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Happy Holidays
From Our Family
To Yours!



National Websites:

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)
www.aa.org or
www.alcoholicsanonymous.org

Narcotics Anonymous (NA)
www.na.org

Cocaine Anonymous (CA)
www.ca.org

For Family & Friends:
Al-Anon & Alateen:
www.OregonAl-Anon.org

Adult Children of
Alcoholics (ACA)
www.adultchildren.org

Serenity Lane...
1-800-543-9905
www.serenitylane.org



Stepping Together

Winter
2011

Serenity Lane's Alumni Newsletter

Saving lives and helping put families back together since 1973



Kids making lists for Santa Claus. Spouses dropping hints. Family members forwarding website links. Just some of the ways people tell us the gifts they hope to receive this holiday season. But one of the best gifts we can give is almost never on anyone's list. Sometimes the ones receiving it didn't even know they wanted it. It can't be bought – yet it can heal years of suffering.

The gift? An amend, done properly, for harm to another. In my work at Serenity Lane, I've seen countless alcoholics and addicts make such amends. Doing so is critical to staying sober. And along the way, these same people, known for the damage they've done, can make a lasting, positive difference in the lives of those they've harmed.

It makes sense. How many times have you ever had someone come to you and sincerely apologize for how they harmed you, then back it up with different behavior that lasts? That's the heart of an unconditional amend. They're hard to do well, of course. Mistakes are so easy. Probably the most common is asking for forgiveness right away, and getting angry when it doesn't happen. When we make amends this way, we're actually attaching strings to our gift. We're asking for yet another thing from the person, but disguising it as a gift. No wonder it doesn't feel right.

There are other dangers, too. Depending on what we did, it's possible that the person to whom we're making the amend doesn't trust us. If our motives are clean, we'll be able to respond with something like "I understand how you feel. I wouldn't trust me either if I were you. But I'll make every effort to earn your trust again with my actions." Then back it up. Let the new behavior continue the gift.

It may be that we don't know what kind of amend to make, or that we feel so guilty that we promise too much. If you have any doubts about what to do, discuss your plan beforehand with a trusted friend, counselor or clergy person. Someone with solid 12-step recovery can be very helpful. The rule to follow is this: A true amend never causes more harm to others – especially the person it's made to.

The moment we begin making these kinds of amends, we experience some interesting – and sometimes amazing – things. People learn they can trust us more than they have before. Our relationships deepen. Even if some are still angry, we find that we can hear their anger without getting defensive. And then, beneath it all, we start to feel real self-esteem. In this cynical age, it may seem quaint or even foolish to admit we were wrong and really try to make up for it. So few people seem to do this anymore. But some of these old ideas are still with us because they provide the best way to act in life. For generations, they've offered ways for imperfect people to move forward without such a heavy burden of guilt and shame. May we all give such a gift to ourselves this holiday season by making real amends to those we've harmed.

*by Jerry Gjesvold, Manager of Employer Services.
35+ years in recovery*



Newsletter Team:

Shely Rahimi: Editor

Angie Delaplain: Graphic Designer

Mary Daniels: Director

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR & ALUMNI COORDINATOR

“embrace the spirit of togetherness and celebrate the progress you have made”

Dear Alumni,

Addiction is commonly referred to as a family disease, and the impact of its destruction extends to all facets of the addict’s life. In the most harrowing times of crisis, families fall apart, trust is compromised and hope is lost. But it is our mission at Serenity Lane to reunite loved ones, rebuild trust and restore hope. Family involvement in the treatment process is vital to achieving the goal of lasting sobriety. In addition, A.A. and Al-Anon are valuable and empowering resources that guide their members through the difficult process of healing past wounds and facilitating a unified approach to enjoying a stable, nurturing future. Your dedication to recovery through counseling and education and your daily commitment to the 12-Steps is a gift you not only give to yourself, but to those around you as well.

During the winter months, when the holidays serve as an occasion to bring friends and relatives together, it is an ideal time to reflect on the transformative effect of recovery on your relationships. I encourage you to take this opportunity to embrace the spirit of togetherness and celebrate the progress you have made through your participation in our program.

Remember not to lose sight of the principles that have brought you to a place of peace in this hectic time of year. From Thanksgiving to New Year’s Day, as you take on the added responsibilities of shopping, cooking, hosting, traveling and the consequent feelings of stress, continue to reach out to your support network, attend meetings, maintain balance and practice self-care.

Whether this is your first sober holiday season or your twenty-first, the gratitude for a healthy life is everlasting.

Happy Holidays!

Shely Rahimi



Outpatient Happenings



COMING RIGHT UP....

• **Serenity Lane in Albany** is having a potluck dinner on **Wednesday, Nov 23rd at 6pm**. Serenity Lane will provide two turkeys (one baked and the other smoked) so bring a dish to compliment the birds. Patients, family, and alumni are all welcome.

