

PERFORMING RECOVERY

ISSUE 11:
MAY-JUL 25

**BEYOND THE
WHITE CHIP:**
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TAKES US
THROUGH THE
JOURNEY OF HIS
HIT PLAY

RECOVERED 1440:
A NEW GRAPHIC
STORY

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PLUS: NEWS AND THE DIRECTORY

MAY–JUL 25



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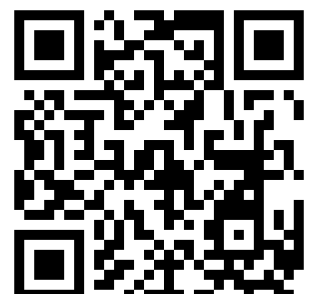
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WELCOME

to the **11th** issue of

Performing Recovery

In this, our 11th edition of *Performing Recovery*, we have a special focus. Sean Daniels' groundbreaking play, *The White Chip*, is being performed for the first time outside the US, at Southwark Playhouse Borough from 9th July–16th August. We're thrilled to be sponsored by Tarento Productions in support of the play's run. Heartfelt thanks go especially to co-producers Danielle Tarento and Annaleigh Ashford – not only for their financial generosity, but for their belief in what we do at *Performing Recovery*.

This sponsorship marks a major milestone. *The White Chip* has been widely praised in its many US runs and is helping to shift the narrative around addiction. Being invited to partner with the London production shows that the recovery arts community here is making waves too. One of the reasons *Performing Recovery* exists is to give recovery stories a platform.

For every ticket sold, *Performing Recovery* receives £1. This is game-changing. We run on next to nothing, so having unrestricted funding will allow us to publish for at least a few more issues and help us to attract more support. So if you're able to see *The White Chip*, please do. Not only will you be supporting *Performing Recovery*, but you'll experience an extraordinary production – hilarious and heartbreaking in equal measure. We're incredibly proud to be involved.

Leading this issue, Sean Daniels shares the play's origin story, offering a fascinating look at its development, beginning with his first days in addiction rehab. Ed Coleman, who plays the lead role in the London premiere, speaks candidly about growing up as the child of an alcoholic and his hopes for the UK premiere. Celebrated poet and academic Wendy Dossett contributes a poetic response to *The White Chip*. We also have details of the show's free weekly after-show talks.

Teased on the back page of Issue 10, The Alcoholic Tarot will be part of *The White Chip*'s London run. After every show, I'll be in a booth at Southwark Playhouse Borough's bar offering free alcoholic misfortune tellings to willing theatregoers. It's a funny, gentle way to spark honest conversations about alcohol and addiction. Tarot packs and printed copies of the magazine will be available to buy at the venue.

Also in this issue, Dr Cathy Sloan and Matt Steinberg – former and current artistic directors of Outside Edge Theatre Company – discuss the pioneering group's 25th anniversary. Outside Edge runs Friday night workshops at Southwark Playhouse Borough, where *The White Chip* is being staged.

Beyond theatre, this issue also features an article by managing editor Alex Mazonowicz exploring how the arts support addiction recovery. While addiction is often a theme in art, many remain unaware of the healing power of creativity in recovery and other healthcare settings. Alex lays out compelling arguments for why the arts should be central to the recovery process. He also speaks with George Fothergill of Status Creative and shares an inspiring project from SUIT Wolverhampton: the films of the Forest Faced project.

We're also grateful to include a powerful graphic story from Bobby of Recovery 1440. Bobby's work is a great example of the creativity, honesty and talent shared with us.

So, dive into Issue 11 and explore some of the most exciting recovery-informed art happening today – on paper, on screen and on stage. As always, our directory of services is included, along with messages from Alcohol Change UK and Soberistas. If you've bought a printed copy of this issue, thank you – you're directly supporting the addiction recovery arts sector. If you're reading for free, thank you too. Without our community, we wouldn't exist. Sign up at recovery-arts.org for free access to all online editions of *Performing Recovery* and updates from the sector.

Thank you for being on board, and enjoy *The White Chip*!

leon clowes

Tickets are available at:

<https://southwarkplayhouse.co.uk/productions/the-white-chip/>

Or use the QR code



NEWS & EVENTS

TRINITY AND BRISTOL DRUGS PROJECT ANNOUNCE PARTNERSHIP

The Bristol-based community centre **Trinity** and **Bristol Drugs Project (BDP)** have announced a new partnership. As part of Trinity's vision of "creative expression for all," it will be working with BDP's Creative Communities programme, which is a 10-year initiative that delivers weekly creative groups and events for people who have been affected by drug and alcohol use. Many of Creative Communities' long-running groups will now be based at Trinity. Additionally, Trinity is proud to become one of BDP's Bristol Sober Spaces venues.

Adam Gallacher, deputy CEO at Trinity Community Arts, said, "This partnership brings together two brilliant organisations with a shared belief in the power of creativity to support people to live more active, connected and fulfilling lives."

Lydia Plant, CEO of the Bristol Drugs Project said: "We're proud to join forces with Trinity, learning from each other and using creativity as a force for social change. From hosting Bristol Sober Spaces events to welcoming our thriving groups into Trinity's iconic building, we are excited to create safe, inclusive spaces that foster connection and community together."

For information, visit: <https://www.trinitybristol.org.uk/activities/project-news>.



CALIFORNIA EXHIBITION

The Art of Recovery will be a solo exhibition of paintings by **Brian Hyman** at Gardens of the World Gallery in Thousand Oaks, CA, from 12th August-23rd September. The show will be comprised of colourful and expressive paintings made during the artist's early sobriety. Bryan is an artist and yoga instructor who uses found wood and mixed media among other abstract artistic techniques.

One of the pieces from his upcoming shows in on the **back page** of this issue. For more details, visit: www.brianhymanyoga.com

PORE ON DISPLAY

Manchester-based **Portraits of Recovery** have announced two exciting projects, *ANEW Way to Peel an Orange* and *Recoverist Curators*, both part of the pioneering 3-year commissioning programme *CHAORDIC*.

ANEW Way to Peel an Orange is a co-created exhibition of new work developed by designer Joe Hartley and the Tameside-based **ANEW** recovery community. The work is part of Joe's residency with ANEW.

Rooted in collaboration and creative exchange, the residency has involved ceramics, furniture making, photographic experimentation and outdoor activities that include equine-assisted therapy and hatching chickens as a nurturing metaphor for new life beginnings. According to ANEW, "We are learning that art and recovery can dovetail together to create a relational experience that offers authentic connections, builds trust and helps us to see each other's joy and creativity one teapot at a time."

The exhibition takes place at the Castlefield Gallery, Manchester, 3rd August-19th October. For more information, visit: www.castlefieldgallery.co.uk/event/anew-way-to-peel-an-orange/.

Manchester gallery The Whitworth will be showing *Recoverist Curators*, an exhibition curated by people in recovery from substance use. Through the lens of recovery, the curators have researched and reinterpreted The Whitworth's collection. The exhibition runs 25th July 2025-June 2026. On 25th September, there will be a 1-day sharing event at the Whitworth, with key insights examining the transformative power and pivotal role of the arts in driving social and cultural change on substance use recovery.

For more details, visit: portraitsofrecovery.org.uk.



SPOTLIGHT ON...

OUTSIDE EDGE

In 2025, **Outside Edge Theatre Company (OETC)** is celebrating its 25th anniversary. Here, former artistic director **Dr Cathy Sloan** and current artistic director **Matt Steinberg** reflect on a journey that has been as complex and inspiring as the lives it touches.

Matt: There's a perception that Outside Edge has grown and changed, but in talking with you, Cathy, and also seeing all the faces at our 25th anniversary celebration, it feels very much like it hasn't actually grown that much. That's not a bad thing. Perhaps your perception is quite different from mine since I'm in the thick of it, but I thought it was an interesting idea to riff on for this interview.

Cathy: It's tricky because if I'd been at the anniversary event, I'd have had more of a sense of the new and the old and how they mix. But I do think there are cyclical things that happen. At the 20th anniversary, which I wrote about in my book, *Messy Connections*, there were new people, but also lots of old connections coming out of the woodwork. That epitomises the long-term connection people might have to Outside Edge as a kind of alternative family or home space.



Above: (Left to right) Matt Steinberg, Catherine Fox, David Charkham and Tom Robertson

What fascinated me was the challenge you had, at the time, not just being made homeless when you left Munster Road, which we were all attached to, but then seeing how you transplanted that sense of home. Home is not about bricks and mortar, it's about ethos and a community of people. So, when you say "Nothing has changed," I think that's about the ethos, the community and connectedness that Outside Edge offers.

Matt: I agree completely. It was always the people who made it a home – that sense of community. In some respects, it doesn't matter where Outside Edge is, they'll find it again. With our 25th anniversary, we didn't open up the party to the wider community. You had to be on our invitation list. That was different from the 20th, which was really an open house. This time we had to think about capacity, health and safety, catering – all those practical things – so we reined it in.

Cathy: That speaks to the maturation of Outside Edge as an organisation. When I joined, it was still just being run by Phil – a wonderful maverick. There was a slightly sketchy set-up with no real health and safety procedures. But the ethos was there. The structure wasn't. Tracy Gregory, as development officer, was beginning to change that. I was the first formal staff member.

When Phil passed away, the trustees panicked because it had all been built around him, the founder. But I felt it could survive beyond Phil – that it was about a legacy, an ethos of practice.

The beginnings of turning it into a business were already there with Tracy and myself. But when I went on maternity leave, things retracted a bit, and when you arrived, Matt, you had to pick up the pieces and push it forward again structurally.

“IT WAS ALWAYS THE PEOPLE WHO MADE IT A HOME – THAT SENSE OF COMMUNITY. IN SOME RESPECTS, IT DOESN'T MATTER WHERE OUTSIDE EDGE IS.”

Matt: It's a process of professionalisation and that always happens with founder-led charities. Eventually, as the original trustees rotate out, new trustees come in with different priorities. They want to see a more professional operation. And financially, we had been protected for years, because we had rent-free office and rehearsal space, as well as funding from Hammersmith and Fulham Council.

When that changed 7 years ago, it forced us to reimagine how we operate. We suddenly had to pay rent, find a new office and rehearsal space, and deal with losing that core local authority support. The choice was to cease operations or adapt fast.

Cathy: There's always a tension between the artistry and the practicalities. People come to Outside Edge for the artistry, not rehab or therapy.



Left: Outside Edge at Social Prescribing Day at the Tramshed in Bethnal Green

It's about expressing themselves creatively. But you have to balance that with securing steady income, health and safety, governance. That tension was always there. It just shifts shape.

Matt: Right now, we deliver a really robust programme of participatory arts. But we're not producing pieces of theatre in the same way about recovery with participants, because our team is maxed out running the workshops. We used to say we'd fund our theatre-making through delivering participatory workshops. That was the model. But now the scale is such that we're constantly keeping up with the demand we've created for arts-based recovery maintenance activities.

