PERFORMING RECOVERY

AFFECTED OTHERS SPECIAL

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NOV 24–JAN 25

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WELCOME

to the **Affected Others** special issue of

Performing Recovery

It goes without saying that as an alcoholic myself, I often find identification in interviews, stories and poems from other people in recovery. But what's maybe more surprising is the recognition when I have spoken to people who don't identify as addicts. Even people who aren't necessarily recovery-focused, such as supporting artists and musicians, have often told me about how participating in a recovery-informed project has helped them better understand the experiences of a family member, friend or even teacher.

Above: *Let It Play* (credit: Road Factory Films)

Anecdotally at least, there are far more people whose lives are touched by another person's addiction than as a society we would like to admit. This is why we talk about addiction as being a community or society disease. This is why we talk about how the solution should consider communities and societal structures.

Though the exact numbers of people impacted by others' addictions are impossible to even estimate, it's a mathematical certainty that these figures are greater than the number of addicts.

Affected others has a broad meaning. Addiction affects traditional and non-traditional families, friend groups, neighbours, workplaces – in fact, any situation where humans rely on each other for practical and emotional support. And yet, so many people remain afraid to speak up about how their lives, emotions and behaviours have been impacted by another's addiction.

The reasons for this dynamic are complex, but as Viv Evans, CEO of Adfam, so rightly suggests in her interview in this issue of *Performing Recovery*, there is massive stigma. And I understand that fear.

One of our editorial principles is that we don't pressure people to talk about things they feel uncomfortable about or that they aren't ready to discuss. So it's with immense gratitude that we present the voices in this special issue. They bring hope and comfort to those of us yet not ready to tell our own 'affected other' stories.

In this issue, we also speak to Deirdre Kashdan, whose *The Missing Project* highlights the erasure of people affected by the addiction or mental illness of a loved one. We have an interview with the filmmakers behind *No Matter What*, which chronicles the recovery of Cassy Rathbun, highlighting the importance of family support.

leon clowes talks with music industry professional Craig Hyman about how adoption and experiences with addiction have impacted their work and lives. In her piece *Waltzing with Musetta*, Annie King takes us through her relationship with her father, both in active addiction and sobriety. We also have a call-out to the community from the makers of a new film, *Play It Again*, in which Emma reconnects with a boyfriend she lost to addiction through her dance and his guitar.

The goal of this special edition of *Performing Recovery* is not to separate affected others from the broader recovery arts sector, but to highlight their experiences. Just as an addict in recovery can find their voice through artistic practice, so too can those affected by someone else's compulsive behaviours find healing through creativity. But as Viv also points out, these projects, like other services for affected others, are unfortunately hard to find.

I hope that the stories told here can help to change that.

NEWS & EVENTS

Not Saints Expands Recovery Support with Music Workshops

Not Saints, the world's only charity record label exclusively supporting musicians in recovery, is offering a new, 6-session programme called **Musical Futures: Creative Recovery Workshops**. Designed for people in addiction recovery, the programme focuses on fostering confidence, connection and self-expression with songwriting and music production.

Founded in 2018 by music industry veteran Chris De Banks, Not Saints has been instrumental in integrating recovery and creativity. Not Saints was inspired by Chris's own experiences in music after he realised that sober musicians and sober music fans had little on offer in terms of engagement with mainstream music culture.

The Musical Futures programme is tailored to accommodate all skill levels. Led by professional musicians with lived experience of addiction, such as Mishkin Fitzgerald, the programme combines technical guidance with emotional exploration. Sessions include everything from songwriting basics to recording demo tracks. Participants also gain access to a peer-support network through group discussions and shared musical experiences.

Above: Musician and facilitator, Mishkin Fitzgerald (credit: Not Saints)

IMPACT BEYOND THE MUSIC

The programme aims to achieve more than just musical output. By encouraging participants to channel their thoughts and feelings into creative expression, the workshops promote positive mental health, build self-esteem and foster a sense of identity. Additionally, the collaborative nature of the sessions helps participants forge connections within the recovery community, a crucial element in sustaining long-term recovery.

Not Saints has already made a significant impact. Since its inception, the organisation has worked with over 70 musicians, facilitated the release of 150 songs globally and hosted more than 50 sober music events across the UK.

Above: Founder of music and founder of Not Saints, Chris DeBanks (credit: Not Saints)

TRACKING SUCCESS WITH CHIME

The Musical Futures workshops use the CHIME framework – Connectedness, Hope, Identity, Meaning and Empowerment – to measure their effectiveness. The CHIME framework is a model for personal recovery that helps people with mental illness gain hope, purpose, and a positive sense of self. Participants complete questionnaires throughout the programme, providing valuable feedback for continuous improvement.

The course is separated into individual sessions that focus on different core skills including the basics of songwriting, structures, arrangement, melody, lyrics and recording. Participants will be encouraged to work on their own creations, with assistance and feedback given throughout the course. Alongside the described skills of songwriting, structure, and basic music production, participants will learn or enhance existing skills such as collaboration, listening skills, critiquing, patience, and perseverance. These are all transferable skills that support ongoing recovery.

Mishkin is a professional musician and music teacher with over 20 years of experience. She is the Principal singer-songwriter with Crimson Veil, Mishkin Fitzgerald & The Chemical Perils, HVIRESS, and solo artist.

The workshops are open to anyone interested in exploring music as a tool for recovery, regardless of their experience or musical ability. For more information, contact Chris De Banks at chris@notsaints.co.uk.

You can read more about Not Saints in Issue 3 of Performing Recovery.

Find out more about Not Saints here: notsaints.co.uk/music

Get Creative For The New Year

Create Better Days, in partnership with the **Energy Xchange**, are holding sober art workshops where anybody can come and paint, write, play music and express themselves creatively in a safe and sober environment.

The organisers told *Performing Recovery*: "Through creation, we can turn our pain into something we are proud of. I cut up old toys and pictures that held painful memories for me and turned them into art pieces I take pride in. We hear from inspirational guest speakers who can inspire others with how art, music and creativity have changed their lives for the better.

They also inspire other people, who may feel scared to try something new, and show them that they can do it, we can all create. We empower people in addiction and trauma recovery to find their creative voice. Art is therapy – being creative helps overcome difficult emotions, which recovering addicts know all too well. And art should be accessible to people from all backgrounds. Creativity is essential to recovery and growth."

Starting on the 25th of January, Create Better Days workshops will be held monthly at Calthorpe Community Garden in Kings Cross, London. What they create in the monthly workshops will be showcased in the summer in a special exhibition. If you want to connect with the group, donate art supplies or speak at a workshop, you can contact them on Instagram at @sophiewoodsart.

Fallen Angels Celebrate Double Win At One Dance UK Awards

Fallen Angels Dance Theatre started 2025 in style at the prestigious One Dance UK Awards, taking home accolades in two significant categories: the Community Champion Award and the Dance Changemaker Award, the latter honouring the inspiring work of Artistic Director Paul Bayes Kitcher and the company.

Held on the 24th of January, 2025, at the Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome, the awards ceremony celebrated the outstanding contributions of individuals and organisations across the UK's vibrant dance sector. The event recognises those who use dance as a tool for connection, inclusion and positive change, making Fallen Angels' achievements particularly noteworthy.

The Community Champion Award highlights the company's exceptional efforts in using dance to strengthen and build communities, fostering creative expression and connection with non-professional groups of all ages.

The Dance Changemaker Award, presented to **Paul Bayes Kitcher** and the company, recognises their bold and impactful commitment to improving access to dance, promoting diversity and driving inclusion within the arts.

The One Dance UK Awards is an annual celebration for people from across the dance sector to unite, celebrate, acknowledge and reward those who have made an impact on the vibrant UK dance landscape.

For more information on Fallen Angels, visit: fallenangelsdt.org

Above: Fallen Angels in 2023 (credit: Point of View Photography)

Write For Performing Recovery!

We want to hear from you! Do you have a project you want the recovery arts world to know about? Are you a poet, creative writer or visual artist looking for a place to publish your work? Do you want to interview an artist in recovery? *Performing Recovery* is always on the lookout for contributors to our magazine, newsletter and website. Currently we're unable to pay for submissions (but we're working on changing that). If you have something you want to get out to the recovery arts world, let us know.

Contact editorial@recovery-arts.org
or visit recovery-arts.org

Spotlight On…

VIVIENNE EVANS
CEO, ADFAM

Adfam *is England's leading charity supporting families that have been affected by someone's drinking, drug use or gambling. In 2024, the organisation celebrated its 40th year, releasing the report* Above and beyond: The key role families play in recovery.

Vivienne (Viv) Evans *joined Adfam in 2001 and is the chief executive officer. Here, she speaks to* **Masha Tiunova** *about the organisation's history, breaking down stigma and hopes for the future.*

Masha: Can you tell me more about how Adfam emerged and has evolved over the years?

Viv: Adfam was set up 40 years ago by the mother of a heroin user. She was lost and couldn't find any information or support. But then she found that there were other people in the same situation, so she set up a support group. At first, it was very low-key. It took place in her house with other people who were in the same position.

For several years, there were many small, local groups. Adfam operated a helpline families could phone for support. This was discontinued in around 2000 and replaced with support using a website. Adfam used to have funding to support services for families of people who had been incarcerated because of substance misuse. There have been a lot of changes over the 40 years; Adfam has been through all sorts of ups and downs – expansion and contraction.

The training element of our work has remained a strong focus. Initially, services were confined to prison visitor centres. Since then, we've introduced face-to-face services and launched Adfam at Home after the COVID-19 lockdowns. This remote service offers up to 6 client-centred support sessions on issues like understanding addiction, setting boundaries, coping strategies and protecting children if you're a non-using parent. This approach is based on years of expertise, with highly skilled professionals running the services.

Adfam provides training for professionals, practitioners and frontline workers, incorporating self-care for family members into many courses. Our website features six counsellor-led videos to guide family members through recovery and self-support. They also signpost people to mindfulness and self-care.

> "Just like people with substance use dependency, families face a huge stigma. People don't like to speak out."

