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March Music

Quarantine Edition #1

The Difference Between an Adventure and an Ordeal is Attitude

Ask for naloxone training & kits, fentanyl test strips at TRC

Overdoses Are Everywhere!
The 3rd Street Beat Mission Statement

The Third Street Beat is a newsletter written by and created for people with addiction. Our mission is to validate that experience so people know that they are not alone, and to emphasize the many unique roads that we take to recovery. This is an opportunity to share our experiences to creatively support each other. We are non-political, non-denominational, multi-racial, and gender neutral. Our mission is one of recovery and harm reduction, and all experiences are welcome. All the viewpoints herein are personal in nature and related specifically to our contributors’ recovery.

The 3rd Street Beat Editorial Team


SUDOKU (solution p. 7)

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The rules of the game are simple: each of the nine blocks has to contain all the numbers 1-9 within its squares. Each number can only appear once in a row, column or box.

Recovery Playlist

APRIL 2020

INSPIRATION

Max Romeo - Chase the Devil
Cursive - What Have I Done
Yeasayer - Germs
Modest Mouse - Polar Opposites
Pixies - Where is my Mind
Red Hot Chili Peppers - Suck My Kiss
Eagles - Hotel California
Beach Boys - Good Vibrations
I’ve been coming to TRC with a smile in my heart, because of the Love I first received, and still recieve, to this day, 6 months and 15 days later. My use of alcohol and drugs has taken me to places that I never thought I would end up, on the street of life, not being a good father, or grandfather. Walking away from life, trying to find the man I was put here to be by God or a Higher Power of life force. But since I’ve been here I’ve been here, I’ve begin to get those things back in my life. My son is my hero along with my beautiful grans - who are my “angels.” My daughter in law is the light of our world for being the Queen of life for my son and grans. TRC, my higher power, N.A., my sponsor and grand sponsor, and the rooms of N.A. have given me what I thought I had found in drugs, which was only 30 years of nightmares. So, share my story to let those that help me thus far know I am thankful from the bottom of my heart. I am doing work and education at ACE in Queens, now, so that I can become a peer counselor.

- Bengia R.
How could I ever forget the coldest winter ever? A night that the blistering cold tore through my body like a dozen ice pics being thrust into me all at once. I must’ve been ten or eleven years old and had sought sanctuary from the blistering winter at my biological mother’s house. I was supposed to be confined to the custody of a group home under the control of the New York Foundling Hospital but chose to go AWOL due to the fact that they wanted me to sleep on a cot in a kitchen infested with rats the size of dogs.

One this particular day, I had to intervene in a fight between two of my younger brothers who were seemingly trying to kill each other over some foolishness. Reminding me of my frequent fights with my other little brother, the one closest in age to me, I decided not to let them fall into the same trap that we did and so I came at them hard to enforce the big brother law of “you better never let me see yawl fight each other again.”

Everything was cool until my biological mother “Mickey” arrived pissy drunk and looking for an excuse to rattle me. As I explained the situation, she became irate and began cussing and shouting in such a drunken manner that some of what she said wasn’t even comprehensible. Yet, the essence of what she said was “you got to go… You can’t stay here… Beside you’re jeopardizing your older brother Joe by being here anyway… Get whatever you got and get the fuck out my house now before I slap you… You’re just like your father…”

I did as best I could to control the rage welling up inside me and prevented myself from reacting as I would normally react when spoke to in such a way by anyone. After all, this was my biological mother. Whether she raised me or not, gave a damn about me or not, I had to take at least that into consideration. Perhaps that is the one thing that prevented me from grabbing her by the throat and choking the life out of her.

I looked at her and said “Ok, I’ll leave. No problem.” Wasn’t much to grab because I didn’t own much except for a bag of library books. I walked toward the door and in one final moment of expressing her anger, she reminded me that the little jacket I had on belonged to her. And her last words were “And give me my jacket… Be lucky I don’t slap you.” The best I could do hearing the “slapping threat” was again give her a warning. “If you ever put your hands on me, I will kill you.” That being said, I removed the coat, gave it to her and exited her project apartment.

I left with a thick shirt, pants and sneakers knowing it was going to be a rough night, but I’ve experienced and survived rough nights like this before so I just headed to the project’s stairwell and began my trek down from the 14th floor to the bottom. However, as I descended from the 13th floor, a voice called out. “Ramone!”, “Ramone!” I recognized the voice of the lady who lived below my mother’s apartment who I knew as Ms. Linda. She had three kids, one of whom was my best friend and girlfriend whenever I made my visits to my mother’s house.