For the first time in recent memory, this year we weren't facing cash-flow issues; we actually secured a social investment loan to hire a full-time fundraiser. But then we couldn't recruit someone to take the job; there weren't any early/mid-career fundraisers available. We were told that so many fundraisers had burned out and left the arts and charity sectors since the start of the cost-of-living crisis because of the extraordinary increase in need across both sectors for an ever-reducing amount of funding. That's not a money issue. That's a sector-wide underinvestment problem. You can't always throw money at structural challenges.

“WE'RE CREATING THAT RICHNESS FOR OTHERS. AND YET – MAYBE WE NEED TO ADVOCATE MORE STRONGLY FOR OUR OWN CREATIVITY TOO.”

Cathy: That sense of constantly fighting for survival, I don't miss that part. One project away from financial crisis and being in that weird interdisciplinary space between recovery services, arts, health and well-being. It makes us adaptable but also very vulnerable to external shocks. Yet we're good at inventing. That's what artists do.

Matt: We support people who are quite literally struggling to survive. I think we've done a good job shielding participants from how vulnerable the organisation often feels. Our facilitation team has stayed stable and is not drawn into the admin stress. They've known many of our participants



Above: A performance of *Check-In/Check-Out* (credit: Ali Wright)

longer than I have. The quality of their work is exceptional.

Cathy: Yes. That's the legacy Phil and I tried to nurture. But it's ironic we provide creative nourishment for others and often neglect our own. I left because I knew I couldn't be the kind of present mum I wanted to be and do this job. I'd seen Phil burn out.

Matt: I made a conscious decision not to facilitate after my first year. I didn't have the bandwidth, and I didn't want to carry organisational anxiety into the room. The facilitation team we have is separate from that anxiety, and thank goodness for that. They can keep the artistry alive.

Cathy: There's a lovely continuity in that, but also a sadness that the artistic director doesn't get to be artistic. That tension was always there. Phil wanted to write but couldn't let go of control. I ended up doing more admin than I wanted, though I was capable of both.

Matt: And when opportunities come to direct, like the piece we're doing with King's College London for trainee midwives, I want to say yes, but I just can't. There's no space. We talk a lot about how our participants now have far richer cultural lives than we do!

Cathy: That's the irony, but also the point. We're creating that richness for others. And yet ... maybe we need to advocate more strongly for our own creativity too – go to the trustees and say, “We need this.”

Matt: The trustees are supportive. They want me to make work, but the economic realities are brutal. We need a radical change in our business model to create breathing space, but as with many other small arts organisations, chasing our tails just seems built into the way we operate.

At the 25th anniversary party, seeing one of our long-standing participants perform the scene he co-created with Phil 25 years ago was extraordinary. He remembered every line. That legacy and sense of co-ownership are powerful.

Cathy: Yes. Phil would've loved that. He believed in collaboration. His playwriting was based on what emerged during the devising process, what was collected and shaped from people's voices in rehearsals. Outside Edge was never just his. It was always us. That sense of belonging is what's survived. It's what keeps surviving. ♦

Outside Edge Theatre Company continues to run free, weekly drama and creative writing workshops across London, including South London Drop-in Drama, every Friday night at Southwark Playhouse Borough, open to anyone in addiction recovery. Visit outsideedge.org.

During The White Chip's UK premiere, former artistic director Dr Cathy Sloan and current artistic director Matt Steinberg will take part in a special aftershow talk on Thursday, 14th August.

For more information, see: <https://southwarkplayhouse.co.uk/productions/the-white-chip/V>.

AFTERSHOW TALKS

AT SOUTHWARK PLAYHOUSE BOROUGH



BRIE BARRIOS

As *The White Chip* makes its long-awaited UK premiere at Southwark Playhouse Borough this summer, a powerful series of aftershow talks and workshops accompanies the run, inviting audiences to deepen their engagement with the play's candid, compassionate take on addiction and recovery.

Running throughout July and August 2025, these free events, open to all ticket holders, feature artists, activists, thought leaders and community pioneers.



LUCY ROCCA

Thursday 17th July, 7 pm evening performance

Lucy Rocca, founder of the online sobriety community **Soberistas**, and **Brie Barrios**, from the national charity **Alcohol Change UK**, will discuss the question: What happens if I don't want to drink anymore? Drawing on both lived experience and policy insight, this conversation explores the first steps and social pressures faced when choosing sobriety.

Thursday 24th July, 7 pm evening performance

Sober influencers and **Alcohol Change UK** ambassadors **Issy Hawkins** and **Karl Considine** lead a talk titled *Hidden in Plain Sight: Why Addiction Stereotyping is Harmful*. Expect a frank discussion about how media portrayals and cultural expectations can mask the complexity of addiction and silence those in recovery who don't "fit the mould."

Tuesday 29th July, 2:30 pm matinee performance

In *Extending the Conversation Through Art*, mixed media artist **Bard Carroll** and spoken word performer **PoetTheJules**, both of the **Inclusive Arts Collective**, will share creative responses to *The White Chip*. This afternoon workshop considers how visual and poetic forms can sustain recovery dialogues beyond the theatre space.

Wednesday 6th August, 7 pm captioned performance

Author of *Through an Addict's Looking-Glass* **Waithera Sebatindira** joins music industry and diversity professional **Paul Bonham** to ask: Is addiction a disability? This will be a vital provocation that intersects with equalities law, access rights, and how we define lived experience within systems of support and exclusion.

Thursday 14th August, 7 pm evening performance

Marking **Outside Edge Theatre Company's** 25th anniversary, former and current artistic directors **Dr Cathy Sloan** and **Matt Steinberg** come together to reflect on the company's pioneering role in addiction recovery arts. Their conversation revisits key projects, legacies and what the next 25 years might look like.

Each event is hosted by *Performing Recovery's* **leon clowes** and includes time for audience questions.



KARL CONSIDINE



ISSY HAWKINS



POETTHEJULES



BARD CAROL



PAUL BONHAM



WAITHERA SEBATINDIRA



MATT STEINBERG

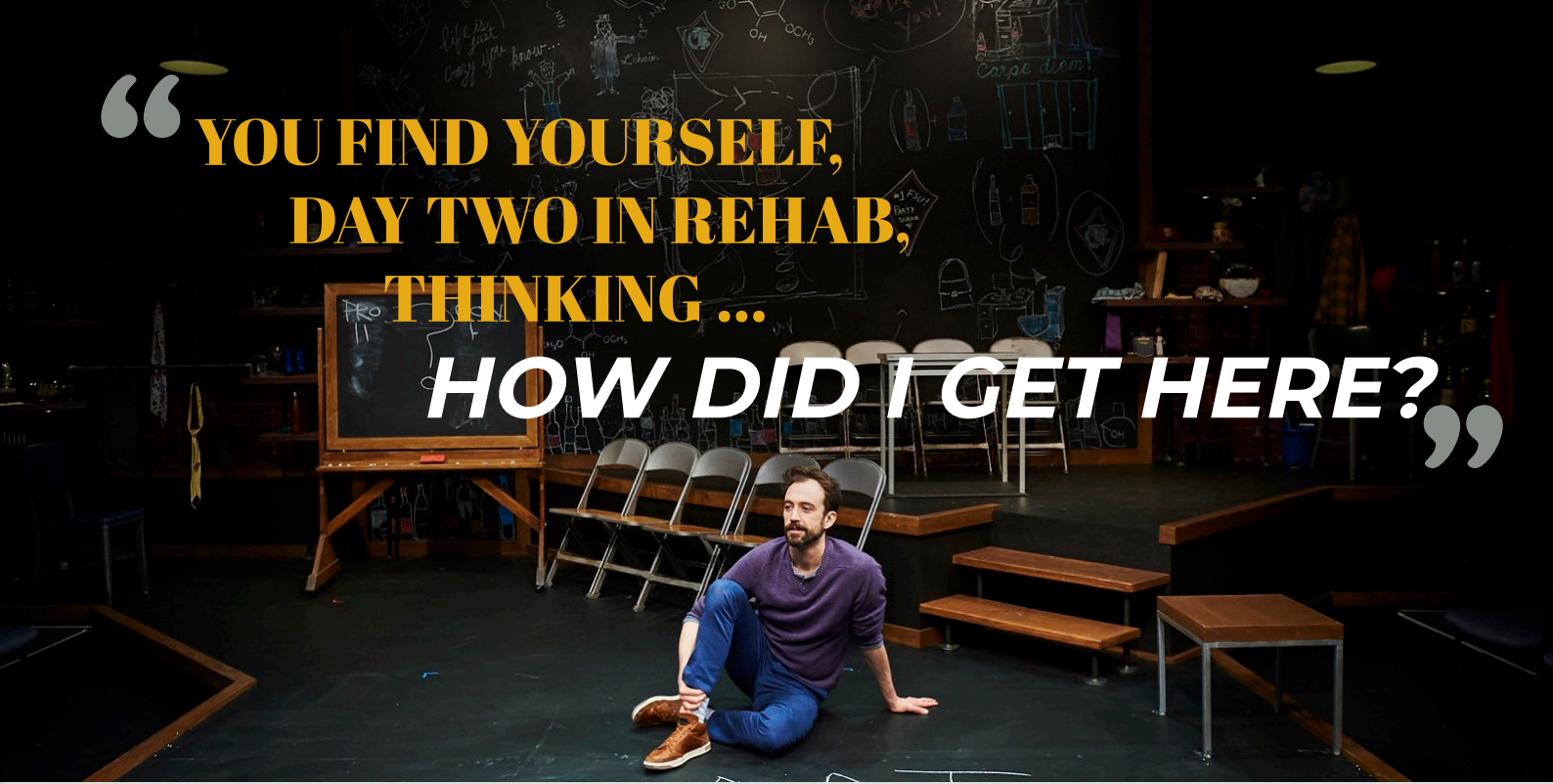


DR CATHY SLOAN

BEYOND THE WHITE CHIP

Behind every piece of art, there's an artist and a process. Whether it's years of toil or a moment of inspiration, the question "Where does this come from?" often reveals as much as the art itself. Especially for artists in recovery, it's not just about what we create, but how and why we make it. As The White Chip receives its first production outside the US, playwright Sean Daniels shares, in his own words, the story behind the play.

“YOU FIND YOURSELF, DAY TWO IN REHAB, THINKING ... HOW DID I GET HERE?”



Above: Kyle Cameron in *The White Chip* at City Theatre Company

SETTING THE SCENE

*All great journeys start somewhere. For Sean, the seed of *The White Chip* was planted in his first days in rehab, trying to make sense of his addiction and where it had landed him.*

There's a monologue in the show that sums up my first crazy days in rehab. I actually wrote that on my fourth day as an in-patient, and with the exception of some tiny trims, it's almost exactly the same.