Adfam also acts as the voice of family members, campaigning on their behalf. We research to highlight the extent of the problem and the experiences of families, raising these issues with the government, local authorities, the press and the public. We believe families need support in their own right – not just because they are supporting someone with a dependency. That said, our research shows families often play a key role in the recovery process, particularly mothers and partners – it's often women. Families play a vital role in recovery, but they need that support themselves.

Just like people with substance use dependency, families face a huge stigma. People don't like to speak out. Adfam tries to challenge the stigma that surrounds anybody who is affected by drug or alcohol misuse. We are trying to build more awareness of the issue and hope that through that, there will be better support, not just for families, but children as well. For instance, Adfam focuses on parental substance misuse, working to keep families together and children safe when possible.

We also run the Alcohol in Families Alliance and an alliance of family support groups.

When I joined Adfam 20 years ago, there were support groups in most UK local authorities. Unfortunately, many of these closed or were taken over by treatment providers after 2010. These groups were often volunteer-led by people with lived experience. Adfam was founded by someone with lived experience, and we're proud to maintain that ethos in our values.

Masha: What changes have you seen in how affected families are supported?

Viv: The cause is still there. There are still as many people affected now as there were 40 years ago. There's still a stigma that is still not talked about enough, despite our best efforts. There's still a long way to go.

There's still a need to train professionals, and we now offer training on adverse childhood experiences. For example, foetal alcohol syndrome disorder. There's also more of an awareness of the impact on families. More and more treatment providers are thinking about families. Certainly people in recovery themselves are talking about families.

There also seems to be an awareness that there is still not enough money

Above: The Adfam report, July 2024 (credit: Adfam)

in the pot. There probably never will be. When local authorities put out tenders for treatment providers, they don't really recognise the need for family support. So that's what we're up against.

So there is more awareness but a lack of coordination between social services and drug and treatment services, and this directly impacts children affected by parental issues. It's a bit of a Cinderella issue. From a local authority level, there's a feeling that family support is a nice add-on if you have the money, but it's not that important.

On a positive note, the voices of families are being heard more loudly now. We've been helping people with lived experience campaign for change, encouraging them to contact local MPs or councillors and advocate for family needs. I would have hoped after 40 years that the cause would be as well-known as mental health, but across the whole drug and alcohol sector there are the same challenges.

Masha: What can be done to best address stigma?

Viv: It's hard to address stigma. In part, it comes from people with lived experience not wanting to talk about it. I remember going to our local women's institute and talking about the work that Adfam does. About half a dozen women wanted a chat with me privately afterwards. They didn't want to talk about it in front of anybody else.

In our society, substance misuse is still seen as an awful thing to happen, but also something that happens to people who are dirty or criminals. In rural areas, this is even more pronounced because people don't want their neighbours in a close community to know. The press still talks about "alkies" and "druggies" – so we also have to work on the language used. I also think we have a long way to go, even with people who are professionals in health and social services.

It's an issue that's poorly understood unless you're actually in the sector, and I think that scares people in the health and social care sector. They're frightened of not knowing what to do if they come across a family member or someone with a dependency. They're worried about child protection and safeguarding.

The problem of addiction is not seen to be a mental health or public health problem but something that's associated with everything nasty, dirty and against the law. The only people who use these substances are people who you wouldn't want to be around.

Above: St Bride's Church, London, where Adfam holds yearly carol concerts (credit: David Iliff, License: CC BY-SA 3.0)

It is such a huge myth, but to break down those misconceptions and misperceptions, it means a big concerted effort on the part of everybody in the sector.

> For people who perhaps don't understand the impact of substance misuse on families, the poems can be very impactful. It would be great if there were more creative works.

Masha: What gives you the most hope about the sector?

Viv: Some years ago, the government gave us some money for what was called the Children of Alcohol Dependent Parents Project. That ran for about 3 years, but doesn't run anymore. We keep asking for it to be reinstated. That gave me hope.

There was also the Family Intervention Project and Family Hubs. Those sorts of interventions gave me some hope for the future, though often drugs and alcohol are not included in the mix of support that's offered at those hubs.

The growing willingness of people with lived experience – and even public figures – to speak out is also encouraging. Their voices are the most credible and powerful.

Adfam's role is to act as a catalyst, supporting these individuals to share their stories and advocate for change. There's increasing government interest in these issues, particularly around supporting children affected by parental substance misuse.

Our collaboration with recovery groups has been brilliant. A few years ago, we didn't even use the word recovery, did we? Now that recovery organisations are making a big fuss, people must stand up and listen. I want to replicate that and make a fuss about families.

We have a carol concert every year at St Bride's Church, Fleet Street, London, a lovely church. We get quite a lot of friends who come along and support us. We also have a competition in which family members submit a poem or a piece of creative writing about their experiences.

The winning entries are read out during the concert by one of the guest celebrities. It's a moving and uplifting event. For people who perhaps don't understand the impact of substance misuse on families, the poems can be very impactful. I hope they can change minds.

It would be great if there were more creative works. For example, Antonia Rolls' work (*see issue 7*) is absolutely brilliant.

Masha: What do you want from the future for affected others?

Viv: I'd love affected people to know that they're going to be okay. That they're strong and recognised, not hidden in plain sight. That they're understood by health professionals, by the general public and by the neighbour down the road.

I want them to know that they're not going to be discriminated against, but they're going to feel supported because they can get help and support, and not hide away in a corner.◆

For more information, see: adfam.org.uk
The Adfam 2024 report: adfam.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Above-and-Beyond-July-2024.pdf

Adfam's Family Voices Competition is a poetry and creative writing competition for families affected by substance use. You can see the 2024 winners on pages 8, 26 and 28.

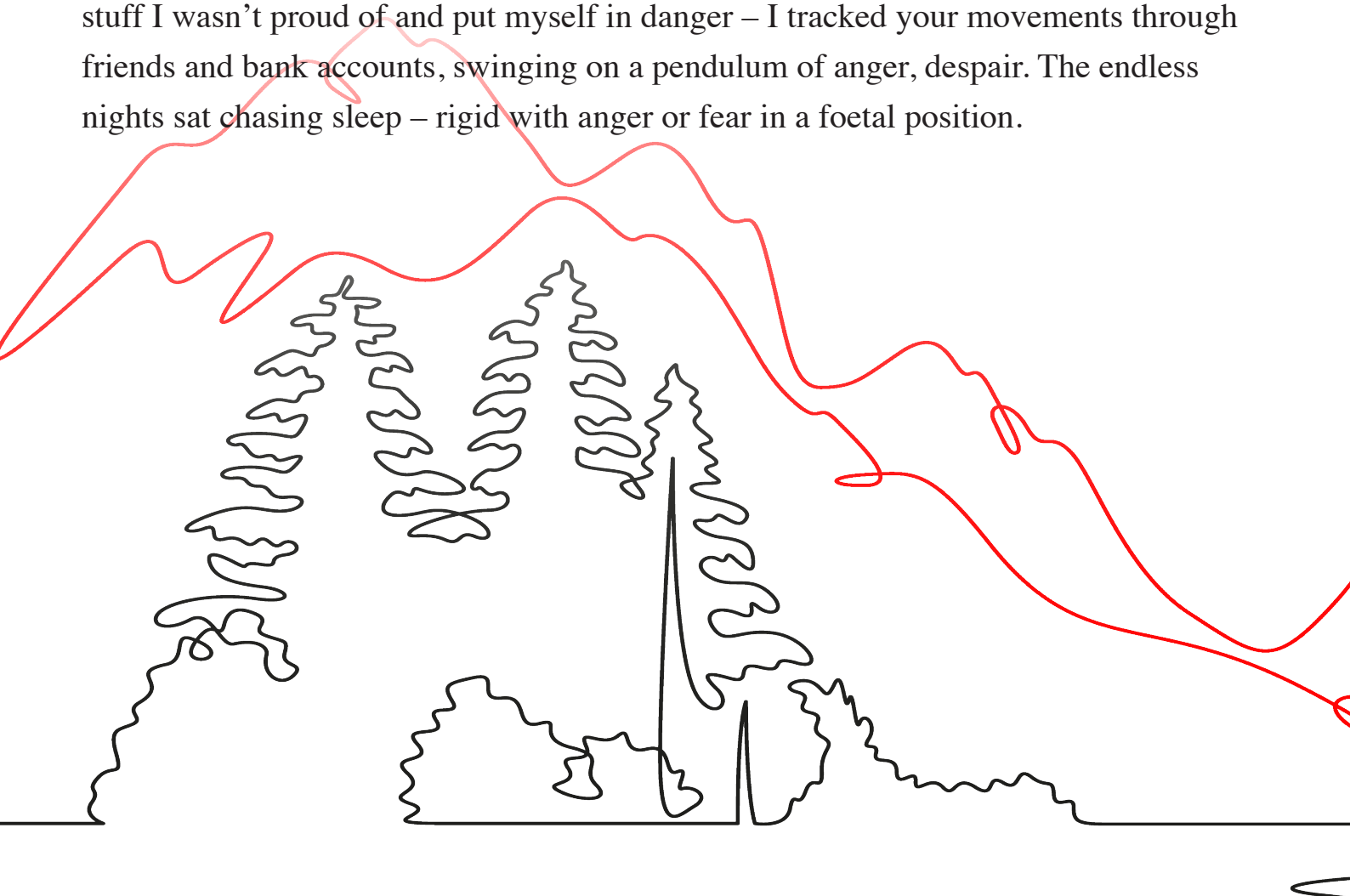
Addicted to you – a letter to my son

by

Caroline Wills

The song ‘Fix You’ resonates in my head, but I couldn’t. I had tried everything but I had run out of options, ideas, energy and hope. For years I tried to find an answer, a cure, a way to find my boy again and to take away the pain, despair and shame.

Drugs dominated your life – every waking moment was focused on the next hit. It didn’t matter about the lies, the stealing and the damage to the rest of us. But I was also addicted. Addicted to you. I lost sight of me, as I was so focused on you. You were the first thing I thought when I woke and would be my last thought at night – usually angry and tense as I waited to see if you would make it home alive. Like you, I did stuff I wasn’t proud of and put myself in danger – I tracked your movements through friends and bank accounts, swinging on a pendulum of anger, despair. The endless nights sat chasing sleep – rigid with anger or fear in a foetal position.

