

"I HEARD MY STORY OVER AND OVER AGAIN FROM DIFFERENT PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD."

DEALING WITH A PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE PARTNER

Recovery Today

ADDICTION, RECOVERY AND SOBRIETY

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THE POWER OF
**NEGATIVE
THINKING**

4 SURE-FIRE
WAYS TO RAISE A
LITTLE
ENABLER

Mayra Leal
(I'VE LET GO AND HAVE FAITH THAT I'M WHERE I'M SUPPOSED TO BE)



DANCING MINDFULNESS AND THE RECOVERY JOURNEY





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DEALING WITH A PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE PARTNER

Passive-aggressive people act passive, but express aggression covertly. They're basically obstructionist, and try to block whatever it is you want. Their unconscious anger gets transferred onto you, and you become frustrated and furious. Your fury is theirs, while they may calmly ask, "Why are you getting so angry?" and blame you for the anger they're provoking.

Passive-aggressive partners are generally codependent, and like codependents, suffer from shame and low self-esteem. Their behavior is designed to please to appease and counter to control. You may be experiencing abuse, but not realize it, because their strategy of expressing hostility is covert and manipulative, leading to conflict and intimacy problems.

PERSONALITY DISORDER

According to the American Psychological Association passive-aggression was considered a personality disorder in the DSM-IV:

This behavior commonly reflects hostility which the individual feels he dare not express openly. Often the behavior is one expression of the patient's resentment at failing to find gratification in a

relationship with an individual or institution upon which he is over-dependent. (APA, 1968, p. 44, code 301.81)

After nearly 40 years it was dropped in 1994. There's renewed interest in studying passive-aggression. See a 2009 study. Passive-aggression was found to be related to borderline and narcissistic personality disorders, negative childhood experiences, and substance abuse.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PASSIVE-AGGRESSION

Because you can't have an honest, direct conversation with a passive-aggressive partner, nothing ever gets resolved. They say yes, and then their behavior screams NO. They try to sabotage your wants, needs, and plans using a variety of tactics. We all engage in some

of these behaviors some of the time, but when there's a pervasive pattern of multiple symptoms, it's likely that you're dealing with passive-aggression.

DENIAL: Like all codependents, they're in denial of the impact of their behavior. This is why they blame others, unaware of the problems they're causing. They refuse to take responsibility for anything, and distort reality, rationalize, blame, make excuses, minimize, deny, or flat out lie about their behavior or the promises or agreements they've made.

FORGETTING: Rather than say no or address their anger, they forget your birthday or the plans you've discussed, or forget to put gas in the car, pickup your prescription, or fix the leaky toilet. You end up feeling hurt and angry.

“

A PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE PERSON
STICKS YOU WITH A KNIFE, THEN
GETS YOU TO SAY ‘I’M SORRY’
BECAUSE YOU GOT UPSET!

”



PROCRASTINATING: They're avoidant and don't like schedules or deadlines. It's another form of rebellion, so they delay and delay with endless excuses. They don't follow through on responsibilities, promises, or agreements. If they're unemployed, they drag their feet looking for work. You may do more job-searching on their behalf than they do.

OBSTRUCTING: This is another nonverbal form of saying NO. When you try to decide on where or when to go on vacation, pick out an apartment, or make plans, they find fault with each suggestion and won't offer any of their own.

AMBIGUITY: They hate to take a stand. They don't say what they want or mean. However, their behavior tells the truth, which is usually NO. This way they

retain control and blame you for being controlling. As you might expect, negotiating agreements, such as in a divorce or child visitation plan, is exasperating. In addition to procrastinating, they avoid being pinned down. They may insist on "reasonable visitation," and label your attempts to specify a predictable plan as controlling. Don't be fooled. This only postpones negotiation when repetitive arguments can occur over every exchange of the children. Alternatively, they might agree to terms, but not abide by them. You can expect to be back in court.

NEVER ANGRY: They don't express their anger openly. In childhood, they may have been punished or scolded for showing anger, or were never permitted to object. Their only outlet is passive-aggressive, oppositional behavior.

INCOMPETENCY: When they finally do what you ask, you likely have to redo it. If they make a repair, it might not last or you'll have to clean the mess they made. If they're helping with house cleaning, their inefficiency may drive you to do it yourself. At work, they make careless errors.

LATENESS: Chronic lateness is a half-hearted way of saying NO. They agree to a time, but show up late. You're dressed-up, waiting to go out, and they're "stuck at the office," on the Internet, or watching the game and not ready. Lateness at work or delivering assignments is a self-sabotaging form of rebellion that can get them dismissed.

NEGATIVITY: Their personality may include pouting or acting sullen, stubborn, or argumentative. They feel misunderstood

and unappreciated and scorn and criticize authority. They frequently complain and envy and resent those more fortunate.

PLAYING THE VICTIM: The problem is always someone else's fault. Their denial, shame, and lack of responsibility cause them to play the victim and blame others. You or their boss become the controlling, demanding one. They always have an excuse, but it's their own self-destructive behaviors that cause them problems.

DEPENDENCY: While fearing domination, they're dependent, nonassertive, indecisive, and unsure of themselves. They're unaware of their dependency and fight it whenever they can. Their obstructionism is a pseudo attempt at independence. They don't leave, but withdraw or withhold intimacy instead. An autonomous person has healthy self-esteem, is assertive, and can take a stand and keep commitments. Not so for someone passive-aggressive. Their behavior is designed to avoid responsibility for themselves and family, and sometimes they depend unfairly on their partner for support.

