



### President's Letter

It is an honor to serve as President of the Board of Directors for SMART Recovery®. SMART Recovery® has been important in my recovery, and I look forward to giving back to SMART Recovery® by serving in this new role. As President of the Board, I will to do my best to facilitate the board in support of our very competent and dedicated Executive Director, volunteers, and meeting participants. I want to thank to thank our previous President, Tom Horvath, and longtime Executive Director, Shari Allwood, for the strong foundation that they and countless volunteers laid for SMART Recovery®. Through their efforts, our 4-Point Program<sup>SM</sup> has emerged as a simple, straightforward method people can follow to change their lives.

Our board is united in its goal to increase the availability of SMART Recovery® throughout the world. Although

sometimes we differ about how to achieve this goal, we agree that the role of volunteers is critical. This is so whether the volunteers are administrative advisors, facilitators, or meeting participants. When someone comes into a SMART Recovery® meeting, whether online or in person, the volunteers leading and attending the meeting are those who offer a method the newcomer can use to initiate and strengthen his or her recovery. Everything we do aims to support that moment. This is why we will be asking volunteers to help us understand how better to support existing meetings and establish new ones. To get this feedback, Shari and I will contact Regional Administrators and other volunteers. We will take this feedback to the Board and use it in discussing how to increase the number of meetings and how to increase volunteerism in SMART Recovery®.

For the last 22 years, I have enjoyed working in prisons with people struggling with substance use and mental health issues. Today I have the good fortune to work with homeless people in Tucson, Arizona. Sometimes the work is overwhelming. There are so many problems,

and so few resources. On the best days, I feel awed to see people in such difficult situations find within themselves an inner will to persevere—and even give back to others. Because of this, I believe so passionately in the role of SMART Recovery® meetings—a group of people with common problems and struggles, coming together, in person or online, to discuss their struggles and offer each other support for change. I also believe that the people who lead and attend meetings are SMART Recovery®'s future.

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## The SMART Recovery® 4-Point Program<sup>SM</sup>

**T**he SMART Recovery® (Self-Management And Recovery Training) program helps individuals gain independence from addictive behavior.

*Our efforts are based on scientific knowledge and evolve as scientific knowledge evolves.*

### The program offers specific tools and techniques for each of the program points:

- Point #1:** Enhancing and maintaining motivation to abstain
- Point #2:** Coping with urges
- Point #3:** Managing thoughts, feelings and behavior (problem-solving)
- Point #4:** Balancing momentary and enduring satisfactions (lifestyle balance)



Tom Litwicki, President of SMART Recovery®

For our meetings to grow, we will need to encourage this cooperative experience. At our 2008 Annual Gathering in New York City, Lorie Hammerstrom, a longtime volunteer with the online community, shared her vision of this cooperative process in a presentation on "paying it forward." The basis of the latter is a film directed by Mimi Leder and starring Haley Joel Osment. As described in the film, paying it forward means that one person helps three people, who are not allowed to pay for the help, but are asked to help three other people in the same way they were helped. I believe SMART Recovery's growth depends on some similar method. Those who receive help without cost must be educated about their value to the group and their importance to the organization. We must also educate them about the expectation that they give back to the organization from the first meeting, whether by helping to set up some chairs, offering someone a ride, by reading the meeting introduction, or by passing the hat. Everyone in SMART Recovery® is part of the solution.

I believe this spirit already exists within SMART Recovery®, and as volunteers, we need only encourage what is already in motion. I say this part based on results of our 2008 participant survey, which is available in full on our website. Also available there are the innovative approaches to developing simplified meeting formats and materials in New York City and in the United Kingdom. The 2008 survey explored how meeting participants interact with SMART Recovery® materials and meetings, and their beliefs about spirituality and addiction. Specifically, out of 369 respondents, 55% agreed that they could

easily learn how to facilitate a SMART Recovery® meeting, and 40% stated they would be willing to facilitate SMART Recovery® meetings. This willingness of participants to give back, even in the early stages of their participation, was illustrated this fall by the New York SMART Recovery® group's implementation of Rational Discussion meetings. Despite having little training and guidance, participants lead these meetings by using a simplified group discussion format centered on the SMART Recovery® 4-Point Program<sup>SM</sup>. Finally, Fraser Ross, the SMART Recovery® Coordinator in the United Kingdom, has provided SMART Recovery® Member Manuals and training materials written and produced by SMART Recovery® participants. I believe this spirit of cooperation will help us go to the next level of growth, increasing the availability of meetings throughout the world.

I will close my first column as President full of optimism about serving SMART Recovery® in 2009. I especially look forward to hearing from you, our volunteers and participants, as we look for ways to increase the availability of SMART Recovery® throughout the world. Over this year I plan to use this column to update you on the growth of face-to-face and online meetings, as well as opportunities to give back to SMART Recovery®. Together, I believe we can even more dramatically increase the availability of our 4-Point Program<sup>SM</sup>. By doing this, we will ultimately help more people change their lives for the better.

Tom Litwicki

*Editor's Note: Tom and I go back to ten or eleven years ago in Tucson. He wrote about those days in a column in **News & Views's** fall issue in 2007. In the beginning, it was Tom, Fred Markussen, Jennifer Wilson, Pat Penn, yours truly, and participants. I will say this: we persevered.*

## Thank You, Dr. Horvath!

The following letter was provided to Tom Horvath from the SMART Recovery® Online community of volunteers.