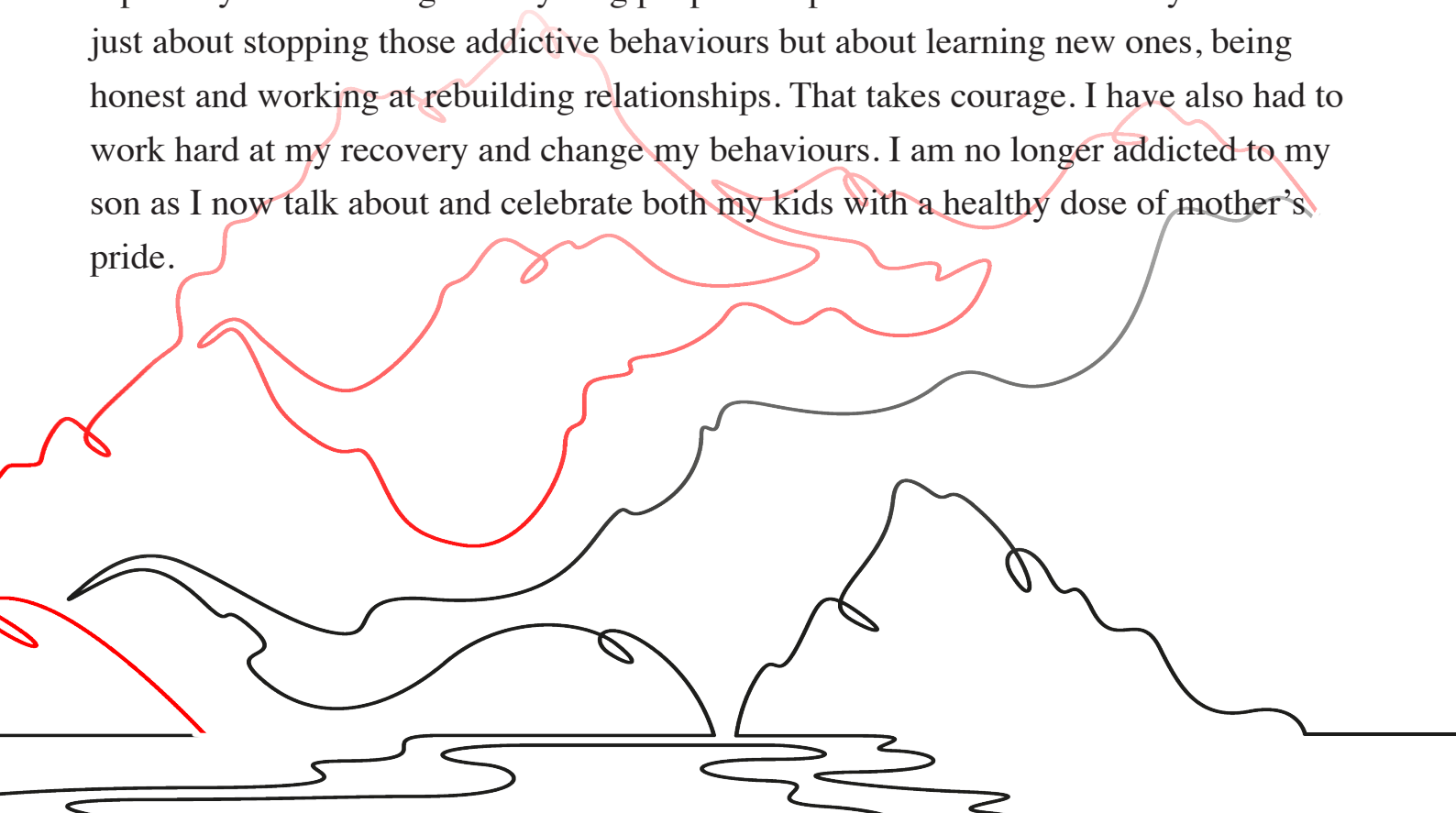


You were good at lying but not as good as me at remembering details, searching for clues and deliberately catching you out. You were my specialist subject. So much wasted energy, and I was more devious than I care to admit. But to what end ? You hated the situation you were in as much as me, but we were both stuck on repeat.

You tried everything I suggested, but things got worse not better. But you always came home. The connection – you knew you were safe. We tried to function and manage as a family, but the shadow grew and got worse. For years I waited for the simple 'morning' text. You knew I worried, and this was our unspoken agreement that you were safe. Those times were hard, and there seemed to be no end in sight, just existing.

But I was still chasing that connection, that tiny chink that showed you were still there. There was hope. I realised, no, we realised I was not enough. I couldn't fix you and we needed a different type of help. I let you go. It was at this point that our recovery began.

I am proud to have a son in recovery and share our story with pride, as we have worked hard as a family. We do not celebrate and shout about recovery enough, especially when talking about young people. People work hard at recovery. It is not just about stopping those addictive behaviours but about learning new ones, being honest and working at rebuilding relationships. That takes courage. I have also had to work hard at my recovery and change my behaviours. I am no longer addicted to my son as I now talk about and celebrate both my kids with a healthy dose of mother's pride.



unhidden in plain sight

Deirdre Kashdan is an artist living in Deal, a coastal town in Kent. She recently received the Wellbeing Award from City Lit in London and the Kent Mental Wellbeing Award (Highly Commended) for her highly acclaimed The Missing Project. *Here, she speaks to Alex Mazonowicz about the inspiration for the project, how art has the power to help those affected by a loved one's mental illness or addiction to create connections, and why it's important to speak about experiences of health and social care systems.*

Left: Deirdre Kashan in her home in Deal (credit: Danny Burrows), above: Deirdre's art space in her home (credit: Deirdre Kashdan)

My first encounter with Deirdre Kashdan's art was in a converted boating hut, now a gallery, on Brighton Beach in mid-2024. Her work was being exhibited alongside Antonia Rolls's *Addicts and Those Who Love Them* (see issue 7 of *Performing Recovery*). Moving around this intimate space, I saw a striking photographic portrait of obscured, identical figures seated and draped in blue. The image was part of *The Missing Project*, a participatory work for women affected by a loved one's mental illness or addiction.

An artist and mother of a man who has had schizophrenia for 27 years, she had long wished to depict her own and others' experience of what it is like to love someone with an enduring mental illness often exacerbated by addiction.

"At 72 years of age, I felt an urgency to speak out. There is still so much stigma. We are all sufferers in this," she tells me over a Zoom call in mid-November 2024. As she reflects on her experience, she is cheerful but softly spoken and is curious about *Performing Recovery*.

The discovery of Victorian hidden mother photography provided the inspiration for the work. These early daguerreotypes were the first publicly available photographs, emerging in the 1840s and 1850s. Because exposure times could take minutes, the subject would have to stay still to create a good image. For babies and infants, this was almost impossible, so their guardian, usually the mother, would have to hold or prop up the child as the photograph was being taken.

To ensure the child remained the picture's focus, the mother would be hidden under cloaks, behind curtains or even disguised as a chair.

"I identified with these powerful images. They seemed to represent what I'd been doing for all these years – hidden from members of the community and often hidden from my son, who had no idea how much I'd been doing to support him behind the scenes. I have also been hidden from the professionals who are charged with his care. I could have been included much more, so I was often this missing person.

These pictures depict somebody not needed or wanted for that particular photograph. The important thing was the child. It's sad. Why not a portrait of the mother and child together?"

I point out that though they might seem unimportant, they are propping up the person in the photo.

"Absolutely. And this dependency may never end. Our loved ones are missing, and so are we."

In December 2023, she posted a call-out to other women on social media, inviting them to take part in the work. Mothers, sisters, daughters, wives – people quickly responded, asking to know more and expressing interest. She would initially meet with them in person or via FaceTime to share experiences, talk about the work and establish trust.

At the heart of the project is a collection of poignant photographic portraits, inspired by hidden mother photography. Women have chosen their own drapes, poses and props to depict their own situations. To start with, Deirdre would take the photos. But when people were spread further afield, they would ask others to capture their images. This added a whole new dimension to the work, as people were having conversations about their

Above: A *Missing Project* portait displayed at City Lit, London (credit: Deirdre Kashdan)

images and what they depicted. A number of the photographs have been enlarged to life-size and displayed outside City Lit in Covent Garden, London, as part of their annual Mental Wealth Festival. She likes the idea of the work being displayed outside, in a busy public space, as opposed to being confined to a gallery. She wants the work to reach as wide an audience as possible.

In a city famous for its statues of royalty and war heroes, people stopped to take in the images of *The Missing Project*.

Another of Deirdre's projects, *They Don't Care*, touches on the frustration of engaging with a health system that offers little support for affected others.

They Don't Care was a durational performance undertaken at City Lit in London in October 2024. She repeatedly wrote "To Whom It May Concern", attempting to fill 27 reams of paper. She has written countless letters over 27 years, trying to get help to prevent her son from suffering another mental health crisis. Many of these letters were never acknowledged.

"I had no chance of completing 27 reams, but I did complete around 2,000 pages. Many people joined in, some coming every day to write a bit more. It was quite incredible." The performance inspired many conversations and was a powerful reminder of how much people really do care.

"Some people sat and cried. They talked of their own experiences and of people that they knew who were in a similar position to mine and actually signposted them to me."

> "What strikes me is the **depth of connection** we make. A connection that I don't necessarily have with people that I've known for a very long time."

Deirdre reads me one message that she is especially touched by:

"Sorry I didn't get a chance to meet you this week, but I probably wouldn't have found words to express properly how meaningful your work is to me. My own experiences of trying to get help for my mum and later myself for decades was something I thought nobody would care about, let alone seek to understand. That you have foregrounded this reality that exists for many and literally centred your experience within the gallery space itself is something I felt very deeply moved by.

Thank you for all that you are doing to raise awareness and give voice to so many who are still unheard."

At the time of writing, Deirdre's son has had a relapse and was being kept in hospital under Section 3 of the Mental Health Act, which allows the NHS to keep a person in hospital for treatment "if their mental disorder is of a nature and/or degree that requires treatment in hospital."

She describes how family members and immediate carers are often marginalised in healthcare settings, causing even greater anxiety and suffering. She also tells me that due to confidentiality legislation and without her son's permission to share information, she is given little or no information about him, despite his lack of mental capacity.