WITHHOLDING: Withholding communication is another form of expressing anger and asserting

power passively. They may walk away, refusing to talk things over, or play the victim and say, "You're always right," shutting down the discussion. They're unable to articulate what they want, feel, or need. Instead, they retain their power using the silent treatment or withholding material/financial support, affection, or sex. This undermines intimacy as a way to fight against their dependency.

There are a myriad of other things they might do, like slamming doors, giving away something of yours, or offering you dessert that you're allergic to or when you're dieting.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Because a passive-aggressive person is indirect, it may be hard to recognize what's going on, but it's essential that you recognize whom you're dealing with. Look for a pervasive pattern of several of the above symptom, and monitor your feelings. You may feel angry, confused, or powerless when trying to get cooperation. If this is a common pattern, you're likely dealing with passive-aggression.

It's important not to react. When you nag, scold, or get angry, you escalate conflict and give your partner more excuses and ammunition to deny responsibility. Not only that, you step into the

role of parent – the very one your partner is rebelling against. Don't be vague, drop hints, blame, or allow yourself to pay-back in kind.

Neither be passive, nor assertive. Instead, be assertive. It's far better to address noncompliance and problems in the relationship directly. Frame it in terms of "We have a problem," not "You are the problem," which is shaming. Don't blame or judge your partner, but describe the behavior you don't like, how it affects you and the relationship, and what you want. If you let your partner come up with a solution to a problem, there's a better chance of resolution.

When you go along with your partner's tactics or take on his or her responsibilities, you enable and encourage more passive-aggressive behavior. It would be similar to nagging your child, but allowing the youngster not to do his or her chores. This takes practice and requires being assertive. Be prepared to set boundaries with consequences. See my blog, "10 Reasons Why Boundaries Don't Work." For suggestions on dealing with passive-aggression, write me at info@darlenelancer.com for "12 Strategies for Handling Manipulators." Practice the tools in *How to Speak Your Mind- Become Assertive and Set Limits*.

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Darlene Lancer

Darlene Lancer is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and expert on relationships and codependency. She's the author of two books: *Conquering Shame and Codependency: 8 Steps to Freeing the True You* and *Codependency for Dummies*. Ms. Lancer has counseled individuals and couples for 27 years and coaches internationally. She's a sought after speaker at national conferences, on radio, and to professional groups and institutions. DarleneLancer.com



DANCING MINDFULNESS AND THE RECOVERY JOURNEY

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By Holly Ann Speenburgh (with Dr. Jamie Marich)

I have this vivid memory from when I was about four years old of me laying on the grass in my backyard. My arms were spread out to the sides and my legs were slightly apart. It was summer and I had shorts and a t-shirt on. I could feel the grass on my arms and legs, could smell the flowers from the garden, and had this amazing feeling of being content and connected. I imagined in my head the world spinning and knew that I was a part of that, that everything was completely in harmony around me. The feeling in my body was light and I could feel a slight tingle. It felt almost like I was moving on a gentle wave. The entire world felt right and I knew that my place in the world was to be a part of the connection of everything. Some may call this a g-d moment while others would argue that I just had an amazing imagination.



DR. JAMIE'S TEDX TALK



It makes no difference to me what others think. The important part was how I felt. I have spent a lot of my life trying to recreate this feeling, but the only time I could even come close was when I was dancing. I started dance classes at age seven, going on eight. By this point, the world had tainted my feelings of pure content and connectedness. I was watching my godmother die of breast cancer, beginning to really understand the term “being bullied,” and had an overwhelming sense of being horribly different from my classmates. In spite of my troubles, I quickly learned I LOVED dancing more than I ever thought. From the time I could walk I knew that life was better with a little saunter in my step. Joining a dance class and being surrounded by others laughing and dancing was pure joy for me. The only thing missing was that feeling of connectedness that I just couldn't seem to grasp again.

Fast forward a decade. I was now a well-versed mental health client, full-fledged self-injurer, and budding alcoholic/addict. Dance class still brought amazing joy to my life, but was no longer

enough to break through the darkness that took over my life when I left the studio. I was living a double life: out as a lesbian at school and straight at home, the “perfect” CCD student in church and devout pagan with friends, and happy at dance class, but miserable the rest of the time. My overall joyous outlook on life was gone and I began to accept the misery that clouded my days. To escape this misery I gave into my addictions- seeking out razors, pills, and alcohol to numb my feelings. Leaving high school, I knew I would probably never live to see my 30th birthday.

I spent years searching for a solution to my problems. I came out of the closet fully, I moved across country (and then back), I tried new religions, and I got married. When the reality of my life began to shadow the temporary happiness of each solution, I turned back to my addictions. After one of many suicide attempts left my marriage strained, I decided that I would do anything to find myself and be happy. On a whim, I signed up for a retreat that promised to help me cultivate mindfulness through movement and creativity. That first night of the retreat I rekindled my love for dance, which had gone by the wayside for years. The first experience of

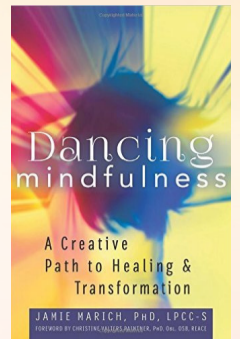
Dancing Mindfulness I had was powerful. I had tears in my eyes as the opening dance session came to a close. I knew I had found something I needed. Within the three days of the retreat I made closer friend connections than I had ever experienced.