December 2008

Dr. Tom Horvath  
President, SMART Recovery®

Dear Tom,

The community of SMART Recovery® Online wants to thank you for the thousands of hours you worked as President of SMART Recovery® during the past 13 years. We have appreciated your dedicated volunteer efforts more than you can possibly know. Repeatedly, we have seen you "heed the call" and be present whenever approached by members, volunteers, and administrators. You have made yourself available thousands of times, and we thank you.

From the beginning, you supported SMART On-Line ("SOL") and all those involved, both members and volunteers. From the beginning, you helped with website creation, and you supported the functioning of message boards, online meetings, and various volunteer committees.

You have been a stalwart supporter of SOL and the community of thousands who came seeking abstinence from unhelpful behaviors. Aside from being President of SMART Recovery®, over the years you dealt with a multitude of issues within SOL. You worked directly with us, taking creative action repeatedly to resolve the concerns of a burgeoning online community. This was something none of us knew much about, and you were tireless in finding ways to help us be successful.

Your regular participation in the online "Distance Training" sessions has resulted in SMART Recovery® meeting facilitators around the world being well coached in the fine art of hosting a SMART Recovery® meeting. You also hosted ongoing meetings

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to help facilitators deal with their own personal issues, and you did it cheerfully and effectively.

You actively supported the SOL fundraisers, donating your time and money and books to help make each year's efforts productive. You powerfully supported the growth and learning of each member and each volunteer. Your appreciation for what we do at SMART Recovery® Online is evident. We dearly hope that our appreciation for what you have done is evident, as well.

We could never thank you enough for each of the many benefits you bestowed upon us, individually and as a group. So, we simply say: Thank you, Tom, for everything.

Sincerely,

The community of  
SMART Recovery® Online



**SMART Progress**

### November 2008 Annual Volunteer Gathering Hosted at the Albert Ellis Institute in New York City

Volunteers who attended the November Annual Volunteer Gathering had a wonderful time of networking and learning. Two of our online volunteers wrote us about their experience at the gathering, and we are pleased to share their experiences with our *News & Views* readers.

### What a Surprise!

by Hammer, SMART Recovery® Online Volunteer

I was not overly excited about going to the gathering this year. I don't know why, maybe because life is busy. However, I did want to see the Albert Ellis Institute and I wanted to see some old friends.

I carpooled with Jonathan Von Breton on Friday. We had a nice chat on the way there and made record time zipping through New York City at midday Friday. When we arrived, we found a couple of people in the café so we sat and soon people started rolling in. It was wonderful to see old friends!

The word was out—be down to the bus by 5:15 p.m. to depart for the Institute or risk the wrath of the executive director! We were all there, ready to go, and piled into the van. New people were there, some I had not met before, some I had heard of but had never seen and did not know well. ALL were charming, lovely, and caring people.

We enjoyed conversation on the bus ride to the Institute, but the traffic was horrible (okay—maybe not horrible—maybe less than perfect—a LOT less!) so it took longer than expected. Let's just put it this way: Da Bronx is charming this time of year! Anyway, stomachs were growling and we called to let those waiting know that we were on our way but would be late.

When we arrived, there was a wonderful crew there to greet us. It was so warm,

friendly, and welcoming. I was excited to be there in the company of such lovely people. We ate some delicious New York

pizza and then headed down-stairs for our evening session.

Imagine our amazement when Albert Ellis himself stepped up to the platform in the very room he used to hold his Friday



Participants on the Ellis Institute staircase

night meetings. Actually, it was NYC psychologist Nando Pelusi, who does a GREAT impression of Dr. Ellis. He was amazing, funny, and very SMART! (Make that REBT.) Joe Gerstein volunteered to get Ellis's "treatment" for the evening and revealed some secrets about himself that no one would have guessed. (Perhaps he was playing a role – but it was very convincing.)

We then watched an Albert Ellis training video. It was Dr. Ellis analyzing his own work with footage of the actual session with a client. He was an amazing man. Although many people saw him as brusque and unsympathetic—I would have to say that to me his compassion was very evident. What struck me with Dr. Ellis was his ability to feel the client's pain and not turn to sympathy as a way of making the client "feel better," which would have been an easy but temporary fix. Rather Dr. Ellis was able to offer the client a chance to recognize that we create our own upset—that the client was CHOOSING to upset himself. Dr. Ellis was amazing as he guided the client to discover that for himself. And I was sitting right there in his Institute!

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I left the gathering very much inspired in so many ways. I left knowing that I could make a difference. I left knowing that the Board of Directors, the Executive Director, and her staff all care deeply about SMART Recovery® and the people who volunteer their time and money to help grow the organization.

I wish you all could have been there to experience the amazing feeling of what SMART Recovery® is about and to see the faces of those who hold it together as well as some of the faces who changed their lives.

### **Back From the NYC Gathering**

As posted on the SMART Recovery® Message Boards by Deb (a.k.a. Caring Hands)

Hello fellow SMARTIES .....I am back from the SMART Recovery® Volunteer Gathering in NYC today, and I must say I am on a natural high.

