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Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)
www.aa.org or
www.alcoholicsanonymous.org

Narcotics Anonymous (NA)
www.na.org

Cocaine Anonymous (CA)
www.ca.org

For Family & Friends:
Al-Anon & Alateen:
www.OregonAl-Anon.org

Adult Children of
Alcoholics (ACA)
www.adultchildren.org

Serenity Lane...
1-800-543-9905
www.serenitylane.org

Stepping Together

Spring
2011

Serenity Lane's Alumni Newsletter

We've been saving lives and helping put families back together since 1973

Simplifying our lives *by Mary Daniels*



Whether you are new to recovery or have years and years of clean and sober living, we are all vulnerable to losing sight of our serenity. I'm not talking about relapse here, but maintaining a peaceful state of mind in which to work our program. When our lives are hectic and stressful, our sense of serenity is compromised. Our minds race with thoughts of commitments and projects, deadlines to meet and places to get to.

It is our responsibility to create a life that is meaningful, positive, and free from unwanted chaos. We alone have the power

to create the life we want. We came across some powerful and inspiring articles (copyright free) on the web that we believe will help you get to that place of peace, and we happily share them with you in this spring issue of Stepping Together. Our focus is simplicity. We hope you enjoy the fruits of our labor.

First a word about one of the authors: Leo Babauta is a writer of one of the top 25 blogs in the world with over 200,000 regular subscribers! Originally from Guam, he moved to San Francisco last year. In 2005, he quit smoking and that one change created many others: He became a runner, ran several marathons and triathalons, began waking early, became organized and productive. He ate healthier, became a vegetarian, tripled his income, and wrote a novel and a non-fiction book. He eliminated his debt and simplified his life.

He lost weight (more than 50 pounds) and wrote several best-selling e-books, started a successful blog, (Zen Habits) created another leading blog on minimalism, gave up his car and is now totally car-free! (Mind you, he lives in San Francisco, which has a good transit system and virtually no place to park a car in the city anyway.) It is easier for him to achieve this than for most of us.

But my point here is this: he's not an expert, or a doctor, or a coach. He hasn't made millions of dollars and he's not the world's greatest athlete. He is a regular guy, a father of six kids, a husband, and a darned good communicator who enthusiastically shares all he's learned. He hasn't copyrighted any of his blog contents because he truly wants to help others. We got inspired after reading his practical, and simple, ideas for living. We hope you do too. ■ Read Leo's articles on pages 4 & 6.

From your Editor



Dear Alumni,

In the wake of tragedy, we are reminded how fragile and precious life is. There are moments when we become apathetic and dispirited, unmotivated to be the change we want to see in the world. However, during times of crisis on a personal and global scale, we are interrupted from our unconscious patterns and inspired to redefine our priorities and commit to living our best life.

As spring signifies the season of renewal, I find myself taking action to bring forth positive changes in my life. My experience with change is that it often comes in waves. Each significant or seemingly small milestone reinforces your progress and acts as a gateway for the next step. The pieces are lined up like dominos and as they begin to fall one by one, each move becomes more intuitive and effortless. All it takes is a single catalyst to set off this chain reaction.

By working towards achieving lasting recovery from chemical dependency, you have put yourself on a clear path to a new, balanced life. With the perspective gained from your commitment to sobriety through the 12 Steps, you are embarking on the beginning of a profound journey. Whether you are adopting a healthier lifestyle, building supportive relationships, attaining meaningful employment, pursuing your passions or simplifying your life, making adjustments to your daily routine will have much larger implications and lasting effects.

The process begins with intention, and through consistent and deliberate action, your efforts will serve to enhance every facet of your life. I encourage you to channel the transformative energy of the season and seize this opportunity to re-evaluate your goals and pursue them with determination and enthusiasm.

There's no time like the present.