I genuinely didn't understand how I'd ended up where I was. I'd always had the best intentions, and I always got drunk again at the wrong moments. I grew up in theatre, so when I was trying to process what had happened, I just started writing monologues and scenes because it was the art I had practised for decades.

That monologue at the start of the show is me freaking out and processing everything that had happened by writing it down.

From a recovery standpoint, I'm really glad that in those early days, I just wrote tons and tons down because my brain has definitely softened the memory of how harsh some of it was. It's triggering to watch the show and be reminded of what those moments felt like.

CONCEPTION

Entry into an addiction support or rehabilitation programme almost always involves a flood of literature, from pamphlets to self-help books. Chief among these is the Big Book, the nickname for the foundational text of Alcoholics Anonymous. While it has helped many and remains a cherished guide, it's also a product of its time, and for some, its dated tone can be alienating.

For a writer, though, such a barrier can also spark creativity and become material.

I really struggled with this 1920s old-timey language of AA. I also really struggled with the 'God' word. People said: "It doesn't have to be God. It can be whatever you want," but I work in an art form that is all about writing. For me, when something is written down you don't get to say, "Let's make these words mean whatever I want them to mean." Somebody chose to write those words as they are.

Still, you can only pout and complain that nothing new or funny has been written about recovery for so long! At some point I thought, "I guess I have to write the thing that I can't find."

FIRST DRAFTS

The early stages of recovery are difficult, but it's not all doom and gloom. For many people, those early weeks, months and years offer great moments of hope, clarity and optimism. And as we get better, there often emerges the healthy impulse to spread the word.

We're all very noble at the beginning of our sobriety, but we're also a bit like teenagers. I wanted to use my experience to help others – though at least at the beginning, that was probably just a way to feed my ego at a deeply humbling moment. I just started writing about rehab – tons and tons of material.

In my early days, I met these gentlemen who helped me to get sober by teaching me about the science of addiction. I had been trying to get sober for a year and a half when I met them. I had been state-ordered to attend AA meetings and other classes, and I'd gone to counselling and therapy. But nobody had talked about brain chemistry before I met those gentlemen. It felt like I was sitting on some type of secret that no one was talking about.

Even now that I am in the health and human services portion of the recovery world, we still don't talk about it that much. We're still trying to convince people on a daily basis that addiction is not a moral failing. It is not just a series of bad choices that somebody has made. I wanted to pass on the gift that had been given me.

Once I got out of rehab, I organised gatherings with friends where we would read chunks of what I had written. These sessions ran up to three-and-a-half hours, and they weren't even interesting! I was just lucky that I had so many phenomenal artists as friends who were happy to read my play ... if I bought them dinner.

Recovery is not a journey that follows a traditional story structure that we understand. In no story does maintenance for 29 years feel like a satisfying end to something. So during these sessions, I had to figure out the structure of the play.



“FUNNY OR WACKY RECOVERY STORIES ARE NOT A GENRE”

Above: Jeff Binder in *The White Chip* at Merrimack Repertory Theater

COMING TO LIFE

*If we're lucky, in recovery we get to reshape our lives, but once we've done that, we have to live them. Sometimes that means going back to our past and making amends for things we'd done in active addiction. For Sean, the next step in both his recovery and the evolution of *The White Chip* was getting the play onstage. The two journeys remained intertwined.*

Prior to recovery, I had turned up drunk to what was meant to be a big meeting with a commercial producer, and I'd blown it. I reached out to him to say sorry, and during our conversation, I also told him that I was working on something about my experience of addiction and recovery. He said he'd love to read it, so I sent it to him. He decided it wasn't for him, but he passed it on to a New York producer, Tom Kirdahy.

However, when Tom saw it was called *The White Chip*, he thought it was about computers, so he didn't even open it! Even though he was in recovery himself, it just didn't click. Luckily, sometime later, he was bored on a long flight one day with nothing to read. He thought, "Fine, I'll read the computer play," then opened it up and realised what it was about.

Tom is a phenomenal producer. Once he got involved he was able to put some resources behind the project which basically meant getting us together with some high-quality actors.

He brought in Sheryl Kaller as director, and the three of us worked on the script for a few years, working out what it was really going to be and what people would or wouldn't understand in the story.

ON STAGE

For many people, one of the keys of sobriety is to keep your recovery close to you. We have jobs, relationships, pastimes, ups and downs, but keeping recovery central to your life can help with all these. For Sean, even in his

job as artistic director of the Merrimack Repertory Theatre his play remained a major focus.

The first production of *The White Chip* was at the Merrimack Repertory Theatre. It's such an alcoholic move to programme a play about how self-destructive you are in your first year of running a theatre programme. Luckily, the people of Massachusetts loved it.

The first productions involved video and animation – we just threw everything at it. Funny or wacky recovery stories are not a genre, so we were trying to figure out how to make it work. But there has been less tech with each production. First we cut the video section, then we cut the animation. Then we cut the first and last scenes.

As a director, I've pulled so many playwrights aside and said, "Listen, your play is amazing, and we will love it so much more if you end it 10 minutes earlier." Of course, the majority of them said, "No, it's all very important!"

But when during previews, Sheryl pulled me aside and said, "You have to end this play 10 minutes earlier. Cut the last three scenes," my first thought was, "Who the f*** are you?"

Then I thought, "Wait a minute. If I was right all those times I'd said the same to writers, and they didn't listen to me, what are the chances that she's right now?"

There was an opening scene where I came out and explained that this is a funny play and I'm so sorry that you have to watch it. We would watch the audience and their reaction would be, "What is happening?"

I realised that I didn't have to apologise for the play. We had to just begin it and not overwhelm the audience. We made the cuts and it really made a difference

In many ways, it's been a journey of editing. I had to trust that the story holds up on its own and that the simpler and more vulnerable the play is, the more it connects and the more access people have to it.

My advice to playwrights is when you get notes, try them. We're not editing a movie and this isn't the final cut. If it's bad, you can undo them, but you'll know.

LIFELONG RECOVERY

The people we meet in recovery rooms can turn into lifelong friends. But connection with “civilians” is also important, so we can live comfortably in a world we were once at odds with.

For Sean, making sure that *The White Chip* could be understood by everyone meant that including people without firsthand experience of alcohol addiction was important.

What I love about the theatre is that no single person can do it alone. It's wildly collaborative. At a time when I was rebuilding my artistic community and my personal life, it was great to be able to spend time diving into the play with people to figure out how to share the story.

I feel lucky to have had “civilians” with me during the development process of the play to help me figure out what makes sense to the average person when they're watching it. They would tell me things like, “You can't talk too much about this,” or “You can't reference that.” They'd ask questions that even I didn't have the answer for. “How was this relapse different from other ones?” and “Why did you keep on drinking?”

I really didn't know the answers to these questions. But to make the play work, I had to work out how a relapse was different. Or if it really wasn't different, *how* was it exactly the same? How *did* things escalate? What was it that I didn't learn?

Working with other people has also helped me own the big moments in my own story and not to be too easy on myself. It's easy to fall into the trap of telling a true story as though it's about a very charming person to whom a series of unfortunate events happened. But the tougher I am on myself in my writing, the more people believe it.

REFLECTIONS

Recovery is a lifelong journey. It's common and healthy for those of us in recovery to stop and take stock of where we are and where we've come from. For artists, writers included, having a record of what happened can help us reflect on and even reframe our pasts.

The play also helped me to understand the damage that I had really done because I had to think about how things would fit into a story. At various moments in the development process, I would sometimes go back to my original writing and think, “Oh actually, this section could work here.”

This is the true thing about writing – it's never lost. At some point when you're on draft 3,000 and you've taken too many comments onboard and maybe tried to please too many people, you can still go back to what the original impulse was.

Also some things you've written become more interesting the further you get away from them. I read some things I genuinely believed at times and think, “How was I lying to myself?”

I went to detox one weekend and my friends came and cleaned my whole house so I would come home to a clean start. At the time I just thought, “Oh, thank God I don't have to do it.” But looking back, to go and clean someone else's (disgusting) house is a huge gift that I just didn't clock at the time. It's important to put in the play that I didn't even see people helping me.

DIFFERENT, BUT THE SAME

After numerous performances in the US, *The White Chip* has now come to the UK. Yet despite cultural differences,

the core of the story remains a universal one. For anyone who has ever attended a 12-step meeting when travelling internationally, it's striking how similar stories are wherever we go in the world.

The play had two readings up in Scotland – though this wasn't a full production. But first of all, any American pop culture jokes fell dead, not a single laugh, but even then I was always amazed by how moved people were by the story. What you realise is: It's everybody's story. I've been to AA meetings around the world, and the amazing thing is, you sit down and somebody who sounds or looks very different from you tells your exact story.

One of the amazing things that happened in New York was that lead actor Joe Tapper's best friends from college came to see the show. Afterwards they said, “How did you get the writer to put your story into the play?” And he had to reply: “I didn't write any of this! I'm just the actor!”

Even during the readings in Scotland, there was a woman that came because she had lost her son, and she wanted to better understand why. Someone else brought his family because he felt like they loved him, but they didn't really understand who he was now that he had gotten sober. These people were moved by somebody from the other side of the planet telling their story.

The amazing and terrifying thing is, regardless of where we are, the addiction recovery story is the same. It's the story of what it was like, what happened, what changed and then how we're better on the other end.

My hope is that through comedy, people can see how much we have in common and that recovery is possible. ♦

For tickets to the London production, visit: <https://south-warkplayhouse.co.uk/productions/the-white-chip>

Below: Crystal Dickinson in the 2024 production (credit: Matthew Murphy)



“MY HOPE IS THAT
THROUGH COMEDY
PEOPLE CAN SEE HOW MUCH
WE HAVE IN COMMON
AND THAT
RECOVERY IS
POSSIBLE.”

A SLIVER OF LIGHT

Ed Coleman is an actor, producer and writer. He played Harold Steptoe in the 2016 remake of *Steptoe and Son*, and in 2019, he wrote and performed the show *Leave a Message* about the moments following the death of his father.

Here, he speaks to Leon Clowes about his own experiences of addiction and how it influenced his decision to take the lead in the UK production of *The White Chip*.

leon: *The White Chip* is a rare theatre piece tackling addiction and recovery with wit and emotional honesty. What drew you to the role?

Ed: I was sent the script by my agent and got an audition. Sometimes you read something and think, "Wow, this is meant for me." That's how I felt. It was funny, devastating, dark, but it carved a tunnel into this beautiful light. It's not my story, but I recognised something in it. There were aspects of the character where the boundaries between me and him were pretty thin. It felt like a challenge and an honour to try and do justice to it.

leon: You've spoken publicly about your father's alcoholism. How does that experience shape your approach to this role?