Ms. Linda called for me to come to her apartment and as much as I didn’t want to go due to the embarrassment of being kicked out, I surely wasn’t going to ignore her and show any signs of disrespect. I turned around, walked back up to the 13th floor and greeted her in the hallway. She invited me into her home and gave me something to drink while her children began gathering some clothes for me. I did all I could to hold back the tears at the realization that someone who was not my mother showed more...
I dance in heart
Spreading joy w love
Living truth from the start
My words were my hugs

To keep myself afloat
Not letting morals go cus ima goat
Doing wat a goat suppose

Not clear like my eyes bleeding
I wouldn’t eat
Til me and god was done w our meeting

Found myself looking down
I can see myself
Get my comfort zone on
So i define health

This just a poem
Watch the page from the pen smoke
If this was a rap
It b fire
Then weed all have to go

#peace

Poem and art by Steven McGlothlin
Hello my name is Omar and I suffer from emotional sobriety. What is emotional sobriety? Some might think it means" happy joyous and free". This is a common phrase used in 12-step meetings like AA and NA . Of course for us people in the rooms we enjoy this simple definition, but it is so much more. It doesn't mean that if we work a good program and achieve physical sobriety or abstinence we will become happy in the process. I hate to break it to you but this simple definition puts a lot of us in recovery in a tough spot. For example what does it say about a person's emotional sobriety when they are having a hard time? What if they're afraid, anxious, sad, angry or confused? Does it mean that they aren't emotionally sober?

Emotional sobriety is a very important factor in recovery. It means to be able to cope with all the negative emotions we ignored when we were abusing drugs and alcohol. These feelings can act as triggers for us to relapse so being able to manage them is crucial for long-term recovery. It is necessary to address all the negative emotions, thoughts and behaviors that we ignored or pushed aside by drinking and using drugs. Only when they are confronted and managed can we truly be both physically and emotionally sober. One of the most important reasons to learn how to address and manage our negative emotions and feelings is that for some of us, our only coping skill is to use. Until we can grow to gain control of our feelings we run the risk of a relapse.

Another obvious reason to work toward emotional sobriety is that it improves our overall Mental Health and our general quality of life. Sometimes for me emotional sobriety is about tolerating what I am feeling and staying sober "no matter what" I'm feeling. It means not blaming myself or others because of the challenges we face in life. It means we don't necessarily need to do something to make a feeling go away. Upon doing the research needed for this article I came across a term representing something that I do. It's called spiritual bypass.

This means using spiritual ideas and practices to sidestep personal and emotional development. It means wearing a mask that presents a false spiritual self that represses my true self. It involves bolstering my defenses rather than my humility, grasping rather than gratitude, arriving as a priority rather than just being in the moment and my favorite avoiding - rather just accepting what is. Does anyone else feel that way too?

What this represents is my "ISM". Since I removed the alcohol, I am left with the ISM. My ISM does not want me to acknowledge that I am scared, angry, ashamed or lost. Some of us in recovery don't want to acknowledge it either. This is because we would have to look at our self and feel the stuff that bothers us. Stuff that we might not be ready to deal with at this phase of our recovery. So spiritual bypass becomes a tool we use as a defense mechanism to control obstacles and outcomes. Believing we are working a spiritual program provides the illusion that even though we aren't using, we're managing our feelings when really we are not taking in deep at ourselves to really recover. Using this defense mechanism we are all susceptible to this unconscious drive to protect ourselves from painful and negative feelings and emotions. Using spirituality as a defense certainly is a lot better than using drugs or alcohol. .....CONTINUED ON PAGE 15
I Can’t Quit

This life I’m livin’ now, which is hell
Regardless of how difficult things are
I must stand strong and rebel
Against those negative forces
Who are working overtime to keep me down
I know they want me to just give up
But since I Can’t Quit, I’ll stand my ground
See I’m a Man with six kids
And I must set a good example for them
So I will embrace adversity
And turn difficulty into a valuable friend
For it is through adversity and difficulty
That I will be able to grow and become strong
And be empowered to destroy those
Who’ve done my kids and me terribly wrong

Shams DaBaron
2/11/06

SUDOKU solution

The worst part of quitting drinking is the lack of excuses you now have for your behavior.
or the novel coronavirus.

I’d wager the questions on most of their minds is “why here?” and the more challenging and complicated “why?” The answer to the first is the fact that Bellevue, aka the 30th St. Men’s Shelter, lies directly between two hospitals (NYU and Bellevue) and right next to the Medical Examiner’s Office, wherein resides the “city morgue” Used to accommodating 9 or so bodies a night, it had no way to deal with the hundreds expiring in New York City every day, so the City had to build a bigger morgue from scratch, and there was an empty lot right behind the shelter next door.