Somehow between Lexie (one of my new friends) and Jamie (founder of Dancing Mindfulness and co-leader of that retreat), I left the retreat with plans to be trained as a Dancing Mindfulness facilitator. I didn't have my BA (I had been working on it for 10 years at this point) yet and didn't consider myself a valid part of the mental health world, regardless of my years of work in the field. I couldn't understand how anyone would think I was capable of facilitating such a deep practice. Facilitator training changed my life. I came out of it with a deep passion for a part of the practice known as Dance Chapel. It's a non-facilitated practice and the way I experienced it during that training brought me back to my youth, when dancing and laying in the grass brought me comfort. The world was blocked out and it was just me and the music. I didn't realize it then, but I was beginning to feel that universal connection again.

I took the concept of Dance Chapel and ran with it. At first I attempted to

Dancing Mindfulness

by Jamie Marich PhD LPCC-S LICDC-CS (Author), Christine Valters Paintner PhD Obl. SB (Foreword)



start a community class and offer a public Dance Chapel once a month. When my small following began to dwindle and the relationship between the studio hosting me and I ended, I turned to my private Dancing Mindfulness practice. I found solace in making playlists for myself and playing with what songs fit where. I woke up at 4.30 am during the summer and drove to the shore to dance my playlists as the sun came up. I played music and danced everywhere. Finally I began to feel that comfort that I had felt as a four year old laying in the grass.

The moments between dancing, retreats, and life were still dark and I continued to use substances to avoid the pain that came in the quiet moments. I was afraid of the contentedness and connection I was feeling. At the time I didn't understand that I needed to work through this pain and fear instead of running away. I gave up self injury, thinking that meant I was no longer avoiding. Holding onto a belief that I was only alleviating symptoms of my depression, I continued to drink and take "as needed" medication even when I did not truly need the pills. Eventually my use caught up with

me and I was forced to take a leave of absence from my job. As I began to understand that I was abusing the substances I took, my Dancing Mindfulness family was there to support and help me through the process. I learned to dance through withdrawal, hard emotions, pain, and success. I learned to accept support and love. More importantly, my Dancing Mindfulness practice taught me to accept and love myself. I have danced into sobriety, out of my marriage, and into the unknown. Mindfulness is now an integral part of my life; I am aware of what I am doing in every moment instead of distracting myself from reality. My body, my mind, my soul, and my image of Spirit all now exist harmoniously. This came to be by the power of being able to connect to my emotions through dance and movement.

It has been almost three years since my first experience of Dancing Mindfulness at that fateful retreat. No longer do I feel that my place in the mental health field is invalid; Dancing Mindfulness, and the family I found through it, helped me finish my BA and begin my Masters in Social Work. I now dance every day in whatever

way I can. Sometimes I set aside time to dance a full playlist and sometimes I just dance around wherever I am (home, car, store, et cetera). I have found myself again. With the help of Dancing Mindfulness, and the family I have found in this community, I have celebrated my 30th birthday, found sobriety, and created a life I am excited to live.

For more information on the Dancing Mindfulness practice and community of facilitators and dancers, please go to www.dancingmindfulness.com. We train facilitators both at live trainings and as part of a distance-based mentorship. Many graduates of our training program are now sharing the Dancing Mindfulness practice in various facets of the recovery world, from rehab centers to sober living facilities, to small private clinical and coaching practices. The book "Dancing Mindfulness: A Creative Path to Healing and Transformation" (by Dr. Jamie Marich, with various contributions from the community) will be released in September 2015. The book is designed for a general audience, hoping to inspire people everywhere to bring meditative movement into their daily life.

