



THE BRIDGE

Family-centered recovery for co-occurring mental illness & substance use disorders

Spring 2006

WestBridge values

WestBridge strives to be collaborative, person-centered and recovery-oriented. We have developed the following set of values that we want to be reflective of our relationships with our participants, families, co-workers and colleagues.

- Hope, respect, teamwork and direct communication are the core elements of our culture.
- We want everyone we interact with to experience our compassion, thoughtfulness, integrity and responsiveness.
- Everything we do is driven by a desire to develop authentic relationships.

We encourage you to let us know when we are living up to these values and when we are falling short. By working together, we can make treatment a positive, hopeful experience. ■

Consultation process offers unique approach

While many people may know that WestBridge provides consultation services to individuals and families, others may not know that we can provide these services anywhere in the country.

Our consultation process can take many forms, but usually begins with a personalized assessment session with an individual and his or her family. The goal of the process is to develop a personal relationship with each individual and family member. We also complete a series of assessments to compile a comprehensive pool of information with which to formulate an evaluation.

“The journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.”

Lao Tzu

The evaluation typically involves gathering information in all areas of an individual’s life, including substance use, psychiatric symptoms, strengths, future goals/hopes, vocational interests, physical health and nutrition, environment and family support.

How and where we gather this information is responsive to the participant’s and the family’s needs. If WestBridge staff determines that a participant is interested in and appears appropriate for our services, we can travel to the individual’s home and community.

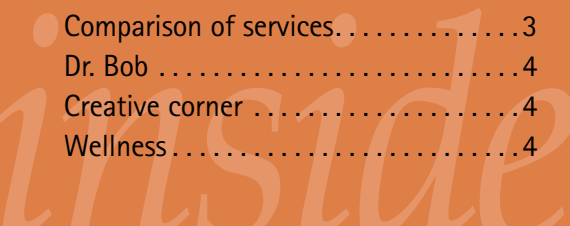
By interacting in the places where people live, work and play, our staff is able to gain a better understanding of their world. Our goal is to provide all consultation participants with a comprehensive set of recommendations consistent with their goals.

These recommendations might include engaging WestBridge’s services, as well as other supports and interventions that we do not provide. Recommendations may also include referrals to other providers if we feel that WestBridge is not the best setting for an individual’s care. Our goal is to determine an individual’s best plan of care. ■



WESTBRIDGE COMMUNITY SERVICES

WestBridge values	1
Consultation process offers unique approach	1
Parent’s perspective	2
Journey through recovery.....	2
Did you know?.....	2
Hope and recovery: Finding strength in asking for help.....	3
In the news	3
Comparison of services.....	3
Dr. Bob	4
Creative corner	4
Wellness	4



Parent's perspective

My son, who has a dual diagnosis, has been in a number of programs across the country, but none was as good a fit as WestBridge. When we visited WestBridge, they met with us as a family and separately to assess my son's issues and motivation to determine if the program was right for him. We all felt that it would be and pursued the residential program at The Commons.

WestBridge's family program has been a real strength and key to the progress that my son has made. The process has gone well because we all have things to learn and work on together. Everyone has to participate. The program is very structured, well defined and comes from evidence-based practices that have been shown to work.

WestBridge's handling of relapses is also distinctive. When my son had a relapse, he was able to return to The Commons. In other programs, participants are removed if they are not totally abstinent. Reality is that in trying to recover from an addiction, relapses happen. WestBridge understands this and helps people pursue recovery and sobriety. My son was held accountable, but also learned the signs of a relapse and how to prevent it. ■



Journey through recovery

"When I hit bottom, I was homeless," remembers "Keith," who now works for WestBridge and has been clean and sober for more than five years. "Deep in my heart I knew it was the booze, the drugs and the choices I was making that were doing this to me."

One day he decided he had to stop and called a friend who had been sober for a long time. That day, Keith entered a hospital detox program. "From there, I asked for a lot of help from family and friends and sought out a spiritual connection. I also surrounded myself with clean and sober people."

Keith attended Alcoholics Anonymous meetings every day for a year, attending three to five meetings a week when he got a job, a schedule he still maintains.

"I learned about addiction," he says about his year in therapy. "It helped me understand what's been going on with me my whole life." He returned to school to become a drug and alcohol counselor and proudly notes that he now has a wonderful marriage and a home.

He credits his recovery to asking for help, following AA's spiritual 12-step program, being an active part of society and being there for others. "To lead a spiritual life, you have to think of others before you think of yourself," he notes.

Addiction is a threefold disease – physical, mental and spiritual – and you need to take care of all three, he claims. Eating right and exercising have helped his mental attitude. "There's a lot of stress in trying to get sober, especially at the beginning. By taking care of myself physically, it has helped me work through a lot of stress." ■

did you know?

An estimated 18 million Americans age 18 and older suffer from alcohol abuse or dependence, at an estimated cost of \$185 billion annually.

- It is estimated that 100,000 deaths annually are attributed to alcohol abuse, making it the third leading cause of death in the United States.
- 20% to 40% of hospital admissions are alcohol related.
- 7% of men and 3% of women reported daily drinking (Johnston et al. 2004).
- More than 1,400 college students die annually in alcohol-related events, primarily traffic crashes.

