



Note About BoH:

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Happy New Year!

Welcome to 2019! One of the things I love about a new year is the new start—a first day of the year for me is like the opportunity to have clean slate to write on.

For this new year, I have chosen a word to focus on for the year. I chose expectant—many times I've not expected anything, or I expected things to just be. This year I want to focus on expecting good things—whether made or given. I am expectant that my health is going to improve. I'm expectant that I will learn something new or a new skill. I'm expectant that I will work hard to think more positively about life in general.

There are many words that I could have chosen—restoration, hope, peace, etc. Perhaps those might be words for you to consider for you this year as you work on your recovery.

With the New Year, many people make resolutions—and some people make a whole list of them, and then after a few days a lot of them have already been broken. Trying something new this year, I've made a broad goal or resolution if you will. It's to be healthier. This includes all aspects of my life. I'm not going to be specific

about what aspect, because it may change from time to time throughout the year. For example, right now will be focusing on improving my physical health. Another time of the year I may focus on improving a skill or knowledge, and yet another time improving my thinking, and so on.

As you start this new year, what one thing would you like to work on for you? What word might you pick that relates to what you want to work on? It's not something that has to be done—some people don't like to set any type of goal or resolution, and that is fine as well! I'd encourage you to find something if you do pick something, that is flexible as recovery is not a straight line—it is full of curves, hills and valleys. It's helpful to allow the flexibility of a goal to be similar to the path that recovery takes. Being kind when something doesn't work out and celebrating when something does.

Consider joining me in having a year that is full of hope for a better year than last, and the ability to be kind to ourselves in spite of our lack of perfection (which is an over rated term and so not possible) or mistakes or choices that aren't quite what we wish we had made.

May This Year Be the Best Yet,
Kristen

Levels of Intimacy

There are several types of relationships that have several levels of intimacy related to them. The less you know someone the less intimacy there is, where the better you know someone the more intimacy there is. This also looks at the degrees of contact we may have in a relationship whether in person, by phone, by email, or other modes of communication. Sometimes when we think of the word intimacy, we think of physical or sexual intimacy, but that is just one level of intimacy that can happen in a relationship that is quite different from the majority of the relationships we most likely have.

I think by far, the most common relationship that most of us have is knowing an acquaintance. These are the people that we encounter and have some type of a common bond many times. This may include the person who is a server at our favorite restaurant, or that we go to a common class to learn more about our hobby. There is little trust in this relationship, and because of that, the levels of conversation are typically not related to much of anything personal. We have no clue at this point if they are trustworthy even, to share with them some of the things we may have in our lives, so the topics are most of the time quite generic.

If we continue to develop a relationship with an acquaintance, we may become friends. Not close friends at this point, but we've somewhere along the line of our discussions found something more in common that we've started talking about. We are able to share a bit more about us, and while we are still learning if they are trustworthy, we are getting a picture that they are and most likely we are more comfortable in talking with them about personal things. Not the deep stuff inside, but things we like, enjoy, maybe even some struggles that we

aren't worried about sharing. Maybe those are things that are common knowledge with our other friends, so we aren't worried if they share that information.

As these relationships continue, we may decide that for whatever reason they are not likely to become closer friends with us—whether on their part or ours. In the case of some of these relationships, we may find one or two of these friends to become like a best friend. Someone we can share a lot more of ourselves with, our cares and concerns, and they with us. We may hopefully find that these relationships are two way streets—not all one sided, but rather mutually beneficial to both of us.

The level of relationship that we may find the most difficult as survivors is the relationship that connects both emotionally and physically. Sometimes it's easier to connect either emotionally or either physically on an intimate level. That person we may be considering to spend our lives with—that person with whom we have decided to spend the rest of our lives with.

Another type of relationship and level of intimacy is with family. This is such a broad area that it will suffice to say that much of what we learned about trust, intimacy and safety came from our family as we were growing up. That could have been (or be) a positive model of relationships, or it could have been (or be) a negative model of relationships.