Shely Rahimi
Alumni Coordinator

Newsletter Committee:

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Angie Delaplain
Mary Daniels



Outpatient Happenings

• Eugene

Current and former patients have created a new Recovery Support/Alumni group called "Bridging the Gap." It allows the new alumni to stay involved and "give back" to current Recovery Support patients. This group meets on the last Tuesday of each month from 6:30 - 8:00 pm currently at the New Hope office at 2133 Centennial Plaza in Eugene. There are potlucks, speakers and other recovery related events during these sessions.

Save the Date...

- The Annual Alumni Picnic will be held on Sunday August 28th at Alton Baker Park in structure #2. The picnic will be catered again by Hole in the Wall BBQ lunch will be served from 1-3pm and entertainment will be provided for the whole family. Desserts provided by our very own Serenity Lane kitchen. Door prizes too! Pack up your family and come join the fun!
- **SLU-Portland** - A new web group for recovery support in the Portland area.

This group is made up of Serenity Lane folks who have participated in Inpatient, IOP and/or Recovery Support in the Portland area. The purpose is to establish a group forum to continue fellowship that was established while in treatment. We recognize graduates lose touch with each other and this group is one way to maintain connection and share experiences. We intend to promote recovery-related discussions and share other events and activities. Membership is by invitation.

It is simple to join and anonymity is respected. To become a member of the online group, tell us a little about yourself by sending an email requesting an invitation to the SLU-Portland group administrator at the following email address: serenitylanePDX@gmail.com

Dear Serenity Lane Family & Friends ~

The following letter was sent to a Serenity Lane counselor in Portland

Dear Faith,

I want to let you know how much you and Serenity Lane have meant to me. You have saved my life and for that I cannot express in words how much time spent with you has touched my life. What I have learned from you and through your kindness and personal approach I am finally able to see the person that I am. I can also see that I can become the person I want to be. I know this journey will be a lifetime of work to stay sober and to continue to grow. I have reached a place where I believe it is possible.

I never in my imagination thought I would see the real David again but he is slowly and steadily returning. I never thought I could love myself but each night as I kneel to pray I thank God for removing another layer of guilt and shame from my knapsack of baggage that I have managed to fill to the brim over the years. Slowly it is being replaced with love and self forgiveness.

Although things are not what I want them to be, I am filled with hope and I am driven to be the best dad and husband I can possibly be if given the opportunity. The damage that we alcoholics cause is difficult at best to comprehend and to face up to, I hope that I am able to make amends for all that I have done. As bits and pieces of damage flow into my consciousness and I acknowledge them and take away their power, I feel with each one a small bit of relief.

I struggle daily to make it through without tears but most of the time it is too much to hold back and I have to submit to my broken heart. I pray every moment that I can completely let go. With time and patience I hopefully will.

The tools and street sense in dealing with this disease that you have gifted to me are the very things keeping me going each day. I hope and pray for the new day filled with happiness and an appreciation for what I have been through. I long to see the finished product that my life will become and wish for time to pass quickly so that I get to that point with haste and intact.

My ability to love and appreciate and to forgive is returning and sometimes it fills me with deep regret that I was not able to conjure these feelings when I had the chance. There are times when it is so overwhelming that I wish briefly that I could turn the feelings off and fade into numbness. These moments are fleeting and would do me no good even if I were able.

I chase after signs and gut feelings to somehow predict the future but I have to be grounded in knowing that I do not possess the power to see into the future and that only God knows for sure. My life right now is filled with speculation and assumption and it takes all of my strength to not think the worst scenerio. For now I have today and I have my recovery mates and I have life and possibilities. It should be enough.

Thank you and thank God that you are here and that I have been blessed to be a part of this group and that you are our captain guiding us through uncharted waters. You are and always will be a hero to me, a light that has shown me that I can change and love and be vulnerable and that I am more than just another alcoholic that lost his way.

I close with this...