I drove in with my buddy and facilitator friend, Pete from New Rochelle. It was great to see Pete, as I have not been able to get to our F2F with my school schedule this semester. Therefore, we drove in at 7:30 a.m. and brought each other up-to-date on

our news, and we voiced our excitement and expectations regarding the gathering.

Upon arriving at the Albert Ellis Institute (first we walked a block past it. Pete said we should ask someone where it is, and I said absolutely not.... WE are THE New Yorkers.....we can't admit we are lost!) We found the doors still locked and a man in a three-piece suit smoking a cigarette in front of the building. We introduced ourselves and in his thick Scottish accent, he told us he was Tom. He seemed very excited to be visiting NY for the first time even though he was staying in NYC alone. He is a SMART Recovery® facilitator in Scotland and unknown to the online community because he does not yet participate online.

Finally after a few moments of standing on the stoop in the misty muggy NYC morning, a very gentle, soft spoken, warm man opened the door and welcomed us in, assuring us that the coffee was brewing and

would be ready momentarily. He was Michler Bishop. We helped ourselves to coffee, fruit, and bagels and chatted with the handful of people who were starting to arrive.

Sooner than later we found out that the main group, who were traveling by bus from Newark, were getting the scenic tour of The

Bronx, because the bus driver was unfamiliar with NYC. We received updates from Michler as to the continuing whereabouts of the missing bus and our hostage SMARTIES, sure that they were ambushed and being held captive by some recovery revolutionary group that feels threatened by SMART Recovery®, which is growing in leaps and bounds.

After about an hour, they started to trickle in...these poor souls arriving in Manhattan via the Bronx from Newark. (If anyone knows this scenario and the NYC area, you will know how absurd this is!) I was thinking how miserable they would all

be after this inconvenient ordeal, but it was quite the opposite. In they walked, all smiles, somewhat hungry and in need of coffee but very jovial nonetheless.

I had a hard time containing my excitement upon meeting these great people I had mentally pictured for the past four years! I was thrilled to meet JVB, Hammer, Shari, J-Craw, Hourglass and



Brett and Gary share NYC's innovative approaches

## **SMART Recovery® Program Tools & Techniques**

The SMART Recovery® 4-Point Program<sup>SM</sup> employs a variety of tools and techniques to help individuals gain independence from addictive behavior.

**These tools include:**

- Change Plan Worksheet
- Cost/Benefit Analysis
- ABCs of REBT (Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy) for Urge Coping
- ABCs of REBT for Emotional Upsets
- DISARM (Destructive Images Self-talk Awareness and Refusal Method)
- Brainstorming
- Role-playing and Rehearsing

Participants are encouraged to learn how to use each tool and to practice the tools and techniques as they progress toward Point 4 of the program—achieving lifestyle balance and leading a fulfilling and healthy life.

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Jodi.....for me those were the key players whom I have known online...although Michler Bishop and Tom Horvath were another advantage too! Not to mention seeing some of the F2F facilitators that I have met over the years from the NYC area and all of the wonderful SMARTIES that traveled so far to be here. We had representatives from Scotland, Australia, and California not to mention many from the east coast such as Boston, Rhode Island, New Jersey, and upstate NY. It was an intimate group of about 40 in an intimate setting inside the great, historic, and prestigious Albert Ellis Institute. A beautifully ornate building, with a majestic spiral staircase and detailed moldings, fireplaces and ceiling to floor windows throughout.

At about 10 a.m. our “gathering” finally got underway. We were treated to some awesome and informative presentations covering the topics of growing meetings (F2F) presented by representatives from NYC, Australia and San Diego, passing the hat/fundraising presented by our own Hammer and Julie Myers, and the proposed idea of a national “Americans in Recovery Act” presented by John de Miranda. All were very informative covering the duties and responsibilities of the Central Office, the need for continued funding for SMART Recovery® and the thought provoking idea of the disease question of addiction and the disability and discrimination questions those ideas present. There was a unity in this room that was warm, mature, focused, and enlightening. Questions and answers were welcomed and encouraged.

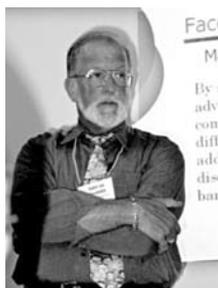
We had some small breaks where we were able to get to know each other a bit in person (AWESOME !!) we had bites to eat, lunch, coffee...we even passed the hat and raised over \$200 to add to the pot for SMART! We ended the day with a

ride around the room where everyone introduced himself or herself and stated what they like the most about the gathering. I think that most of us were in agreement that we liked getting to meet each other, especially for those of us who spend so much time with SOL — the sense of family and coming together of so many amazing people, all gathered in one place, so many so far from home — was truly a humbling experience.

Finally, it was time for goodbyes, a gathering of the group for pictures on the spiral staircase, and hugs and promises to “talk” soon whether it is online or at a F2F meeting. Some of the group were heading to Metropolitan Museum of Art and then to an uneventful ride back to Newark that didn’t end in Delaware or Scranton! Pete and I walked the 10 blocks back to the car as excited as we were when we did the same 8 hours before and chatted all the way home rehashing the events of the day.