This information, with one exception, is from *The Journal of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism*, Volume 28, Number 4, 2004/2005. ■

Hope and recovery: Finding strength in asking for help



"If I need help, I am weak. If I ask for help, I am shamed. If I take help, I am vulnerable." This is what I told myself when I was too isolated and scared to separate my schizophrenia and depression from my true self, unable to see recovery as something I deserved.

Asking for help requires motivation for change, direct communication skills and acceptance of vulnerability. True motivation for recovery goes beyond the insistence for change that comes as a result of physical necessity or legal consequences; its drive is internal and comes after contemplation and preparation.

Direct communication skills are very important in finding the words to ask for help. Commonly termed a thought disorder, schizophrenia is actually closer to what I call a "communication disorder," because people with schizophrenia often believe they have conveyed quite clearly that they need help. In reality, they have offered an assortment of misinterpreted signals, confusing comments and cryptic silence.

Communication distortions are not unique to schizophrenia. Depression tends to dampen the urge to speak effortlessly and confidently. Manic speech patterns fire up words until they are indiscernible and non-communicative.

The acceptance of vulnerability as an asset, and not a weak point, enables me to reach out to other people and ask for help in a way that emboldens recovery. Motivations for change and straightforward communication, filtered through vulnerability, coalesce to find power in asking for help. ■

by Lisa Halpern, peer mentor, WestBridge Community Services, Cambridge, MA

Comparison of services

The parent of a WestBridge participant recently wrote to his insurance company about the advantages of WestBridge's services and why they should be covered. The following is a synopsis of his discussion on why WestBridge's services are better suited for people with a dual diagnosis as compared to other treatment providers he has worked with.

WestBridge:

- Does an in-depth evaluation to develop a treatment plan
- Provides evidence-based practices and integrated services for dual diagnosis
- Does weekly medication management
- Offers 24/7 services for mental health and substance abuse issues
- Uses cognitive therapy
- Involves family members in a participant's care
- Encourages family support and therapy
- Employs a multi-disciplinary treatment team of physicians, nurses, clinicians and counselors and has low staff turnover
- Has clinically licensed program directors and executive staff
- Offers an individualized appointment schedule determined by the needs of the participant
- Provides services in the office and in the community
- Offers vocational supports as part of treatment ■

in the news

2006 Massachusetts NAMI Walk

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) kicks off its third annual three-mile walk on Saturday, May 6, at Artisan Park in Brighton. WestBridge will again field a walk team as it joins together participants and their families to improve the quality of life for people with mental illness.

The NAMI Walk supports NAMI affiliates, raises public awareness about mental illness and the realities of individuals and families living with these disorders, fights stigmas and the negative stereotypes associated with mental illness, provides outreach to new populations affected by mental illness,



increases NAMI membership, and builds a larger NAMI community. Walk with NAMI for the Mind of America! For more information, contact the NAMI-Mass. office at 781-938-4048 or www.namimass.org. ■





Dr. Bob

Robert Drake, MD, PhD

Does cannabis use cause schizophrenia?

Researchers are just beginning to understand some of the genetics that underlie mental illness, addiction and co-occurring disorders. A recent study (Caspi et al., *Biological Psychiatry*, 2005) found that people with a specific polymorphism of the catechol-O-methyltransferase gene are highly likely to develop adult psychosis if they use cannabis during adolescence.

In the study, adolescent cannabis users had heightened vulnerability if they had a specific variant of the gene. Among non-cannabis-using adolescents, the genetic vulnerability did not lead to a higher rate of adult psychosis. Adult cannabis use without adolescent cannabis use did not increase vulnerability.

This finding is extremely important. The catechol-O-methyltransferase gene is associated with dopamine metabolism and schizophrenia. This explains why some adolescents, but not others, are genetically vulnerable to long-term negative effects of cannabis. Understanding genetic risk may prevent some cases of schizophrenia. ■

Creative corner

We invite our readers to share their artwork, essays, photos and poems.



Andrew West

wellness

Taoist Yoga

WestBridge now offers Taoist Yoga at The Commons once a week. Taoist Yoga employs breathing techniques, postures, movement and meditation to increase, strengthen and circulate blood flow and the vital life force throughout the body. The sessions are taught by Tom Sherman, a certified Kripalu Yoga instructor and holistic health counselor.

The workouts integrate mind, body and soul and enhance the respiratory and cardiovascular systems. Taoist Yoga stretches, tones and extends all muscles and connective tissues, increases musculoskeletal strength and slims the body. As a preventive health routine it favorably impacts the immune system.

Taoist Yoga increases stamina and all levels of human energy. It can also help stress management, encourage relaxation, increase the ability to focus and provide a general feeling of well-being. ■

comments

We welcome your comments about this issue of *The Bridge* and invite you to submit ideas for future stories.

To contact us and for more information on our services, visit

WESTBRIDGE.ORG

or call us at

800.889.7871

Editor: Stacey LeBel


WESTBRIDGE
COMMUNITY SERVICES
1361 ELM STREET SUITE 207
MANCHESTER, NH 03101

NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 174
MANCHESTER, NH