In this life there are few butterflies that land so close that we can fully appreciate their beauty

In this world there are few times that we can say we made a difference and cared enough

In this heart there is little left to sustain when all is lost and hope is a dying flame

In this body there is the remnant of a life that was undeserved and a child that needs love

In this time miracles abound and the butterfly lands so near that we are overtaken by it's beauty

~David G. 2/22/11

Edit Your Life: A Media Fast

by Leo Babauta

Our lives can become incredibly hectic, but we have the power to eliminate certain things that serve only to complicate and clutter our daily existence. The following is an excerpt from a web series called “Edit Your Life,” by Leo Babauta. In his blogs, the writer focuses on the benefits of simplicity.

I’m a former newspaper editor, and one of the things I learned was to edit brutally. Cut out everything that’s not necessary, and you’ve got a more meaningful story. I highly recommend editing your life.

How about a Media Fast?

For those in recovery who have already given up their drug of choice, consider giving up some of the other things you’re addicted to: television, DVDs, movies, news, magazines, newspapers, and ... gasp! ... Facebook and the Internet. I’m going to suggest an experiment.

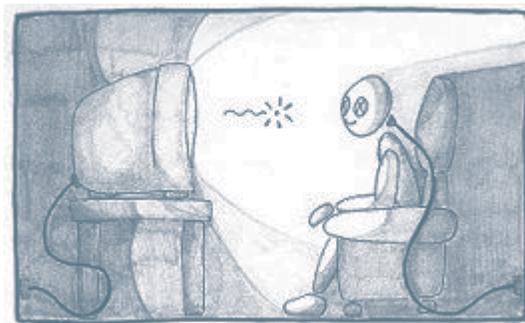
Take a minute to think about how much information you process every day. If you’re like me and a lot of other people, you get a lot of your news on the Internet, and you may also read a lot of blogs. You probably read books and magazines and newspapers too. You probably also watch a lot of TV, where you get entertainment and news. You might watch a lot of DVDs, and listen to the radio on the way to work. At work, you might get memos and emails and a billion other pieces of information coming at you.

It’s information overload.

Our brains are not made to process this much information. We can do it, but it gives us a lot of stress, and we cannot think about any of the information long enough for it to give us real value. We are in the middle of a vast river of information, and it just flows by us constantly.

And then there’s all the time we spend on all this media. Take a minute to think about how much time you spend online (typically a few hours), watching TV or DVDs (typically a few more hours), and reading all the other stuff mentioned above (another hour or two). Now think about how many goals you could accomplish if you cut those activities out of your life. The time you would gain could be tremendous.

So what do you do about it? Sometimes it’s good to get drastic. Try a media fast. But is it even possible? Yes, it is.



Here are some ideas:

- If you’re feeling bold, cut out everything for a week. Well, everything that isn’t completely essential — you might need things like email for work, but can you really say that reading your blogs is essential? Is TV essential? Most likely not. Cut it out and see if you can make it a week.
- Fast for a day. Can’t hack a week? Try one day. Cutting all Internet, TV, radio, and reading (other than fiction) for a day would be pretty drastic for most of us. See if you can last.
- Fast on specific media, and take turns. Instead of cutting out everything, try cutting out only TV for a week. Then try cutting out newspapers and magazines. Then ... if you dare ... try cutting out your blogs. Then your favorite websites.
- When you fast, work on specific goals. Don’t replace one media with another, or with another time-waster. Have a goal that you’d like to accomplish for that day, or week. See if you can use the time you’d normally spend on media to accomplish actions that further your goals.
- If you’re not sold, track your time. Try logging your time spent on media for one day, without actually cutting back. Add it up in a spreadsheet at the end of the day. See how many minutes you devote to each type of media. It might be an eye-opener.
- Once your fast is over, re-think your media intake. You may discover that cutting out TV, for example, wasn’t as hard as you thought, and that you were able to get a lot done. Maybe you want to stay off TV for good, or at least cut back on it drastically. Instead of launching right back into your old media habits, use your media more thoughtfully from now on. See if you can live with less, and work on your personal goals more.
- Imagine the peace of mind that could come from shutting off the river of information that comes at you daily. Imagine the focus you could find without all the distractions. Imagine that your life can be changed for the better with this one little edit. We all know quitting an addiction is not easy, but you’ve done it with your drug of choice, so now move on to eliminating some of your other addictions. ■



Organize Your Work Life ...

by Peter Walsh, frequent guest on Oprah and author of "Enough Already!"

