

FINDING GRATITUDE



RETREAT
REVIEW

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PETER SCHORR
Chief Executive Officer

Dear Friends,

What does gratitude mean to us at such difficult times? Does it have to be that warm feeling of thankfulness we have towards others or just in general? Should the person who feels gratitude just be thankful for what they have and not seek anything else?

Seems like a very simple formula for many, but not what we should be preaching. It's important to feel thankful for the blessings we have, but also to want to achieve more. We don't have to be complacent in our gratitude. Our gratitude should be measured on a sliding scale. Sure we can have gratitude for everything but it isn't as much fun as finding new ways to be grateful.

We have all been part of the worst world pandemic any of us has ever seen. Many have lost their livelihood and other have lost loved ones. It's not easy to be gracious when you have all these things happening at once.

How do you tell someone who has had a hard time lately to just be thankful that you are still here and that you have your health? Of course we are thankful of that, but when bad things happen to us our quickest defense is to be angry and disappointed with life.

What should these people do? There are no simple answers, but one thing we can do is show love and support to others not as fortunate as us. Tides may turn one day and we might be the one looking for that shoulder to lean on.

Right now, be supportive, be loving, be caring, and let friends and family know that you are there for them. Gratitude comes in many forms. Showing you care means you are thankful for that person in your life. Let them know it.

All the Best,


Peter Schorr
President/CEO



FROM POVERTY TO GRATITUDE

by Tyler Vieux

Recently, I had the opportunity to sit down and interview TJ Griffin; motivational speaker, community leader, and founder of The Vision Program. I quickly learned why he is so influential to young men and women all over the country. "Gratitude is the key to success, whether it is business, spiritual or treatment," said Griffin "If you can't be grateful in the small moments, why do you think you will be blessed with the big ones?"

TJ was born and raised in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, primarily known for its large Amish population. However, TJ found himself stuck in the inner city, known for its high rates of murder, gang violence and drugs. TJ's parents split at the young age of 4 and even though his father was always nearby, he struggled with alcoholism.

His mother was very involved in his life. Waking him up for school, making sure he behaved and getting his assignments completed on time. Unfortunately, that did not last forever. In fact, when TJ turned 15 it all came to a sudden stop. TJ's mother started battling a cocaine addiction and could no longer be as involved in his life. Following this, TJ started to head down the wrong path. During this time, he had a dream to become a successful rapper. This became problematic as the culture and music tended to glorify and exacerbate drug use and crime.

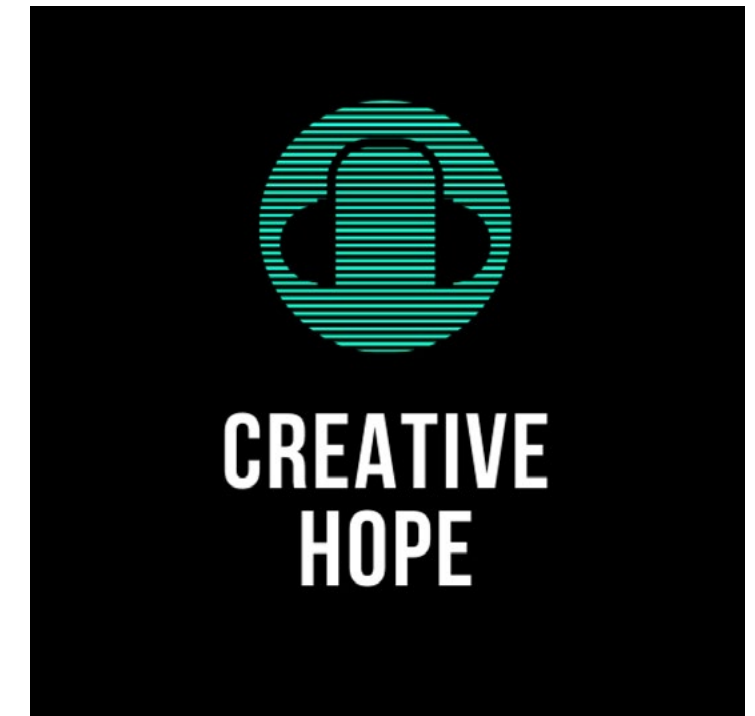
He moved his girlfriend and friends into his house and began selling drugs out of his childhood home. He did this as a way to make ends meet.