A very different type of relationship where we may share much more intimately with, but it is not generally reciprocal, is the relationship we have with professionals. These professionals may be our pastors, our doctors, counselors, and so on. Those that we expect that they will keep

I think by far the most common relationship that most of us have is knowing an acquaintance.

our information confidential and they will help us, even though we may have never told anyone else, including our closest friends, or perhaps even our spouse. Unlike friendships, professionals usually keep their personal lives private, so we aren't just calling them up to chat, or them to chat with us. Given what we can share with them however, is quite intimate on our part. As each of us are different, these levels of relationships may vary and look differently because we are unique individuals who have gone through a variety of relationships prior to now, some with good relationships and some with poor relationships or even hurtful or abusive relationships.

It's okay to talk about relationships and

intimacy and not talk about physical or sexual intimacy. If we struggle with relationships, we may want to consider talking with a counselor or pastor about relationships in general and look further into where we are and how to make improvements in future relationships, whether what we can do, or what we can watch for in a relationship to continue to grow in our relationships.

Characteristics of a Healthy Relationship

Within a relationship, both have individual characteristics that present themselves over time. Here are some signs of a healthy relationship (friends, dating, or marriage):

There is mutual trust and trust in themselves to take care of their own needs. This also allows the ability to be open about thoughts, feelings and wants or needs.

There is honesty within the relationship about feelings and thoughts and don't have to fear negative consequences of that honesty.

Understanding is really important. The ability to share what questions or concerns there may be, to ask for clarification and may communicate what is going well without jealousy.

The ability set boundaries as friends and as individuals, with an awareness of each other's boundaries. This allows freedom within the relationship to respect each other's differences and needs.

There is support rather than pressure

when making decisions. One individual may be sorting out the decision making while the other may offer thoughts or suggestions or even ask questions, but without pressure or a desire to sway the decision one way or another.

It is a safe relationship without needing to guess where one or the other stands within the relationship.

When in a friend type of relationship, both individuals are equal in power. Within a professional relationship, the professional provides a safe place to allow the individual to make informed and educated decisions without pressure or fear of consequences.

There is support rather than pressure when making decisions.

A Mother's Love



Submitted by:

Erin

For Amanda

What Is Recovery?

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary provides two relative definitions of recovery. “the act or process of becoming healthy after an illness or injury : the act or process of recovering” and “the act or process of returning to a normal state after a period of difficulty.”

As a survivor of trauma, depending upon the type of trauma experienced, one of these definitions may fit a bit better than the other. I would submit that there is a third definition that didn’t provide. The process of finding a place that is healthy for the individual which brings peace and strength.”

Recovery doesn’t just happen. It is a process—a journey if you will. It is not straight and narrow. It is curvy, has hills and valleys, or sometimes even mountains in the way. So it is with certain times we take baby steps, and other times we take a bigger step. On a really straight path, we may even skip a couple times.

I think “normal” is a term that is used that really doesn’t have a place in recovery. Depending upon what one has been through, recovery could look very different even if two people went through the exact same thing, at the exact same time, at the exact same age, at the exact same location. Just because one is recovering this way and they reach a place of being able to manage with what happened as their normal, does not diminish the place the other person reaches in their recovery.

I’ve used normal a lot in recovery—I want to be normal. But what is normal? I wasn’t born into a functional family, so I don’t even know what normal truly is. It’s only what I picture in my head that I’d like to reach in my journey.

Rather than using normal, I’d rather use a few more words to describe normal. Normal for me is a place where I feel at peace, where I’m not haunted with in-

tense memories all the time, and where I feel free to be who I am— whoever that will be further along in this journey. For now, I’m where I am now, but it’s a much better place than what was “normal” growing up, or even when I was in my twenties. It seems like time helps me to be able to look back and see that where I am is better than the last place I was.

Sure, there have been dips in the road, but if I look back overall, recovery has been moving along slowly. After living many years now, I see a tremendous amount of progress in my recovery.

Recovery can be two steps forward and one step back, then higher on the climb up the giant hill in front of us, it may be one step up, one step back until we find a better place to get our footing.

Think of recovery as a toddler learning to walk. The first time they stand up, they fall down again. They try and try again. Every time they try to stand up they get better at it. It can take a while—it doesn’t happen overnight, but it seems like just yesterday they could barely stand and now they are walking though wobbly it may be. Before we know it, they are running right before our eyes.