"There's a need for confidentiality. But isn't there also the need for carers to be told at least something, without going into detail? Even if it's only 'Your son is okay, he's safe and there's some improvement.' That's all I need to know."

It speaks to the power of Deirdre's work, as well as her determination to have her story heard, that when someone from Chris's ward called her to ask for feedback on how families were being treated, she pointed them to *The Missing Project* website.

"In fact, my experience there has not been good, but at the end of the interview, I asked if I could share the project with her. She looked at it and said, 'Oh, my word, this is so powerful! And I'm going to send it straight away to my bosses because we know we need to do better in this area.'"

Her experience is not uncommon. An under-resourced healthcare sector – coupled with society's stigmatising attitude to addiction and serious mental illness – creates the landscape of ignored yet vital carers that Deirdre's work so eloquently illustrates.

Deirdre talks about how art has the power to heal, reveal and transform. It can help us make sense of our own experience as well as that of others. It can throw a spotlight on social issues, helping to raise awareness. It can create a space for people to be heard and acknowledged.

Above: *They Don't Care*, performed at City Lit in October 2024 (credit: Danny Burrows)

"What strikes me is the depth of connection we make. A connection that I don't necessarily have with people that I've known for a very long time." She sees no barriers or boundaries to the work – it has the potential to be enormous. These connections with other women in her position has formed a type of "social sculpture."

However wide the reach of Deirdre's art is, it maintains that all-important personal connection. As she picks up her laptop and uses the camera to show me her art space, I can sense the excitement. It's an office in her home with a kaleidoscopic assortment of artworks, photographs, clippings and books. It's here that she spends her time putting together her projects, building the social sculpture. It was also the setting for what she refers to as "One of the most important conversations I've ever had" when she heard her son wandering about this creative area.

"I asked what he thought the work was about. I don't think he'd ever realised the effect of his illness on me. How when he'd been sleeping rough on the streets in the middle of winter, cold, vulnerable and intoxicated, I hadn't known where he was or whether he was safe. He'd been unable to think about me in all of that while trying to survive. His addiction and desperation made him appear to be someone unable to relate or care about others.

But at that moment, we were able to talk about these things. I told him the project wasn't his story, but that I was telling my story and that other women were telling their stories, too. But I said, 'Ultimately, what I'm doing is fighting for you. You have been so let down over the years. I want there to be better services for you in the future.'"

This is the complex challenge that art like *The Missing Project* addresses so effectively. Conversations about mental illness and addiction often focus solely on the individual – their choices, the steps needed to help them and how they can recover. However, addiction and mental illness are increasingly recognised as not just as individual issues but as family, community and societal ones.

We frequently overlook the stories of those affected by someone else's mental illness and addiction – parents, friends, partners and children. In doing so, we ignore both the crucial role they can play in supporting recovery and their own need for healing. Just as we work to reduce stigma and celebrate individuals in recovery, we must also recognise and support everyone impacted by mental illness and addiction.

Thinking about *The Missing Project* images displayed outside City Lit, I can't help but see some similarities to the grave of the Unknown Warrior at Westminster Abbey, just over a mile from the City Lit building. I hesitate to make this connection to war, but Deirdre enthusiastically agrees.

"I see these people as heroes. They're battling with so much. They've got their own grief and their own worries. They are often living with trauma because the person who is unwell and addicted is behaving in quite dangerous ways.

So they are absolute heroes, and they don't give up – they battle! So yes, they're to be celebrated. Wouldn't it be wonderful to erect a beautiful memorial or something concrete to recognise and celebrate them? I'd love that."

In its own way, and with more than 200 participants across the UK and the US, Deirdre's work is doing just that.◆

You can view The Missing Project *at:* www.themissingproject.co.uk
The invitation to participate is open. You can message deirdrekashdan@googlemail.com *for more information.*

UPCOMING EVENTS:

July / August 2025: Exhibition and continuation of *They Don't Care* at The Beaney House of Art and Knowledge in Canterbury.

25 July 2025 (National Schizophrenia Awareness Day): An evening event at The Lighthouse Music & Arts Pub in Walmer. It will devoted to *The Missing Project* and includes poetry, prose and photographs, along with music composed by Jonathan Hamer, who tragically took his own life in 2024.

Sept 2025: Displays in Ramsgate, Deal and Dover libraries.

Oct 2025: Further displays at numerous Southeastern Railway stations to mark World Mental Health Awareness Day.

FAMILY MATTERS

No Matter What *is an inspiring documentary about* **Cassy Rathbun**, *a resilient woman from rural Colorado, the US, and her family's unwavering support as she navigates addiction and incarceration to rebuild her life. Co-directed by* **Gayle Nosal** *and* **Beret Strong**, *the film features Cassy's powerful journey. The documentary is being used nationwide in educational programmes at correctional facilities, treatment centres and re-entry services. It had its Colorado broadcast premiere in 2025 and will screen at the Advanced International Winter Symposium on Addictive Disorders, Behavioral Health, and Mental Health in Colorado on the 27th of January.* **Alex Mazonowicz** *met with Cassy, Gayle and Impact Director* **Lisa Allen** *to talk about the origins of the film, its reception and the importance of family in recovery.*

Alex: How did the idea for the film come up?

Gayle: In around 2016, I was a volunteer with a dance programme that went into the facility where Cassy was to provide some dance and movement therapy.

I remember meeting Cassy there and being so struck by her passion and her commitment, showing up fully to every single session and wanting to take a leadership role. I wasn't looking for it, but I connected with her because of her positive energy. She wanted to make the most out of the programme.

When Cassy started the process of leaving La Vista Women's Correctional Facility and moving to Denver to live, we connected. I asked her if it would be possible for me to film the journey with her a little bit and learn more about her story. I also asked if she wanted to participate with the filmmakers as a collaborator at various levels of the production.

Right from the start I wanted it to be a collaborative, participatory unfolding of the story. I think you can see some of that come across in the film through Cassy's own use of the camera. The whole film was created through the relationship with Cassy.

Alex: Cassy, how did you feel at first being asked to participate in something that would offer that much exposure?

Cassy: My initial feeling was the excitement of even being considered for this project because I wanted to share my story with others to provide hope. I had been in the criminal justice system long enough at that point that I understood that hope was kind of a rare thing.

People applying themselves thoroughly to the healing process was also, unfortunately, a rare thing, so when Gayle asked me to take part in the film, I didn't hesitate. I felt strongly from the start that it was going to be something that could help others.

Alex: You've talked a bit about journalling and writing as a way of purging some of the more difficult moments in your life. Can you share a little bit about that?

Cassy: The journals I show in the film are made up of the clippings from the 3.5 years I was in prison. I would go through a magazine and cut things out. I had quite a collection. When I found out that I was leaving, I began the process of putting it all together with book quotes, song lyrics and letters from family. That was one of the ways I expressed the things that I had processed during my time there.

It seemed like every quote had a picture and everything just fit right together. I also utilised a lot of different journalling and storytelling techniques when I was incarcerated.

Left: Cassy (centre), with her parents Sheree (left) and Mel (right) Bustos (all images provided by the filmmakers)

I was given several different writing assignments in my treatment programme in prison, such as writing letters of forgiveness or writing my life story. I was even encouraged to write a children's story that explains my situation to the young people in my life, so I wrote a children's book called *Sass the Dragon and the Tower of Rison*. It was a powerful activity.

I now own and run a sober living home for women, and I'm also a peer coach for a men's home. Depending on what we are working on and processing, we use writing prompts quite a bit in the different activities.

Alex: How was dancing as an experience?

Cassy: It really added a whole level of healing that I wasn't aware needed to happen. I had been working on my emotional healing, processing trauma, decisions and consequences, and this happened to coincide with the dance programme coming to the prison.

When I took the first dance class, I just started crying. I realised quickly that I had begun my journey into healing the physical effects of the trauma. It completely changed everything for me. I was already very physically active while in prison, but the dance therapy flipped a whole new switch for me. It was really exciting because I finally began to put myself back into my body.

When we experience trauma, people can separate from their bodies in order to survive the experience. That disconnect is often missed as part of recovery. But for me, dance is very important. I continue to teach a creative movement class that involves the women of the community that I live in now. I'm so thankful that I have that information to now pass on. I wish everybody could dance and express themselves that way.

Alex: In a lot of recovery media and discussion, it's normally the person who is recovering that's put in the centre, but this film opens with an emphasis on the family. Why is there that focus?

> "For my parents, the film shows their continued support, especially while I was incarcerated."
>
> Cassy Rathbun, Recovery Co-ordinator