It was a bittersweet day for me. It was WONDERFUL and heartwarming to meet some of my online buddies. It was thrilling to feel part of such an amazing community that spans the globe. It was exciting to feel connected to an organization that is so real, vast, and growing every day. It was a privilege to spend a day with many who give so much for so little in return. It was amazing that I was here in this place at this time in my life almost 17 months sober because of an organization I found in the back of a book when feeling ambivalent about having an issue with alcohol. I had to pinch myself to think that four years ago I was feeling so hopeless knowing that AA would never be for me and thinking I had no alternatives and now I have found it. In addition, I for one learned the lesson that Hammer was “hammering” into our heads—I WILL PAY IT FORWARD for as long as I have the time and the energy. Giving back never seems to get old—the rewards far outweigh the sacrifices. There are people here who need us today and every day, and isn’t that what we are all about?

I thank you all for giving me a day I will not soon forget. My finances are such that I will most likely not be able to go to a gathering out of state or country any time soon, so I will treasure this day and hold it close to my heart for days to



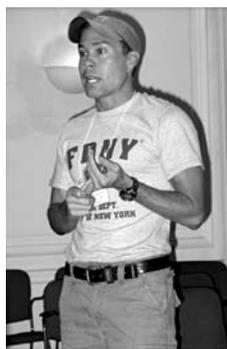
John de Miranda presenting



Julie Myers' Pass the Hat presentation



Michler Bishop's smile after the hat passing exercise yielded over \$200!



Jim describing SMART Recovery® Australia's successes



Nando Pelusi as Dr. Ellis



Hammer presenting “Pay it forward”

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come. I wish I could have met in person everyone connected to SMART Recovery®, and I felt so fortunate and honored to meet those I did. I hope you all got home safe and look forward to working “side by side” with you all for many more tomorrows.

## SOL (SMART Recovery® On-Line) Has Had a Busy and Highly Successful Autumn

by Jonathan von Breton, Director, SMART Recovery® On-line

On October 5, we had our annual Anniversary Celebration & FUNdraiser. SOL turned 10 this year! We had a number of well-known guest speakers. Our auction and other FUNdraising activities brought in over \$5,500.00. That was a \$500.00 increase over last year’s total. All of the SOL Volunteers worked incredibly hard to make this the huge success that it was. The newly formed FUNdraising Committee worked especially hard.

The fund raising effort at SOL is now a permanent fixture with its own full-time committee. Their goal is lofty: raise \$100,000.00 for SMART Recovery®. They have come up with some good ways to do this. First, they come right out and ask the members and people who use SOL to contribute. Many of us, volunteers and staff, have a link to the donation page on our signature line.

They also have two ways to give money to SMART Recovery® painlessly and indirectly.

GoodShop will donate to SMART Recovery® if you designate it as your charity: <http://www.goodsearch.com/goodshop>

GoodSearch does the same thing when you use it to do web searches. Again, you have to designate SMART Recovery® as your charity.: <http://www.goodsearch.com/>



Everything the SOL FUNdraising Committee accomplishes goes to and benefits all of SMART Recovery®. Please support their efforts by passing the hat at face-to-face meetings and by encouraging everyone to use GoodShop & GoodSearch.

In mid-November, we started the first SMART Recovery® On-Line Volunteer Tool Training. Each of the major tools in the SMART Recovery® Toolbox is covered. Senior SOL Volunteers, members of the Board of Directors, well-known psychologists, and others, led the trainings. We hold the trainings in PalTalk, the voice chat venue used by SOL. Attendance at these trainings was good, and the volunteers valued them highly.

All are invited to join us in our SOL activities – meetings, message boards and chat!

## Welcome to Our Newest Board Member!

Please join us in welcoming Brett Saarela as our newest member of the SMART Recovery® Board of Directors!

Brett has well served SMART Recovery® NYC as a board member and officer; member of Operations Committee; member of National Committee on Facilitator Development; NYC Training Coordinator; and member of NYC Outreach Committee. As well, Brett has helped with leading our bi-monthly Distance Training program, helped to present work regarding SMART Recovery® NYC outreach at our recent annual gathering, and just introduced our first SOL Tool Training. Brett is innovative and enthusiastic. She continues to lend her professional expertise to a variety of volunteer roles to sustain and grow SMART Recovery® locally and globally.



Brett presenting SMART Recovery® NYC information at the November volunteer gathering

Congratulations and welcome to Brett!

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## International Development

### SMART Recovery® in Iran

We are delighted to report that a new SMART Recovery® meeting is underway in Kermanshah, Iran! The first meeting attracted 10 participants—no small feat! It exists because of the efforts of Fariborz Arbasi, MD, who hopes soon to offer an online meeting.



As well, Dr. Arbasi has created a website in Farsi, which is the principal language of Iran, and which is spoken in parts of Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Pakistan.

Dr. Arbasi has a Center to assist patients with medical services, methadone, and psychology services. He believes that SMART Recovery® is adaptable to a variety of language and cultural environments. At present, meetings take place in his office. However, Dr. Arbasi is completing paperwork to gain a permit to provide SMART Recovery® meetings throughout Iran, including public facilities. We are grateful for Dr. Arbasi's enthusiasm and support in widening the international network of meetings available to people who want to overcome addictive behaviors. Thank you Dr. Arbasi, and we extend a warm welcome to our new participants!

