



AFTERwords

A Newsletter from SIERRA TUCSON®

Fall/Winter 2010

An Interpretation of the Twelve Steps

By Wayne Zespy, Evening/Weekend Therapist

Addiction is defined by the World Health Organization as “a pathological relationship to any mood-altering experience that has life-damaging consequences.” Defining addiction like this, we might need football stadiums to hold meetings for those who may benefit from 12-Step groups. I like to define recovery as “a return to a natural state.” Of course, we may all define a natural state unique to us. This state has changed many times in my personal recovery. My awareness and the First Step shifted as I killed “one alligator close to the boat,” and then another would appear. Many people come to Sierra Tucson for chemical dependency or other specific afflictions, then realize that addiction is much more encompassing. Many find that they struggle with codependency, sexual compulsivity, food, etc. One thing I realize about addiction is I can hit myself in the head with a green or red rock, and they will both give me a headache. So we identify what obstacles get in the way of returning to our natural state and work on releasing them. This gives us clarity to look at deeper underlying issues. I first have to stay out of the burning building, and then I look for the matches that started the fire.

The First Step states, “We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.” So in Step One, I surrender the problem. I surrender the war on reality. I define the obstacles that keep me from returning to my natural state. I do a great amount of research and development when it comes to this Step. Often it is when the pain becomes greater than the fear of change that I become motivated to change. Although I am not through with the pain until I learn its lesson. It is through the experience of this pain that I learn that I need to let go. I realize that on my own power I have little ability to let go or change my behavior. This doesn’t mean that being powerless is the same as being helpless. It means I recognize my human limitations, become accountable, and make a different choice by asking for help.

Step Two states, “We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.” I established my insanity by doing the same behavior and expecting a different result in the First Step. I develop faith, hope, and trust in Step Two. I question my old ways of thinking and become open-minded enough to be teachable. I take simple suggestions and healthy risks. I am looking for something to help me with a little more sanity than I have.

Step Three states, “We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him.” This Step was a trigger for me. I was raised with very strict and shameful religious views. I can use my faith or religious convictions, but there is no requirement to do so. The Twelve Steps comprise a spiritual, not religious, program. For a lot of us, it is difficult to grasp a concept of a loving God. For instance, what about atheists, agnostics, or other philosophies that don’t have a belief in a personal relationship to God? I needed a tangible idea of God. One way I opened my mind to grasp this concept was to use acronyms. For instance, what could provide me with “Good Orderly Direction?” A group of sticks is stronger than one on its own. This “Group Of Drunks or Druggies (in recovery)” may provide some sanity, if I have received the “Gift Of Desperation.” For my level of desperation is in equal proportion to my level of willingness. I would attend 12-Step meetings with an open mind, become vulnerable, and ask for help. In the beginning, a sane group conscience provided the necessary guidance for me. This allowed me to let go of my old ways of thinking and allow for new ideas to be grafted upon my open mind. My relationship to God evolves and becomes more inclusive the longer I stay in recovery. Step Three is basically a decision to do the rest of the steps. In Step One I surrender the problem and Step Three I surrender to the solution.

Step Four states, “We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.” This is a step of introspection. I list everything I know about myself, my behaviors, defects, shortcomings, ASSETS, values, principles, etc. It is much like owning a business. I take inventory of the stock and decide what I want to let go of and what I want to keep.

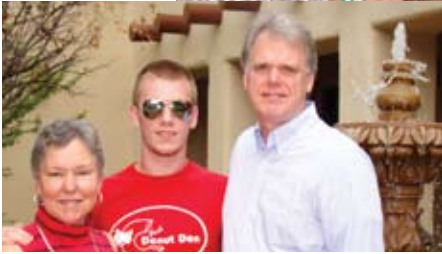
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S.T.A.R. 23 highlights



*Save the Date
for
S.T.A.R. 24!
November 3-6, 2011*



Spotlight on Alumni - Liz T.

Courage and Recovery



The Pathway to Courage ran rampant through my heart, although sometimes hidden beneath briars of self-doubt and indecision. For me, it was the only strength I had left, to take that first step towards healing and recovery, using it as a barometer and pulse I could check when facing myself in the mirror.

I carry scars of violence, loss, neglect, and abandonment. I also know nurturing and truthful love, the responsibility to protect and cherish, and the fear that comes when life takes bitter turns toward smoldering embers and the ashes of grief.