However, TJ had finally reached his breaking point. "I come from an aspect of poverty that hurts so bad I never want to go back again, poverty is embarrassing; smelly clothes, classmates making fun of you, having to sleep on the floor for years in a filthy house." TJ realized he needed to make changes in order to avoid a similar fate as his parents.



Around this time TJ and his girlfriend had a son. It was then realized he wanted to get off of welfare and provide for his family. He began working for an addiction facility during the day and a recording artists manager at night. TJ soon realized he really enjoyed helping people and wanted to find a way to combine his work at the addiction facility with his love for hip-hop culture. Now he had a vision, and a plan. The resilience behind his execution of that plan is truly remarkable. TJ founded "The Vision Program", where he was dedicated to fixing communities and inspiring our youth to believe in themselves while tapping into their potential.

"I have a passion for helping young adults and the youth" said TJ when asked about why he got into this specific space. TJ has been featured in countless interviews, Ted Talks, and has presented numerous speeches to at risk youth all around his community.



Following the success of The Vision Program, TJ founded his next project, **Creative Hope Studios**. The sister company partners with The Vision Program to bring in portable recording studios into treatment facilities and teach residents how to record, produce and engineer their own music. Creative Hope Studios has designed a space where residents can openly express themselves in a number of different ways through the power of music for years to come. As seen through his work, TJ has actively dedicated himself to creating a better life for at-risk youth in his community and plans to continue to try and reach youth across the country.

"Gratitude to me, is where blessings hide." Gratitude is something that is extremely important to TJ. I asked him; If you had to pinpoint one part of your work that you are truly grateful for what would that be? "Every encounter with a child is a divine appointment, I get the chance to spend time, and have a small window to influence the youth to make a positive change, that is really a blessing." ■



FINDING GRATITUDE ON A COVID-19 COLLEGE CAMPUS

by Chey Amick

Finding gratitude in today’s global climate can be tough. This is no exception when you are residing on a college campus in a COVID-19 world. A year ago, when I was imagining my freshman year of college, I thought I would be living the typical college life with large crowds of students passing me by on a daily basis. Currently, I am witnessing the opposite

When I was getting information on colleges, before the novel Coronavirus hit, brochures were filled with the typical photos of students sitting and laughing, or similar depictions. I was excited to see the college experience come to life.

Sometimes it is hard to find your way through a drastic change of events and that is especially true when you’re a college freshman walking around an otherwise barren campus. I have, however, managed to find little things that bring gratitude.

While 2021 Marywood University does not look like those brochure pictures, I am still within such a welcoming community.

During my almost semester and a half of college at Marywood, I have become deeply rooted in my department of Multimedia Communications. I’ve joined The Wood Word, our online news source, and quickly became the Assistant News Editor. I’ve also become a DJ for our college radio station. These two activities

have helped me find gratitude by keeping me occupied and they allow me not to dwell on the current state of the world.

Another way I have found gratitude is through my friends. We are all in the same department, so we get to see each other and hang out all the time. They’ve kept me grateful by making me laugh so hard I cry and just letting me be able to goof off. Personality wise, we are all on the same wavelength. I have never been a part of such a tight-knit group of friends. I’m forever grateful for them and enjoy all of our adventures together.

I am also filled with gratitude when I think of my family and my friends back home. My parents, especially my mom, and my friend Michaela and her family are always only a text away. Knowing this makes me appreciate the fact that if I need anything, I can always reach out to either of them – even if it is just to say hello and tell them about my day.

Overall, I have continued to find moments to be grateful by surrounding myself with people that enrich me on a daily basis. They all play a special role in my life and without them, I wouldn’t be where I am today.

Marcel Proust, a French novelist said, “Let us be grateful to the people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom.”

This quote is relevant because it furthers the notion that who you have in your life, influences you. I encourage you, the reader, to take a step back and find gratitude within the people you coexist with. The people in your life should elicit gratitude of some sort, and should make your soul blossom. As I’ve gotten older, I’ve learned to appreciate the little things just a little more than I always have.

Learning to find gratitude in my life everyday has transformed the way I look at the people and the world around me and has changed my college experience for the better.

If interested, you can check out The Wood Word, Marywood University’s online, student-run news source, at TheWoodword.org. ■





DAYS CAN SEEM HARD, FINDING GRATITUDE EVEN HARDER

by Tanya Ruhl

When you struggle with mental health, even your good days may not be great.