As to the question of “why?,” researchers believe that the virus initially evolved in bats. The bats infected another animal, possibly a pangolin (an asian anteater and one of the most illegally traded animals in the world) or another animal, which then infected humans at an animal marketplace in Wuhan, China.

The situation inside the shelter is shaky at best. For one, hand sanitizer is not readily available and the bathrooms do not contain soap. But the biggest issue is the fact that Bellevue is the front line shelter that all homeless New Yorkers must pass through before being assigned to their actual shelter (which is smaller and may be located in any Borough). Because of this it is common sense that new admissions be medically examined before entering the general population. However, this is not the case, as residents are examined about a week after being admitted. This is unacceptable in the time of coronavirus. Any new resident may be infected with the virus, but they are immediately thrown into a room containing 5 to 20 people, and put into contact with the general population in the hallways or in the cafeteria where they can potentially infect hundreds. Because of this pandemic, it is essential that the admission process be modified so that new admissions are medically screened (at least having their temperature taken!) before being given a bed.

There also needs to be a process to require health screenings of individuals that exhibit symptoms of the virus. If a resident is having coughing fits and other residents bring a complaint to management, it should be management’s responsibility to have the sick resident screened for the virus as soon as possible. The situation now requires that sick residents ask for help themselves, but many are in denial, and it is simply not enough to expect them to ask for help for themselves. When neighbors are uncomfortable with a fellow resident’s medical condition, they should have an avenue to report the condition and for the sick resident to have a mandatory examination. CONT ON PAGE 12
Dearly Departed...

Dear Ms. Thing/ I'm tired of this fling./ All you do is make My head spin/ and make Me spend./ I bend/ over backwards./ You had Me hiding and ducking from My Life like I was in the back woods/ up in smoke like I lit a pack of Backwoods./ Why would you do this to Me?/ I gave you all My time, money,/ friends, and almost My Family/ but you're no fan of Me./ You stopped Me from being what I planned to be./ I hate this shit/ but I have to admit/ I still miss holding you at night/ putting My lips on you so tight/ and when I wake up, you're there just to get Me right/ and make Me feel warm./ Sometimes our Relationship doesn't feel like a storm/ because it seems to keep Me calm./ Shit; who am I to complain/ because I chose to play this game,/ instead of staying in My lane./ Which means I chose the pain./ But now I gotta' say/ 'go away/ to stay'/ because I want you outta' My picture frame./ ~Johnny Jungle 7

ALWAYS HAVE FAITH
(inspired by the Ted Talk 'underdog' video)

I know I have to persevere
Because I just heard a message
that I shouldn't quit because
somebody needs Me here.
I've shed blood sweat and tears/
for years…
Supposed to have the Heart of a
Lion with courage as Big as a bear
But have been frozen with fear.
Now it's time to tear
Down the walls
That have made Me stall.
Alcohol/ and cigs, had Me feeling
like My back is against the wall…
An underdog?
No...I have Hope through The
Savior and The Scriptures that I'm
not that at all
Because I am an extension of
God. ~Johnny Jungle 7

As I became a full blown Addict, As my self-esteem being Stepped on like a doormat What glimmers of hope thrown out of The window, also in smoke

My soul surrounded in pure darkness Not wanting to see the light As a crack pipe became more and more Of a crutch that leads you to your Rock bottom

A slave to the addiction stealing and begging Tarnishing my self-worth and values That were given us as a child

Our peer and counselor would say Easy does it or one day at a time With a sober mind we begin To change just for a day as light Shines, the diamond became brighter ~Yuldante Hargitt
It's hard to take a look at, let alone write about my addiction. I thought I was playin' this thing totally close to the chest and that none of my friends had the foggiest notion that I had jumped on this bucking dragon stallion all the while wringing' its neck just as tight as possible. I was a pubes width away from checking out BIG TIME. How did I start? How did I stop? And could I hope to keep the time, strength and knowledge I'd acquired?

My old man had a real taste for piss poor, mass produced beer, delivered instantly from the beer tapper in the family room. I began to get curiouser and curiouser about the beverage he consumed so steadily and one day decided I'd give it a try. That first experiment was a dismal failure, as I found it to be as appetizing as Brussels Sprouts (i.e. Satan's little cabbage).