Ed: My own story is different. I'm not an alcoholic. I grew up in a time where drinking was almost a rite of passage. Some of the best and worst moments of my life happened under its influence. But my father didn't make it. He never entered recovery or admitted he had a problem. He hit a bump in life and never got back up. Alcohol, for him, was about numbing the low-level thrum of pain. His life became quiet, isolated sadness and supermarket spirits. He wasn't a whirlwind personality, just someone slowly dying. That's a sadness I'll always carry. We never got to know what kind of relationship we could have had if he'd managed to get better.

In *The White Chip*, I play someone who does find a way out. My father didn't get that, but if I can do this role justice, if someone sees the show and it offers them even a sliver of light, then it will have been an incredible thing to be part of.

leon: Your own play, *Leave a Message*, dealt with the grief of losing your father. Do you see a through line between that and *The White Chip*?

Ed: Definitely. I co-wrote *Leave a Message* with my friend James Mitchell to get some distance from the real events. It was based on the day I had to clear out my father's flat, a squalid rented bedsit. In the middle of this grief, you're faced with these weird, practical tasks. I became obsessed with recycling. There I was, separating 1990s porn mags into bin bags, then sneaking them one by one into a



Above: Ed Coleman

paper recycling point in a Morrison's car park, surrounded by school kids. It was absurd, but I wanted the play to show how friendship can carry you through, and that we're not doomed to repeat our parents' mistakes.

leon: As someone with both lived experience and artistic sensitivity to these themes, what do you think *The White Chip* offers audiences beyond its central subject?

Ed: First and foremost, it's just a great story. You don't have to have direct experience of alcoholism to relate to it. It's a journey, the classic dark night of the soul, rock bottom and redemption. You know the ending when it begins, but it's a hell of a ride. The character is incredible, the people he meets are extraordinary. And even though it's specific, it speaks to anyone who's made mistakes or had regrets or just pushed things too far. It's about friendship, love, family, hope, things that are universal.

leon: What conversations do you hope *The White Chip* might open within theatre and beyond?

Ed: I hope it encourages more mindfulness, especially around drinking culture. I still drink, I'm not here to preach. But doing this play has made me think more about how much I drink and why. Do we really need it to oil the gears of every social event?

We're planning to have amazing non-alcoholic cocktails at the press night. That wasn't always an option. I remember when Kaliber was the only alcohol-free beer, and it was awful. Now there are incredible choices. I actually stopped drinking during the pandemic. A lot of people saw it as a wine-tasting opportunity, but I thought, if I do that, I might go mad. I didn't miss it, and the alternatives were pretty good.

If someone's drinking has become a problem, I hope this play helps them feel they can speak up and seek support. It's amazing that your organisation will be at the show each night. Performers often seem invulnerable, but we're not. I hope *The White Chip* helps to break some of the silence and opens the door to real conversations. ♦

To see Ed in the London Production of *The White Chip*, visit: <https://southwarkplayhouse.co.uk/productions/the-white-chip>



ALCOHOL

CHANGE^{UK}

Help us build a world free from alcohol harm.

Every 24 seconds someone comes to Alcohol Change UK for information and support – and we want to be there for every single one.

People across the UK need independent, honest information about the impacts of alcohol – free from shame, stigma or blame. We give people ways to understand their relationship with alcohol, and practical tools which are always free to make changes to improve health and wellbeing – like our Try Dry® app, an online check your drinking tool and tips for making lasting changes. And we support people with better knowledge to be there for others too, whether that's a family member, a colleague or a friend.

We're proud to work with people all over the country to share their stories and experiences of alcohol, offering moments of connection that can change lives. By understanding the many impacts alcohol is having on all of us – whether as individuals, families, communities or society – we can start to bring about much needed change.

Our website was visited more than a million times last year – and our resources will always be free and accessible to all. We rely on the generosity of our supporters to do this. Help us be there for everyone by supporting our life-saving information.

To find out more visit alcoholchange.org.uk/get-involved/donate



Above: Fallen Angels (credit: Natasha Bidgood)

It was love...

It's hard to explain what *it* is to people who have never experienced *it*. For me, *it* was like love. I yearned for the object of my desire – *it* was an obsession and a longing in my body. I remember being dragged from a bar after only having had one beer to go to a place I knew had no alcohol. I wasn't upset, I was heartbroken – like saying goodbye to a lover for the very last time.

For some people, *it* is a spiritual matter. For others, *it* comes down to self-control or weakness of character. Law-makers and enforcers have attempted to address *it* with the criminal justice system. Doctors and scientists attempt to deal with *it* through medication and therapy.

It is given many names: dependence, substance-use disorder, alcoholism, behavioural compulsions, deviancy. Those who experience *it* have been called junkies, alxies, crack-heads, reprobates, bad parents, scum, eccentrics and tortured geniuses.

You could take a random person with lived experience, a random doctor, a random social worker and a random judge, and ask them to write down what *it* is, and every answer would be different.

I call *it* addiction and I call myself an addict. It's just my choice. But if addiction is so hard to pin down, how can we begin to navigate addiction recovery?

CUNNING, BAFFLING, POWERFUL

It's a truism that "Once you put down the drink or drug, that's when the real work comes in." Medication might help with some initial cravings, but staying "sober," "clean" or "on the wagon" is another thing.

Addiction is messy. There are no easy-to-swallow pills to undo the physical, social and mental damage. That's why recovery is such a meaningful process. It's not just about

picking yourself up, it's about finding the right road to walk down every day for the rest of your life.

Recovery is understanding yourself and the world around you. It's about understanding what happened and what happens next. And it is hard.

Finding accurate figures for relapse rates is nearly impossible, but estimates are that 40–60% of people entering into addiction treatment will use again within a year.

However, this does not mean that for 40–60% of people, recovery didn't "work." Relapse, paradoxically, is a part of recovery for some people. This world of recovery is full of paradoxes and contradictions. Even if a person only has one glass of sherry at Christmas, they've consumed more booze in the last 12 months than I have in 17 years, and yet *I* am the "alcoholic." Not only am I an alcoholic, I even have the tenacity to be a *grateful* alcoholic.

It makes no sense.

Luckily, as humans, we have something that lets us discuss things that we don't understand and make no sense. We have methods to unpick that which defies logic. We have ways to express the inexpressible. We have art.

TELLING STORIES

"Good creative practice – whether storytelling, visual art, movement or music – supports the process of recovery by valuing voice, experience and, above all, imagination. It allows people to make sense of their stories while shaping new ones for the future. In a shared space, creativity becomes a way to connect, to listen and to be heard without judgement," Simon Ruding, artistic director and CEO of the Manchester-based participatory arts organisation Theatre in Prisons Project (TiPP) told *Performing Recovery*.

In organisations like TiPP, people are encouraged to engage in arts, and through imagination and the creative process, participants examine themselves and their own story. In participatory arts, everyone takes part, and as their own personal stories evolve, so does the public narrative around addiction.



“Recovery is more than leaving something behind – it is about imagining something new. When people are supported to create, they don’t just recover, they reclaim and rebuild their lives on their own terms.”

The ideas that Simon is talking about are shared throughout the world of addiction recovery arts. As humans, we have used storytelling, through language, performance and visual art, to create tales to explain the world around us. From cave paintings to the fables of Aesop, from ritual dancing to operatic extravaganza, our intrinsic ability to weave narratives have enabled us to reframe the past and imagine our futures.

In a clinical setting, examination of an addict’s history plays a vital role. First in the essential fact-finding to establish what medical intervention might be needed to mitigate the harmful effects of what someone may have used or be withdrawing from. Then in a therapeutic setting, examining behaviours and impulses is important to create new life strategies. Making plans for how to live without a substance is vital.

Yet within these sterile, abrupt interactions, our experiences are flattened into A4 folders of tick boxes and leaflets. Among the bullet pointed practicalities, the breadth and depth of human experience are lost. As clients in a system, we are acted upon and guided based on data.

The problem is that addiction isn’t just something that happens like a cold or a broken arm. It’s something that permeates your entire life and being. Though professional support is important, our individual experiences are more complex and need more nuanced attention.

Self-reflection is vital if we are to understand ourselves. Playwright and actor Tom Nightingale achieves this through his work with the theatre company he founded, The Mixed Bag Players, a York-based theatre group for anyone affected by mental illness or addiction.

“The value of creativity in recovery is priceless,” he told us. “Subjectively, it allows me to make sense of my own realities – these realities being a dual diagnosis of addiction issues and mental illness. Creativity helps make sanity a viable option.”

For Tom, not only is storytelling healing, but it is healing in a fun way. The Mixed Bag Players’ 2024 production *Nightingale’s Game: Pretend To Be Like Who?* gave Tom and the rest of the company an opportunity to deal with taboo subjects like addiction and mental illness in a collective way. The group encourages collaboration across society. Tom also stresses the enjoyable aspect of this collaboration. It’s a far cry from the cliché of the isolated, tortured writer. What they do is fun, and that’s important.

That creating art is enjoyable isn’t simply a nice side-effect, it’s vital. Fun is an antidote to stress, and stress can be deadly. In addiction recovery, fun is serious business.

PARKLIFE

In his 2008 book *In The Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction*, Canadian physician and author Gabor Maté puts forward a compelling case for stress being a significant contributing factor in substance addiction. He mentions two important studies. One is the now

famous Rat Park study, in which lab rats were given sugar water laced with morphine. When kept under isolated, uncomfortable and cramped conditions, lab rats would consume the morphine laced water habitually rather than plain water. When allowed to socialise with other rats in Rat Park, a spacious, comfortable environment, the use of morphine-laced water went down considerably. Even rats that had built up a physical dependence on morphine would switch to the plain water once they were placed in Rat Park, despite experiencing physical withdrawal symptoms.

In a second example, Maté relays a 1975 study of US soldiers returning from the Vietnam War. The rate of heroin addiction among returning soldiers was 20%. However, 1 year after returning, that figure had reduced to 1%, meaning only 1 in 20 soldiers addicted to heroin after returning from war and undergoing treatment in army hospitals “became re-addicted.”

These studies, along with other evidence and Maté’s experience as a psychologist specialising in addiction, lead him to the conclusion that “Three factors need to coincide for substance addiction to occur: a susceptible organism; a drug with addictive potential; and stress.”

The idea of stress being a predictor of addiction is a compelling but controversial one. As a child, I was led to believe that the mechanism of addiction was a simple straight line from trying a drug to stealing to feed your habit. I’m from a generation that as kids was told, “Just say no.” Yet as I grew older, I saw people smoking marijuana without ending up living on the streets. I eventually tried most illegal drugs made available to me – yet I stubbornly became an alcoholic. Why did I become addicted to a socially acceptable drug consumed and celebrated without stigma by millions of non-addicts every day? As Maté puts it, “Drugs do not make anyone into an addict anymore than food makes someone into a compulsive eater.” Addiction is not a moral failing, it is a reaction to trauma.