They might not be what you perceive to be the “perfect” day, like a day where you lay on the beach in the sun and read a book while listening to the waves lap on the sand. Or a day you spend hiking in the mountains, breathing in the fresh air while listening to the birds chirp, and taking in the colors of all the plant life that

surrounds you. Maybe neither of these two scenarios are your perfect day and that’s okay because that’s not really the point I’m trying to reach.

Some days are just plain hard and often times these are the days where we seem to focus on the most. These are the days where some of us can find it the most difficult to find gratitude within our day. Well, at least I know I tend to. I also seem to hyper-fixate on

absolutely everything that can and will go wrong on those days. Whether it has or not, I decide it will and my attitude can just downright be miserable. Just ask my kids or my husband, they will absolutely vouch for this.

My therapist says this is partly due to the fact that anything I can’t control, I do not like. So when I am having a bad day, or something has gone wrong during the day, it is at times due to an issue that occurred and was out of my control. This comes from having C-PTSD otherwise known as Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Too much control was taken away from me many times throughout the years and in unimaginable ways. So, because of this, I want control over anything and everything I can have control over. What can I say, I’m a work in progress.

I try to act like everything is okay, but my tone can have a roughness to it that isn’t normally there. My answers can also be short and sometimes cutting. Here’s the kicker: I don’t even realize I am acting like that most of the time! So, how do I change my attitude around as well as find gratitude? There is no simple answer nor a simple solution. For me, there are a few different ways. For starters, my family really helps. I am able to find gratitude because of them, as they show me that even on the hardest days it is okay to keep fighting. They also show me it is alright to let them know I struggle.

I find gratitude in my therapist. If it wasn’t for her, I don’t know if I would be able to have had kept a stable job for almost 6 years. I find gratitude in my work. While I may not work directly with patients any longer, there are still ways I am able to help and make an impact with what I do. I find gratitude in my service dog that I am currently training. He will be an amazing work partner-in-crime for me. I also find gratitude in my boss. She is one of my biggest supporters and is always willing to listen on the bad days.

Last but not least, I find gratitude in myself. I say this because making it through the hard, or bad days is not an easy task. There are days I want to give up and throw in the towel, but I don’t. So, don’t sell yourself short, it’s okay to have hard days. You can even find gratitude in a nap if that’s your thing. Pick one thing a day, and see if it helps to change your view on life just a little. Karen Rivera one of Retreat’s therapists also has some really great ideas on ways to find gratitude when you are feeling stuck so make sure you check her article out as well! ■





FINDING GRATITUDE IN A BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SETTING

by Karen Riviera

“Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos into order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend.” –Melody Beattie

In their work on boundaries, authors Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend describe gratitude as the opposite of envy and entitlement. They explain that grateful individuals are filled with happiness and joy as opposed to feeling miserable and resentful. Researcher and professor Dr. Brené Brown found that people who describe themselves as living a joyful life actively practice gratitude

and attribute their joyfulness to their gratitude practices. In fact, joy and gratitude are described as spiritual practices that are tied to a belief in human interconnectedness and a power greater than ourselves.

I am currently a Primary Therapist at Retreat Behavioral Health’s inpatient treatment center in Ephrata, PA. I have worked as a therapist since graduating with a master’s degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling in 2015, and I have been with Retreat for the past five years. Being here at Retreat, I’ve noticed that when most patients arrive to inpatient treatment, they are stuck in some way or another. Maybe they are stuck

personally, mentally, professionally, emotionally, relationally, developmentally, behaviorally, spiritually or perhaps something else or a combination of things. Sometimes they are stuck in addiction, grief, compulsions, anger or resentment. They often are seeking change or some sort of shift in focus, perspective, thinking, feeling, energy or behaving.