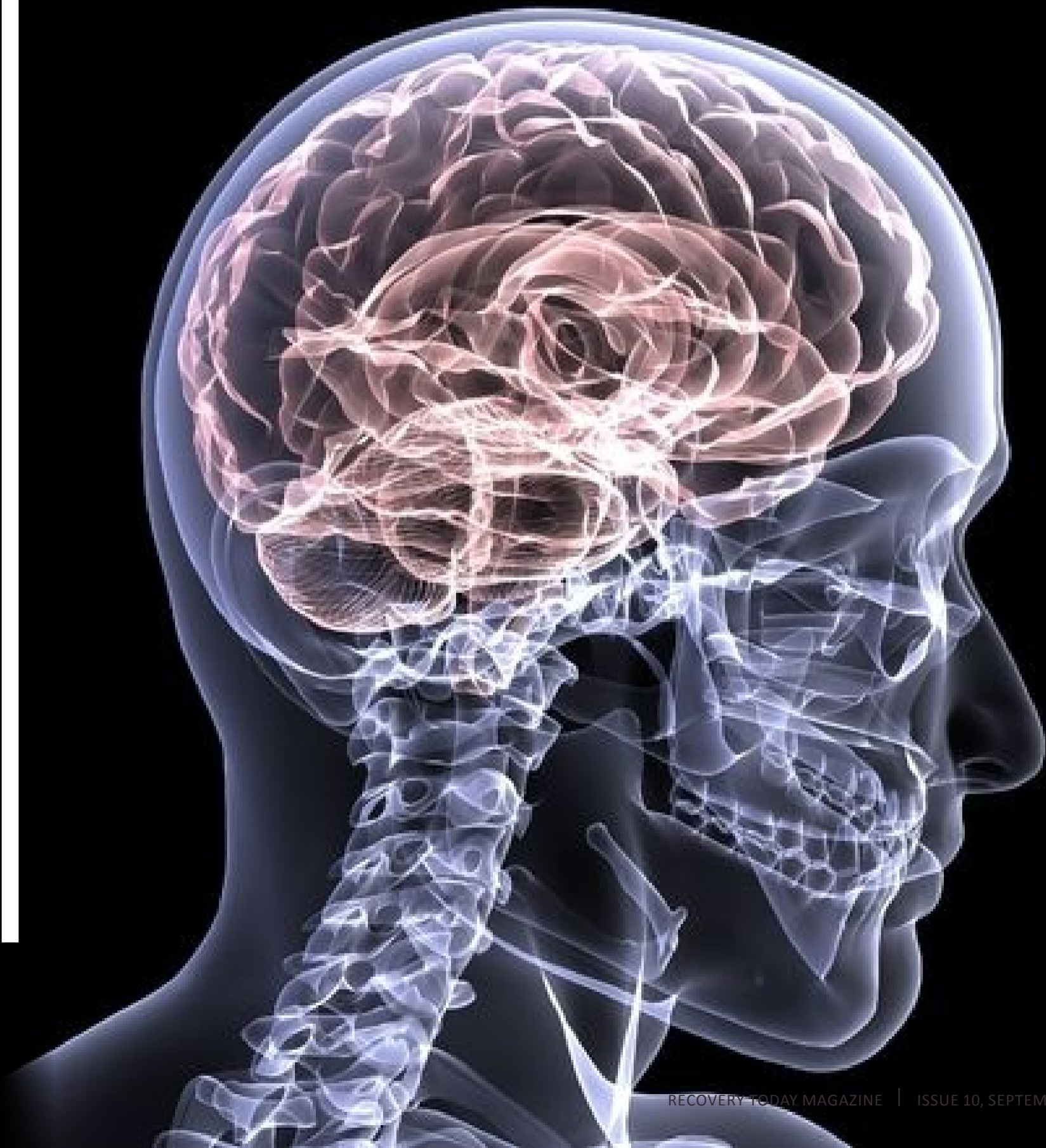


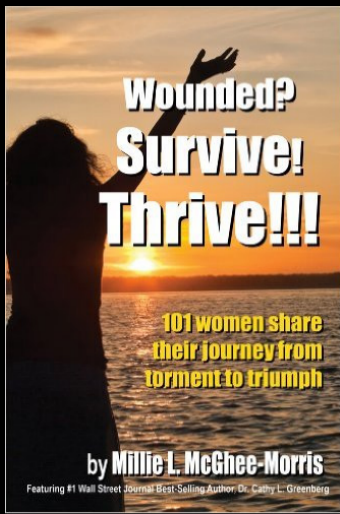
Dr Jamie Marich

Jamie Marich's friends and colleagues describe her as a renaissance woman. A dancer, musician, performer, writer, and clinical counselor, Marich unites these elements of her experience to achieve an ultimate mission: bringing the art and joy of healing to others. Bio Link: <http://www.jamiemarich.com/>

THE POWER OF **NEGATIVE THINKING**

There are many of us who go through life and choose to take on the responsibility of everyone else's opinions, decisions or actions.





Wounded? Survive! Thrive!!

By Millie L. McGhee-Morris



WE OFTEN LOSE
SIGHT
OF HOW RESILIENCE
CAN PLAY A ROLE
TO HELP US NOT
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We then feel guilty that we are never good enough or strong enough to have our own beliefs without the approval of parents, peers, colleagues or friends. If something bad happens, we take it personally and never seem to hold others accountable for their responsibility, however big or small. We continue to strive to do our best, but we find that for many people in our path, that is somehow not good enough for them.

Many people put negative thoughts into our heads that tend to make us feel that we are not good enough to live our lives without this emotional blackmail. They instill in us the idea that we are being a bad person if we think independently. Pressure builds with all of these confusing thoughts, whether they are your own thoughts or someone else's, as to what is right or wrong. This in itself ruins our ability to think logically. It's easy to understand why we then become afraid of either being disloyal or losing a friendship or relationship.

All of us are not perfect. We all have faults. When teachers, coaches, parents and friends continue to give us negative feedback, we begin to believe in their beliefs and not our own. We begin to doubt our own abilities. To avoid conflict, we decide to take on all of the responsibility in a situation or circumstance, whether it was our fault or not. This lowers our self-esteem as well as our self-worth. Too many times we may begin to take on coping skills of self-hate, addictions, cutting, suicidal thoughts, etc. For others, silence or submission may be their best way to deal with these experiences.

We often lose sight of how resilience can play a role to help us not succumb to life's tribulations—and not just survive them, but thrive as a result of them.

Unfortunately, instead we continue to live our lives of doubt and quiet shame. Sometimes our past does not reveal itself until later in life, with past memories of horror, destruction or distraction popping up suddenly out of nowhere. When these incidences occur, we are often left frightened, distraught or feeling guilty. This then enables others to manipulate us into their way of thinking. They hit us with their negative thoughts about us when we're at our lowest points. This leaves us little strength to combat their attacks; hence we adopt their thinking instead of relying on our own beliefs.

Have you ever considered how negative thoughts can hurt you?

Negative thoughts can cripple you.

They can enable you to become co-dependent on others. After all, if you can't think for yourself, you're going to need someone else to think for you, right?

Negative thoughts can prevent you from feeling like a complete person.

They make us doubt who we are and what we are capable of. Negative thoughts can paralyze you by conjuring up feelings of self-defeat or despair.

They can imprison your mind so you feel no self-worth, or for that matter no self-acceptance.

Negative thoughts can prevent you from self-exploration. They can hold you back from discovering and understanding who you really are and the dreams you have.

They can become obstacles to what stands between you and reality.

Negative thoughts can kill the very essence of what you are truly capable of.

They can stunt your growth and narrow what you believe your future can hold for you.

When a negative thought occurs in your mind or if people share their negative opinions of you, it is important to really think about whose thoughts those are. Are they really yours, or not? Take into consideration other people's feelings and beliefs. Weigh them against your own. You do deserve to think for yourself and do not need the approval of those around you. Sometimes that is hard to do, especially when your opinion may differ; but you do have the freedom to think for yourself.