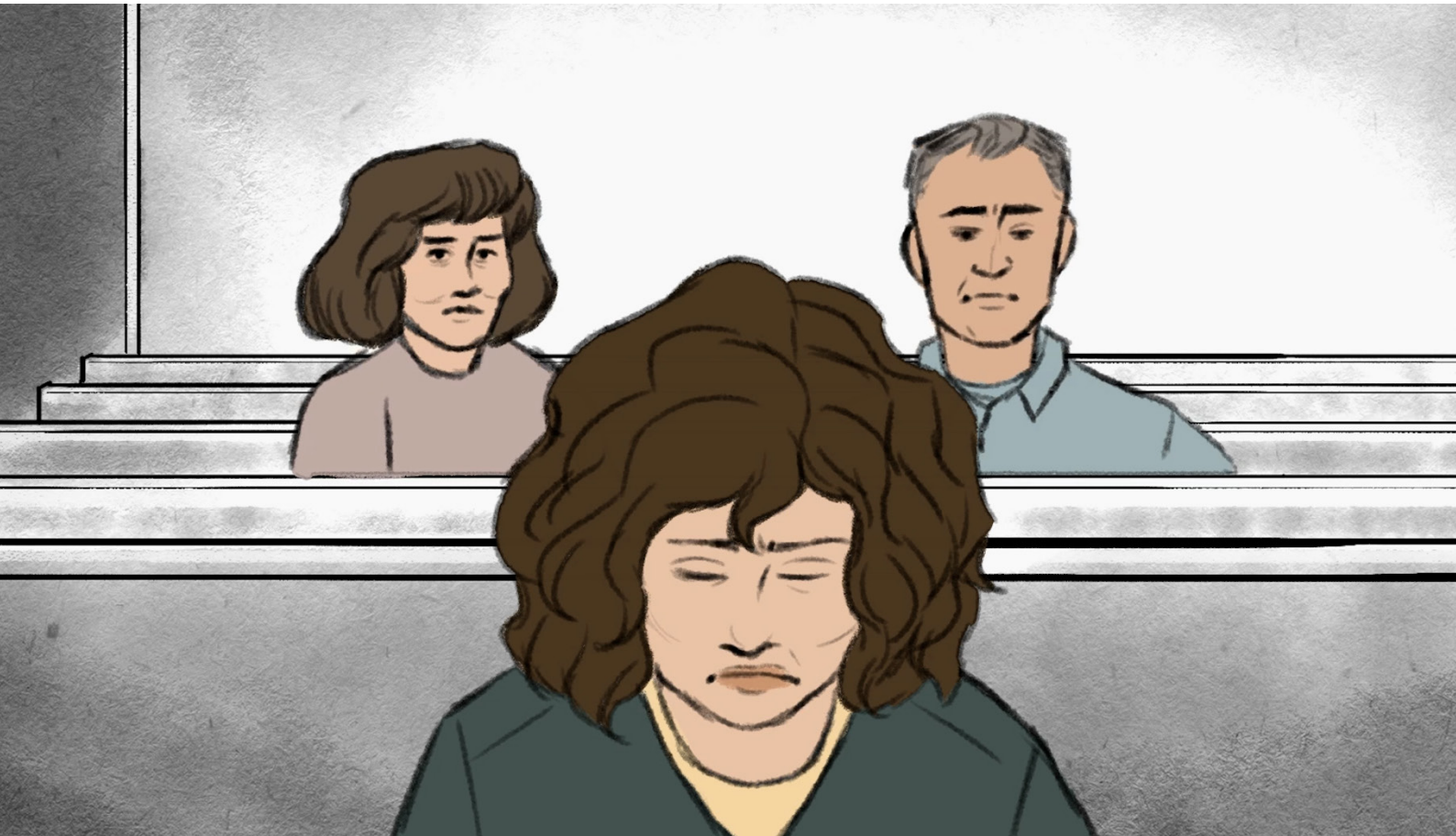
Gayle: It naturally came out. Cassy helped facilitate a relationship with her mom and dad, and the more that we spoke and the more that they were with us, the more that I thought this is a really important thread for the story.

This importance is underscored when I learned that it was pretty rare for families to have the kind of access to the prison system that Cassy's family did. There are not that many women in the criminal justice system who can say that they have their family around like that. Policymakers need to know that the bond can be left intact, even if it's just enough to keep on nurturing and supporting the person in prison. In the film, we can see that this family bond is one of the main elements that helped Cassy, not only while she was in prison, but on the day that she left.

Her family is just so strong and so courageous, especially with all the things they went through. But the film also shows the common struggles. Cassy's mom, at one point, says, "You think you're doing what you should do to help your child, but you're not." And the dad says, "You don't know what it's like to see your child undergoing this."

These are things that I have experienced in my personal life. I have a brother who was an addict, and he passed away many years ago from addiction. I have another

Below: Animated sequences for *No Matter What* were provided by Zoe Lyttle



brother who is now in recovery. As the oldest child, I was there to go to family therapy and talk to my parents about what to do.

Alex: With that in mind, is there anything that you've learned from this film?

Gayle: I always had an approach of being compassionate towards my siblings as much as I could, but I learned a bigger appreciation for the importance of resources, whether they're the community resources directly for parents and siblings or resources in institutions. I learned that access to information about how to get help is kind of limited.

Alex: In the UK, there is often a feeling that even when people who are recovering are being helped, often the affected others are not getting the same amount of support. Is there a similar situation in the US?

Cassy: I think resources are lacking in general for both sides. It's an interesting part of recovery, and it often depends on insurance. Also, being in Greeley, which isn't a big city, though it's definitely not a very small town, we have fewer resources.

The process of navigating resources for the person who is recovering or wanting to recover is one thing. But finding resources for families is even harder. There just is not a lot of support, nor is it even addressed.

I feel, a lot of times, the focus is on the person recovering. Because on the outside, it appears that their mental well-being and their life choices are so dire that if attention isn't given to them, they could perish. They could die or become homeless. The effects on the family are often put to the side.

On the other side, the family might be so thankful that person is out of danger and that the effects that addiction had on them and still have on them are again pushed to the side.

Everybody's focused on helping this person rebuild or just celebrating this person. A lot of times, the absorbed trauma from the experience on the loved ones is probably never dealt with. There are a few organisations like Al-Anon, but I couldn't tell you even a meeting or a group that's held in my area that would be available to support families.

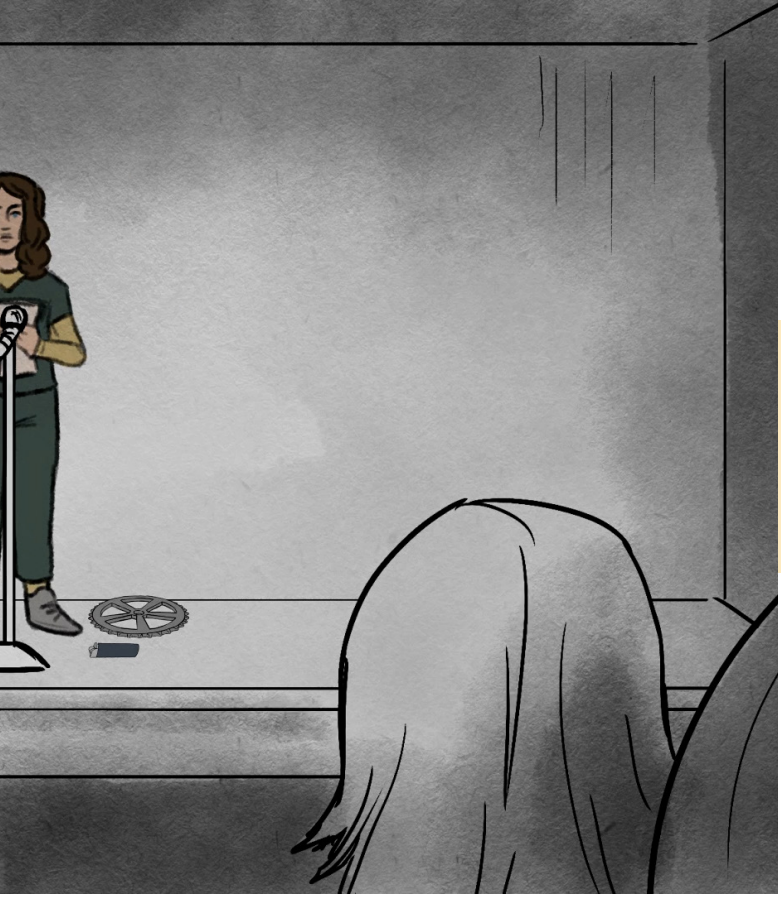
Alex: It sounds like there's a lot of work that needs to be done, but your film is an excellent resource. What have the reactions to this film been like?

Cassy: There have been different reactions from different groups of people. For some people, there's a lot of hope and excitement that maybe the same thing is possible for them. But for others, there's a kind of response that not everybody has it that good. Not everybody has family support like that, or the film is kind of a fairy tale. I feel that both sides can be true.

The people who see it as a fairy tale think it might be too far out of reach for them. But the underlying theme of hope is always there. I feel very fortunate to have had the support that I did, and it was helpful. However, in the long run, it was me who decided to do everything that I could for myself, and I think it comes across in the film.

Gayle: We've had an interesting experience with outreach in prisons, for example. We would love for this film to be shown to parole officers and mental health staff in prisons. When someone in that system watches it, their response is, "Oh, this is awesome. We love it. We can use it. We can teach it – but we have to get approval," or "We don't know if it's in our budget."

A film is also a work of art. I wish prisons would show more films, just show more stories. Part of the point of this project is to get some of these bigger systems to understand how arts, dance, storytelling or having a therapeutic community can all help systematically.



Lisa: As the impact director, I help to get the film out into the world and build partnerships. Peer recovery coaches are responding really well to the film. We were at a conference last year called the Association for Justice-Involved Females and Organizations. They had a screening and a Q&A around the film, and we talked about Cassy's lived experience.

People at the conference really believe in getting trauma-informed, gender-responsive programming into correctional facilities.

One of the major responses has been that there's a lack of resources for families of people who go through these kinds of crises. We had a booth at the National Association of Addiction Professionals in the DC area, and everyone said this. I think one key discussion point that this film sparks is that we really need more resources for families.

Alex: Having seen the film and having seen the process, how does your family feel?

Cassy: The premiere of the film was here in the town that I live in, and the majority of my family was here, along with people from the community and people I work with. I was able to talk to my parents a little bit about how that was for them.

They've always just been very supportive. They also are on board for providing hope for everybody. They've told me that they are just relieved that they don't have to worry about me anymore. Now we're all just on the other side of it all, watching the progress of my story and how it's impacting people around me.

It's exciting to be able to watch the impact of the film in real-time. There are a lot of people who will watch the film, and I'll never know about them. But I want to provide inspiration for people in recovery as well as their families, and my parents want to do the same.

For my parents, the film shows their continued support, especially while I was incarcerated. I know that the film shows how they struggled with the support they gave to me while I was in active addiction, and there are some conflicting feelings about whether they were doing the right thing. But they really wanted to showcase that when I was incarcerated, their support was a big part of my journey. Being able to stay connected to my family was really important for me to keep that sense of community and family and connection.

Alex: How did the family participation dynamic work when making the film?

Gayle: The first part of it was to ask them if it was okay to do this story and if they wanted part of it. Then we started talking, and they agreed to have sit-down interviews. There are some snippets of that in the film. We told them if there was something they said and wanted us to erase, we could do that. Cassy's parents have a commitment to Cassy and to hope and trust, so that created a full collaboration.

Sometimes her parents would talk about a moment, such as kicking Cassy out of the house, and they would cry on screen. That meant pausing, taking a break or asking if they wanted to do it again. The participation was a level of not only asking for permission, checking in and maintaining dignity in tough situations but also saying, "It's your story."