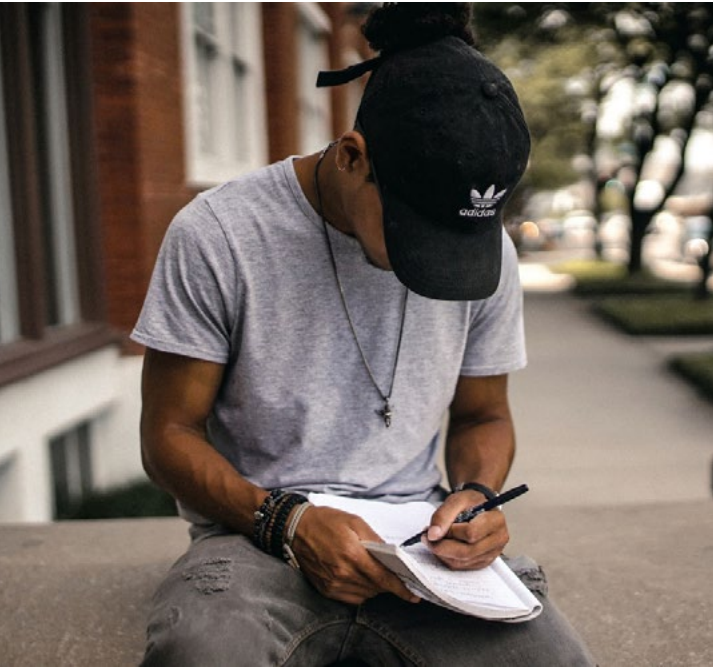
At times when I have personally felt stuck, gratitude has brought about that needed shift. I am thinking of a time while working with a particular group of individuals in therapy who seemed stuck. One day, (tired of spending every morning trying to verbally redirect negative energy in this group), I decided to bring in magazines, art supplies, and recycled jars. The group was asked to use the items to fill the jars with representations of the things they are grateful for. At first nothing seemed to be happening, but by the end of the group, members had engaged in a creative process. Their energy (which had previously been spent finding faults and complaining) was directed towards more positive thoughts and activities. They were smiling, giggling and talking to each other. In fact, most of the members had personally thanked me for bringing in supplies and doing something out of the usual routine. Furthermore, now they each had a jar filled with positive thoughts, phrases, ideas and energy that they could dump out and immerse themselves in whenever they felt stuck again.

Last year, I made a New Year’s resolution to replace complaining with an “attitude of gratitude.” Through this intentional focus on gratitude, I realized I was becoming more cognizant of my negative thoughts; however, I also realized I needed to take things a step further than just the attitude. Then, after receiving the exact same gratitude journal as a gift from two separate people, I realized maybe this was a “sign” (or perhaps a hint) that I needed to cultivate the attitude of gratitude into more of an action step in my personal life. As a therapist, I had given plenty of assignments to patients to nurture gratitude in their lives, clearly it was time to take my own advice.

So, how do we go about turning gratitude into a verb? A wise, fellow therapist suggested thanking God before our feet even hit the floor in the morning (which is a much more proactive and positive way of starting the day than my usual routine of hitting the snooze anywhere from 1-16 times). I personally started with writing daily in the gratitude journal I was gifted. I aim for writing in the journal as soon as I get to work and also in the evening before I go to bed. I once worked with a patient in early recovery from addiction and trauma who turned her gratitude list into a day-

long affair. Her daily routine included listing at least 10 things she is grateful for throughout the day. She shared that the most ideal time for her to think of gratitudes was while walking. To maximize the impact, it’s important that we take time to not just list what we are thankful for but to spend at least 10-20 seconds considering theses gratitudes in our mind, heart, and soul. Another way that I found to bring gratitude into my weekly routine was to take time while exercising or stretching to express gratitude and send love to different areas and parts of my body. Other ways to bring action to gratitude include art, prayer, meditation, and music. It is also important to share our gratitude with others (think—hand written notes, thoughtful gifts, or shared experiences).

Our brains are plastic—able to grow and reshape. We can actually change our brain structure through positive or negative experiences. If we choose to focus on positives, we can choose to wire our brains for happiness as opposed to the evolutionary negative bias present in our brains. The author of “Acceptance was the Answer,” (which is my favorite story in The Alcoholics Anonymous “Big Book”), says it best: “When I focus on what’s good today, I have a good day, and when I focus on what’s bad, I have a bad day. If I focus on a problem, the problem increases; if I focus on the answer, the answer increases.” Gratitude allows us to replace reactive feelings such as anger and resentment with more pleasant feelings. It can also help us relieve stress, decrease anxiety and depression, change our perceptions, increase creativity, and frees our energy for productive measures allowing us to move in a direction more aligned with our values. How will you bring action to your gratitude for yourself and others today? ■





Gratitude. In recovery circles, it’s common to talk about and identify the gratitude that we all experience when we realize what could’ve happened if we continued on the path that we were on. But, do we ever take a deep dive into gratitude? Do we know the definition?