Sometimes when I have a decision to make, I take out a tablet or

writing pad and decide what is important for me to achieve. I then write down what my beliefs are and what other people's opinions are about these. I evaluate what resonates with me and then consider what I am going to do. My decision has to resonate with my true purpose and passion. It has to allow me to be congruent with my own integrity and the knowledge that what I am doing is good for myself and my family, friends, colleagues and others.

Sometimes I call these negative thoughts "A.N.T.s" – automatic negative thoughts. They feel like they come out of nowhere, yet often we have been conditioned to think them for years and years. I can assure you that no matter how young or how old you are, you can undo these negative thoughts and beliefs because, believe me, these thoughts were not even yours to begin with.

Freedom from them can be found through the idea of getting rid of the clutter that is in your brain, just as you could remove the clutter from your home. It may seem hard to do at first, but I know if you start to recondition yourself with positive thoughts daily, you will



feel the weight lifted from you as you release negativity, depression and anxiety.

You so deserve to be kind to yourself, to see how free you can really feel without all that negativity holding you back. It is so refreshing when you can finally take a deep breath of clean air.

May you practice giving yourself a chance to live with peace every day.

You are in my thoughts and I know you can do this,



Dr. Christina Charbonneau

Dr. Christina Charbonneau is an award-winning doctor who has been practicing medicine for more than 30 years. She is also a certified coach, media personality, speaker and former medical school professor. She's Recognized with the Most Compassionate Doctor Award and the Patients' Choice Award in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013, a fellow in Integrative Medicine at the University of Arizona College of Medicine, #1 international best-selling author with her contribution to the book, Ready, Aim, Captivate!: Put Magic in Your Message and A Fortune in Your Future. and #1 international best-selling author with her contribution to the book, Wounded? Survive! Thrive: 101 Women Share Their Journeys from Torment to Triumph. <http://drchristina.com/>



Mayra Leal

**I'VE LET GO AND HAVE
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INTERVIEW WITH MAYRA LEAL

QUESTIONS FOR MAYRA

RECOVERY TODAY MAGAZINE INTERVIEW

1. What has been your greatest thing you've learned so far in your sobriety walk?
2. Do you believe in the "Hit Rock Bottom" philosophy of getting people to treatment?
3. You had a leading role in Daniel Baldwin's Award Winning Film "The Wisdom to know the Difference". What impacted you most in filming it?
4. What are your thoughts on intervention and on tough love?
5. Do you feel its harder, to stay in recovery as a celebrity or person in the public eye?
6. How has your life transformed since you've been sober?
7. What makes you the most happy now?
8. What do you aspire for the future? Will you do more roles related to recovery or portray those in recovery?
9. What have you found that has worked the best for you in recovery?
10. What does "Living in the moment" mean for you?
11. Dr. Wayne Dyer just passed away; in a previous conversation you said he was one of your favorite authors; why? What kind of things did you learn or enjoy or reframed your thinking in general or in particular related to staying sober or peace of mind?
12. What is one piece of advise you either remind yourself over and over again and / or you'd give to another young aspiring actress / model?

This concludes another exclusive interview for recovery today magazine and remember if you're listening and either you, or someone you love needs help, whether its the first time or the ...13th time, help is just a phone call away.

Call now at 800-595-3803 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

“I HEARD MY STORY OVER AND OVER AGAIN FROM DIFFERENT PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD.”

I have spent endless amounts of time studying the effects addiction has had on me and the people around me. I have read books, talked to therapists, and experts for the answers to the why's, when's and what if's. However, the most fruitful method of examining the effect addiction has had on my family system is simply to trace the steps of my own life. Once I had the presence of mind and the desire to look at the subject up close and personal, I found that I was a poster child for the consequences of addiction and its array of dysfunction.

I am a recovered addict, alcoholic and an adult child and grandchild of alcoholics. I am also the ex-wife of a daily chronic pot smoker. That is quite a resume, but not an uncommon one. Even during my Mothers' pregnancy, the emotional stress transferred to me, through the active addiction surrounding her life, left its imprint.

The power of addiction continued to mould me from the day of my birth, into the most obscure and uncomfortable shapes imaginable. There are no nice

neat explanations in an alcoholic environment; just an array of disjointed justifications and haphazard attempts at survival. Emotional trauma, fear, secrecy, shame and guilt are what a family with an active addict in the house eats for breakfast. In addition, family members develop their own disordered behaviour, and a lifetime of chaos prevails.

I was born and raised on the South East Coast of Ireland into an Irish, Catholic, Alcoholic, family. A huge cliché, but a fact nevertheless. My Mother was and still is a beautiful woman, elegant and graceful. At 19 she was totally unprepared to deal with a baby and an alcoholic husband. My dad was equally as handsome, came from a farming family, played in a band, and drank a whole lot. My Momma was the quintessential enabler who protected and took care of her problem spouse. She fell into the co-dependent roll like a pro, never allowing my father to experience the negative consequences of his drinking.

Eventually she turned into the textbook case, angry and resentful

caretaker. Her entire life was engulfed by micro managing my father. Even at a very early age, I could recognize just how irresponsible and selfish he was. I also recognized that my family was not the same as other peoples' families with the confusion eating away at my tiny mind.

She did her very best to protect me and my two siblings becoming an expert at covering up and keeping secrets. However, when you live in a home where there's active addiction, there is a certain air of constant disturbance. It's as if someone or something is about to jump out at you from the shadows. I was in constant flight or fight mode which turned into uncontrollable anxiety.