However, stress relief can be hard to come by in recovery, especially when you are used to turning to substances to unwind. And the process of rebuilding a life is inherently stressful. But if art relieves stress, and stress is a contributing factor to addiction, then there is good reason to think that arts intervention can have a direct positive effect on people in recovery.

The social return on investment for the arts as a healthcare intervention

is estimated at
£4 – £11
for every
£1 spent.

A 2017 study from the UK All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing suggests that arts, both as activities and as therapy, show significant positive outcomes in health and well-being settings.

For instance, an “arts on prescription” project showed a “37% drop in GP consultation rates and a 27% reduction in hospital admissions,” resulting in an annual savings of £216 per patient.

When you engage in art, your brain releases the feel-good hormone responsible for motivation. Importantly, it is the engagement in art that creates the benefit. It is not simply a finished art product that makes you proud – the process of making art is beneficial in itself.

The New Note Orchestra (NNO) is a Brighton-based music collective for people in addiction recovery. Although the group has put on acclaimed performances at venues such as the Royal Opera House, it is about more than the artwork. It’s about the community.

In a 2023 services outcome report, 10 out of 11 members of NNO agreed that being a member made them feel more positive about their life and that their mental health had improved since joining the orchestra.

A 2024 report from Manchester-based Fallen Angels Dance Theatre (FADT), with whom NNO partnered at the Royal Opera house, stated 80% of participants had experienced positive life changes, including reduced anxiety and depression. The report also highlighted that recovery professionals had seen improved client outcomes in emotional and physical well-being of people in recovery who had joined FADT.

EVERYDAY PEOPLE

FADT and NNO, like other UK recovery arts groups, centre community, creation, quality and performing as key parts of their activities. These are the major differences between the recovery arts sector and arts therapy.

Art therapy is a valuable tool in healthcare settings. Its many advantages and outcomes are similar to those experienced by members of recovery arts groups. But the main distinction between art therapy and recovery arts practice is an important one, and that is self-direction.

Art therapy, like traditional therapy, is guided and will generally follow a therapist-client structure. In recovery arts, however, such distinctions are irrelevant. Many recovery arts groups were started and are led by people with lived experience, and though they may be professionally run, still carry the DNA of mutual support groups such as AA or NA. Those led by people who don’t identify as addicts will still place an emphasis on ownership of the artistic output by those creating it.

In short, while arts therapy is something done to you, recovery arts is something you do.

Gary Krishna is a writer and facilitator of the Boscombe-based, multi-disciplinary Outsider’s Project. He says: “Creative writing and the arts have given me purpose. What started as a private outlet became a way of life, helping me grow, skill up and reach people in powerful ways. I now perform my own writing to a professional standard in theatres and spaces where people actually pay to hear it. I get paid to return to prisons every year, running workshops and performing for people who are now where I once was. And I connect with them deeply – because I’ve lived it.”

COME TOGETHER

In the age of the self, with increasing atomisation and automation, our need for community is palpably, even painfully apparent. What a community looks like differs from person to person, from group to group, but for many people in recovery it is essential.

In my own experience, the true value of peer-support groups is less about didactic advice and more about the comfort and the stability of there always being a place to go to be with people like me. For all the problems that one could observe of organised religions, congregations formed around shared beliefs have been a source of comfort and power since before the written word. And while cynics have derided such congregations as deluded or brainwashed, they too have formed their own communities offering support and the power of friendship.

Having a shared goal and ambition can create cohesion almost impossible to recreate in other circumstances. The cooperation needed to put on a theatre production, dance show or musical ensemble is rivalled perhaps only by team sports.

Addiction is an isolating force. Though many valuable communities have been built around the British pub, ritual cannabis use and experimentation with hallucinogens, for an addict, the need for the short-term relief of a substance will outweigh the desire to invest in long-term relationships. It is not a choice, but a reaction to circumstance.

The link between isolation and addiction is a vicious circle. Lack of positive connection can be a major factor in forming an addiction, and being in active addiction makes it harder to form positive relationships and communities.

As Johann Hari states in his 2015 book *Chasing the Scream*, “The opposite of addiction isn’t sobriety; it is connection.” But this doesn’t mean that making connections is easy. Isolation doesn’t stop the moment we put down our substance. Medical intervention doesn’t change the world around us. If a lack of social connection was there before addiction took a hold, then it is even more bitterly present as the physical dependence fades. Marginalisation, on the basis of racialisation, neurodiversity, gender identification, sexuality, social-economic status and more, creates barriers to social inclusion that cannot be cured with a pill or a weekly half-hour session with a psychologist.

The 12-step group is not the dingy, smoke-filled church basement in the general public’s imagination. It is a place of hope, positivity and laughter, but the experience is intense. Talking about your most personal experiences in front of a group of people week in week out, though essential for some, is another kind of hell for others. Creating spaces around art, however, allows people in recovery to come together and share experiences without the pressure of having to directly articulate trauma week in week out.

“Creativity in recovery gives people the opportunity to work through past trauma and pain without having to find the words. It develops skills in arts and performance which increases confidence and self-esteem and opens up access to the arts and venues to new audiences,” says Sophie Wilsdon of the Bristol Drugs Project.

HOW DO THE ARTS HELP ADDICTION RECOVERY?

Participating in creative arts relieves stress, reducing incidents of relapse.

Arts can help increase self-esteem for those in recovery and combat negative stereotypes.

Recovery arts groups create inclusive communities that offer support and belonging.

The arts can make positive recovery stories more visible, making recovery more appealing and encouraging people to get help.

“Music, movement, drama, poetry and even comedy can all allow self-expression outside of the confessional.”

FUN IS THERAPY

Kate McCoy is the artistic director of the Brighton-based Small Performance Adventures. “As part of a group playing together and creating theatre, you get to totally inhabit yourself and be fully present in the moment, and simultaneously – and perhaps paradoxically – forget yourself as you surrender to the process of creating. And we all need that. Small Performance Adventures create spaces for play where people can meet as equals and be their playful, creative, authentic selves. I have been running creative residencies in prison recovery settings recently, and one group member put it better in two words than I can in a paragraph: playful healing.”

The term “playful healing” not only describes the direct experience of being in a workshop, but also one of the key ideas behind recovery arts as a whole. One of the many myths of addiction is that it is the result of a hedonistic lifestyle, reinforcing the idea that recovery should be painful and austere – detox or withdrawal should be unpleasant to deter the addict from using again, lest they have to experience withdrawal another time. Similarly, the recovery process is seen as a punishment for poor life choices.

But this is clearly not true. If every single person who'd ever had a hangover never drank again, the alcohol industry would be in dire straits. Negative side effects on their own are seldom a deterrent. Long-term recovery, however it is described, should be based around positive experiences, healthy relationships and resilience rather than more pain, more discomfort and more social exclusion.

CHANGES INSIDE

In recovery arts groups, friendships are formed and mutual support is learned. People experience the rewards of co-creation. But it is not just our relationships with the outside world that change, there is also change within ourselves, in our attitudes and our very identities.

Like many addicts, I carried shame with me throughout my early recovery. It was a shame I took with me from my days of active use. It may have even come before. As I built up time sober, I saw the strength in my experience, and yet I remained an addict.

Active addiction is such an encompassing state of being that it can override all other aspects of who we are. In early

recovery, all interactions centre around being an addict. This is true for medical appointments, peer support groups and even time with friends and loved ones, who, with all the best intentions, tip-toe around us, scared of the next relapse.

But through art we can find new identities. And this is a guiding principle for many recovery arts practices

Geese is a Birmingham-based theatre company that works with people in criminal justice and social welfare settings to make positive changes. According to its artistic director, Andy Watson, “Creativity, and specifically theatre, invites you to try out new roles, re-imagine your narrative, rehearse new ways of being and take ownership of your script. Exploring your own (or fictional) stories through performance and play offers valuable space for thinking about who you are in the world and who you want to be.”

When we play, write and create, we momentarily displace ourselves. We find new ways of telling our stories or recognise ourselves in others. But identities are also changed in a simpler way. The moment a person engages in the creation of art, they become an artist. This is true for everyone, in recovery or not. Yet it holds a special significance for those of us struggling with self-esteem, whether our last drink or drug was a month or a decade ago.


Even as visible recovery is becoming more acceptable, there is still a burden on the person in recovery to stand up and say “My name is x, I'm an addict, and here is my story,” and to be “brave,” “open” and “honest”. To be able to stand up and say, “My name is x, I'm an artist, and here is my art” is profoundly different. And this difference does not just impact the person, it impacts the audience.

SAY IT LOUD

Addiction is a community disease. Its effects and causes are societal. According to the British addiction support charity the Forward Trust, 47% people in the UK “have either experienced or know someone who has lived with drug, alcohol, medication or gambling dependency.” Despite this, there is still a large, deep stigma surrounding addiction and addicts.

This stigma is dangerous. It dissuades people from getting the help they need. And it also creates barriers for people in recovery, from social exclusion to lack of employment opportunities.

Where does this stigma come from? We only have to look at the media to see how poorly people in recovery are



An Arts on Prescription project has shown a **37%** drop in GP consultation rates and a **27%** reduction in hospital admission.

Above: Rising Voices (credit: Maggie Telfer OBE)

treated. If we see someone in active addiction, it is sensational and dehumanising. At the same time, if we are told a person is in recovery (or sober, clean or dry) in series one of a show, then more often than not, we can expect to see that person relapse disastrously to boost ratings by series two. Of course, it's true that many people coming into recovery will experience relapses. But what is also true is that millions of people around the world who call themselves addicts are doing things, normal things and great things, without relapsing and without their past colouring every action and interaction.

The paradox is that knowing you are an addict is essential to recovery. It is the fact that tells us that "just one" is never just one. But if being an addict and being in recovery carry so much negativity, then this becomes a barrier. People who need recovery need to see that being an addict is good. That is, to know your disease is the first step to protecting yourself against its symptoms.

Dr Sharon Coyne is artistic director for the Boscombe-based arts charity Vita Nova. According to her: "Arts and theatre work breaks down stereotypes around the disease of addiction and opens dialogues. This is particularly powerful when working with the young people who watch Vita Nova's plays and hear their testimonies. The arts help to explain the inexplicable."

To celebrate recovery is to say that not only is it possible to overcome your addiction, but that the process is fun and fulfilling. It is to say that you can be an artist, even if you weren't before. It is to say that addiction is difficult, but it doesn't have to be scary. We are not the dregs of society to be pitied. We are artists. We are skilled and passionate. We are real people who, like everyone else, want to do great things. We are not outside society – we ARE society.

FOR ART'S SAKE

Reducing anxiety, reshaping identities, building communities and combatting stigma. These are all essential ways that art can help in addiction recovery. But what about the other way around? How can addiction recovery help art?

In 2025, art is encountering an existential crisis that a few years ago would have been dismissed as science fiction. In the past 3–4 years, the world of literature, followed by music and visual art has been "disrupted" by AI. In short, jobs that used to be done by writers, visual artists and musicians are now being taken by generative AI algorithms.