My next experiment proved much more eye opening and life changing, though it took a change of venue, substance, and social dynamic. I tagged along with my sister to a friends house and we found our neighbors, Lindsey and Shauna, imbibing a thick, creamy beige liquid and giggling loudly. Peer pressure kicked in immediately and my sister and I were called to see if we were cool enough. Cinzia, the sister, took the bottle and gingerly sipped. I, on the other hand, grabbed the thing and gulped it for about a minute. The others looked at me as if I had just bitten the head off a kitten and I let out a very bassy belch. Then the drunkenness came, warm as polar bear fur, and I forgot everything. In hindsight, I should have known that I was predisposed to a life of alcoholism as I drank 1 ½ bottles of Bailey's Irish Cream in my first sitting.

At the time I had beautiful, luxurious, long hair and the next morning I came to with nothing but little sprouts and tufts of hair coming out of my scalp. I had apparently butchered my 'do wilst drunk as a skunk. I look at that first real drunk and realize that I should have learned from my self destructive actions and stopped touching liquor at all. Unfortunately that wasn't the case and I wrestled with it for somewhere around 25 years of masochism and escapism in a bottle.

The transition from bottle to needle was lightning fast and even more devastating to every facet of life, most of all my relationships. The only people I kept in my life were now exclusively addicts, dealers and people I could take some sort of advantage of. The tedium of this lifestyle weighed more and more until I finally just couldn't live this record-on-skip existence.

I put myself into The Project Renewal detox and subsequent outpatient facility and for the first time in a very long while, I found hope within myself and I found a ragtag band of lost boys & girls that make each day a positive step forward in my recovery. This group is utterly amazing and is integral to my sobriety.

You guys ARE BANGARANG!
I thank My Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for giving Me
the Might of The Precious Stone called Verdite/ only
found in Great Zimbabwe/ where My Family/ had to
fight/ and take flight./ As the color of this Stone, I
stay Green and Hope to Shine Bright./ Once I dust
off the dirt and am able to see past the gloom and the
darkest of nights,/ I want My armor to gleam like the
Sword of the sharpest of knights./ I Pray that like
this stone to I stay solid and tight./

I thank My Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for Your
Care/ that You have kept Me Afloat as the element of
Air/ so the rough currents of Life I may bear/ and
keep Me moving Ferociously as does a bear/ does in a
forest to tear/ apart what stands in My way/ and
keep Me warm as Zimbabwe's Indian Summer
Breeze in May/ because I know all too well how this
cold world can stay./ But You keep Me like the wind
as the Sun Shines it's Rays./

I thank My Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for keeping
Me Raging through this Life like Victoria Water
Falls/ found on the border of Zambia and
Zimbabwe/ the largest of them all/ Home to
Jonathan and Sabina Maswoswe/ My Parents who
gave Hope the Gaul/ to withstand almost all/ and stay
well rounded like a ball./ Now I want to be Great like
this 9th Wonder of the World./ I want to be like this
Great Body of Water as I wonder what's happening in
this world/ and make a Human Body as I wrap Myself
with God's Greatest Creation...that means; Under a
Girl./

- Johnny Jungle 7
New York City’s homeless population hangs by a tenuous thread. They are among the most at-risk for viral infection and little is being done to alleviate this threat. Social distancing is important, but it is not enough. Mandatory health screening for new admissions and for those reported as being sick need to be required immediately. These poor souls have a morgue outside their windows and the image of countless dead imprinted upon their minds. They need relief in the form of comfort in the thought that the next roommate they have has been screened and is not a carrier of this fatal virus. ~ AK
I can’t tell who u r with a mask
I miss your lips
This is now “the face”
More than a race, but abundant
Cunning, baffling, shelter in place
How y’all doin’ down there?
Don’t be nowhere, hope y’all stay safe
No outside inside, to-may-to, to-mah-to
Whatever the motto make way
It’ll be better son, u hold on it’ll be alright
U r great when u create
I’ve ate dietary no grease
I’m well, but rather have jambalaya on my plate
Get u sum. U can send it
Write a letter, this is the new age
Ur daddy send u a phone
From his plan, strange
And pay ur bill, gee thx
R u coming to see us after May
It’s been a while I ain’t seen ur face

~ Steven McGlothlin

Lighthouses don’t go running all over an island looking for boats to save; they just stand there shining.

Anne Lamott
concern for my well-being than my very own biological mother. “All I have is these sweaters for you. I’m so sorry I don’t have more but I can’t let you go out in this cold with nothing on your back… I can’t believe Mildred did that” she said as she helped me put the sweaters on. “You’re such a nice boy and you don’t deserve to be treated like that…. I wish I could adopt you…”

As Ms. Linda continued talking all I could do was stare at my best friend, her daughter Tracey, who I called my Pipe Buddy. She and I were Pipe Buddies because we communicated through the pipes that ran throughout the buildings and would spend hours talking to each other through the pipes. Tracey always made me feel special and now here I was accepting these clothes because I was being tossed into the streets on this cold winter night. My face was blank as was hers but our minds said the same thing, I’m sure. It was a love for each other that even this experience wouldn’t break.