Yet I had no words to express what this living, breathing thing was that inhabited my home. I never heard the word alcoholic until I was about 11 years old. My teacher brought up the subject in class one day. It was a lightbulb moment for me. Everything he said correlated with my home life. As was the norm in society in those days, the connection with



the alcoholic or addict being a sick person wasn't made. I did hear, however, that the spouses and children of alcoholics were unfortunate to have such a selfish and immoral person in the house. The shame I felt at having a daddy so awful, raced through my veins like poison, and I continued to feel shame every day for the rest of my life.

Sharon Wegscheider, Author and Family Therapist coined the phrases that describe the roles of children in an actively addicted household perfectly. I can relate to being a version of each of these characters at different stages in my life.

Up to the age of 13, I was "The Lost Child". Wegscheider states that The "Lost Child" constantly seeks escapism from the family chaos living in a fantasy world into which they withdraw. It is not uncommon for these children to get chronically ill or wet their bed. They may seek comfort by overeating, or using alcohol and drugs. Indeed, I did all of the above. I got diabetes at age 7, wet the bed for a time and later had eating disorders. Then, of course, I followed the family tradition of becoming a drunk.

I then became the "Scapegoat". At 13 I began my own love affair with alcohol. I

started acting out in anger and defiance letting my parents know I hated them. Inwardly, I felt, neglected and abandoned because of my mothers' obsession with my father. My father's indifference to his children began to spew out as rage. I stopped caring about school, and all I wanted was drugs, alcohol and sex. I then became the family's problem instead of my father. I didn't know it then, but I know now, it was a cry for help.

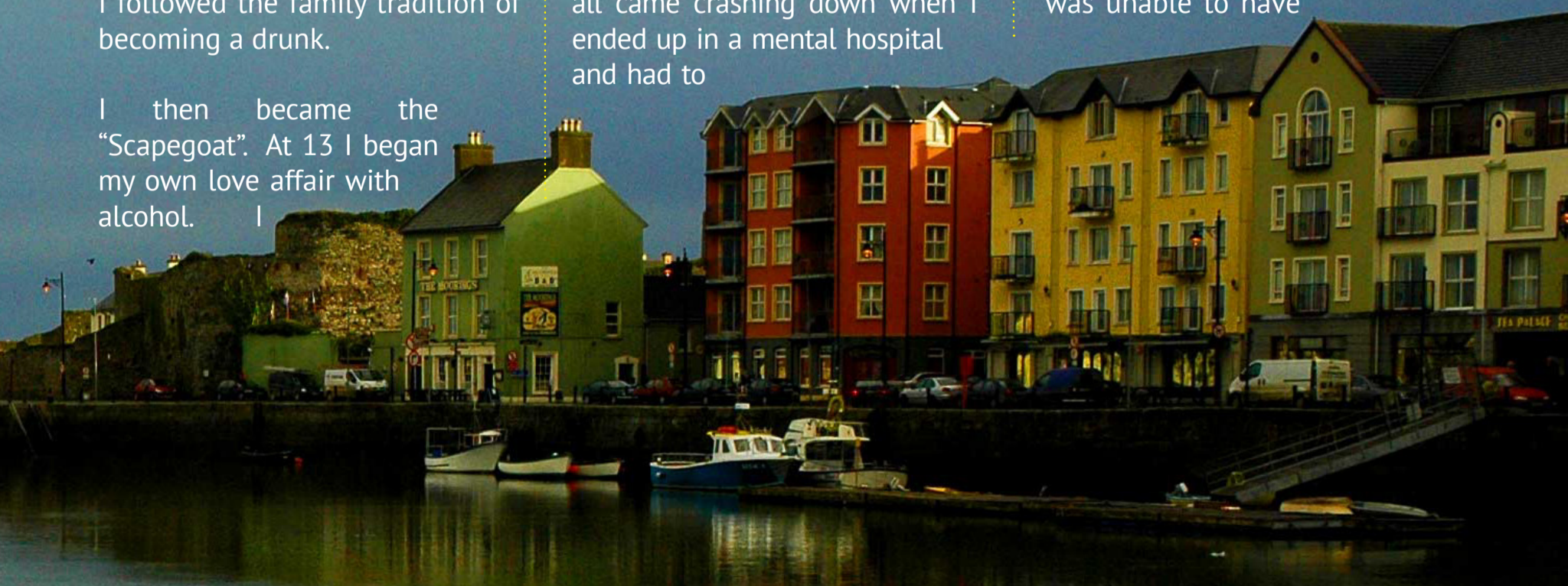
I also played "The Hero" for a time. This child is typically over-responsible and over-achieving. The dysfunctional family uses this person as proof everything is perfectly ok in their world. After all, this child is doing great! This person couldn't possibly come from a sick household, right? I used my status as the perfect housewife to play this one out. I had a handsome husband, big house and fancy car. Everything was wonderful! Yes, outside it was. I appeared fantastically strong and together. Inwardly though I was living a lie and suffering with inadequacy and guilt, because despite my efforts, my family was not healing. That little game all came crashing down when I ended up in a mental hospital and had to

face my own addiction issues.

The only character that I don't recognize strongly in myself is "The Mascot". The Mascot tries to repair the family by diffusing chaos through entertaining. They try to make everyone feel better by being cute and funny. Inwardly though, this character experiences intense anxiety and fear, and may carry immature patterns of behaviour all through their lives. Instead of dealing with problems, the Mascot tries to run away from them or makes light of their feelings and the reality around them.

So having attempted all possible avenues at gaining the attention I needed in childhood, later as an adult child of an alcoholic I discovered that I had no concept how to live life functionally. Even after leaving home, I was basically left to experiment with different types of behaviour until I found one that worked.