Gratitude is, not surprisingly, both a noun and a verb; being defined as the quality of being thankful or showing appreciation in return for kindness. It also includes recognizing the value of something. I have an old friend whose favorite saying is, “Gratitude is an action word!” Cicero, a Roman scholar, observed: “Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others.”

While we often spend time identifying what gratitude is, I think it’s equally notable to identify what gratitude is not. Gratitude is not bypassing feelings or thoughts. Sometimes folks try to bypass the emotional work of getting well by just spending time identifying what they’re happy about and ignoring some of the nagging, unfinished feelings that may need to be addressed. Doing the work to let go of and acknowledge feelings that may be perceived as negative allows us the mental space to feel grateful. We also need to note that gratitude is not indebtedness or apologetic. Gratitude should be given freely and not seen as a duty. The spirit of gratitude, in all cases, should have no expectations and should depend on true thankfulness, not just guilt or deference. It should never feel like a ball and chain, but simply a free expression of thankfulness and openness to the gifts we have received.

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO CULTIVATE GRATITUDE:

- **Keep a gratitude journal**, or if you’re in alumni utilize the gratitude journal in our Retreat Recovery App. Writing it down as we know in recovery, is often a way to cultivate awareness.
- **Include one act of kindness in your actions daily.** Gratitude is often best expressed through the action of giving someone else an opportunity to feel blessed.
- **Use the phrase “Thank You” more often.** Most of our electronic communication these days has allowed us to let our manners slip away. Saying “Thank You” often makes us mindful of the gift, services, or favors we are receiving.
- **Look for the horse in the pile of manure!** Find the positive or the opportunity in a challenging circumstance. That doesn’t mean you don’t deal with negative emotions, but once you have processed those parts of a challenge, find the good.
- **Find a key point of the day, like driving to work or right after you’ve eaten breakfast and spend five minutes being mindful of the blessings in your immediate surroundings.** The beautiful countryside, the wonderful coffee, the house that keeps you safe and warm, the children sleeping upstairs.



Stop and give your full consciousness to this and try to practice this brief mindful exercise at the same time every day.

— **Watch an inspiring story or read an inspiring book.** Often times, seeing someone else’s challenges and triumphs can help us relate to our own experiences and reflect on how we overcame these challenges.

— **Get grateful on social media.** Try posting one thing you’re grateful for each day for one month. Pick a day that you will post something grateful and name it, for instance, Gratitude Tuesdays.

— **Avoid comparisons.** Very often comparisons encourage us to feel one above and one below. Instead, perhaps mentally celebrate the gifts that others receive and then spend a little time examining your own.

— **Make a gratitude board.** Or make gratitude part of your vision board. Sometimes visual cues and tactical connections help us cultivate internal feelings. Add photos of times that you’re grateful for, mementos from a once in a lifetime trip or a copy of an email from someone special to the board, then hang it in an area you frequent. Another creative suggestion is

to make a gratitude jar or box and place one expression of gratitude in daily. Then, when the time is right, spend some time reflecting on those statements.

— **Give back to others.** Giving what we have can help us realize that we are blessed with the ability to do so, and honors what we possess in a way that’s actionable. You can also give back in multiple ways such as giving time, talent, teaching or donating.

— **Take time to appreciate others!** Do it openly do and regularly. As Voltaire said “Appreciation is a wonderful thing. It makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well.”

— **Be mindful of your words.** Words can be limiting or expansive. Do your words invite gratitude and opportunity, or do they reinforce negativities? For instance, if you say “I’m never lucky” you may miss times when you had the opportunity to observe a little luck in your life. Avoid words like never or always. Try restating things in the manner, such as “I am pretty lucky” or “I have a lot to be grateful for.”

This is not an exhaustive list of ideas and I encourage you, if you’re interested in cultivating gratitude, to do research for yourself and find those practices that resonate with you the most, ensuring you’re successful.

Research tells us that gratitude can improve physical health, increase overall sense of well-being, increase self-esteem, broaden and build on assets we have, motivate and create pro-social behaviors and help people recover from mental health challenges and substance-use disorders. Gratitude practices also increase a sense of autonomy and confidence, and yet helps us relate to others and feel connected. Gratitude is also attributed to job satisfaction and high performance.

Let’s take a moment to cultivate our own gratitude with a few small exercises.