The decision to come to ST came amidst threatening waves of emotional helplessness following yet another abusive relationship with voracious abandonment—and evolved with intensity into desperate wishes for resolution and understanding, my unfulfilled wishes to unearth and disarm recurring “first step wrong” decisions, those rascally and self-defeating urges to seek out detrimental and personally harmful situations or relationships.

I gravitated towards what I knew, the traveled road—the road where land mines, booby traps, and dangerous creatures lurked in the undergrowth of pain and despair. These monsters had evil charms they used skillfully to morph into my so-called crusaders—where I once again hoped to believe their empty promises, eradicate my pain with more abuse, neglect, and uncertainties that I had learned to recognize and accept as my own reality. How does one make changes when the options seem so limited?

It had been a long and painful journey, looking for love with flawed descriptions of what love really is, looking at the wrong time and in the wrong place because the only things familiar were the negative, poisonous voids within the relationship.

My days at ST were the most fearful, loving, angry, hopeful, and peaceful I have ever known. When I stepped on that plane to Arizona, the decision was made there would be no turning back to the life I had been living. The changes ahead outweighed my greatest expectations but not without tremendous pain and agonizing resignation to a new

approach. The scars had covered much of the losses very skillfully, and denial can be an excellent camouflage.

I have to say I have never been so eager and so hesitant to face what festered and roiled within me. It took a while to realize change does not happen overnight but with continued vigor and consistent work, the reward will make itself apparent, although sometimes very slowly.

It was suggested I try an EMDR session. It was a different approach using relaxation techniques. The atmosphere and caring staff made it a safer option. This turned into the best decision I made. Through this technique, I was able to recreate many troubling episodes of trauma and abuse, the benefit being able to see the event itself and feel pain erased and nullified. This was what I had been searching for and to find it was nothing short of a miracle.

These sessions were both exhilarating and exhausting. There would be days of release, followed by days of reflection, sadness, and pain. The jubilation in knowing my mind now had a safe alternative to the old way of thinking promoted my desire for continued healing. I had six EMDR sessions, each one dealing with other aspects of trauma and abuse, decision-making fiascoes, both past and current. The sessions started a metamorphosis within me. I have changed my life and it's done one step at a time. I awake each day looking at the possibilities that lie ahead. There are trials we all face and when mine approach, I use my Wellness Toolbox and support system to reinforce this new life I have with myself.

Thank you, Sierra Tucson, for providing love and support for beginning the rest of my life. I have never worked as hard as I did during my stay, and I have the smiles and contentment to prove the results. With support and continued involvement in Spiritual and Holistic endeavors, I am finding my family has healing, too. We have a closeness that intensifies with time and we all look forward to any time we can spend together. There is hope in the world but it takes Courage to find it and be at Peace.

~ By Liz T. ★

Spotlight on Alumni - Chris H.

Life Change and Giving Back



I came to Sierra Tucson for the Family Program in December 2009. I look upon this experience with great fondness, as my most life-changing experience. I was exposed to feelings, thoughts, and realizations about my life that I had never had before. ST gave me the tools, encouragement, and support I needed to really make a change in my life. I had spent the previous four months in Al Anon, building a foundation of behaviors and a fellowship of support. Al Anon taught me to “put down the microscope and pick up the mirror.” Sierra Tucson furthered this mentality of keeping the focus on myself and helped me uncover my codependency. Before finding a path to recovery (the path to a better way of enjoying and appreciating life), I realized I was living my entire life on auto pilot. I thought the way I was behaving and acting in my life was just fine. My anger and rage were completely justified because I was the one being victimized by someone else’s actions. At Sierra Tucson, I got to know myself more deeply and became aware of feelings I never knew I had. I didn’t realize that my anger and rage were really just a cover up for the fear, sadness, and guilt I felt.

The people I met through my family support group during Family week became another network of support for me as I continued my journey of working on myself. After all, we had shared our deepest fears, feelings, and tears with each other. We stayed in touch through email, phone calls, and chats over coffee. After moving to LA, I joined the Alumni Support Group there and added to my recovery network. I have discovered that having “real” people (this is my term

for those in recovery) in my life encouraged me to continue on my path. It was through this group that I was encouraged to return to Sierra Tucson for S.T.A.R. 23.