• **Serenity Lane in Roseburg** is having a holiday potluck and you're invited. **Wednesday, November 30th, 5pm potluck begins. At 6pm Dwight Lee** (Serenity Lane's Spiritual Advisor) will be the special guest speaker. SL will provide the turkey, you bring a side dish or dessert. Current patients, alumni, family and friends, all welcome. Come and join the fun!

SAVE THE DATE:

• **Serenity Lane in Bend** will hold their **19th Annual Holiday Party on Friday, December 2, 2011. Potluck starts at 6pm** at the Sons of Norway hall, 549 NW Harmon Blvd, Bend (right behind Serenity Lane) Each year this event gets bigger and more fun so bring the whole family and kick off the holiday season with a bang!

• **FYI:** An alumni group is gaining momentum in the Beaverton area.....details are: .

Westside Alumni Meeting

1800 NW 167th Pl, Suite 115

Beaverton, OR 97006

They meet every Wednesday at 5:30 pm

All Portland area Recovery Support patients and alumni are welcome. For more information, contact Chris V. at: in-vutwo@gmail.com or Gary W. at: grwold@comcast.net

Address Changes/Deletions

Help us keep our mailing list current: send changes or deletions to:

Shely Rahimi
Serenity Lane Alumni Office
10920 SW Barbur Blvd
Portland, OR 97219

or email to: alumni@serenitylane.org

or call Shely at **503-244-4500 ext 8103**

Staying Sober During a Crisis

A crisis is defined as any event that leads to a dangerous or unstable situation. We all encounter different situations that can be labeled a crisis. You can lose your job, someone could become very ill, or catastrophic events can occur that threaten the stability of your home life.

For an individual in recovery, crisis situations need to be dealt with quickly. External stress can quickly turn into a threat to your sobriety. When facing a crisis, the key is to be pro-active. No matter what you are dealing with, if sobriety is on shaky ground, things can only get worse. The worst-case scenario is a relapse, which will only intensify the pre-existing stressful situation. The following five methods can be used to remain clean and sober when dealing with a crisis.

1. Reach out to others – Look to contacts from 12-step meetings, your therapist, or someone else who understands addiction recovery and has your best interest at heart – they put your sobriety first. Online recovery forums are a great way to find 24/7 support. Remind yourself that you are not alone and that support is always available.

2. Keep busy – with exercise, hobbies, or any positive activity that will remind you of why you want to stay sober. Journaling is a great way to record what you are experiencing and break the crisis down into manageable pieces.

3. Know your triggers – Remind yourself that you are human. Be aware of triggers that can threaten your sobriety. When you can predict your reaction, you can take preventative measures.

4. Change your thinking – Take the word “relapse” off the table. If your first thought during a stressful situation is to use your drug of choice, take action to change your immediate thought process. This takes time, but it becomes easier as you find healthy ways to react to triggers.

5. Find spiritual footing – Leaning on your Higher Power is a wonderful way to find peace of mind, thus de-escalating a stressful situation.

During any crisis remaining clean and sober is a must; therefore it needs to be your number one priority. Utilizing any of the above methods requires that the recovering individual face their crisis, recognize what triggers exist that threaten sobriety and effectively and quickly find a way to return to solid ground.

A crisis is something that all recovering individuals will face during their lives. When the footing beneath their sobriety remains intact and reinforced, the chances of a relapse decrease. Reminding oneself that drinking and/or using will only make a bad situation catastrophic is essential. Combine that mindset with a course of action and you will stay clean and sober.

HOW to FORGIVE - 8 Guidelines

by Victor Parachin, an ordained minister and writer living in Claremont, California.

While forgiveness has always been an important concept in religion and ethics, only recently have psychologists begun to discover its powers as a psychotherapeutic tool. In three separate studies, people who had not resolved the wrongs done to them - college students, elderly women, and incest survivors - all improved when therapists helped them learn to forgive. Although an increasing number of counselors recommend that we forgive those who have hurt us, many people find forgiveness difficult to offer. Here are 8 guidelines to help extend forgiveness and ease resentment.

1. Educate yourself about forgiveness. According to Webster's New World Dictionary, forgiveness means: "to give up resentment against or the desire to punish; to pardon; to overlook an offense; to cancel a debt." Thus, the goal of forgiveness is to let go of a hurt and move ahead with life.

Forgiveness is NOT:

- **Forgetting.** If the hurt wounded you enough to require forgiveness, you may always have a memory of it.
- **Excusing or condoning.** The wrong should not be denied, minimized, or justified.
- **Reconciling.** You can forgive the offender and still choose not to reestablish the relationship.
- **Weakness.** You do not become a doormat or oblivious to cruelty.