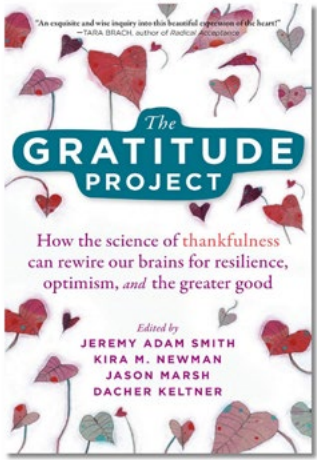
1. Close your eyes and think of three people in your life that you feel grateful for who are alive, and not near you right now. Using the lines below, take a moment to write down the names of those people, and what about them makes you feel grateful. Commit to letting them know within the next three days.

2. Close your eyes and think of three things about yourself that you are thankful for. Write them down in a positive “I am…” statement. Now take those three statements and place them in your pocket, purse, or wallet. Over the next three days, commit to taking them out and silently reading them to yourself at least twice a day.

I am

I am

I am



Also, check out the book “The Gratitude Project: How the Science of Thankfulness Can Rewire Our Brains for Resilience, Optimism, and the Greater Good,” or check out Berkeley University’s Greater Good Science Center at ggsc.berkeley.edu.

There is no doubt we’ve had a lot of challenges over the last year; certainly creating some opportunities to look at things differently, and to experience things in a way that has expanded our coping skills and awareness. So as we move into this New Year with these challenges, my wish for you in 2021, is that you fill your toolbox with the tools of gratitude and use them to build abundance in your life. ■

Joi Honer is the Senior Director of Alumni & Community Engagement at Retreat Behavioral Health.





TURNING LOSS INTO GRATITUDE: ONE MOTHER'S STORY

by Tyler Vieux

Recently, I had the pleasure of speaking with Bobbie Ziemer; mother of three, author and inspiration to “angel mommas” all over the country. Bobbie’s story is beyond captivating; I hope anyone reading this never suffers the

way she and her family has or can find strength in their experience. The loss of her daughter Madison had an everlasting ripple effect on all aspects of her life.



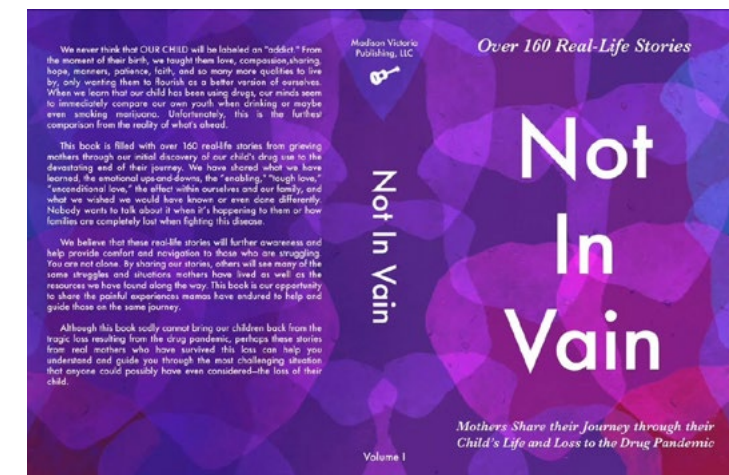
Bobbie’s daughter Madison, being a new mother, had checked into a drug detoxification center in the fall of 2017, looking to get her life back on track. Unfortunately, Madison would not be returning home; she passed away suddenly after entering the facility. As one would imagine this life altering experience brought life as Bobbie knew it to a screeching halt.

Bobbie went through more than anyone could ever imagine. The loss of a child, divorce, memory loss, you name it. She was functioning at about 1% of what she once considered to be “normal.” Once her career began to plummet, she made a conscious decision to take back control. She wanted to raise awareness about what had happened to her, her daughter and her family. She made it a priority to help others while destigmatizing the disease of addiction. The idea of her daughter simply being a statistic was not an option.

Bobbie decided she wanted to share her truth about what had happened; not only to her daughter, but also how it impacted her life. She also wanted to provide that same opportunity to other mothers who were going through similar circumstances. Bobbie curated a book, titled “Not In Vain” where over 160 mothers share their journey after losing a child to an overdose.