Cassy, does that seem like how it went from your perspective?

Cassy: Oh, absolutely. I know we all felt included in the process. There was never a time I was worried or concerned about how the film would turn out or there was going to be something that I didn't agree with. There was communication and respect throughout the entire process, and I know my family felt that as well.

Any time there was a question or we needed clarity, we could have those conversations. I felt like we just walked side by side throughout the whole thing.

> "It's not about extracting a story – it's about riding along with it and participating in the story."
>
> Gayle Nosal, Co-Director

Gayle: We also gave a camera to Cassy, and she was able to use that to create a diary. She could take it everywhere, so she had that sense of authorship. She could use the camera the way that she wanted.

Cassy's mom and dad were very forthcoming with sharing family pictures from their past, and archival footage. We wanted to honour the way they had been documenting the past.

Alex: Even in very well-meaning media that focuses on addiction and adverse life experiences, individuals, families, and communities are often very much stigmatised because they're dehumanised or looked down upon. People want these very extreme stories. The fact that Cassy and

the family played such a major part in the film is very humanising.

Cassy: The feedback I've received from parole officers and probation officers is that the film humanises the client more. It also humanises the corrections officers.

I've heard that quite a bit from officers and clients – that they've used it to remind themselves and their co-workers that we are humans. It probably gets overwhelming, seeing the same thing day in and day out.

> "Like the film, every impact campaign has a journey, and you just have to follow the magical thread."
>
> Lisa Allen, Impact Director

Alex: How does storytelling help with recovery? If someone wanted to tell their story in recovery, what would be your advice?

Cassy: First and foremost, addressing the trauma and healing the inner child was the key to freedom and success for me. Addressing those in a safe manner can be vital. Of course, it varies from person to person and depends on resources. It can be messy, but as one of the ladies at my house said, you can't just slay your demons; you have to go in and see what they're feeding on.

So begin through journalling, meditation or some kind of visualisation technique. You have to be very careful, especially in early recovery. It's not advisable to go at those things without professional help. One thing that spoke to me in prison, and still does now, is music. Find songs that you can relate to in recovery, books and art.

We do a lot of burn lists. Where we take a week to write down the things that we would like to get out, and then we burn the lists and roast marshmallows on the ashes of our pain and have s'mores after. It's really just expressing and scrubbing those wounds however you can.

Also, do some exercise. Get in touch with your body and do any kind of mindful practice.

Gayle: For me, it's important to have some kind of personal, reflective practice. And it's important for me to understand that my agenda as the storyteller, as the filmmaker, is to sit at the back of the bus. Cassy and her ideas are driving the bus. Her family is driving the bus. These days, sometimes there is too much of a rush; people feel the need to get their story done quickly, then edit it and put it on Instagram with a photo.

The storytelling that I like to do is non-extractive, which takes time.

Lisa: Getting a story out there comes from having really good partners. That's why it's really amazing to work with *Performing Recovery*. Like the film, every impact campaign has a journey, and you just have to follow the magical thread. What's the destiny of this impact campaign, and where does it want to go?

With *No Matter What*, we have tried so many things, and so much hasn't worked. But with impact campaigns, you have to fail upwards. Maybe that's the thing with recovery, too. I'm also in recovery, and I make mistakes. I know I'm imperfect, so I fail upwards.

The Department of Corrections in Connecticut partnered with us to use the film as a resource in four of their prisons, including an all-women's prison. Correctional facilities are responsive but slow. We've also been invited to a number of conferences. Sometimes, there's a lot of flow with the film and sometimes we just have to hurry up and wait.

Even with this interview, we reached out, and we didn't hear back for months, but here we are. Things come in their own time, and it's never the timeline that you think it's going to be.

The film had its Colorado broadcast on Rocky Mountain PBS in January, and we're going to be at a conference, hopefully in January, too. So it's really starting to pick up steam.

For me, the question is, how do you follow the magical thread? We have to get to know our audience. I've had so many conversations with people on Zoom – what did you think about the film? What are your resources? What do you need?

Now, I feel like we're hitting our stride. It takes time to build these partnerships. It's like recovery – sometimes it goes quickly, sometimes it goes slowly. It's like the desert; though it looks like there's nothing growing, it's actually teeming with life. There are all these bugs and mini roots. I have an awesome mentor who reflects this to me a lot. There's so much actually happening. I feel the same with this film campaign. There's a lot happening under the surface, and things are lining up; we just have to ride the wave of the impact campaign. It's a fun ride.◆

For more information on bringing No Matter What *to your community, visit* nomatterwhatfilm.com *or contact Lisa Allen at* lisa@nomatterwhatfilm.com.

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SITTING WITH DISCOMFORT:

ART, ADOPTION AND ADDICTION

leon clowes and Craig Hyman have some things in common. They are both heavily involved in music, they both have first-hand experience of addiction issues and they are both adoptees. For this special family-related issue of Performing Recovery, *leon talks to Craig about his journey through the music industry, his observations on addiction and the intersection of creative expression, adoption and recovery. Craig reflects on the highs of managing artists and the underlying complexities of personal and professional struggles.*

All images credit: Craig Hyman

Ieon: Craig, could you give readers an overview of your career in the music industry? What have been some key highlights and roles you've undertaken?

Craig: I started in college as a concert chairperson, hosted a radio show and gradually moved up from being a production assistant to a television and film producer. I eventually became involved in artist management, promoting concerts, and consulting for record labels, festivals and live venues. One of the more notable phases was my time managing the A&R department for RCA Records for the New York and Los Angeles offices, and building a boutique reissue label. I've toured with artists like Ryuichi Sakamoto, and most recently, tour managed in Morocco and Spain. These days, I focus mainly on concert presenting and live music curation, artist management and consulting, but the journey has been wide-ranging.

Ieon: You've seen a lot in the industry, particularly regarding addiction. What are your observations on how addiction affects the music and entertainment sectors?

Craig: Addiction in the industry is pervasive. I've been involved in music for about 40 years, and I can tell you that addiction ebbs and flows, influenced by the drugs trending in society at the time and other variables. For instance, cocaine was huge in the '70s and before that, in the '60s, it was all about pot and hallucinogenics. The arts and music industries, by nature, tend to attract a kind of outlaw mindset – there's a certain freedom that allows individuals to indulge in ways that feel consequence-free, at least until things start to unravel.

Addiction is highly individual, though. There's no one-size-fits-all explanation. Some people are genetically predisposed, while others turn to substances to escape psychological and spiritual discomfort.

Ieon: Given that we're both adoptees, do you think there's any link between adoption and addiction?

Craig: Definitely. There are two primary reasons I see. One is genetic – addiction and alcoholism can be passed down, even if the adoptee doesn't know their biological family's history. The other is emotional. Many adoptees turn to drugs or alcohol to escape the profound trauma, deep psychological and spiritual discomfort caused by the "primal wound" of being separated from their birth mother. I've seen firsthand how this unresolved trauma leads many adoptees to substance abuse from running a men's adoptee self-help group for over a decade. About 60–70% of the men in the group I've encountered have struggled with addiction at some point in their lives.

Ieon: Do you see any connection between the need to be creative, being adopted and addiction?

Craig: There's definitely a connection for some, but it's not universal. Creativity often becomes a form of escape or a way to channel the emotional chaos many adoptees experience. In my experience, creative expression taps into the subconscious. It allows us to access those deep, hidden parts of ourselves – whether through music, art or writing. It's one of the few ways adoptees can get close to that primal wound and start the healing process. But not every adoptee is creative, and not every creative adoptee struggles with addiction.

WHEN AN ARTIST IS USING, THEIR CREATIVE PROCESS GETS DISTORTED. THEY'RE NOT THEMSELVES, AND IT OFTEN AFFECTS THE QUALITY OF THEIR WORK. BUT WHEN THEY GET SOBER, IT'S LIKE A REVIVAL OF THEIR TRUE ARTISTIC SELF.

IN MY ADOPTION SEMINARS AND GROUPS, I'VE SEEN HOW ART CAN HELP ADOPTEES ACCESS AND WORK THROUGH THEIR TRAUMA.

leon: You've mentioned that art therapy has been particularly impactful for you. Could you expand on how creativity played a role in your own healing process?

Craig: Absolutely. I've been in therapy since I was 9 and have tried almost every form of it, but spiritually based art therapy was the most effective for me. It allowed me to access that primal wound for the first time. Creative expression – whether it's drawing, painting or music – comes from the subconscious. When we create, even if we think we have a clear intention, what we're really tapping into is that deep, hidden part of ourselves. For adoptees, who often have issues that are difficult to access consciously, creative processes are incredibly effective.

In my adoption seminars and groups, (see link below) I've seen how art can help adoptees access and work through their trauma. It's a unique tool because it speaks to parts of us that we don't fully understand, especially memories or feelings tied to our early separation from our birth mothers.

leon: Have you seen artists in the entertainment industry use creativity as a way to recover from addiction?

Craig: Yes, I've definitely seen artists go through recovery and come out the other side creatively stronger. When an artist is using, their creative process gets distorted. They're not themselves, and it often affects the quality of their work. But when they get sober, it's like a revival of their true artistic self. The process of recovery brings with it new experiences, and sometimes those experiences enrich their creative output even more than before. It's not easy, though. Recovery is hard work, but it can lead to some of the most authentic and powerful art.

leon: That idea of a revival ties into what I've been thinking about – how adoptees go through a similar process of recovery. There's a parallel between an artist recovering from addiction and an adoptee reclaiming their identity. Would you agree?

Craig: Absolutely. There's a profound parallel between the two. Whether it's addiction recovery or adoption, both journeys involve confronting deep wounds. For adoptees, the primal wound of separation from our birth mother is often the driving force behind many of our struggles. Coming to terms with that and learning to live with it is a lifelong process. Like peeling back the layers of an onion, there's always more underneath. But once you get to a place where you can face it head-on, without running or numbing the pain, you start to heal. That's when you begin to reclaim yourself, and in many ways, it's similar to an artist finding their way back to themselves after recovery.

leon: It's sitting in that discomfort, isn't it? Being able to face it rather than pushing it away.