### SMART Recovery® Australia Update

*Editor's Note: These activities will have taken place by the time this issue of News & Views comes out, but it shows how much our Australian SMARTies are accomplishing.*

#### November 2008

Jim and Josette attended the SMART Recovery® Annual Gathering in New York City on November 7 and 8. Jim and Josette briefly presented on how we are managing to get groups up and running in New South Wales, Tasmania, and Victoria.

APSAD (The Australasian Professional Society on Alcohol and other Drugs), November 23-26, 2008, Sydney. APSAD is dedicated to raising awareness about the problems related to the use of alcohol and other drugs, and to promoting improved standards in clinical practice and in research into this and allied subjects.

APSAD offers two major forms of professional development for health professionals. The first is the Society's scientific journal, the Drug and Alcohol Review. The second is the Annual Drug and Alcohol Conference.

Josette and Jim made many contacts for their trips to South Australia, Northern Territory and Western Australia. There is a lot of interest with SMART in these states and Jim and Josette plan to travel there in the New Year.

SMART Recovery® Australia will be conducting a 90 minute workshop at this conference with 25 attendees.

#### December 2008

A biannual Facilitators Meeting will be held in Sydney- we will focus on training the facilitators on managing difficult people. This meeting will be held on the 6th of December. There are 26 facilitators attending.

Monthly meeting with Department of Corrective Services.

Management lunch to be held on the 10th of December.

Jim will conduct in-services on SMART Recovery® for ADIS and Quit line.

Jim will conduct in-service for Positive Living Service and Health.

Jim and Josette will travel to Melbourne to conduct additional training to Turning Point and any other interested parties.

Jim will prepare Business Plan for 2009.

### SMART Recovery® in Brazil

by Diogo Machado, Phoenix, AZ

Brazilians who have participated in the first SMART Recovery® workshop in 2007, and those who are interested in joining the group, will have the opportunity of attending a second workshop in the second half of February 2009, at the Community Chamber of Barra da Tijuca, on Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. This will be the first time in which the newly translated Portuguese Participant's Manual will be used in a seminar. Roughly 50 people are expected to attend this time. The e-mail to subscribe for updates is: [diogo@assistedrecovery.com](mailto:diogo@assistedrecovery.com)

### SMART Recovery® Calgary Update

by Curtis Boudreau, President – SMART Recovery® Calgary

It's an exciting time for SMART Recovery® in Calgary. Three meetings take place each week. I hope to set up a fourth meeting soon at the Calgary Drop-In Centre. I have presented the program to their management and SMART Recovery® seems to be exactly what they are looking for to help their clients entering the transition phase back into society.

Every eight weeks I present SMART Recovery® to AADAC's relapse-prevention clients as an available resource to help people stay clean after treatment. This has been successful, and we see many new faces at our meetings after I present there.

AADAC really seems to support SMART Recovery®. Developing this

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relationship has been great for SMART Recovery® Calgary. AADAC has centres all throughout Alberta and I am welcome to present at their centres as often as timing permits. AADAC is Alberta's government agency for Alcohol and Drug Addiction. They provide services to all people who are having problems with addictions of any kind. SMART Recovery® seems to be a perfect fit for them.

I have recently set up a weekly presentation at Renfrew Detox Centre. Renfrew is an AADAC program helping people detox so they can enter treatment. Doing presentations there is exciting, and I am delighted to provide a spark of hope to those who want to recover, but who have failed with 12-step programs. As well, I present the SMART program as a supplement to 12-step recovery. The message I try to convey is to open up their minds to recovery, and take recovery anywhere that they can get it. After all, they would take money from any source to continue their addiction. Why not do the same with recovery? Our 4-Point Program<sup>SM</sup> and five tools can supplement any program to ensure continued success in recovery.

AADAC's Lander Treatment Centre in Claresholm, Alberta, offers residential treatment, and I have done a presentation for their counselors and hope to be setting up a weekly presentation for their clients. Many of their clients are from Calgary and can attend meetings after treatment. For their clients not in Calgary, I will promote SMART Recovery® On-line. One of the alumni from Lander is now a SMART Recovery® facilitator and expects to promote SMART at Lander.

I have succeeded in setting up well-received presentations at 12-step-based centres. Top of the World treatment centres asked me to do a presentation for their

counselors at their Calgary office, and I hope to do regular presentation to clients.

One of Calgary's biggest treatment centres is the 12-step-based Fresh Start residential program. I will soon be meeting with its executive director and hope to present SMART Recovery® to clients on a regular basis as an additional resource as they re-enter society.

I hope to travel to Edmonton to speak at centres and help bring SMART Recovery® to their city. One of our success stories works in recovery in Edmonton, and wants to see regular meetings set up there. Treatment centres in the cities of Lethbridge and Medicine Hat want weekly SMART Recovery® meetings.

I have continued to have success in using the SMART Recovery® program. Next May I will celebrate four years clean. Being able to present to people as an example of what can be achieved through living clean and applying the SMART Recovery® program to life has been great boost to my recovery, self-esteem, and confidence.

I guess you can say I put my recovery where my mouth is.

Thank you for allowing me to be of service to SMART Recovery® and helping me so that I can carry a message of recovery to those in need!