I wore different masks and personas. I changed my job a million times. I felt I had to lie to be acceptable; not only to other people but mostly to myself. I was unable to have



fun without being intoxicated, and even then, I felt guilty about having any kind of joy. I didn't know how to react to any life issue and ended up overreacting to most things. And as for relationships – well the failure of my marriage is proof that I was clueless about that, too. I ended up marrying a man that was very similar to my father and began parenting our children exactly how I had been parented.

History had begun to repeat itself. I could see a lot of my mothers' characteristics in me, but also my fathers. I knew that someone had to break this cycle of addiction and dysfunction in my family, and each day, I became less and less tolerant of my life long issues. I was now an alcoholic and dysfunctional mother. It was my worst nightmare. I watched my children suffer and hated myself for bringing my own pain and fear around them to witness.

So the recovery journey began for me on January 23rd 2010. I worked hard to dispel the grip my own addictions had on me and have successfully conquered them

one day at a time. After about 18 months of being clean and sober, I noticed that all the old issues from childhood started to come back up for me. I was still making very unhealthy and sometimes very dangerous decisions in my life, especially regarding the men I allowed into my life. I knew I needed to face my dysfunction head on, if I was ever going to have true peace in my life.

I started to read Melody Beattie's books on co-dependency, and I sought therapy for myself and my children. There were no co-dependents anonymous meetings anywhere near where I lived, so I searched online and found InTheRooms.com. This is a social media site for people in recovery from everything you can imagine. It is also an invaluable resource for the families of addicted people. In there I found live online recovery meetings not only for my primary addictions but also for Co-Dependence, Alanon and Naranon.

Tears streamed down my face as I listened to the shares at my very first CoDa meeting. I heard my story over and over again from

different people from all over the world. I truly began to heal from my life conditioning from that moment on and slowly shame and self-hate started to leave me. The support of the friends I made there was and still is invaluable, and it remains a staple in my recovery process daily.

Through my lifelong relationship with addiction, I have learned that we have a choice as to how our experience shapes us. Once we have control over our own lives, we can choose to stay in the torture and eventually be murdered by it, or we can choose to take the wisdom we have gained and use that to build a different life. Today, I am recovered. I am a survivor. I am free. My children and I have recovered together, hand in hand, with love and compassion and understanding. I also have grown to have compassion for my family situation and history, and I understand how its dysfunction was carried from one generation to another. I have ceased hating, fighting and blaming and learned that the only way to recover is taking responsibility for my own healing and my own life.

Nicola O'Hanlon, is a recovery writer who has been in recovery for over 5 years. She has blogged for InTheRooms.com, and has had her work published in several online magazines

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The illustration shows a man and a woman in silhouette, their arms extended towards a smaller silhouette of a child. The man's hand is on the left, and the woman's hand is on the right. The child is in the center, reaching out with both hands. The background is a light yellow color. Below the illustration is a grey horizontal bar with a dashed white line and a series of red rectangular blocks.

4 SURE-FIRE WAYS TO RAISE A **LITTLE ENABLER**

BY MISTI B.

It used to be the term “codependency” was reserved for folks in relationships with alcoholics. Even though the word “recovery” is more commonplace—name one celebrity who hasn’t had a stint in rehab?—we’re still reluctant to discuss the impact codependency has had on our culture.

As with most behaviors, codependency often begins in childhood. Now, I’m no child-rearing expert, but I am expert at being raised in a crazy, addicted home, and can say without a doubt that my own annoying enabling behaviors began at a young age. While most can agree that leaving your child in a car alone or telling them

to keep quiet about Mommy’s drinking will lead to a whacked out childhood, not everyone is aware that seemingly more “caring” behaviors can also lead to codependent kids. It’s not just the lady in Walmart cursing at her kids who is damaging her children. If you’re engaging in the following behaviors, you’re going to raise a little enabler.

And there's nothing worse than a needy, controlling little enabler (except maybe an entitled little narcissist).

1. LET ME HANDLE THAT! My father's solution to the girls who bullied me in sixth grade was to form a circle and force me to fight the biggest one. While that's not recommended, if you're constantly fighting your children's battles, you're not helping. When your kids talk about a problem at school, and you're always coming up with a plan of action, you take away their ability to solve problems. They start thinking they're incompetent, and it shreds their self-confidence. They may stop trying altogether. Guess what happens when those kids grow up? You got it. They come home to live with you—at thirty-five.

2. SUPERMOM, SUPERDAD! If you're in total control of your kids' schedules, food choices, clothing or friends, you're not allowing them to explore. They'll fear making decisions and won't have a clue about how to express their creativity, because they've been trained not to be spontaneous. It's a sure-fire way to sow the seeds

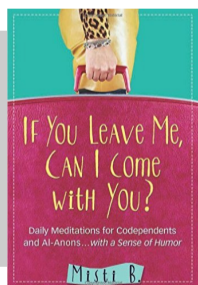
of resentment and rebellion or forced capitulation in kids. Imagine, being stuck in a job you hate, because you have no clue about what you want from life? Imagine waking up at forty, miserable, after realizing you've married your bossy, dominating parent? Yes, it's an exaggeration, and we're all responsible for our own choices, but society is filled with folks whose parents scheduled the life out of them.

3. YOU COMPLETE ME... If you're unfulfilled at work or home, or your relationship, or if you don't have many interests, you're putting pressure on your child to fulfill you. Not in a creepy way, just in the way the cheerleading squad gets when her daughter goes out for the squad – or worse, when she refuses to. If you don't make time to discover what makes your own life meaningful, you're gonna raise unhappy kids. You might not know they're unhappy until they confront you in the aisle of Home Depot about the fact that you're an emotional black hole they can never please! - but the day will come. At least, one can only hope. Because there's nothing less attractive than a fifty year-

old man who still says, "Mommy, Mommy, look at what I did!"

