



THE BRIDGE

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

Summer 2008

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. ■

WESTBRIDGE

COMMUNITY SERVICES

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It's a marathon, not a sprint

Change is part of life and for most of us change does not come easy. People who enter treatment are expected to make many changes to facilitate recovery. The process of change has been studied at length and we know that change is a process that starts with our thoughts and beliefs. Often, people who are referred to treatment are ambivalent or reluctant to change. This is normal. Research has shown that at any given time, 20 percent of people are ready to make behavior changes.

WestBridge designs treatment interventions that help people change their behaviors. These interventions target thoughts and beliefs through assessment, education, physical exercise and consciousness-raising. The goal is to help people develop ambivalence about a problem behavior. Once this occurs, we focus on interventions that help resolve ambivalence.

Change is a process that starts with our thoughts and beliefs.

Ambivalence is often seen as resistance or denial; we characterize ambivalence as a normal part of change and examine the positive things and challenges about changing.

This stage is called contemplation and sometimes people get stuck here. They say all the "right" things, but their behavior does not change. They may lack the confidence to change, the energy needed to change, or become impatient with the time needed to foster new behaviors. Once someone makes a decision to change, that is when we see new behaviors. Understanding this process can help families understand that while they themselves may be in the "action" stage of change, their family member may not be. This is normal. Understanding this process can help families in their own recovery and in their expectations of family members. ■



inside

Parent's perspective

My son Aaron* went from being a happy child to being diagnosed at 18 with schizo-affective disorder and then a dual diagnosis of substance abuse. As our family worked through diagnosis, medication, medical treatment and counseling over two years, his condition deteriorated and we moved from optimism to despair. Then we found WestBridge.

From the first time I spoke to Melissa on the phone, I was taken back by her genuine concern for Aaron and my family. I was impressed that two WestBridge staff traveled to our home in the Midwest to meet with us to see if WestBridge would be a good fit for Aaron and was thrilled that he agreed to go.

His first days at The Commons were tough, but because the staff was well skilled in addressing Aaron's needs, hurts and addiction, he assimilated into the program well and quickly. He became actively involved in AA and NA meetings, group discussions and activities. When I visited, I immediately saw that the staff was genuinely concerned about everyone's well-being.

After 10 weeks of treatment, Aaron is back home and we have seen many positive changes. His medication is balanced, he is more engaged with our family and he meets with a local psychiatrist and psychologist. We also participate in weekly Family Education and Support phone sessions with WestBridge staff.

While I worry that Aaron may relapse, I will be forever grateful to WestBridge for providing him and our family with new skills and knowledge. If not for WestBridge, I am fearful that our son would have been destined for an overdose, accident or untimely end. ■

**not his real name*

We all can choose to make positive changes in our lives. For a few, the decision and action is quick. For most, thinking about and making changes is quite a process.

Small changes add up

WestBridge teaches not only its staff but also participants and families about the Stages of Change (Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross) and how we can help ourselves and support each other in making small changes. We all make "mountains out of mole hills" and sometimes have polarized thinking where we do not see or feel something in its entirety ("black and white thinking").

Life is not all or nothing. When we want to make a change, we can do the smallest thing differently. Over time, these small differences add up to a change. Even in finance, investing smaller sums on a regular basis (dollar cost averaging) can result in an investment that increases over time, as opposed to investing a lump sum all at once, or not at all.

The investment in our health pays huge dividends over the short and long term. Take the stairs once a day. Park farther away from your destination. Drink an extra glass of water. Turn off the TV 15 minutes earlier than usual and read something. Stop for 10 seconds and just breathe! These little changes add up over time. ■



did you know?

Since WestBridge opened its doors, it has invited program participants to help interview and evaluate potential staff. This practice not only helps participants feel part of WestBridge's mission and values, but also empowers them to be in control of their recovery and to think about what the recovery community needs in terms of care providers.

A WestBridge participant who took part in recent interviews says, "I was surprised this was part of the process...I felt very recognized." Involving participants has helped to infuse an attitude of togetherness and unity of purpose, enhancing the organization's focus on being a community of recovery, equality and empowerment. WestBridge continues to seek ways to develop a positive culture of recovery from mental illness and/or substance use disorders. ■

WestBridge seeks rehabilitation accreditation



John Ahman, CTP

WestBridge is committed to providing state-of-the-art services to people with co-occurring disorders, and to their families. In pursuit of these high standards, we are working on obtaining accreditation through the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). Staff members John Ahman and Christine Dubois traveled to Tucson, Arizona, for a three-day certification training to prepare for the arduous accreditation process. John has been a CARF accreditor since WestBridge's inception, which has helped us align our services with CARF standards.



Christine Dubois, MS

CARF is an international family of organizations that develops and evaluates treatment providers. Its mission is to develop realistic standards that improve the value and responsiveness of programs and services, so participants and families achieve the outcomes they

desire. WestBridge opted to seek accreditation with CARF based on shared core values: all services should be provided in a dignified and respectful manner. Participants and families should have access to evidence-based practices that achieve optimal outcomes, and individuals should be empowered to exercise informed choice in all treatment decisions.