According to professional organizer Monica Ricci, there are four basic work styles that most people fall into. Identify your style, and you'll know how to best organize your work life, she says. Peter talks with Monica about the four work personas and how to overcome the organization challenges they face in order to be more productive and less stressed out.

The Planner: This is someone who's organized, reliable and has a great work ethic.

- **Challenge:** The planner's problem is that she tends to keep everything and suffer from information overload.
- **Solution:** Remember to purge and get rid of excess paper on a regular basis. Destroy confidential materials with a crosscut shredder.

The Perfectionist: Like the planner, the perfectionist has an excellent work ethic.

- **Challenge:** Assuming no one can, or will, do as good a job as she can, the perfectionist is afraid to delegate tasks and can become overwhelmed, Monica says.
- **Solution:** Find trusted resources you can delegate to so you can have a great delegation experience to build on. Hire an out-side service to do certain projects for you if necessary, she says.

The Go-Getter: Can-do attitude means he's always on the move and always busy.

- **Challenge:** Since the go-getter is often traveling for work, his information is scattered, perhaps on different computers and lots of little notes, Monica says.
- **Solution:** It's all about consolidation—get a three-ring binder and store all your important information in one spot. Consolidate electronic documents on a portable flash drive.

The Procrastinator: is well intentioned.

- **Challenge:** Late to meet deadlines, the procrastinator can't get her head around the concept of time. "It's very abstract," Monica says. "So they run out of time, all the time."
- **Solution:** Make time concrete by creating time lines on paper and using a color-coded planner. Track where you spend your time, and break up tasks into a series of small deadlines. ■

Get Ready for Allergy Season

If you don't want to be stuck using anti-histamines all spring, consider some natural therapies. For instance, certain allergies are related to certain foods - by eliminating those foods, even hay fever can be eliminated.

Consider Becoming an Early Bird

Studies have shown that people who wake up earlier are healthier than night owls who completely miss the morning light. Especially after our long winter with no light, it will do you good to take advantage of the early morning light and the vitamin D it gives.

Get Dirty

Who here doesn't remember playing in the puddles as a kid? Heck, who doesn't remember EATING mud as a kid? Not only is exposure to a little dirt good for your inner kid (and your outer kids), exposure to bacteria is important to build healthy immune systems. So go out and play in the mud!

Eat Seasonally

'Tis the season for eating spring baby greens! When you are choosing greens, go for a mix of tastes: mild, bitter, peppery and spicy. A good example is a mix of dandelion greens, arugula, escarole, frisée, radicchio and endive. Spring greens are excellent for bone health and the digestive system, increasing digestive juices and enzymes in your liver, pancreas and stomach. Eat them before your dinner to improve your overall health.

Stop and Smell the Tulips

Even if you don't know how to meditate, one of the most valuable principles is to live in the present. I realize you have a lot to do - we all do - but stop every once in a while and just enjoy all the beauty in your life. Do only what you are doing, be only where you are. Stop multi-tasking so much and just be. In addition, research is showing that being outdoors can have benefits for both your physical and mental health. So breathe it all in and stop fussing about everything, at least for a bit.

Spring is full of transition and promise. Enjoy it. If you need help with allergies, cleanses or setting some goals to take advantage of the newness of spring, please consult a holistic health practitioner.



Procrastination Remedies

by: Leo Babauta

There isn't a person among us who doesn't procrastinate, and that's a fact of life.

It's deep within us. We think we're going to do something later, or read that classic novel later, or learn french later. But we always overestimate how much we can do later.