2. Clean out your thinking. The only way to keep ourselves free from the infestation of troublesome thoughts is to spend a few minutes each day cleaning out our thinking. Has someone hurt you by his or her comments? Were you publicly insulted by someone? Did a friend fail to come through for you? Pluck off each offending layer of thought and dispose of it. Doing so insures that a vague irritation does not transform itself into a deep resentment or intense hatred.

3. Practice on small hurts. To become a generous forgiver of major pains, practice forgiveness on small hurts.

Forgive immediately the small slights inflicted by strangers - a rude clerk, a driver who cut you off, a doctor who keeps you waiting and waiting, etc. Use those events as practice time to prepare you for the tougher task of forgiving major hurts.

4. Challenge your thinking. Forgiveness is much easier when you give up the irrational belief - the expectation that other people will always act in the way you want. Tell yourself it is unrealistic to expect that people will always act decently and respectfully toward you. Remind yourself that everyone is fallible and capable of making a mistake.

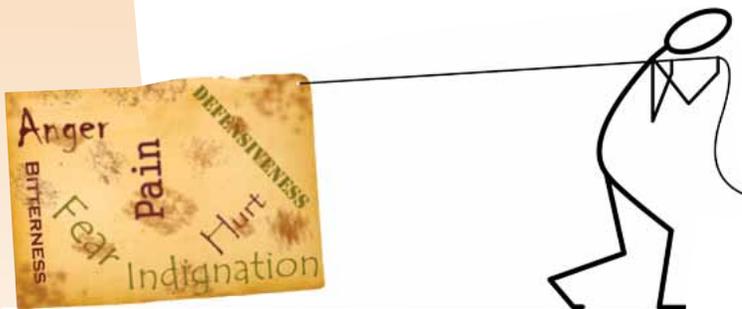
5. Understand that resentment has a high price tag. There's a strong connection between anger and a wide spectrum of health miseries - chronic stomach upset, heart problems, and skin conditions among them. Without question, the more anger we experience within, the more stress we're under. Whenever a hostile or hateful thought enters your mind, try to be fully aware of the harm that resentment can do to you, even making you ill. Let that knowledge further motivate you to forgive and let go.

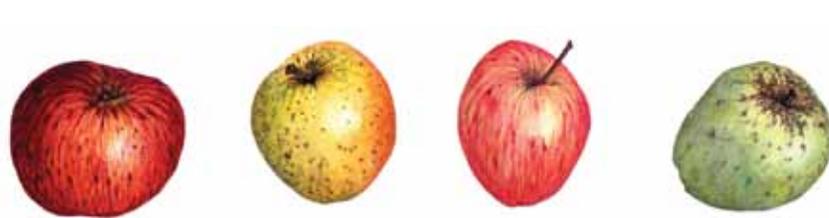
6. Remember: lack of forgiveness is giving others power over you. Withholding forgiveness and nursing resentment simply allows another person to have control over your well-being. It is always a mistake to let such negative emotions influence your daily living.

7. Recognize the ripple effect of harboring a grudge. When you can't forgive someone, there can be a ripple effect which negatively infects your family and friends. An unforgiving and bitter person who has not let go of animosities can poison an entire family and ruin the holidays for everyone. Forgiveness is a priceless gift which you can give to yourself and your family.

8. Bury the grudge - literally. Write a letter to the person who hurt you but don't mail it. Express fully, clearly, honestly how you feel and why that person's act hurt you and made you angry. Conclude with the bold declaration that you have forgiven him or her. Then, bury the letter in a potted plant or somewhere in your yard. This is a powerful symbolic exercise which many people have found to be extremely therapeutic. Bitterness and anger imprison you emotionally.

Forgiveness sets you free.





Wassail.... what's that?

Wassailing is an ancient English tradition that is performed with the intention of ensuring a good crop of cider apples for the next year's harvest.

The word **wassail** means literally 'good health' or 'be you healthy' and also refers to the beverage of wassail which is a hot mulled cider traditionally part of the wassail ceremony. In the cider-producing counties in the South Western counties of England wassailing refers to a century's old tradition that involves singing and drinking to the health of apple trees in the hopes that they might better thrive in the Autumn.



Gratitude can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. It makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.



Cranberry Wassail

Ingredients:

- 1/2 gallon apple cider
- 1/2 gallon cranberry juice
- 1 cup lemon juice
- 1 1/4 cups pineapple juice
- 1 large orange, thinly sliced
- 24 whole cloves
- 1/4 cup clover honey
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 4 cinnamon sticks
- 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon ground allspice
- 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger

Garnish:

- 12 fresh mint leaves
- 12 orange slices for garnish

In a large saucepan, combine cider, cranberry juice, lemon juice, pineapple juice, orange slices, cloves, honey, sugar, and cinnamon sticks. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer; add the nutmeg, ginger, and allspice. Simmer for 10 - 15 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Serve warm and garnish with mint and a slice of orange.



