Editor's View

Journey to Life: "You have shown me the path of life."

Psalms 16:11

On this planet, people struggle with the shackles of addictions and addictive behaviors. Over the past decade, Health Ministries at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists has been transformed to Adventist Recovery Ministries (ARMin) in order to witness the various responses and reactions to these efforts. In 2003 the special issue of the Review, "Adventists and Addictions," was met with reactions as disparate as "This cannot be true - after all we are Seventh-day Adventists" to "About time" and "too little too late!" It is a striking reality that wherever one travels in the world, people struggle with the shackles of addictions and addictive behaviors.

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Focus on the Recovery Process

The Healing Value of the 12 Steps

Many years ago I woke up after surgery in a hospital “recovery room.” A few years later I “woke up” after what might be called “emotional surgery” in a rehab treatment center’s “room of recovery.” Both health care facilities were interested in healing and recovering health. Today, people generally think of hospitals as places to get well physically and rehab treatment centers as places to get well emotionally. People tend to think of rehab treatment in terms of recovery from addictive disorders (harmful/sinful actions) such as: alcoholism, overeating, drug addiction, sexual addiction, and workaholism. Hospitals and rehab treatment facilities both include after-care treatment. After my hospital surgery, after-care included medications, proper bandaging and rest. Following “emotional surgery” to treat my “disease” at a rehab, after-care included attending twelve step meetings. This enabled me to find healthy ways of coping with “stinking thinking” and staying free from my “drugs of choice.”

As I stick with the treatment plan – by attending 12 step meetings, finding a sponsor to guide me in ‘working the steps,’ and sharing what I have learned with others in need of recovery from their obsessive, compulsive thinking, and harmful addictions/sins, I receive many positive health benefits as a result.

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Since the spiritual roots of the twelve steps are based on the eternal, unchanging principles of God’s Written Word, much of the healing value I receive will be spiritual. I will come to understand more fully the challenge of Jesus Christ to acknowledge that I am “miserable, poor, blind, and naked.” (see Revelation 3:14-22). My spiritual vision will improve as I follow the 12 steps and I will understand and accept myself as a “loved child of God.” (see Jeremiah 31:3; John 1:12).

My impaired judgment – not thinking first – is replaced by an improved ability to think clearly and reason from cause to effect. This means I will readily acknowledge when, and over what thought or harmful habit I am powerless, and what is unmanageable (see Step One). I will remember that “a power greater than myself” – Jesus Christ is able to restore me to sanity (Step Two). Then I will turn my will and life over to His care. (Step Three).

As I look at my “experience, strength, and hope” through working Step Four (taking a personal, moral, inventory), I discovery that what I learn from the past (my ‘experience’) helps me plan for a better (‘hope’ – filled) future. My dependence on my Higher Power leads to a new found ability (‘strength’) to live in the present (“one day at a time”).

Healthy boundaries (‘when’ and ‘how’ to say ‘yes’ and ‘no’) are better understood as a result of study and implementation of the steps with the guidance of a ‘sponsor.’

I learn that as I share my recovery story (“carry the message”) with others, I am blessed with on-going health and strength “just for today.”

Contributed by Ray Nelson, MDiv, MSPH, Midwest Area ARMin Coordinator.
The God of the Bible

My recovery program started in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) 26 years ago and I remember well the process of healing the broken relationship I had with God. The love of God was so evident in the lives of people witnessing about the way their lives were transformed. My realization that it was the God of the Bible at work came through a member of AA who was a Catholic priest. He explained how Jesus so loved me He went to the cross for me even though I had stayed so far away from Him (John 3:16) and it was explained in terms I could understand at last. I came to believe that Jesus was the Highest power at work my life and in the recovery process. Through a series of miracles I started to study the Bible and realized that all I was learning in AA was in that Bible. My gratitude and Love of Jesus for His healing power in my life had to be witnessed. Ever since coming to Jesus some 24 years ago, I have defined my higher power as “The God of the Bible” in AA meetings or when I would tell my story.

We know that we are in the last days and that time is short for us to proclaim the 3 angels message. The Holy Spirit is leading people to Jesus in ways we could never imagine possible. One place this is happening is through secular and Christ-centered recovery programs. The miracle is that the Biblical principles of recovery when studied and practiced lead us to a greater relationship with Jesus. I have been amazed in recent times (last 5 years) to hear more and more people at AA recovery meetings expressing that their Higher Power is “The God of the Bible” and this has reinforced my belief that the Holy Spirit is at work. Recently at meetings in South Carolina and Florida the witness about God was proclaimed by some 25 percent of the attendees; this is a miracle!

A short time after I came to Jesus an old friend led me to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Holy Spirit led me to become involved with Christ-centered recovery in the church. Pastor Hal Gates was leading a program called Regeneration and I have been involved with it since 1989. The program today is called Adventist Recovery Ministries (ARMin) and is a part of the North American Division’s Health Ministry. We are helping to Lift Jesus Up through recovery so that people will be drawn to Him. People in recovery to addictions have an understanding that there is a God working in their lives but many do not know who He is. We can help define Him.

We establish groups at Seventh-day Adventist Churches which can be an outreach to the addict seeking recovery. Members of ARMin can share their strength, hope and experience as well as train those willing to be involved. You can find more information at adventistrecoveryministries.com or feel free to email me.

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Adventist Recovery Ministries
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Director's Message

The (NAD) has for years embraced the vision of Re-
generation Ministries pioneers dedicated to bring healing to those who struggled with ad-
dictive behaviors. This ministry has become
an official ministry of NAD Health Minis-
tries being renamed as Adventist Recovery
Ministries (ARMin). In line with NAD
Health Ministries vision of “Every church
being a center for health, healing and whole-
ness in the community”, ARMin’s mission
is to “promote healing and freedom from
harmful practices by providing resources and
training to facilitate recovery.” It is to lead
people to a closer knowledge of our loving
Creator and life Restorer that ARMin exists.

We pray this Journey to Life newsletter
will bring resources, inspiration, reliable
information that can be used by churches,
schools, and hospitals. A 12-step Christ-cen-
tered resource called Journey to Wholeness
will be available at the 2012 NAD Health
Summit training. We envision every church
in North America embracing this ministry
walking together the “path of life” God has
made known to us. He is leading the way.
Join us in this Journey to Life!

Katia Reinert

Recovery News

Frank Sanchez, the ARMin Coordinator for the
Southern Union conducted an ARMin Aware-
ness Sabbath at the Lakeview SDA Church in
Powder Springs, GA in October, 2011. Twenty-
five individuals participated and signed up for
the church’s local ARMin Core Group.