Some Powerful Solutions

Enjoy the process. When we dread something, we put it off — but instead, if we can learn to enjoy it, it won't be as hard or dreadful. Put yourself in the moment, and enjoy every action. For example, if you want to go out to run, don't think about the hard run ahead, but about putting on your shoes — enjoy the simplicity of that action. Then focus on getting out the door — that's not hard. Then focus on warming up with a fast walk or light jog — that can be nice and enjoyable. Then feel your legs warm up as you start running a little faster, and enjoy the beautiful outdoors. This process can be done with anything, from washing dishes to reading to writing. Enjoy yourself in the moment, without thinking of future things you dread, and the activity can be very pleasant and even fun.

Set up accountability. If no one is looking over our shoulder, we tend to let ourselves slack off. So set up a procrastination-proof environment — find people to hold you accountable. Consider an online fitness challenge where you report your workouts to the forum. You can do this for running, quitting smoking, writing a novel. You can even just use your friends and family on Facebook or email.

The trick is to be accountable. Your sponsor fills this role, and you can do it for others.

A Different Mindset

Three other things that must be said about procrastination:

1. Do what excites you. If you do what you're excited about most of the time, you'll be less likely to put it off. Focus on why it excites you, rather than the dreaded aspects of the activity. I do this and my procrastination is lower than ever.
2. Productively procrastinate. If you're going to procrastinate, do other productive things instead. So if you don't want to do your project, at least get some smaller tasks done.
3. Sometimes, procrastination is OK. I'm not anti-procrastination, at all. This guide is for those who want to beat it, but in my book, lazing around can be a beautiful thing. Reading stuff on the Internet that I'm interested in isn't a bad thing. Sometimes, give in to procrastination. But other times, you might want to get off that lazy butt and actually accomplish something. ■

Speed is irrelevant if we're headed in the wrong direction ~Mahatma Gandhi

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Raised bed vegetable gardening is a great way to grow your favorite salad and stir fry ingredients. In fact, for a number of reasons, it may be even better than in-ground gardening.

The Benefits of Raised Bed Vegetable Gardens

What exactly are raised bed vegetable gardens?

Sometimes it isn't possible for you to grow your garden in the ground. Whether it's a lack of space, a lack of good soil, or a lack of soil altogether, you can still have your vegetable garden if you design it above the ground.

Raised vegetable garden beds are constructed in block-style box containers. These can be built to suit any of your sizing needs and be placed wherever you want them placed: in your garden, in a bed of bark, or even on a concrete patio.

With raised bed vegetable gardens that are at least 12 inches deep, you can even successfully grow most root vegetables. This is a truly great way to grow your favorite veggies with ease.

Other great benefits that come from gardening in this way:

* **Less Area to Weed:**

By having the space limited to container walls, you will have much less work to do when it comes time to weed your garden.

* **Plant Early:**

With the improved drainage and run-off from raised beds, the soil is able to warm faster in the spring. This enables you to plant your vegetables earlier than you would otherwise.

* **Protection from Frost:**

Raised bed vegetable gardens are easy to cover with tarps because they are off the ground. This adds much greater protection on those cold spring and autumn mornings.

* **Gardening Ease:**

No longer will you have to strain your back while planting, picking, or weeding on the ground level. With raised beds you won't have to lean over nearly as far to get your work done.

Even if you have the room for an in-ground garden, it would be a good idea to consider using a raised bed vegetable garden design for ease of access and care.

Aside from all of the technical and health advantages of raised beds, they are aesthetically pleasing to the eye.

Tips:

- * Make sure the ground beneath the raised bed is as level as possible.
- * Try to leave a space of two and a half feet between each of the containers. This makes it easy for you to access them when you need to.
- * And before you do anything, make sure your design is exactly how you want it. The boxes are very difficult to move later on, so try to be exact with your design before you start.



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- **Raised Bed Vegetable
Gardens**

Your journey has molded you for your greater good, and it was exactly what it needed to be. Don't think that you've lost time. There is no short-cutting to life. It took each and every situation you have encountered to bring you to the now. And now is right on time.

~Asha Tyson