How to **Gain** to **Assertiveness** to **Empower** **Your Recovery**

by Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.

Alcoholics and addicts are called upon to learn new living skills to replace the role that chemicals played in their lives. Two of the most important skills to be acquired in early recovery are **effective communication and relationship building**. Assertiveness is a necessary component of both. This self-assured style not only involves being able to stand up for one's own rights without trampling on the rights of others, it also involves being able to say "no" without feeling guilty. It encompasses taking responsibility for one's own feelings, behaviors, decisions, actions, and reactions, while giving up responsibility for those same things in others.

It includes being able to appropriately express a full range of emotions to others. Self-confident, firm behavior involves being able to openly, honestly, and directly communicate one's wants and needs. Firm boundary setting does not involve building impenetrable walls. It tells others where you stand, and outlines a range of appropriate behavior in regard to you.

Passivity denotes an absence of self-confidence and firmness. It generally involves abandoning one's own rights, wants and needs, to the wants or needs of others. An absence of appropriate boundaries allows others to pretty much treat you as they want, regardless of what you want. Aggression involves trespassing others' boundaries to get your own wants or needs met. It can involve verbal, emotional, sexual, spiritual, or intellectual abuse, and include manipulation and dirty fight tactics. People can also be passive-aggressive, which is about being aggressive in a sneaky, covert way. More often than not, it is about acting out anger in a hidden way. A classic example is typical backbiting, talking behind one's back kind of behavior that you see in the world of work every day. Most people exhibit this behavior from time to time.

The following are examples of passive aggressive responses to a request that you don't want to do:

1. Saying "ok" but not having any intention of doing it.
2. Saying "ok" and intending to do it, but putting it off until eventually they do it themselves.
3. Saying "ok," doing it, but doing a lousy job at it, thinking "they will never ask me to do that again."
4. Saying "ok," doing it and doing a good job at it, but going around to everyone complaining about their imposition in the first place.
5. Instead of saying "no," giving 15 excuses why you can't do it and the real reason is that you don't want to.

An appropriately firm way to deal with an undesirable request, is to say, "No, I don't want to do that," or "No thanks" or "No." When you are not accustomed to being assertive, a simple "No" can feel aggressive. Most people have some area of their lives where they feel pretty confident about standing up for themselves. Even the least self-assured person has some area where they can be assertive and the most self-confident person has some area where they stumble.

The skills that you use to be firm in one area are transferable to other areas where it seems like you will always give in. All it takes to transfer these skills is "risk". The risk is usually fear of loss. This is often about loss

• • ▶ of esteem, self-esteem, loss of goods and services, or loss of a relationship. Most of the time, the fear is way out of proportion to the likelihood of actual loss.

In order to find out which areas you have the least confidence in your ability to be assertive, ask yourself whether you typically behave in a confident, firm manner when you engage in the following circumstances:

1. Getting off the phone from telemarketers without listening to their sales pitch?
2. Taking something defective back to the store?
3. Sending a steak back that is not cooked the way you ordered it?
4. Telling your neighbor "no" when s/he wants to borrow something.
5. Setting boundaries with someone at work who tries to take advantage of your good nature either by trying to get you to do their work, or asking you to cover up for them.
6. Negotiating for changes at work, either for more money or a change in working conditions.
7. Saying "no" to one of your siblings who wants something that you don't want to give -- time, energy, or other resources.
8. Saying "no" (and staying at "no") to a child who wants something you don't want to give or buy.
9. Setting boundaries with parents or spouse's parents when they want to meddle in your business (e.g. money or marriage.)
10. Conveying your feelings assertively to your significant other who has done something that involved your feelings being hurt.

Can you see patterns in the areas where you want to be confidently firm, and where you have trouble? In which areas of difficulty can you accomplish being assertive by practicing the skills you already have? If you took the risk, what would happen?

Look at the areas that lack confident firmness and ask yourself "What is it that I haven't been willing to risk?" Much of the time, the fear is not reality-based. If you find that you cannot be confidently firm in close personal relationships, the risk is probably fear of abandonment. You may be afraid that those significant people won't love you if you are honest with them.

Assertiveness is a worthwhile endeavor. It builds and reinforces self-esteem.

Passivity, Aggression, & Passive-aggression undermines self-esteem. Learning to be confident and competent in your relationships with others is an important recovery task.

Confident, firm communication is a component of acquiring these relationship skills.

*by Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.
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Inside:

- **The Gift of Amends**
- **Holiday Events**
- **Forgiveness**
- **Wassail**
- **Assertiveness & Empowerment**

If you see good in people, you radiate a harmonious loving energy which uplifts those around you.

If you can maintain this habit, this energy will turn into a steady flow of love.

~ Annamalai Swami

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