*Editor's Note: There is much we can learn from Curtis's style of presentations about integrating SMART Recovery® with 12-step. Helping people learn to help themselves is our goal. Dr. Patricia E. Penn's ADMIRE+ program for dual-diagnosis (co-occurring problem) clients in Tucson, Arizona, has had remarkable success, and it combines 12-step with REBT/SMART Recovery®. I think the clients do take what they want and leave the rest, and what they take is SMART Recovery®!*



## SMART Ideas

### Passing the Hat and Selling Handbooks

by Pat Kelly, SMART Recovery® Facilitator

Like many, I'm sure, in the beginning our meeting(s) really struggled. I facilitated many a meeting with one, two attendees—even some with none. And, of course, the turnover was high. Those days were 2004, 2005, even into 2006. A couple other meetings sprang up, but eventually the other facilitators would lose their motivation and “my” meeting soldiered on. Over some time, attendance gradually grew to four to six people on the average, typically a couple/few “core” members and a couple/few pass-throughs.

I never dreamed of passing the hat in those first couple of years. Maybe I was chicken but it seemed like such an imposition. I was just grateful if anybody showed up! In addition, the meetings seemed so unimpressive with their small size, that it felt unofficial. I figured people would think I was collecting for myself! Not very rational, I know. And I did actually have expenses—printing, etc.

But one thing that was always constant, I would sell handbooks. I don't know—Jodi could probably find out with research—but it seems like I've put out 200 handbooks in this time. Probably an exaggeration, but I'm confident it's well north of 100. And almost without fail, the \$9 asking price is a \$10 payment (“keep the change”). And considering that my true cost wasn't \$9 based on our group discount, there's a little more money for SMART Recovery®. And this

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was the basis for most of our meeting's "group donations" for some time. I'd move a few handbooks per month at \$10 average, keep the difference for SMART Recovery®, maybe toss in a couple bucks monthly of my own and submit it with my next book order.

Well, I also noticed the fact that when most people gave me the "change", they'd often say things like "Put it in the kitty. Isn't there a kitty?" and so forth. And my earliest responses would allow that well, shucks yes, ideally (there ya go!) we were supposed to pass the hat, but it really seemed awkward—and after all (to myself), most of these attendees had just walked in with a heavy burden and just shelled out for a book.

Somewhere during this time I had gotten my first SMART Recovery® cap. Then I had a real hat to pass! So now in response I could gesture at the hat: "See, they even have an official hat! And there are expenses, SMART Recovery® is a non-profit that does a lot so we can have this alternative available..." and so forth. And lo and behold, then others who hadn't bought a book that night—returnees—would reach in their pockets and pull out a buck or two. And so this practice became more regular at most meetings, if retaining an informal air.

During this time, as I contemplated the phenomenon on occasion, it occurred to me that many of these people had been exposed to the passing of the hat at 12-step meetings. Hmm, now the awkwardness was fading away. But the process was still informal, with little "sales pitch" involved.

Moving from 2007 to 2008, our "core" approached a half dozen; not all would/could make it every week, but at least a handful were usually there, and with pass-throughs, we started pushing double digit attendance. Fast-forward a few months, and

now single-digit attendance is a rare occurrence. Yet even earlier this year, collections were an informal although regular process—sometimes the hat didn't even appear, just some bucks thrown in like a poker ante while I collected for books.

I should probably mention that I always pass out handbooks for use by those without them at the start of the meeting and explain the cost, suggesting it would be a good investment, but noting that I'll collect the loaners at the end of the meeting. 95% of those books are purchased at the end of the meeting, rather than being returned. And the whole collection process starts then.

Then, at one meeting a few months ago, an amazing thing happened. Mind you, there are now some truly "SMART" core members, people for whom SMART Recovery® has really made a difference. One night, a newcomer—clearly with 12-step experience—had fidgeted out a bill and mumbled something about a donation. And one of the core group members exclaimed "Yeah, where's the hat? We gotta pass the hat, Patrick! Where is it?"

SMART Recovery® needs some help!" And when that hat came around, it had close to \$30 in it!

That cemented our hat-passing tradition. The hat itself appears at every meeting now, still at the end of meeting and sometimes with less fanfare and speechmaking than at other times, but seemingly always with positive results.

And that's the story. Sorry to be so long-winded! It's actually a rare evening that I've had ample time; I wrote this while keeping one eye on the Cubs game, and it just seemed to flow. Anyway, I hope you enjoyed the story and maybe there is some insight in there somewhere. I've learned enough to suspect that while my story may not be the norm, it is probably not unique.

As far as meetings that don't generate any contributions—that I can't fathom. But then, I've heard anecdotes of other meetings that don't use handbooks—relying on printouts of resources, I presume—and/or don't maintain stocks of handbooks for potential sales. I am fortunate to be able to maintain an investment in SMART Recovery® materials, knowing I can turn it over; I suppose some others may not be. But I suspect some others without this approach are merely taking an "easy" way out—although frankly I find it cumbersome (and expensive) to constantly print materials for our meetings (although I do some, as do other members). In any case, looking back I will say that the "wheeling and dealing" of handbooks was and remains instrumental in generating donations for SMART Recovery®.

