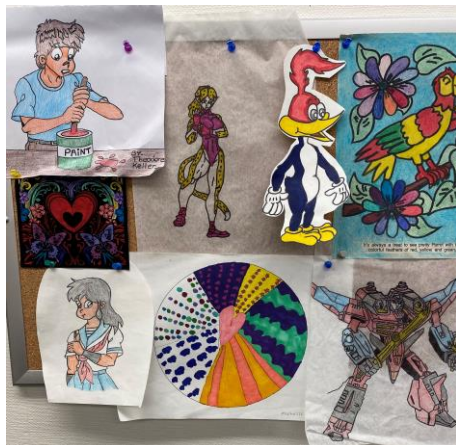
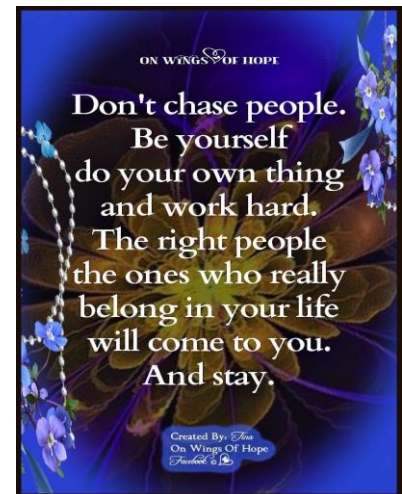
Just like any other detrimental medical condition, mental illness is still an illness. **For many with mental illness, medication is necessary**, just like it would be for a diabetic taking insulin. For some individuals with mental illness, medication is needed for survival. For others, like those who have mild to moderate depression, anxiety, or ADHD, medication can help ease symptoms, so they can function normally. And having regular therapy combined with medication can greatly improve one’s quality of life.

**Myth:** *Seeking help for mental illness will lead to being ostracized and make symptoms worse.*

**Fact:** I know it’s hard to come out to anyone about having a mental illness, especially because they’re so commonly misunderstood and people who are unfamiliar with mental illness tend to think that people are the way they are because of nature, personality or attitude. But when you do have the strength, courage and bravery to open up to someone else, you are working to alleviate the stigma, increase awareness, empower yourself, grow as a person, and promote understanding of mental health. So **don’t let others perceptions scare you from getting the help you need.**

By Rupri Kaur

when the world comes crashing at your feet  
it’s okay to let others  
help pick up the pieces  
if we’re present to take part in your happiness  
when your circumstances are great  
we are more than capable  
of sharing your pain



These are pictures in my office I wanted to share





Remember to send you art work,  
poetry or short stories to Bonnie  
Holeton



You can send to my email  
Bholeton@steppingstonesrockford.org  
or 815-963-0683 Ext. 246



The Advocacy committee is up and running.  
Anyone interested in being on the  
committee Please Contact Bonnie Holeton  
at the Main office.



THERE IS MORE TO MY STORY Project Semicolon (projectsemicolon.org) was born from a social media movement in 2013. The semi-colon mark represents mental health struggles and the importance of suicide prevention. The movement is "dedicated to presenting hope and love to those who are struggling with depression, suicide, addiction, and self-injury. Project Semicolon exists to encourage, love, and inspire." But why a semicolon? "A semicolon is used when an author could've chosen to end their sentence, but chose not to. The author is you and the sentence is your life." Originally created as a day where people were encouraged to draw a semicolon on their bodies and photograph it, it quickly grew into something greater and more permanent. Today, people all over the world are tattooing the mark as a reminder of their struggle, victory, and survival.