When I first arrived at S.T.A.R. 23, I had overwhelming feelings of fear and a sense of not belonging. After all, in my mind, I didn’t go through the inpatient program at Sierra Tucson, so I felt like others would reject me and think I was out of place. Through the process of the weekend, I was able to conquer these fears and realize that this was my own mind telling me untruths. I did not meet a single person there who did not welcome me and offer me their love and support. It became my second most life-changing experience, after attending Family week. The fellowship, workshops, support, hikes, coffee runs, meetings, tears, and laughs (my jaws hurt so much the day after Mark’s comedy act) were so powerful and moving. It was here where I established my intent to begin journaling after putting it off for long enough. This has since become one of my best recovery tools in my recovery toolbox. The weekend was so well organized and a much needed recharge for my recovery, reminding me of how far I had come and how much further was possible if I stayed dedicated to the Path my Higher Power has in store for me.

Since becoming a part of the Sierra Tucson family, a whole new way of life has been opened up for me, and for that I am eternally grateful. Staying connected and “showing up” for my ST friends is the best way I know to give back.

~Chris H. ★



An Interpretation of the Twelve Steps (Continued from page 1)

Step Five states, “We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.” We are as sick as the secrets we keep. I find someone I trust and expose what I know to them, God, and myself. I look at the exact nature of what I found in Step Four and inquire as to the deeper nature of it.

Step Six states, “We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.” These character defects served to protect and define me for a long time. It takes time to become willing to let go of them. Again, I become motivated when the pain becomes greater than the fear of change.

Step Seven states, “We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.” In Steps Six and Seven, I revisit steps One through Three. I also look at Step Twelve where it states, “We practice these principles in all our affairs.” If I am practicing the spiritual principles of the God of my understanding in all of my affairs, I implement the characteristics of that “Good Orderly Direction.” For instance, if I practice honesty in all of my affairs, the obstacles to freedom such as cheating, stealing, dishonesty, deceit, and manipulation are removed.

Step Eight states, “We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.” We put ourselves on this list, as well. Most of all, we harmed ourselves. We become clear that we made a huge mess that needs to be cleaned.

Step Nine states, “We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.” This means I have no right to do harm. It also means I walk the walk. I don’t just say, “I’m sorry.” I practice new behavior over a period of time and I earn back the trust and credibility I lost through old behaviors. Not only do others trust me, but I learn to trust myself.

Step Ten states, “We continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.” With continued introspection and accountability, I look deeper into the recesses of my baggage by being vulnerable, open-minded, attending meetings, therapy, etc. When I find something, I take it back to Step Five and expose it, look at the nature of it, and then to Steps Six and Seven to find freedom. Furthermore, I immediately make amends whenever I behave inappropriately. I don’t want to add more amends to my Eighth Step.

Step Eleven states, “We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to

carry that out.” I believe that prayer is talking to God and meditation is clearing out the clutter to hear God’s voice. The more time I spend in a healthy relationship, the more it evolves and flourishes. In this step we also seek out God’s will for us and power to carry it out. I have come to realize that God’s will for me is to learn how to love and accept myself compassionately and unconditionally as much as my God loves me. It is from that overflow inside I am able to practice love for others in the same way. My recovery is practiced “inside out” as opposed to addiction, which is “outside in.”

Step Twelve states, “Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts and to practice these principles in all our affairs.” We are promised a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, and because of this joy we want to share it in service and compassion to others. It also says we “practice.” We claim progress, not perfection. In fact, my return to a natural state is the remembrance that I am a spiritual being having the human experience of addiction. I will no longer be judged by my past. I will endeavor to bring awareness into my fallible, human experiences and with grace allow my true self to manifest. I will let go of the lies of shame and remember who I am. It is in this remembrance that I realize my recovery.

In my recovery, many changes have taken place to help me to remember who I am. My understanding of these steps has allowed me to see a way out of the past trauma and abuse that is a part of my story. The weeds of shame are uprooted by the practice of replanting new seeds with affirmations, self-care, nurturance, forgiveness, gentleness, and kindness. This also assists me to be of greater service. Today I understand that recovery is definitely an inside-out journey, as opposed to the outside-in process of addiction.

One of my greatest experiences and joys is to work at Sierra Tucson, which further allows me the ability to keep what I have when I give it away. It is a way to share with other struggling people my experience, strength, and hope in an empathetic manner. It is one of many paths of compassionate service and spiritual awakening that have happened as a result of these steps and by practicing these principles in all of my affairs.