*Editor's Note: (1) Go, Cubs, go! (2) Again, Patrick has discovered a brilliant way to promote SMART Recovery® through selling handbooks and segueing into passing the Hat. This is an idea we should routinely publicize.*

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## What's Wrong with Being Sober?

as posted to the SMART Recovery® message boards by susanj

### Then.

Aw man, my life is going to be so dull when I give up the party life. I mean it's really exciting now. Parties and fun and blacking out and passing out and throwing up. I mean, what am I gonna do without my booze? Man I'll have to make new friends. All my friends hang out in the club, and they party and have fun and black out and pass out, and they are great. They really support me—on my way to the car. I bet sober people just sit at home and watch TV, watch the paint dry, and watch their hair turn grey.

Man, how am I gonna cope with my problems without a drink in my hand? I mean, how do you deal with a bad day at work, a nagging mate, a barking dog, the rain, the bills, the stress....I bet sober people have high blood pressure and hate themselves.

Man, how am I gonna deal with business dinners and Christmas parties and backyard barbecues? EVERYBODY drinks. They are going to think I am weird or that I have a problem. People are gonna talk about me. I mean, they all still remember me trying to float the picnic table in the pool last summer after four pitchers of margaritas. Man, I was the life of the party! I'm so shy, drinking makes me brave and social. And then loud and obnoxious.

Man, if I quit drinking that would be like telling the whole world I have a problem. How is that going to affect my reputation? I mean everybody knows how much fun I am. Drinking makes my life so much better....

### Now.

Wow, I sure have a lot to do today, I love my new job, love the classes I am taking. For the first time in 20 years I can climb the stairs without having to sit down

and catch my breath. I have a great family. It seems like we do a lot more now.

Oh my gosh, it took a while to get out of the financial mess, but once I started seeing clearly it got easier to focus on the priorities. Shoot, my beer money alone paid off the appliances and we can eat out more often.

Friends. Wow, the old ones are still around. I don't see them much, at parties, barbeques and at social events. They always ask me to drive them home. I am the life of the party. I drive, they live! My new friends are great. They have lives and don't spend all day Monday apologizing for something they said on Saturday.

Learning to cope with stress was a little harder, but I hung out at this neat online recovery group and they had these tools and once I quit running my mouth and started using my head, well I learned how to cope with a lot of stuff.

I don't really miss the drinking. Not the puking, the blackouts, the fights, the unpaid bills, the angry look in the eyes of my family. My dogs even trust me now.

I don't feel like an outcast. Or a weirdo. Or an ex-drunk. I feel like a trendsetter. A role model.

My reputation? Spotless. I am reliable, dependable, honest, and sane. (Well, mostly.)

So what's wrong with being sober? Not much, except now I want to accept responsibility for my life instead of blaming everything on the "I drank too much I didn't mean it I'm sorry" monster.

Being sober makes my life so much nicer to be in!

*Editor's Note: As I sometimes tell clients in group, maybe I'd better rush right out and start drinking, in order to stop and then feel so much better! The same thing would apply to my checkered reputation.*

## People Power



## Autobiography in Five Short Chapters

by Portia Nelson, Tucson, AZ

**I.** I walk down the street.  
There's a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I fall in.  
I am lost...I helpless.  
It takes forever to find a way out.

**II.** I walk down the same street.  
There's a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I pretend I don't see it.  
I fall in again.  
I can't believe I am in this same place.  
It still takes a long time to get out.

**III.** I walk down the same street.  
There's a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I see it is there.  
I still fall in...it's a habit.  
But my eyes are open—I know where I am.  
I get out immediately.

**IV.** I walk down the same street.  
There's a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I walk around it.

**V.** I walk down another street.

## Iceberg

As posted on the Message Board by Fen, SOL Volunteer. (Fen offered this response to an individual who was feeling a bit overwhelmed, and we love the analogy!)

You have a mountain of stuff? I had an iceberg of stuff. The drinking was the top of the iceberg. Quitting chopped that off, but the things that were below that part of the iceberg floated on up. The drinking had kept them below the water line, so to speak.

So I worked on those...and the iceberg shifted a bit and other stuff came up to say hello. The process continued until the iceberg was little chunks of ice...and over time, they melted away.

Time, keep that in mind, you drank for over ten years, it may take a bit of time to sort things out. It is kind of an unrealistic expectation to think everything gets better as soon as we quit. Takes a bit of time, but change is possible, You CAN do this...in fact you are already doing it. Good start!

*Editor's Note: Long ago in the AA Grapevine I read an article with the same idea, titled, "Stop Drinking: And Change the Rest of Your Life." In AA, this would be a spiritual awakening; in REBT, it would be a profound philosophical shift. However, if you stop drinking and make no other changes at all, you would be way ahead of the game. I never met anyone whose life got worse due to stopping drinking.*

### No Thanksgiving for Me?

As posted to the SMART Recovery® Message Boards by Richard de Montreal

Just some personal thoughts on being thankful.

So here I sit on this most American of Holidays, alone (not even pets around) for the first time in over 45 years and with nothing to help me to drown my sorrows or forget my troubles and to top it all off, I ain't even an American! My Canadian Thanksgiving was last month!

The economy is in the crapper, 145,000 people put out of work in the last two months in my State of Michigan alone. There are bombings and attacks going on in Bombay, fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, people starving in my backyard because the Food Banks have run out of even the basics, folks getting killed stealing copper from live electrical grids to feed their drug habits, and not only is it not

safe to walk the streets of the city at night, doing so without an armed escort is likely to see you end up dead.

So what is there to be thankful for?