In a highly commercialised society, art is often seen as a commodity. Spotify, one of the world's largest music distribution platforms, has begun to include AI-generated music in its playlists. Following the launch of ChatGPT, the flood of AI-generated books onto Amazon became so problematic that the company had to restrict self-publishing to only three book uploads per day. AI-generated art and

videos are commonplace on social media and are becoming harder to distinguish from human-made work.

Art and artists have also been systematically devalued in schools over the last few decades, and participation in activities like music and drama has decreased dramatically. According to the UK's Cultural Learning Alliance, the number of pupils taking art GCSEs has dropped by 42% since 2010.

The devaluing of art is not a product of technological innovation, it is a societal problem. It is slowly being stripped from formal education, underfunded in higher education and weaponised in so-called culture wars. But it is through the process of creation that we can learn to know ourselves, feed our imaginations to create better futures, and build empathy and understanding in a world that can be so cruel.

Those who think a machine can create art as well as a human have entirely missed the point. Art is not a luxury good, it is a process. It is a product of human emotion, skill, introspection and inspiration. Art, at its best, is about the connection between those expressing and those experiencing that expression. By definition, this cannot be created by a machine. Though an algorithm might imitate us, it cannot experience the world as we do.

Addiction recovery arts reminds us of the value of that human connection – and that engaging in the creative process is just as important as the output. From writers to dancers, musicians to those working with fabrics, artists in recovery constantly remind the world of the value of that human connection.

Through the hope of a better life, recovery artists offer inspiration. From the communities we build, we create engaged audiences. And through the honesty of talking about our lived experiences, we offer the thing that society so desperately needs – authenticity.

Addiction is of the human condition. It is a reaction to the world. It is cunning, baffling and powerful. It defies logic and yet permeates our entire society. But art, too, is of the human condition. It is both a reflection and a lens on our surroundings. It helps us rationalise the things that seem irrational, to express the inexpressible and to bring us together in celebration.

The question is not, "Can art help us to heal?" The question is, "How could it not?"♦

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Danielle Tarento & Annaleigh Ashford present



**'Plays save lives in all kinds of ways.
I would bet that The White Chip has, and will'**

The New York Times

THE WHITE CHIP.

**By Sean
Daniels**

Director
Matt Ryan

Set & Costume Designer
Lee Newby

Lighting Designer
Jamie Platt

Sound Designer
Max Pappenheim

**A Dry Comedy
About Drying Out**



**'...likely
to leave you
shaken and
stirred with
plenty of
laughter
and sobs'**



**'A delicate
equilibrium
between
laugh-out-loud
comedy and
gasp-inducing
tragedy'**

The New York Times

**SOUTHWARK
PLAYHOUSE
BOROUGH**

9 Jul - 16 Aug

southwarkplayhouse.co.uk



STATUS SYMBOLS



Above: Status Creative participants making music (credit: Status Creative)

Status Creative is based in Saxmundham, Suffolk, and has been a registered Community Interest Company since 2023. The organisation supports its local community with creative activities for people in addiction recovery, as well as people with mental health challenges, in poverty or isolated, who have experienced homelessness or domestic abuse, refugees, and people from BAME, minority and LGBTQIA+ communities. **Alex Mazonowicz** spoke to **George Fothergill**, one of the directors and founder of the organisation.

“When you’re in recovery, there’s this massive hole where addiction once lived. How do you fill it?” George says to me over Zoom on a late February afternoon.

“This is where being creative comes in. Not only does it help rewire the neurons in your brain, but you’re filling the time where addiction used to live with something positive. That’s one of the most crucial things, especially in the early stages of recovery. Everybody’s got a relapse in them, but not necessarily another recovery.”

Like many facilitators in recovery arts groups, George is an artist first and foremost. At the end of our chat, he jokingly complains about the admin and funding bids he has to do that day – “It just sucks the life out of you” – then excitedly tells me he has to learn a song on bass to support one of Status Creative’s participants.

“We’re performing at the Suffolk Sober Spaces tonight. It’s an open mic event started by Not Saints and funded by Lowestoft Town Council. It’s doing quite well now, but the initial problem was that first push of getting people to be involved,” he tells me.

George worked as a professional musician and led a music charity for 10 years before starting Status Creative. When he founded the organisation, he could see that there needed to be more than music, and now, people can also take part in dance, visual arts and creative writing activities. “When it comes to music, we involve digital tools like iPads. With these tools, people who might not have the patience to learn an instrument can start to get some gratification. They can start to see results within minutes. Once they’ve got the confidence, we can build on that.”

“We had one participant who was in his 20s,” George says, referring to the musician he will be playing with that night. “He was almost on the streets. He did one session, and when he came back the next week, he’d written a brilliant song. All his experiences started pouring out. And because of the creative writing sessions, he’s now a phenomenal songwriter.”

Creative writing is a great starting point for many people in recovery who may not have experience in the arts. “We’re having a conversation now,” George tells me, “but it has to be a two-way street – when you stop speaking, I start. But with creative writing, you can take all the time you need. You can concentrate on self-reflection.

It’s easy because you just need a pen and some paper.

We’ve seen some amazing writing, too. People reading back what they’ve written, saying, ‘Where did that come from? I didn’t realise I could write like that!’

The value of creativity if you’re in recovery cannot be underestimated. It’s fun, but it’s also beneficial if you’re doing something creative with other people in recovery, creating a non-judgemental, safe space where you feel more likely to open up a bit. Everybody at Status Creative has lived experience of domestic abuse, homelessness, mental health problems or previous addictions. So it makes us relatable.”

Since March 2024, Status Creative has supported more than 1,500 people. Among them, 86% said they felt a reduction of anxiety levels after attending workshops, 90% said they felt a sense of accomplishment and 60% said they would be less likely to need medical intervention for their mental health. Since February, Status Creative has been further funded to create a safe creative space in the Lowestoft area, as well as receiving funding from the Recovery Innovation Fund to expand provision into Norfolk.

“Our ethos is simple. When you walk out of the door, we want you to feel better than when you walked in it. We ask people ‘Has doing something creative helped you in your recovery? Are you less likely to seek medical help as a result?’ Generally, the answers from participants are things like, ‘Yes, I’m buzzing at the moment. I don’t think I need to call the mental health nurse today.’”

However, like many other recovery arts groups organisers, George recognises the funding problems.

“At the moment, the money just isn’t there. For £1 invested, you can get a social justice saving of £4. If you can prevent someone from relapsing and needing medical help, then that’s around £400 saved just for one hospital visit.

At some point, the penny is going to drop, and the NHS will see how much money they can save. It is spending £12 billion a year just on mental health services.”

When that penny drops is another matter, but in the meantime, Status Creative, with 60 workshops planned over 2025, is continuing to support the community and spread the word that creativity works. ♦

Status Creative would love to speak to anyone about the benefits of the arts for the recovery community. Get in touch at: info@statuscreativecic.com or george@statuscreativecic.com.

For more information on Status Creative, visit: <https://statuscreativecic.com>.



Lucy
Rocca

Founder of
Soberistas

Help Us Change the Story Around Addiction

At Soberistas, we know what it's like to feel alone in your struggle with alcohol

– to wonder if you're "bad enough" to need help, or too high-functioning to be taken seriously. Many of us have lived for years in that grey area, outwardly coping but inwardly falling apart.

We exist to support those people. The ones who don't see themselves in traditional recovery spaces. The ones who want change, connection, and a version of sobriety that doesn't feel like punishment - but possibility.

Since 2012, Soberistas has been a safe, anonymous, women-led community for anyone looking to escape the grip of alcohol and rebuild their lives. Some of us identify as addicts. Others don't. What unites us is the desire to live fully, freely, and in control.

Our mission is twofold

- To challenge the stigma still attached to addiction and sobriety.
- To provide real, ongoing support to people who want a way out of destructive drinking patterns.

Through expert-led coaching, peer support, motivational content, and real-life community, we offer a path to sobriety that's grounded in compassion and lived experience. We don't do shame. We don't do labels. We do honesty, empathy, and hope.

But we can't do it alone. Every membership and every voice raised helps us expand our reach. It helps us tell the truth about alcohol in a world that still glamorises drinking - and ignores the fallout.

If you've ever felt stuck, scared, or unseen in your drinking, you're not alone. If you believe that healing is possible, even when you can't see the whole path yet - you're in the right place.

**Soberistas**[™]
love life in control

Charitable
Incorporated
Organisation

JOIN US | SUPPORT OUR WORK | BECOME A MEMBER
<https://soberistas.com/membership>

'Oh My Fucking God Slash Science'

... Slash Art

by

Wendy Dossett

We asked poet and academic Wendy Dossett if she could respond poetically to the play *The White Chip*. This is what she said.

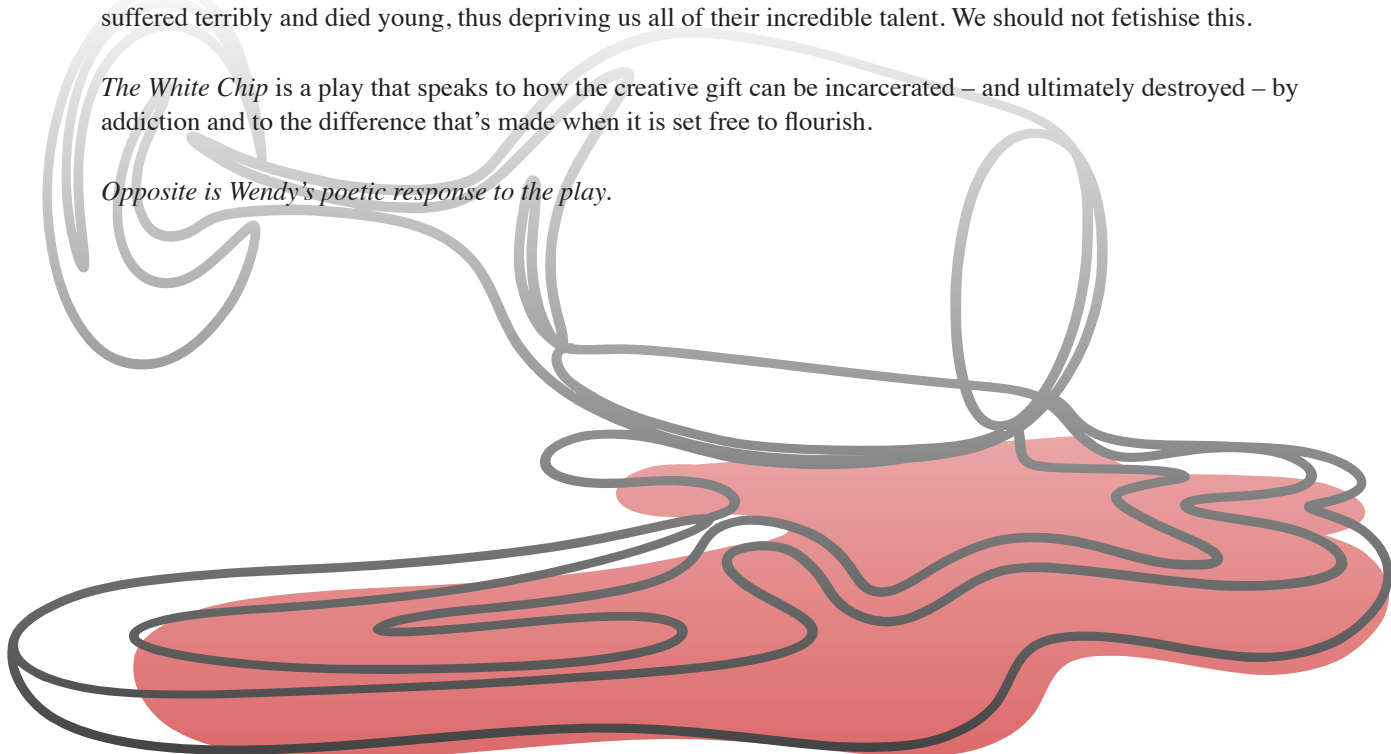
The White Chip play interrogates the differences (and, to an extent, the similarities) between the God language found in the 12 steps and more scientific understandings of the condition of addiction that might resonate for many. There's a humorous moment in the play when Steven, realising there's a neurological reason that he struggles to make it beyond 90 days, exclaims, "Oh my fucking god slash science!" It's a laugh-out-loud line in the play, but it's also a serious recognition that, for this individual seeking recovery – and indeed for many others – science has something to add: a key that opens other possibilities. That funny, clever statement might also be a reflection on how our language promotes the awe of religion but tends to miss the awe of science. Why is it always "Oh my God!" and not "Science!?" We could see the two as an opposing binary or we could also acknowledge that, for many, God and science have a great deal in common. Perhaps they are both awesome!