Craig: Exactly. And it's not easy. The instinct is to run, to numb, to mask the pain. But if you can sit with it and acknowledge it, you start to heal. It's like what Ram Dass said, "Invite it in, have a conversation with it." It's uncomfortable, but it's necessary. For adoptees, this discomfort is often linked to that early experience of separation – the terror and annihilation that comes from being torn away from our biological mother. It's not something we can remember consciously, but it's there, running the show until we confront it.◆

For more information on Craig's Inside Out Expressive Arts *programme for adoptees, visit*: https://www.facebook.com/insideoutadoption/

Only Hope

by

Kathleen Bryson

When I think about you I just sit and weep,
there's never been a promise made, that you ever keep,
I feel so lost and lonely over who you have become,
and that is really hard for me as I am still your mum,
I know you steal my money if I leave my handbag down,
or anything of value is you see it lying around,
my jewellery has all gone mementos that I had,
and when I think about them it makes me feel so sad,
but that sadness it is nothing to the grief I feel for you,
as I am still your mother and I do so love you.

I so worry about you and the company you keep,
and even though I go to bed I really cannot sleep,
the thoughts that swirl around my head they keep me wide awake,
I don't know how much longer of this nightmare I can take,
but I must keep on hoping the one day you will be,
the child that I gave birth to the person you should be.

CARTE POSTALE

Waltzing with Musetta

by Annie King

My own alcoholic father left the family home when I was 6 years old ...

He had been a quiet drinker. In fact, you could say he was too quiet. Never rude, never swore, and, until a threatening incident with a shotgun, never violent. I spent my early years being the perfect child, quietly listening and bearing witness to my mother's increasing frustrations and anger that arose in her desperate efforts to understand what was happening within him and, subsequently, within the family.

Be it food, drugs, sex, gambling or alcoholism, watching a loved one spiral into the maelstrom of active addiction is a frightening and bewildering position to be in. The chaotic and destructive lifestyle not only affects the user, it impacts many of those close to them; family, friends, employers and yes, even the neighbours.

"You promised you'd stop. Stop lying, stop hiding, stop stealing, stop shouting. Just stop. Stop. Stop. Stop. Why won't you stop?"

Watching the decline of the addict – their physical deterioration, their mental incapacity, the compromising of moral standards – impacts the rationale of the loved one. Enabling, justifying, normalising, blame and denial become dominant patterns of thought and behaviour for all persons involved.

"Maybe it's me. It must be me. I must do better. Do my homework. Do the dishes. I'll change. Change the sheets, make the bed, clean up the vomit, wipe up the mess, throw away the bottles, what in the heck is this?"

Bearing witness to and becoming the victim of their violence, their theft, their secrecy, their frequent disappearances can be equally, if not more, devastating to the mental, physical and emotional health of the family member(s) than the constant abuse the addict is putting themselves through. As the antics of Hugo's Mr. Hyde demonstrate, madness lurks in the crevices of helplessness and the uncontrollable.

"I love you. I'll leave you. Let me in. Let me go. Get out. Please don't go. Where are you? Why are you angry? Why am I angry? Why do you shout? Why don't you speak? I won't speak. What are you doing with that? Hide in my bed, cover my ears, pretend to sleep, please let me sleep ... it's a just a bad dream ..."

The mind has now become a despairing battleground between what was, what is and what might be. A three-way tug of war. Add to this love, fear and disillusionment; the mind now becomes embroiled in a nine-party conflict. With each desperate attempt to control, with every disheartening trial to stay straight, the fractions multiply and intensify. Standing alone in the trenches of broken promises and absent hope, one simple yet torturous question reverberates:

"Where is the creative genius I once knew? Where is my little boy wonder? What happened to my sweet girl? I know they are in there somewhere ..."

Lost in this lonely labyrinth, too, your loved one may be seeking answers to this very same question. Riddled with shame, guilt and fear, Master Misery takes ahold of the helm. Difficulties with sincere self-expression, disjointed emotional outbursts, feelings of failure and dysfunction overwhelm. If recovery is not sought, the inevitable self-destruction will occur. Remarkably, even in that moment of harrowing paralysis, the strength to crawl across the floor and call out for help invites recovery to prevail.

Another common theme amongst addicts is that substances provide a temporary relief to any disturbance in one's spirit. The need to numb one's self becomes habit, which, in turn, becomes an addiction. This habit, this craving, this obsession, becomes cyclical. Addiction truly is a dis-ease of the soul.

Numb with alcohol, emotionally and verbally catatonic, my father was silent in every aspect except when it came to his enjoyment of music. Music became a conduit for him to reach his emotions. When he found sobriety, my father was able to share with me his passion for classical, opera, folk, bluegrass – even for my brother's punk rock band. He shed a tear when my piano plonked out Puccini's *Musetta's Waltz*, the only time I ever saw my father cry.

My father, like many other alcoholics and addicts, suppressed sorrow, suppressed joy, even suppressed love as a result of "using." Perhaps life had been too raw, too painful to feel. As a Master of English Literature, perhaps he was fearful of showing his inarticulation when it came to describing his feelings. Perhaps I am searching too hard for answers that I will never find.

The recovery process can be viewed as a renewal of the soul, a re-birth, a re-emergence of self. And, as with most births, it is not without fear, struggle, pain and immense joy. Although addiction does not define a person, their experiences are embedded in their psyche and emotions. The internal struggle and consequences of an addict's lifestyle are often traumatic and degrading, shame is mortifying, and self-esteem is at an all-time low. Nurturing and compassion for all involved are essential elements when navigating through this passage.

Almost every addict believes that there's a suffering genius within themselves. To the extent of the genius, one cannot say. However, we have been party to this extreme suffering by witnessing our loved ones drown their spirit in alcohol, bury their core-being with drugs, food or other addictions.

Breaking free from the binds of these dependencies, the person in recovery has a chance to earnestly develop a new or existing skill set, explore personal interests, formulate new ideas and observe life with an invigorated sense of curiosity. The desire to express this wonder becomes integral to recovery and often comes through creative endeavours.

Constructive self-expression and creative outlets offer an encouraging arena in which to reflect, regenerate and renew. Creative endeavours provide a structure, an intent, a method of communication that can be fundamental to the recovering addict. Loved ones and strangers alike, observers of this transformation become integral to this inspirational exchange.

Creativity complements the universal desire to evolve, to develop, to show one's self. Self-expression bends and folds with the dancer's movements, flows with the writer's prose, blends with the painter's brush, is sung though the tenor's tone, rhymes with the poet's pen. The soul's heartbeat can be felt in the rhythm of a drum. Through this is conveyed a pureness of spirit, an earnest countenance and an absolute connection to life.

Gratefully, through the unconditional love of family, friends and fellow recovering alcoholics, my father found his way out of this dissolute spiral, choosing courage as a companion as he embarked on Robert Frost's "road less travelled."

I now understand that even at 40 years of age, sobriety was my father's genesis, a new opportunity to re-connect, to re-discover, to re-cover most of that which was lost during his years of drinking. Ultimately, this loss had been the connection to himself, his spirit, his family and his community.

My father passed away with 37 years of sobriety under his belt. Throughout his recovery, my father found the courage to experience and process his emotions without a martini in hand. He demonstrated loyalty, love and caregiving. His devotion and enthusiasm for teaching English literature took him to China and Istanbul, among other places around the world.

My father's desire for family contact and connection shone through his own personal creative outlet of writing letters. Alongside a tremendous treasure trove of adoration and love, I store a boot box full of his correspondence. Enveloped and marked with magnificent, brightly coloured stamps are letters detailing his impressions of life, descriptive and humorous epilogues, enchanting tales of travel, and painted through the words on the paper hangs his very own Rembrandt; a portrait of a dapper man poised solemnly near a stone wall, donning a crimson fez. Through his descriptions of the dune's shadows in the setting sun, one can almost taste the salts from the desert. And, finally, as true to form as ever, my father always signed off every correspondence with one everlasting word ...

Love

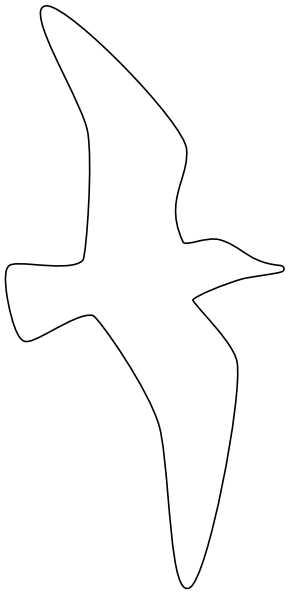
Adrift

by

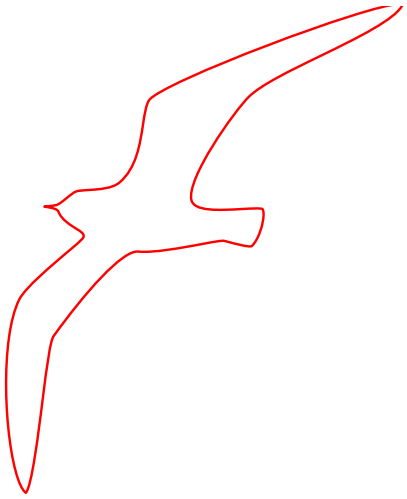
Jude Lockwood

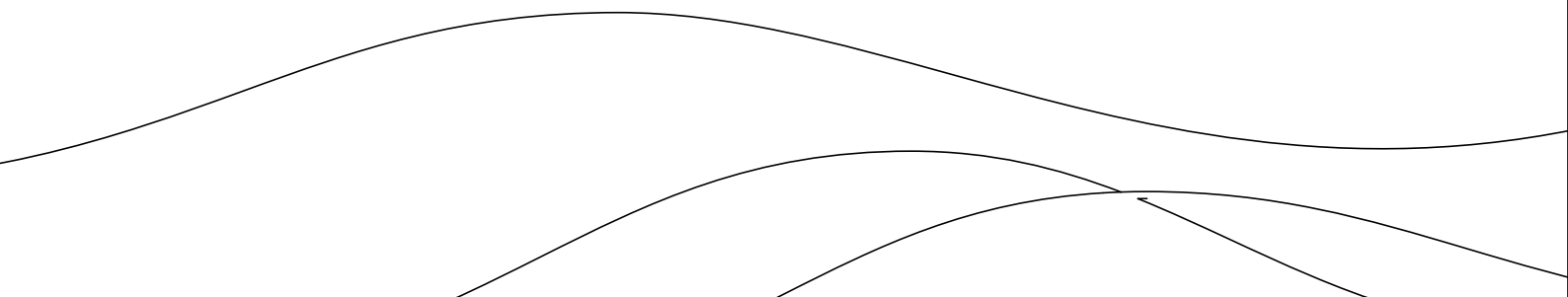
I can't begin to describe how I feel.
The wound is too deep, too infected to heal.
Disappointment, sadness, anger, defeat.
These are all realities I need to delete.
I'm living in a capsule of utter despair,
Every molecule of melancholy laid exposed and bare.
My heart is heavy, my tears are flowing.
Panic inside of me swelling and growing.
Will this nightmare never end?
It's an alien existence that I can't comprehend.
To witness a life being destroyed by drink,
Dangling on a precipice, stepping on the brink,
All hope disappears, you're left feeling scared.
It's impossible to feel positive, no emotion is spared.
There are twists and turns of every kind,
Plenty of negatives to blow your mind.
It imprisons your heart, leaving you bereft
Wondering what emotional part of you will be left.