I took the sweaters given to me and got a lesson from Ms. Linda in the value of having layers of clothing to prevent the cold from causing one to freeze to death. I was also given a hat and told of the value of protecting my head during cold night. They all hugged me and wished me well. The long embrace from Tracy was very reassuring as I swore to myself that I would rise back up and show her I’m still a strong guy, that his is nothing. I’m still that dude and she better not mess with no one else because I was not a bum or anything like that. I just didn’t have a place to live. These were not my words but they were indeed my thoughts and with those thoughts I exited their apartment. Then soon as I got back into the stairwell, I cried all the way down to the first floor at the realization that I now had to face the streets alone in this blistering cold winter night. As soon as I exited the building and that cold hit me, I knew immediately, this was only the beginning of a sad and dreadful night. I’ve seen many cold nights during winter since that night, but this night will forever remain The Coldest Winter Ever.  -THE END
But it is a defense mechanism, nonetheless. As people in recovery we want the ability to access all our feelings, because being present for what is real is what enables us to make better choices, grow in our recovery and propel us to achieving the most authentic and fulfilling lives in recovery.

There are some coping skills and tips I find work for me but recovery is different for everyone so if you have a formula that works keep doing it. We are all unique, and come from different walks of life and have suffered in different ways, but we can recover and be happy with our lives. A lot of recovery comes from the way we think and speak to ourselves. Thinking positive and having positive affirmations for ourselves are crucial for us to recover from our negative attitude and outlook on life. One of my primary coping skills for my new life in recovery is prayer and meditation. For me prayer is asking my Higher Power for the possible outcomes of my problems, and questions in regard to how to approach and conquer the challenges I must face. Meditation serves to allow my mind to come up with solutions to the problems I have and find a workable solution. I find it allows my mind to focus and what I can do to overcome challenges and plan out my future. Personally this is how I start my day and I find I am more focused and solution-based. It also helps me with behaving in a much calmer manner when it comes to dealing with everyday situations and problems. This is considered to be a form of mindfulness practice and I find it works for me.

Another skill I’ve developed is reprisal. This involves confronting the negative emotion and reframing it in a more positive sense. In the 12-step rooms they say "grateful addicts don't use". So instead of focusing on the negative or bad things and situations, I look deep at the what am I grateful for? Or what can I learn from this situation? I find it helps me to grow in my recovery. Also, the concept of "I have been there before". This mantra reminds me that I can handle this situation because I can relate it to something similar that I have already been through and know that it will work out. That shows my own personal growth.

Another major coping strategy I use is my social connections or network of sober people. I find having a strong social network of people in recovery is a great way to help manage my negative feelings. Being able to speak to someone I trust is an important factor in confronting and dealing with my troubling emotions. I’ve read "That the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel". So true! I find that having good social connections that are deep and meaningful are great at helping me navigate my new life. I find that working through issues with my close friends in recovery helps us both grow from each other’s experience and strengthens our bond as brothers and sisters in arms.

For me personally, working closely with my counselors here at Project Renewal have been critical in my life. I find that they are always willing to listen to me vent my anger and be there for me when I break down and cry my eyes out. I feel like we have built a mutual respect for each other and that they have helped as well as supported me through the darkest period of my life. It was here that my recovery began and I take pride in coming back to do this newsletter and make groups to continue to build the bond that grows stronger. each time we overcome an obstacle together.

I think this is my greatest coping skill, my network. It is the core of my emotional sobriety and I cannot express my gratitude for the people that I have met in the process that have helped me so much. I could also tell you that my network helps me to keep my attitude in check. They are usually the ones to point out my reckless behaviors and bad attitudes and when I am reverting back to my old self. In moment it may not be what I want to hear at the time, but in the long run it helps me to see the areas I still need to work on and even advise me on what works for them. That type of trust really helps me to maintain my emotional sobriety.

The most important takeaway here is to remember that emotional sobriety is a state of mind and also a process. No one achieves perfect emotional sobriety and this is why we should always be working towards a better balance in our lives to have greater emotional awareness and learn to use Healthy coping strategies that are productive. This is how we really get sober. - THE END
Thanks for reading our newsletter, we hope you enjoy it!

The 3rd Street Beat is accepting submissions!

If you would like to submit a piece of art, your recovery story, or other work, see OT in the Recovery Center or attend the Newsletter Meeting at 2:00 pm on Thursday afternoons.