For me, though, there's a further dimension that this play brings to the consideration of frameworks for understanding recovery. This dimension is art itself. As part of his self-justifying self-talk, Steven asks, "Who wants to read a sober Jack Kerouac?" I used precisely this method to shore up my own addictive behaviour. Looking back at the drivel I wrote drunk, I cringe to remember how I would tell myself my poetry would never be as good as William Blake's if I was sober! Turns out my poetry would never be as good as William Blake's – drunk or sober (who knew?). But I never wrote anything worth publishing until I got sober.

Our romanticisation of the addictions of great artists is deeply problematic on so many levels. The idea that the artistic drive needs artificial help is now showing itself in the troubling reliance on artificial intelligence. We forget that these artists – Amy Winehouse, Kurt Cobain, Dylan Thomas, Janis Joplin and so many others – suffered terribly and died young, thus depriving us all of their incredible talent. We should not fetishise this.

The White Chip is a play that speaks to how the creative gift can be incarcerated – and ultimately destroyed – by addiction and to the difference that's made when it is set free to flourish.

Opposite is Wendy's poetic response to the play.



The strait-laced satirist may well decide that Turners, Dürers, or Bellinis, do not spring from dry Martinis. But we're not so sure. For us that spark elusive ignites only on the other side. William James, psych giant and great pragmatist, was known to say, "The sway of alcohol over mankind is unquestionably due to its power to simulate the mystical faculties of human nature, usually crushed to earth by the cold facts and dry criticisms of the sober hour. Sobriety diminishes, discriminates, and says no; drunkenness expands, unites, and says yes."

But is he right?

Are we so small,
we don't believe
great art comes unassisted?
And here is the true
diminishment

Dr James,
where once we thought
drugs were the door,
Now it's the turn of Artificial
Intelligence.

Freedom's just another word
for nothing left to lose,
Joplin's classic nihilistic howl.
But how -- just muse,
a voice like hers could age
and speak
to the searing losses of our day.
We're lost in space
without her coded blues.

Could William Blake have
have journeyed unassisted
in those outer realms
Or slipped them inside-out
with his magic verse?
Do you want to read
A sober Jack Kerouac?

Hear
a fully
recovered
Amy
Winehouse?

"No! They are the GOATs -The Greatest of All Time," we cry
But what if they're the goats sent into the wilderness
with our sins fastened to their backs?

Their art consumed with reverence, yet lives reviled,
Mirrors of our own extremes the ones kept
veiled.

This marvellous play
God
It speaks the
salvific
pathways,

v
/
choices.

sets up an opposition of
Science
truth of diverse
healing
multiple voices,

But
most
of all
it
speaks,
to me at
least,

of art, of creativity

That spark, renewed, recovered, found.

Freed from addiction's dark captivity.

The Alcoholic's Tarot

is an arts project by leon clowes. It reframes the Major Arcana of the traditional tarot deck to spark reflection and conversation around people's experiences of alcohol. In a reading you may consult the wisdom of these special cards to find out what will be your alcoholic misfortune. But beware, the cards never lie...

O The Complete Fool

While under the influence you have a tendency to make a total tit of yourself.

I The Medicinal

You kid yourself into thinking you need the grog to make yourself feel better.

II The 'High' Priestess

You're very likely to be partial to a bifta or the strongest grade skunk you can find.

III The Impress

You have to be centre of attention in an annoying way.

IV The Superior

You think you're better than everyone else.

V The Sycophant

You're a right creep.

VI The Smothers

You ruin any relationship with your clinginess.

VII The Raging Harlot

You're a right whore.

VIII Intense

You bore everybody else in the bar with your angry story about your boss all night.

IX The Shirker

You're a lazy shite, aren't you?.

X Real of Misfortune

You're a walking disaster and are to be avoided given the bad luck you bring.

XI Injustice

You're so hard done to, aren't you?

XII The Hanging Man

By god, you suffer with the hangovers, don't you?

XIII Feel Like Death

By god, you REALLY suffer with the hangovers, don't you?

XIV Intemperate

Doesn't take a lot to press your buttons, does it?

XV The Demon Drinker

One is too many and ten is nowhere near enough.

XVI The Shit Shower

After about four drinks you are to be avoided at all costs.

XVII The Scar

Bit accident prone when over imbibed, are we?

XVIII The Moonie

You have a tendency to show off what no one wants to see when you're drunk.

XIX The Shun

Can't face the world after what you did last night, can you?

XX Self-Judgement

You're too hard on yourself but perhaps, actually, you should be pretty ashamed after what you did.

XXI The Whirl

Ever had the feeling the room is spinning and you're certain you're going to be sick?



OUT OF THE WILDERNESS

BY

WOLVERHAMPTON SERVICE USERS INVOLVEMENT TEAM (SUIT)

In September 2024, Wolverhampton-based recovery organisation SUIT started work with Peter Chand, also known as The Indian Storyteller, and composer and editor PKC the First to produce a series of short films exploring the diverse addiction experiences of SUIT clients and volunteers.

The films were co-designed by SUIT clients, volunteers and staff members with lived experience. They describe the journey of addiction, recovery and mental health as navigating through a deep, dark forest and are a deep dive into the real experiences of the SUIT team. The object is to raise awareness of addiction and recovery, and the sensitive issues that coexist alongside them.

In January 2025, the films premiered at Wolverhampton's Literature Festival in Wolverhampton Art Gallery's Making Space, where the SUIT team and Peter delivered a workshop with zine making, creative writing and visual exploration of forest worlds.

The films of the Forest Faced project are intended as a creative resource for other clients in recovery, clinical treatment services, agencies and staff to draw upon. The project is funded by Wolverhampton City Council's Department of Public Health. The films were shot at Asylum Artist Quarter, which championed SUIT's creative arts and gave a great amount of encouragement to the peer-led team. You can view the project on the SUIT youtube channel.

Visit: www.youtube.com/@serviceuserinvolvementteam

If you are affected by any of the real-life stories in the project or need advice, support and understanding from their lived-experience team, call SUIT on 01902 328983 or send a message at: <https://www.facebook.com/SUITWolves>.

FILMS AND FILMMAKERS

Down the Rabbit Hole: Leanne and Sally

Sally and Leanne's *Down the Rabbit Hole* explores their battle with heroin and how they escaped to become Alice in Wonderland. The films tell their journey through the deep, dark forest and how they have managed to stay on that winding road of recovery.

Stairway to Park Dale WVI: Matt and John

Park Dale WVI is where Matt and John's jazz and blues-infused tale of addiction and recovery speaks of colour, sound and silence, and the joy that comes when the stillness passes. This is a story about love, beauty, connection and finding your tribe.

ਰਸਤਾ (The Way): Vijay

Vijay's journey tells of a rock star lifestyle; the hedonism that came with being in a Bhangra band in the 1990s and how the popularity and arguments caused by drink and drugs finally broke him.

Vijay now works at SUIT as the Punjabi-speaking project worker, supporting communities at local temples, addressing stigmas around alcohol and addiction, and encouraging people to be more open around mental health.

Three Stories: Keeley, Beau and Charlotte

Step into Beau's world, where an arduous journey through a dark forest leads to a dazzling clearing in the twisted branches above. This is a story of hope, change and learning. Keeley's story covers grief, strength and the power of

music to help her break from the cycle of pain and addiction. Charlotte's story is her artistic journey through recovery from alcohol addiction to a better life, and how she now has two birthdays. (That means double the cake!)

Nieustraszony (Fearless): Karolina and Warren

Everyone deserves to have supporters on their side, to keep believing in them, to help them achieve. To keep being different, unique, valued. To survive.

SUIT's Polish-speaking project worker, Karolina, explains her strength in overcoming feelings of guilt and failure, from her traumatic beginnings as an orphan in Poland to finding herself embracing power and epitomising *nieustraszony*, becoming fearless.

SUIT volunteer Warren speaks candidly of trauma, how it shaped his criminal past and how he used drugs as a way to control the things he had never had control over. He has found encouragement and inspiration in recovery, new connections and creativity, and he seeks out ways to help others. "When you start to see that light at the end of the tunnel, something happens. It can't be explained," said Warren.

Mr Moustache: Marcus and Jason

Named after a song on Nirvana's debut album, *Bleach*, *Mr Moustache* explores a deep, dark forest with a path of obstacles from childhood and teenage years. Trying to fit in with others, being told to "man up," but feeling different and understanding that there is more to living in a world of overt and brain-dead machismo.



RECOVERED 1440

THERE ARE 14 HUNDRED AND 40 MINUTES IN A DAY ...

Bobby is a writer and artist from the East End of London. In his own words:

I was brought up in the East End of London during the 90s, and for who I now know is a very sensitive boy, that was a tough place to be. It was a very masculine and violent environment, two things I am not. As a child, I was always consciously aware of everything, painfully so. I was aware of what you might be thinking of me, aware of what I needed to say and do in order to fit in. I did not know it then, I did not know it for 38 years, but thanks to the education I have been given, I know now that I was riddled with fear. I still can be at times.