~Wayne Zespy
Evening/Weekend Therapist



Sierra Tucson continues to strive to become more green in its support of the environment by using less paper. If you are receiving the eNews “Beyond the Miracle” and would like to be removed from our postal mailings, please email Tim McLeod at AlumniCoordinator@SierraTucson.com. If you have never heard of Sierra Tucson’s bi-weekly Alumni eNews, “Beyond the Miracle,” and would like to sign up for it, you can do this at www.SierraTucson.com in the “Alumni” section.



Alumni Support Groups

Sierra Tucson Alumni Support Groups are currently located in the cities listed below. Information about each of these Alumni Support Groups can be found at www.SierraTucson.com (click on “Alumni, Alumni Support Groups”). If you want to start a group in your area or just want to know what it takes, please contact Alumni Coordinator Patty Reyna at 888-535-8214 or PREyna@SierraTucson.com.

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|-----------------|------------------|
| Scottsdale, AZ | Boston, MA |
| Los Angeles, CA | Detroit, MI |
| Northern CA | New York, NY |
| Denver, CO | Syracuse, NY |
| Southeast FL | Portland, OR |
| Atlanta, GA | Philadelphia, PA |
| Chicago, IL | Dallas, TX |
| Kansas City, KS | Houston, TX |

Outpatient Assessment Services

In 2010 Sierra Tucson began offering Outpatient Assessment Services for the first time ever. As we continue to develop our inpatient programs to meet the needs of patients and alumni, we’re aware that sometimes people require in-depth assessment to know what kind of help they need. Outpatient pricing and a shorter time frame make this comprehensive assessment more affordable and accessible.

The Assessment and Diagnostic Program (ADP), has traditionally been a 4 1/2-day inpatient program to provide extensive evaluation for complex diagnostic concerns. Now the ADP may also be accomplished on an outpatient basis in as little as 2 days, depending on the complexity of the testing required.

Upon completion of the evaluation process, a multidisciplinary team reviews assessment data and prepares an integrated diagnostic report, complete with treatment recommendations. A round table feedback session is provided to the patient, the referring

professional, and, when appropriate, family members or legal/professional supervisory personnel. Teleconference is available for those who cannot attend in person.

Brain Neuroimaging is an optional part of the ADP, whether inpatient or outpatient. SPECT (Single Photon Emission Computed Tomography) scans produce vivid, three-dimensional pictures of brain physiology. SPECT gives data about a brain’s functioning and adds biological information to the presenting problem, which can assist with evaluation and treatment planning. SPECT Imaging is also available as a separate Outpatient Assessment Service and is always combined with a Psychiatric Evaluation to interpret the scan in relation to the person’s clinical history.

A variety of “à la carte” Outpatient Assessment Services are available at Sierra Tucson. Please call our Intake Department at 800-842-4487 to request a brochure or ask for details.



We invite you to call for more information about Sierra Tucson’s Outpatient Assessment Services. ★



From the Editor By Tim McLeod, Senior Alumni Coordinator

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Hello, my Friend,

All of us here at Sierra Tucson hope you are doing well and the gifts of working a program of recovery continue to arrive.

During the ups and downs of recovery, many times you forget your position. You lose track of all the work you are doing and begin to focus on your condition. Conditionally living means you spend time judging yourself, making comparisons, and evaluating what you lack. This only leads to discouragement and forfeiting the current moment by focusing your attention on how to control the future. It's like living on shifting sand. There is good news: you are not alone; we have all been there.

Positional recovery is all about living in the moment. What am I doing today to strengthen my recovery? It is about traveling from your head to your heart. If you want to shift from condition to position, start by writing or saying out loud "I am" and begin listing all the things you are doing that benefit your recovery, like:

- I am seeing a therapist
- I am working my program
- I am going to meetings
- I am reading and meditating
- I am exercising
- I am creating time for myself
- I am asking for help
- I am reaching out to serve others
- I am loved
- I am supported by friends and family

"I am" it, my friend, and condition will run and hide!

Sometimes we are not aware that we are living in our condition, and that is why we need support from others. You will need them to provide you with a "conafriidge," a confirmation, affirmation, and encouragement based on the things they see you doing for self-care.