Well, I still have a job for one thing. It is a good job, I make pretty good money, I'm sometimes appreciated and it keeps me interested, most of the time.

Although I have diabetes, high blood pressure, and enough aches and pains left over from a career that left so many broken bones and scars that I can't always remember how I got all of them, I can afford to buy the expensive medications that not only keep me alive, but fairly comfortable and functional as well. My eyesight is failing from age and diabetes, but I can still see well enough to drive, to work, and to play on a computer. I have trouble walking far because my legs have edema and my hips and knees are full of arthritis, but I have a nifty little car that gets great gas mileage to get me from place to place.

I may be alone, but I am not lonely. I have friends to call and talk to, friends to visit online to see how they are doing, and the old girl from upstairs is coming by this afternoon for some coffee and to share a pie she baked for me. We'll chat and get caught up before she toddles off for dinner with her family of kids and grandkids.

I may not be with my son, who lives in England, but I get to see him and speak to him live and in person every once in awhile via the technologies of the Internet. So I know that he's safe and about as happy as any other nine-year-old in his situation can be these days. He knows that his Dad is out there somewhere and loves him very much, that he can talk to and see his Dad whenever he asks. That's more than a lot of Dads who live 3,300 miles away get.

I may not have a lot of money because, let's face it, living in a place like Detroit in particular and the USA in general is

darned expensive, put a crushing load of debt from a divorce and constant medical bills on top of it and it can be even more difficult. But then I have enough to live well, if simply. I have a nice little apartment that's warm in winter and cool in summer and has manageable energy bills, so long as I don't mind wearing sweaters inside when it's cold and shorts and a t-shirt when it's hot. The power doesn't go off very often, so what there is to eat in the fridge and freezer stays fresh until I want it. There's plenty of food and even a little something special for tonight's feast. A roast turkey breast, mashed sweet potatoes, sliced pickled beets, and some Boston baked beans, quite a meal!

While there are people in this world who may not like me and whom I wouldn't lend any money to, at least there's nobody out there that I think hates me, at least not so much that I'm afraid to open the door or start my car in the morning, anyways. And for those people who have hurt me so bad in the past that I still haven't been able to find it within me to forgive them, I'm fortunate to have the ability to realize that those things that happened are in the past and nothing can be done to change them. So the best thing to do is to just let them fade away from my memory (which gets easier as I get older, of course).

Y' know something? Now that I've thought about it and written it down, I guess that I do have a lot to be thankful for after all. I realize now that there's no reason to desire the escape of the bottle, to drown my sorrows, anxiety for the future, and other concerns, because upon analysis, two things are clear...

I've got it pretty good; things could be a lot worse. Coping with my life with a clear, alcohol free mind and body makes it a lot easier to do, it also makes it easier to appreciate life as it presents itself. Happy Thanksgiving, everyone!



## 3-Minute REBT

### Experience With and Without Thought

by Philip Tate, PhD

Author of *Alcohol: How To Give It Up and Be Glad You Did*,  
1996, See Sharp Press, Tucson, AZ.

This brief writing contains some of the thoughts of both Albert Ellis and J Krishnamurti.

From Albert Ellis we learned that we sometimes have absolutistic beliefs that easily hinder us. To eliminate them, we seek evidence of their validity. Seeking evidence entails observation. Thus, REBT teaches us to observe—for a moment—to check out our beliefs, discard those that seem without substance, then to live more rationally using rational beliefs.

J Krishnamurti spent most of his life teaching of awareness through observation, not to verify beliefs but to know truth, and not for a mere moment but as a route to awakening, stating that people need awakening and not guidance.

Consider some fundamentals of experience. First, we sense events of the world in which we live: we see, we hear, we smell, etc. When you see natural phenomena such as rose, or a sunset, and when you see human activity such as lovers holding hands, these events are real, aren't they? They are not creations of your thoughts and imagination.

Second, we think of the events that are important to us. We imagine events from our past; we think of people that we know, and we think of some events as they occur. Our thoughts are mental work and not of our senses nor of a reality that we sense. The people of whom we think are real, but our thoughts of each person are not the person. The thought is not the thing.

Thoughts don't give us immediate awareness. That occurs through our senses. The only way you can see truth in what I say

is to observe without thinking. Do this: thoughtlessly observe whatever is around you. This is commonly called meditation. When you do this, thoughts will enter your mind even though you are trying to observe without them. Notice your experience both when you have thoughts and when you do not. For instance, you may see an object of beauty and have an experience merely from observation. Then you may think that is beautiful. As you go from non thinking to thinking, your experience changes. Your thoughts alter your awareness.

You can also be aware of your actions. If you're well practiced at golf, you know that thinking while hitting the ball easily interferes with your performance. Pure awareness of your actions is all that's needed.

Most of our actions cannot be practiced as well, nor do they require the same precision. Living without drinking after you've been a heavy drinker is an example. You may have urges and you easily think of them. A solution, of course, is to quickly put your attention on something else; focus on it and do it. But, if you relapse, you may then think of it and of yourself. You may think I am no good for having a drink. REBT teaches us to dispute this by asking, "Is there any evidence this is true?" If you are practiced in awareness of your existence and your actions, and that you have no awareness of no-goodness, then you can easily recognize that no good is pure thought and pure bull; this thought is not a thing. Eliminate it and move on to something else and your experience will improve.

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