The drug that brought me to my knees was powdered cocaine, and I will always be forever grateful that it did, because when I was finally broken, my journey in life finally began.

*I am 5 years clean and sober. I am also the happiest and most peaceful person that I know. Why?? I finally surrendered, I reached out for help, I entered a 12-step fellowship – and for the first time in my life, I did what I was f*cking told!! I attended meetings, I got a sponsor, I embarked on the journey of the 12 steps with the same zealotry that I showed in my drug using.*

*If you are suffering with addiction ... if when you start, you can't stop ... or if when you do stop, then you can't stay stopped ... **please, please, please ask for help.** Get yourself to a 12-step meeting. You are not alone. You never were. There are people at those meetings that will love you until you can learn to love yourself, they will show you the steps to take to find out who you really are.*

At *Performing Recovery*, we are grateful and proud to present some of Bobby's work. The short graphic story over the next six pages is one of honesty and hope. If you want to know more, visit: www.recovered1440.com/podcast.

CONTINUED ...



1 AM...

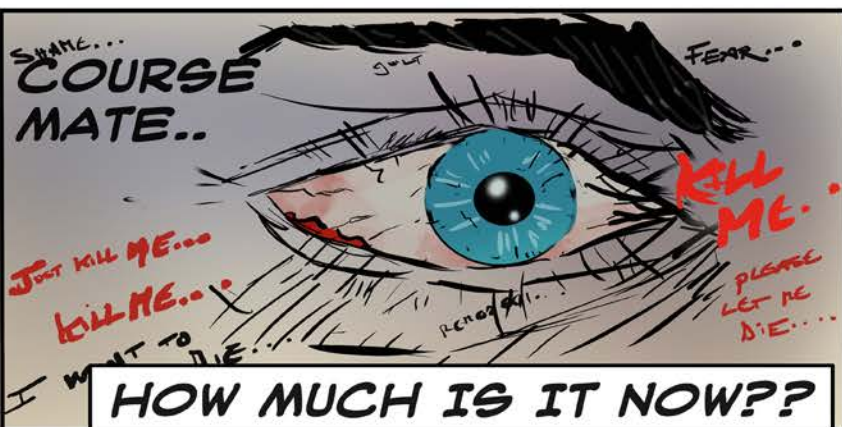
'WHY DON'T YOU EVER JUST TAKE 3 BRO?'



"COS I DON'T EVEN WANT THIS 1..."



'YOU DEFINITELY GONNA HAVE THE REST OF THIS DOUGH ON FRIDAY THO ... YEAH??'



HOW MUCH IS IT NOW??



'HOW THE FUCK HAVE I DONE THIS AGAIN?? ... THERE MUST BE SOMETHING WRONG WITH ME...'

"OH WELL... FUCK IT!! I CAN'T STOP NOW!?"

I'LL JUST FINISH THIS BIT ...

AND THEN I'LL DEFINITELY GO TO SLEEP" ...

3AM...

"SORRY MATE,
ME AGAIN
...
CAN I GET YOU
TO DROP ME
ONE MORE
...
PLEASE?"



I KNOW
I KNOW,
I'M A CUNT
...
I SHOULD
HAVE JUST
TAKEN 3
...

YES
MATE,
THE MONEY
WILL BE
THERE
FRIDAY...
100%...



"MEET YOU AT
THE USUAL
SPOT
..."



"15 MINS?..."



"NICE ONE
MATE....
YOU
DEFINITELY
COMING
YEAH?"

HALF AN HOUR LATER

*Shit... Kill me...
Panic... Anxiety...
Fear... Paranoia...*

WHERE THE FUCK
IS THIS
GEEZER??
IF I GET CAUGHT
I'M DEAD....
WHY THE F*CK AM I
EVEN DOING
THIS??



"MATE...
WHAT'S HAPPENING?
YOU STILL COMING?
HOW LONG YOU GONNA BE?
LET ME KNOW ASAP..."

MATE??
YOU THERE?
WHAT'S HAPPENING?
YOU STILL
COMING YEAH?

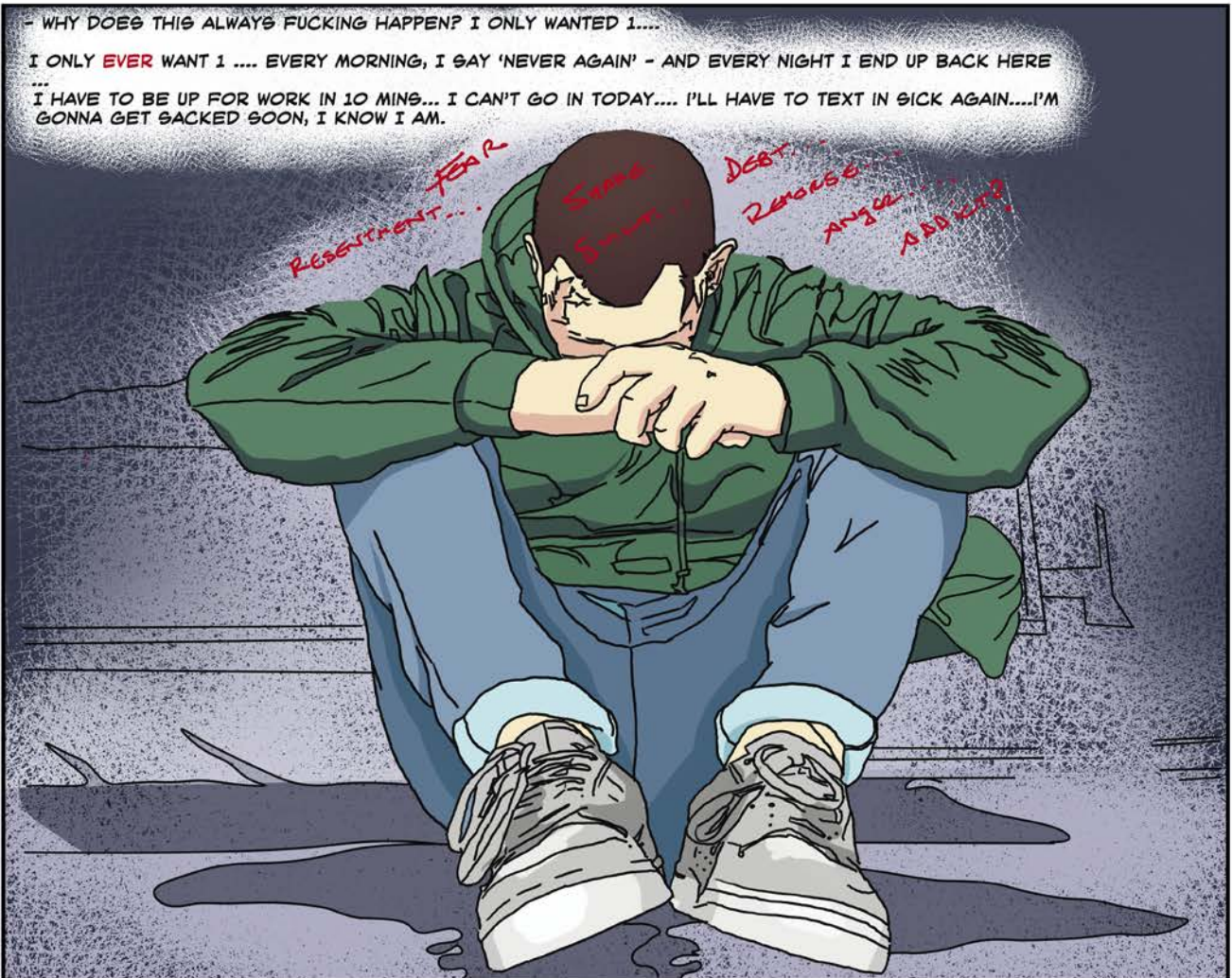


20 MINS LATER...

"HERE ...
TAKE THESE QUICK...AND DO ME A FAVOUR,
STOP PESTERING ME...
I GET HERE WHEN I GET HERE -
AND THIS MONEY BETTER BE THERE
FRIDAY .."



"YEAH SORRY ABOUT THAT BRO...
I CAN'T HELP IT....
YEAH COURSE. FRIDAY... 100% MATE"...









"WELCOME HOME!!
ARE YOU NEW YEAH? WICKED!
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU MATE.
... YOU CAN RELAX AND
PUT DOWN THE GUN NOW....
THE WARS OVER ...
YOU ARE NOT ON YOUR OWN
...NOT ANYMORE.."

TO CONTINUE FOLLOWING THE JOURNEY - LOG ONTO:

[HTTPS://WWW.RECOVERED1440.COM/PODCAST](https://www.recovered1440.com/podcast)

...AND LISTEN TO OUR STORIES.

THERE ARE 14 HUNDRED AND 40 MINUTES IN A DAY, AND THAT IS HOW WE RECOVER. ONE DAY AT A TIME.

GOOGLE: 12 STEP MEETINGS IN MY AREA - AND GO. YOU WILL BE WELCOMED WITH LOVE AND OPEN ARMS.

THIS COMIC BOOK IS NOT AFFILIATED OR ALLIED WITH ANYONE EXCEPT FOR THE WEBSITE OWNER AND ARTIST.

THE DIRECTORY

ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS WORKING IN RECOVERY ARTS

UNITED KINGDOM

BDP Creative Communities

Bristol

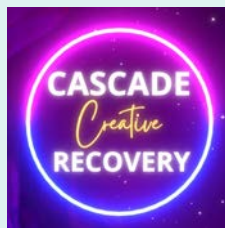


Part of the Bristol Drugs Project (BDP), the Creative Communities include Bristol Recovery Orchestra, Oi Polloi Theatre Group and Rising Voices Recovery Choir.

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 project seeking to address mental health and addiction issues with conversation through the arts

The Detox Factor

Staffordshire



A creative hub using music, theatre and other arts with the primary purpose of inspiring the still suffering addict.

Website: www.facebook.com/thedetoxfactor

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.

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.

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.

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/lostsoulevents](https://www.instagram.com/lostsoulevents)

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

Mindful Art Club

Plymouth



Offering art groups, meditation and other activities for people in recovery in the Plymouth area.

Website: mindfulartclub.co.uk

The Mixed Bag Players

York

York-based theatre group associated with York in Recovery.

Website: [facebook.com/groups/835222381575024/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/835222381575024/)

Not Saints
Brighton



A record label and events company that releases music from bands in recovery, as well as setting up sober open-mic sessions and running music training courses.

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: theatroyal.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: islingtonpeoples theatre.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

Sobriety Films



A social enterprise that uses film to raise awareness of recovery and champion recovery for those that need healing from addiction, mental ill health and trauma.

Website: www.sobrietyfilms.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/>



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