Remember, don't judge yourself by your condition but by your position. If you ever need a conafriidge, please don't hesitate to contact me or Patty. We have been striving to bring the love for years. ☺

In August many of you experienced the new and improved Alumni Retreat, S.T.A.R. 23. What an amazing weekend it was! Here is what one person had to say: "To all of the alums who attended, I want to thank you for your inspiration, energy, and love last weekend. This year especially made an impression on me, and I'm very motivated to work my program EVEN HARDER!" The 2011 Alumni Retreat, "Carrying the Message," will be held on November 3-6, 2011, and we will be continuing the retreat theme.

So plan to arrive on or before Thursday, November 3rd, to participate in all the activities. Updated Retreat information will be available at www.SierraTucson.com.

I want to thank Wayne Zespy for his interpretation of the Twelve Steps. For those of you who may not know, Wayne now has a meditation CD for sale in the Sierra Tucson Bookstore. Feel free to call Darlene in the Bookstore at 800-624-9001 to order your copy.

I also want thank Chris and Liz for sharing their compelling stories. The recovery process continues to amaze me. Healing and transformation are available for everyone, whether it be a family member who attended the Family Program or the person who has struggled mentally or physically. Freedom can be found when we choose to reach out and ask for help.

Patty's list of alumni contacts from around the world continues to grow. If you would like to be a part of this list or want to join our private alumni Facebook page, please contact Patty Reyna.

Only one bench remains to be purchased on the Twelve-Step Path, and we have plenty of space for many more pave stones. If you are looking to give your loved one or alumni friend something to celebrate their recovery, this might be the perfect gift. All information can be found at www.SierraTucsonBricks.com.

If you'd like to make a difference in a person's life and have the means to donate funds for someone to receive treatment at Sierra Tucson, then we have two options. For more information on a tax-deductible donation, visit www.SierraTucson.com, click on "Alumni," then "Donate to Recovery Foundation." If a tax deduction is not necessary, please call me and I will connect you with the appropriate channels.

Evening/Weekend therapist Wayne Zespy would love to hear from you if you would like to come to Sierra Tucson on a Saturday evening and share your experience, strength, and hope with the patient community. You can reach Wayne at LZespy@SierraTucson.com.

In closing, Patty and I look forward to connecting with you and, most of all, We Support You!

Huge blessings,

Tim McLeod

■ *"Our mission is simple: encourage the struggling, celebrate the miracles, and always bring the love."* ■



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Address Service Requested



Alumni World Tour

Alumni and family members are invited to join our Alumni Coordinators at the following events!

Upcoming 2010 - 2011 Alumni World Tour dates can be found on our website and in the biweekly Alumni eNews, "Beyond the Miracle." Please check regularly for changes and updates.

This is not a complete list of events, but it shows alumni events attended by Tim McLeod and/or Patty Reyna.

December 2010

- 8 – Los Angeles, CA, Alumni Support Group Holiday Party
- 10 – Scottsdale, AZ, Alumni Support Group Holiday Party
- 12 – Denver, CO, Alumni Support Group Holiday Party

January 2011

- 4 – Houston, TX, Alumni Support Group
- 5 – Dallas, TX, Alumni Support Group
- 6 – Detroit, MI, Alumni Support Group
- 8 – Atlanta, GA, Alumni Support Group
- 19 – Kansas City, KS, Alumni Workshop
- 25 – Scottsdale, AZ, Alumni Support Group
- 26 – Los Angeles, CA, Alumni Support Group

February 2011

- 3 – New York, NY, Alumni Support Group
- 21 – Southeast Florida Alumni Support Group
- 22 – West Palm Beach, FL, Alumni Workshop
- 23 – Boca Raton, FL, Alumni Workshop

March 2011

- 1 – Denver, CO, Alumni Support Group
- 2 – Dallas, TX, Alumni Support Group
- 8 – Scottsdale, AZ, Alumni Support Group
- 9 – Phoenix, AZ, Alumni Workshop
- 10 – Tucson, AZ, Alumni Workshop
- 21 – Chicago, IL, Alumni Support Group
- 22 – Baton Rouge, LA, Alumni Workshop

April 2011

- 14 – Philadelphia, PA, Alumni Support Group
- 18 – Boston, MA, Alumni Support Group

May 2011

- 5 – New York, NY, Alumni Support Group
- 14 – Atlanta, GA, Alumni Support Group
- 16 – Southeast Florida Alumni Support Group