“The grief is heavy, it doesn’t become lighter, you just become stronger” says Bobbie. To find gratitude after such a tragic experience really speaks volumes about one’s character. Bobbie not only found gratitude after her daughter’s passing, but she used that to fuel new opportunities not just for herself but others suffering as well. By doing this she was able to unite grieving mothers everywhere. Mothers that were incredibly grateful to

have a platform to tell their story about what they had gone through as they lost a child to substance use.



“I am honored to be the vessel to help these women tell their stories” said Bobbie.

Someone was always there for her while assembling her book whether it be an editor, illustrator or another mother willing to help. That is what she was so grateful for; the process fell into place. People helping time and time again for her book, all dedicated to saving the lives of others. Her book was dedicated to creating awareness and avoiding having even just one person feel the way that she felt following the loss of her daughter. “The true gratitude is how everything fell into place the way it was supposed to, to make the book happen,” said Bobbie.




“I remember going into the bathroom before bed one night, I just remember sobbing. Not because I was sad, it was truly an overwhelming feeling of gratitude.” Bobbie said after being able to leverage her past experiences and skills to make everything she had done possible. By using her pain in a way that she was able to help others and connect them to let them know they are not alone. This has helped in many ways and something she will cherish forever. Touching the lives of many and doing good with her time on earth is something she has everlasting gratitude towards.

Some gifts are given in ways that we may not ever be able to understand, it’s about appreciating the moment and being grateful for what’s in front of you.

“There is purpose through the pain.”

All proceeds from Bobbie’s book “Not In Vain” are donated to the #NotDone mother support group which continues to empower & unite women across the country. ■



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THE
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Corner**

with Steve Martorano

TUNE INTO OUR PODCAST EVERY TUESDAY AT: BEHAVIORALCORNER.COM/PODCAST

Join Steve Martorano, seasoned Philadelphia radio personality, as he discusses the complex world of behavioral health, the way we live and how our life choices affect our mental, physical and spiritual well-being.

RECENT EPISODES



EPISODE 39: Jackie James & Germano Kimbro
How large is the mental health crisis in general, and how much larger is it in minority communities? These are the questions answered this time on the Behavioral Corner. Racial disparities in mental health services are the topic with guests Jackie James, P.R. Director for Retreat Behavioral Health, New Haven, CT, and Germano Kimbro, a community activist, breaks in down on the "Corner."



EPISODE 38: TJ Griffin
When TJ Griffin decided he had something to share with at-risk kids, he didn't look for them to come to him. He went to them, in "the hood." Preaching the gospel of Hip Hop culture through his "Vision Program," TJ delivered a message of hope. "Just 'cause you're born in the hood doesn't me you have to die there."



EPISODE 37: AJ Daulerio
We all know the story of Icarus, who flew too high and crashed to earth. So does AJ Daulerio. As the editor of the wildly successful website "Deadspin," AJ had the world in his hands when it all came tumbling down in a haze of arrogance and drugs.

UPCOMING EVENTS

TO VIEW OUR UPCOMING EVENTS, SCAN THIS CODE:

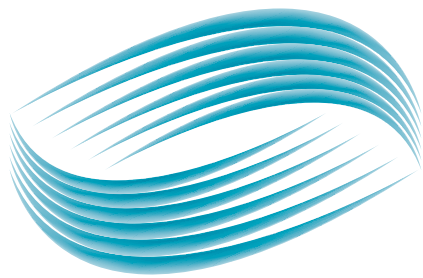


Retreat Behavioral Health Live Panel Discussion Series:

Our Upcoming Live Panel Discussions on Facebook Live will be held at 6 pm ET.

Retreat is continuing to hold a series of live panel discussions on Facebook Live. These conversations with leading experts, academics, and voices on a variety of issues pertaining to substance abuse and mental health are meant to foster important discussions about themes and topics relevant to our community.

Join us regularly for these live discussions, and weigh in with your comments, questions, and feedback, on our official Facebook page: www.facebook.com/retreatbh to find out more information about the live panels or other events please go to our events page, events.retreatbehavioralhealth.com, on our website to find up to date information.



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Retreat Behavioral Health offers addiction services, from medically monitored detox to outpatient rehabilitation, providing a full continuum of care. We work with most commercial insurers, offer 24/7 admissions and complimentary transportation. We have locations in Lancaster County, PA, Palm Beach County, FL, and New Haven, CT. At Retreat, we pride ourselves on providing a compassionate and spiritual environment for those struggling with addiction in a secure and comfortable setting with dedicated and caring staff.