4. INTER-WHAT?! Just as children that are given too much responsibility and exposed to too much can become unhealthy, if they don't develop interdependence, which includes being a part of a group and interacting with trustworthy people outside their immediate family, a child won't flourish. They need the experience of being part of a team or a group to learn important skills like: listening, empathy for others, and compromise. If not, you run the risk of them becoming that maladjusted "I'll just take my ball and go home" kid on the playground. And we all know where those maladjusted kids end up, don't we?

In all seriousness, if you find these dynamics occurring in your family and kids, get some support from Al-Anon or a related group, church, friends, and/or a therapist. Your kids may not thank you for getting them help, but the rest of the world will, because there's no denying it: enablers are annoying and exhausting to be around. The only thing worse than a little enabler is a little narcissist, but I think we've already established that.



If You Leave Me, Can I Come with You?: Daily Meditations for Codependents and Al-Anons . . . with a Sense of Humor **By Misti B**



Misti B.

Misti B., a writer, filmmaker, and recovering codependent, writes humorous books about life in recovery, shining some light into normally very dark spaces. Misti's career in entertainment—producing live events, writing and directing for stage, TV, and film—combined with her dysfunctional upbringing provide the fodder for her gritty but inspiring recovery stories. She is the author of *If You Leave Me, Can I Come with You: Daily Meditations for Codependents and Al-Anons...with a Sense of Humor*. For more information, visit Misti on her website at www.mistibwrites.com



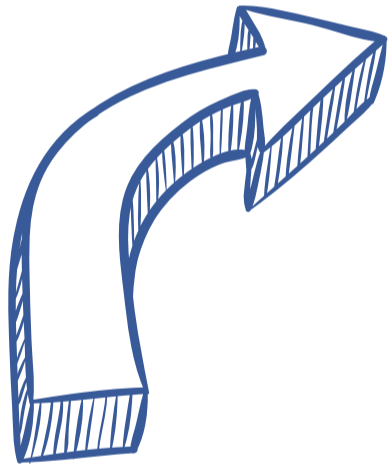
Greg Hannley

Publisher

Nationally recognized addiction expert, Greg Hannley is the Publisher of "Recovery Today Magazine". He is also the Chief Executive Officer of SOBA Recovery Center, and Executive Producer of the acclaimed film with Daniel Baldwin, "The Wisdom to Know the Difference". Greg has appeared on CNN's Larry King Live, Fox News, Fox and Friends, San Antonio Living, and other national media outlets. His vision is to provide a safe, sober environment for those suffering from the disease of addiction and to evangelize a simple, powerful message; there is hope.

Rob Hannley, Producer

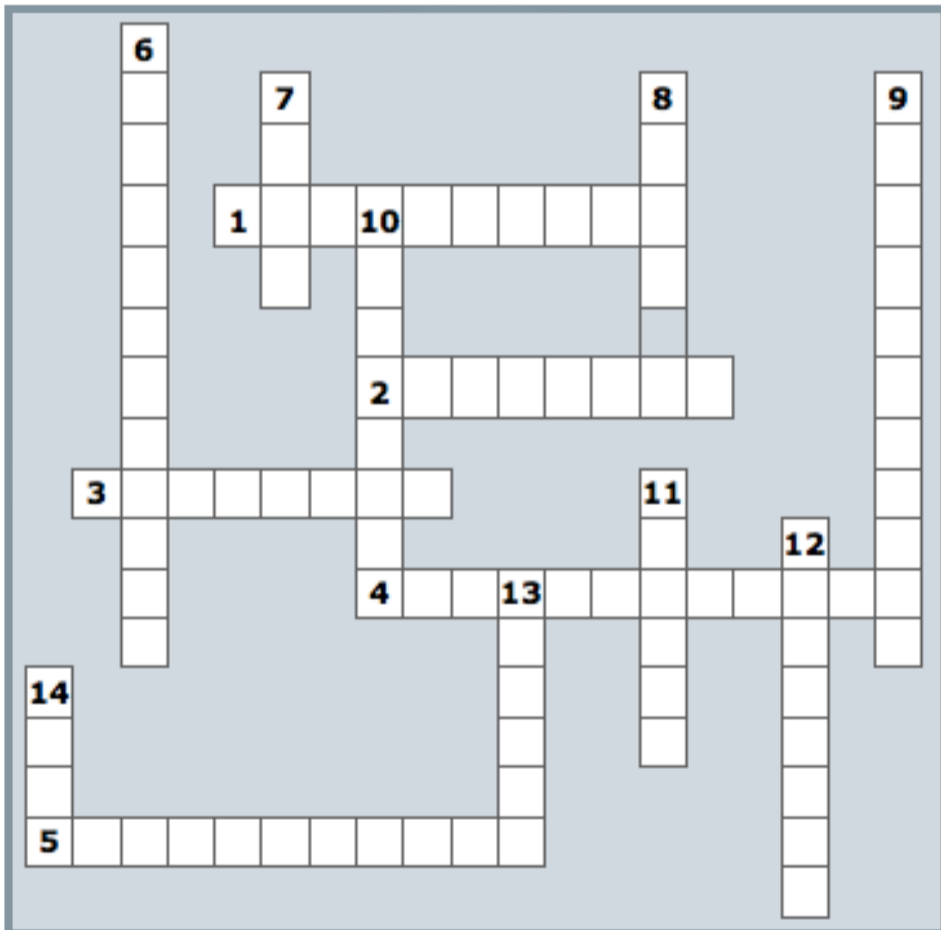
Sherry Gaba, LCSW Editor



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