Christine will be working with the Leadership, Quality Improvement, Safety and Human Resources Committees in preparation for the accreditation process. The plan is to submit the application by December 31, with a CARF survey team reviewing WestBridge during the first quarter of 2009. ■

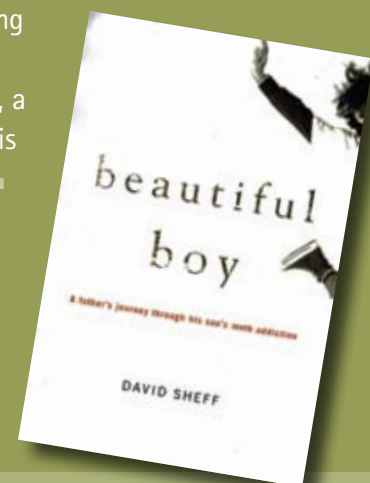
Summer reading

Beautiful Boy
A father's journey through his son's meth addiction

David Sheff's account of his son Nic's addiction is raw with emotion and personal reflection. This is not only a story about the fear involved in loving someone with an addiction, but one of hope and the strength of family and love. Sheff illustrates what parents feel every day as they watch their brilliant, funny, talented children slip into the grips of drugs:

"I [heard] from addicts and their families—their brothers and sisters, children, and other relatives, and, most of all, parents—hundreds of them...outpourings of compassion, consolation, counsel, and most of all, shared grief.... People are relieved to learn that they are not alone in their suffering, that we are part of something larger, in this case, a societal plague—an epidemic of children, an epidemic of families. For whatever reason, a stranger's story seemed to give them permission to tell theirs.... Letters and emails still interrupt my days with haunting reminders of the toll of addiction. My heart tears anew with each one...."

This is a courageous, must-read for families, along with *Tweak*, by Nic Sheff, a memoir of his experience. ■



in the news

- Mary Woods, RN, LADC, WestBridge CEO, presented "A Continuum of Community Care for Individuals with Co-Occurring Disorders" at the 27th national conference, "The Next Generation of Dual Diagnosis," in Las Vegas, April 28-30.
- Jonathan Routhier, LICSW, MBA, participated in the "Best Practices in Programming for Co-Occurring Disorders" panel discussion at the Open Minds Innovations Institute in Boston on April 29.
- Our Massachusetts participants and staff walked in the NAMI Walks for the Mind of America walkathon on Saturday, May 31, to support NAMI MA services.
- Lois Hollow, ARNP, BC, and Kevin Keefe, LICSW, will again present "Family Education and Support: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Families" at the Cape Cod Symposium on Addictive Disorders in Hyannis, Mass., September 4-7. ■



Dr. Mark

Mark Green, MD

Managing the intoxicated person

Lecturing an intoxicated person is pointless. Logic and memory are impaired and resentment will linger. Express concern for safety, look for danger signs and save therapy for later.

Relatively innocent drugs can cause big effects in combination with street drugs. Pseudo-ephedrine in NyQuil® can cause panic or paranoia. Trazodone can interact with dextromethorphan to produce serotonin syndrome. Inadvertent Tylenol® overdoses may occur in those abusing opiates such as Vicodin® or Percocet®.

Opiates suppress breathing if the amount taken exceeds tolerance, which can be fatal. This is more likely when sedatives like benzodiazepines and alcohol are used with opiates. If breathing rate is low, the person needs to be roused with walking, cold or pain and be given naloxone in an emergency room.

Alcohol and sedative intoxication is dangerous. Focus on keeping the person safe and maintaining positive communication to allow for hope and change.

Read the full article at westbridge.org. ■

Creative corner

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

Quazi reality

Quazi reality
Semi insanity
Dreams are reached in a place of
Desperate tragedy.
Lost my mind
So sarcastic smiles
Are my life
My lie
My
quazi reality

Where I'm
Not quite me
Not quite sane
Not quite In-Sanity

Sea Of Reality

I am afraid today
That I will succumb
To these Feelings within
Cravings and lust for sin

Stuck in my mind
I find I'm drowning
In a sea of reality
I've escaped the insanity

Once again I'm tripping
But now I'm falling over me
I'm afraid of failing me
Afraid of sobriety
Afraid to go back
To the insanity
To loose touch with me

So I choose
To drown in this reality
Swim in this sea of sobriety

VoiceAmerica

Internet Radio Show

Mondays, 3 p.m. EST (noon PST)
www.VoiceAmerica.com
Health & Wellness Channel

Summer Shows

July 21: Dr. Tom Irwin, The McLean Center at Fernside
July 28: Donna Corrente, Hormonal Shifting in Women
August 18: Carol Colleran, Hanley Center, Aging and Addiction

Call-in number: 866-472-5792

Join Mary Woods, WestBridge CEO, for these engaging and informative programs. For a complete list of upcoming topics, visit westbridge.org.

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

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