To see you struggle with life every day
Your whole future seems futile and grey.
I can't seem to reach the son I once knew.
What you are going through, I haven't a clue.
I experienced anxiety a long time ago,
Feeling depressed and extremely low.
But your problems go much deeper than that,
Your whole demeanor is colourless and flat.
It's hard to look at your troubled face,
Eyes staring blindly into space.
No energy and all enthusiasm gone.
What's troubling you my precious son?
A mum wants to see her child flourish and thrive,
To enjoy the world and be alive.
From the moment of conception to the baby's birth,
A child is the most cherished soul on earth.
Suddenly!



Out of the blue enough is enough.
Rehab is available but it's going to be tough.
You've found your sensible head, heard the bigger voice,
You've thought about it carefully and made the wisest choice.
Alcohol is the enemy, not your family.
Knowing it will destroy you if you ignore reality.
Alcohol is a parasite that diminishes your life,
Cuts through existence like a sharp bladed knife.
You're fighting with all the strength you can muster.
You're showing resolve and not lack lustre.
Focusing on the positives that life can offer.
Dispelling the negatives and refusing to suffer.





A HEALING MOVEMENT

Let it Play is an exploration of addiction, grief and hope, showing how the power of music and dance can heal hearts and souls. Here, the filmmaking team of Rod and Emma tell us about this new film and how other people affected by addiction can get involved.

All images credit: Road Factory Films

Emma is a dancer. On the 11th of June, 1990, her life turned on its axis when the man she was in love with died from a heroin overdose. Ray was only 27 years old and a talented guitarist. He had guitar heroes and a dream to be a successful musician. His guitar was a very special handmade instrument built by the legendary Tony Zematis, unique. Emma has held onto this beautifully crafted instrument for over 30 years, shut away in its box like a coffin. The last person to play it was Ray's best friend Kris Dollimore at his wake. She feels it's now time that the instrument comes to life again, so the filmmakers plan to take the guitar to other musicians, who will play it with improvised, instinctive expression, sharing their stories of addiction and loss.

Dance and music have played a significant part in Emma's healing process and helped her come to terms with grief and loss. Exploring her grief also led her to a film course, where she met filmmaker Rod, and together they started their creative journey to explore human stories surrounding loss and addiction. Grief, loss and addiction are subjects that connect us all, particularly at this time in history. Through film, music and movement, they hope to open up a dialogue bringing people together.

Each musician who plays the guitar tunes into its soul, allowing it to speak through them. The guitar acts as a conduit, enabling them to explore music as an emotional release. This is why the filmmakers are reaching out to the recovery community to invite people to come and play the guitar.

Movement has become Emma's language, through which she expresses all her emotions and helps others to do the same. She runs the Five Rhythms movement practice in many countries and diverse communities.

Rod is a filmmaker with over 15 years' experience telling stories through the language of film. He uses a poetic visual style to reveal the surprising narratives that give insight into our world.

Anyone who feels that they have experience of any of the issues raised in the film or who would like to be involved as a guitar player, please get in touch with Rod or Emma at the email addresses below:

emma@emmadance.co.uk
roadfactoryfilms@gmail.com

THE DIRECTORY

Organisations and Individuals Working in Recovery Arts

UNITED KINGDOM

BDP Creative Communities
Bristol

Part of the Bristol Drugs Project (BDP), the Creative Communities include Bristol Recovery Orchestra, Oi Polloi Theatre Group and Rising Voices Recovery Choir.
Website: www.bdp.org.uk/creative-communities/

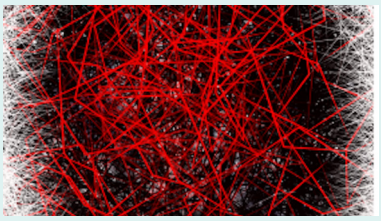
Cascade Creative Recovery
Brighton

A community-based, peer-led charity. Projects include a community choir, open mic nights, drama and creative writing

Website: cascadecreativerecovery.com

Cysylltu/Connecting
Bangor

A Bangor-based multi-disciplined art project seeking to address mental health and addiction issues with conversation through the arts .



Eleanor Cowell
East London

A visual artist exploring mental health through arts and well-being classes.

Email: eleanorcowellart@gmail.com
Website: eleanorcowell.com

Edinburgh Recovery Activities (ERA)
A project set up to provide fulfilling and enjoyable experiences for those in recovery. The activities include meet-ups and a creative writing group.

Email: mickmccarron@cyrenians.scot
Website: www.facebook.com/EdinburghRecoveryActivities

Essex Recovery Foundation
A visible recovery community that runs a number of arts-based recovery projects as well as the Essex Recovery Festival.
Email: hello@essexrecoveryfoundation.org
Website: www.essexrecoveryfoundation.org

Fallen Angels Dance Theatre
Chester, Liverpool, Greater Manchester

Fallen Angels Dance Theatre supports those in recovery from addiction or mental health adversity through dance, performance and creativity.

Email: claire@fallenangelsdt.org
Website: fallenangelsdt.org

Geese Theatre Company
Birmingham

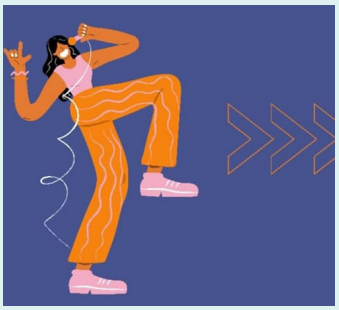
A theatre company enabling people in criminal justice and social welfare settings to make positive changes through performances and training events.

Email: info@geese.co.uk
Website: geese.co.uk

Horizon
Brighton

Supporting those in recovery from addiction through the medium of creative film, media and photography. Horizon offers free courses and workshops led by media professionals.

Email: annie@editsweet.rocks
Website: myhorizon.rocks



Lost Souls Poetry Night
Wandsworth, London

Sober-friendly open-mic nights for poets and other wordsmiths.

Website: instagram.com/lostsoulsevents

New Central Media
NCM will publish with people who have lived experience of addiction, as well as academic literature on improving practice and policy. No previous writing experience is necessary.

Email: d.patton@derby.ac.uk
Website: drdavidpatton.co.uk/new-central-media

New Note Projects
Brighton

The New Note Orchestra is made up of musicians in recovery from addiction. Also includes a weekly guitar group and New Note Dance.
Email: molly@newnote.co.uk
Website: newnote.co.uk

The Mixed Bag Players
York

York-based theatre group associated with York in Recovery.
Website: facebook.com/groups/835222381575024/

Not Saints
Brighton

A record label and events company that releases music from bands in recovery.
Website: notsaints.co.uk

The Outsiders Project
Boscombe

An organisation working with outsider artists in the community.
Website: facebook.com/outsidersprojectboscombe

Outside Edge Theatre Company
London, E1

A theatre company and participatory arts charity supporting recovering addicts and those affected by addiction..
Website: edgetc.org.

Our Space (Theatre Royal Plymouth)
A creative programme for adults who face challenges, like homelessness, mental health and substance misuse.
Website: theatreroyal.com

Portraits of Recovery
Manchester

Visual arts charity supporting people and communities in recovery.
Website: portraitsofrecovery.org.uk

The Recovery Collective
Glasgow

A community interest company formed to use music to promote recovery from drug and alcohol addiction.
Website: facebook.com/recoverycollectivecic

Recoverist Theatre Project
Islington, London

Part of Islington People's Theatre project It uses applied theatre and creativity with vulnerable and marginalised groups, including adults in recovery.
Website: islingtonpeoplestheatre.co.uk

Small Performance Adventures
Brighton

Workshops, performances and events in partnership with recovery, mental health, criminal justice, homelessness and education organisations.
Website: smallperformanceadventures.com

Status Creative CIC
Saxmundham

Carries out creative activities to benefit wellness and the community with people with adverse life experiences including addiction.
Website: statuscreativecic.com/

SUIT (Service User Involvement Team)
Wolverhampton

Service supporting vulnerable adults in welfare and addiction recovery with lived experience. SUIT's art collective meet every week for practical and applied work.
Website: suitrecoverywolverhampton.com

Vita Nova
Boscombe

A creative arts organisation and recovery community, run by members and volunteers.

Website: vitanova.co.uk

Voodoo Monkeys
Devon

A theatre company based in Devon committed to working with and for marginalised communities.

Website: facebook.com/voodoomonkys

INTERNATIONAL

The Creative High
USA

A documentary film created by Adriana Marchione and Dianne Griffin focussing on nine artists in recovery from addiction.
Website: thecreativehigh.com

Passenger Recovery
Worldwide

Resources, articles and support for sober musicians, including a tool kit for touring and travelling musicians who need help and support while sober on the road.
Website: passengerrecovery.com

Turn Up For Recovery

"Like Macmillan coffee mornings but for music and recovery," Turn Up For Recovery promotes fundraising gigs anyone around the world can put on.
Website: turnupforrecovery.org

The Recovery Project
Florida
Florida-based projects using arts to help reduce stigma and help people with addiction.
Website: https://www.floridastudiotheatre.org/support-us/therecoveryproject/