The journey of recovery looks a lot like that. Maybe we tried to remember to ground ourselves in a moment of dissociation. At first, it seems like we just can’t do it. As we keep practicing, especially when we’re not in the middle of a state of dissociation, we find that the next time we dissociate, maybe we remember to ground after the fact. That’s progress. As we continue to practice, just like that toddler, we are going to get better and better at grounding

*Think of recovery
as a toddler
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so at some point in the future of practice, we have it when we need it, and most of the time we will be successful at that skill. Not perfect, because expecting perfect is a task that is not possible.

Another part of the journey of recovery is finding that under the first layer, there can be a lower level, a root cause of what we are dealing with today. Remembering that this can be expected, maybe it will be less of a surprise and disappointment to us when that happens. Right beside that is the fact that when we are actively working on recovery, it may seem like there is greater distress or more symptoms. That's pretty common because we are focusing on working through it. It doesn't mean we are getting worse, it means that we've most likely stuffed it until we couldn't stuff it anymore.

I always think of the intensity of working on recovery like a sore that has become infected and the doctor opens it up to let the infection out. It is pretty messy for a bit—maybe we have to change the bandage pretty frequently for a while but after a while it heals up and the doctor lets us know that we are doing well and there is no further need to treat it unless something else happens.

Recovery is much like that as well. When we first take the lid off of what we are dealing with it feels very intense, uncomfortable and painful. Treatment can be painful in the short term, but brings us closer to learning to heal from the trauma we went through. One of the gut reactions to this intensity and painfulness is to stop and run away and try to stuff it down again all on our own. My question though, has that really worked for us? If we look back at how we've been managing, has it really been a nice, neat picture of health, or has it been pretty messy all along without working on recovery?

Either route we go is difficult—stuffing or recovery. I hope we will choose the journey of recovery, even though it's quite painful and a lot of hard work. I think it's worth it.

When we first take the lid off of what we are dealing with it feels very intense, uncomfortable and painful.



Vulnerability



Submitted by:
Anonymous

Just for Fun



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Lonely

Sitting all by myself the TV is on.
Wishing it was earlier so I could call a friend.
Just three of them, real good friends.
We spend time together and yet I'm alone.

Deep inside if I admit.
I'd like a partner, someone at home.
Fear keeps that back as I don't want to be hurt.

It seems clear that I'd need to change.

Start to open up, it's a bit scary.
Maybe it's time to look at my options.
Challenged by trust it doesn't come easy.
Offering hope, just maybe its there.

Submitted by:
Anonymous

Relationship with God

A relationship with God can be challenging after trauma because it's difficult to understand why the trauma happens when God is supposed to protect us. The question, "Why God?" comes up frequently. That we are promised he will take care of us, but then this (whatever this is) happened.

I love the Psalms because David gives us a great example of Trauma. He served God well, and yet he still went through traumatic experiences. He experienced many of the emotions of fear, depression, sadness as well as difficulty understanding why things were happening. He made some really bad decisions in the process of his life, yet He was so loved by God. In fact, through those experiences and the crazy ride of emotion, David has been used greatly throughout time. Even today, David gives hope and understanding of how much love God has for us in spite of all we've been through. Yet God used David's life through his lineage, to bring God's Son, Jesus, to earth to save us eternally.

Maybe we are angry with God, or maybe we don't feel Him at all. Perhaps He is our lifeline right now to staying alive. He understands exactly where we are right now at this moment. It doesn't matter what challenges we have with our thoughts, feelings or be-

haviors, He accepts us where we are. Does He want us to stay in a place of struggle? No, but He definitely understands where we are.

I believe He is holding on to the thread or rope we are holding on to, to get through. It may not feel like it but I (we) can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (us). Philippians 4:13 NKJV



"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

MISSION

The mission of Hope Recovery is to provide Christian-based supportive compassion in the lives of trauma survivors by assisting them in recovery, providing support, resources, committed volunteers, and standards of excellence.

VISION

To offer compassionate support to survivors of trauma making their way on the journey of recovery and healing.

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If you're feeling **suicidal**, please contact 800-SUICIDE or if outside the US, go to www.befrienders.org

If you are being **abused**, experiencing incest or rape, please contact RAINN at 800-656-HOPE. RAINN provides links to international agencies.

If you are in a **violent relationship**, call 800-799-SAFE. For international contacts, go to www.hotpeachpages.net/a/index.html

We're on the Web

www.hope4christianrecovery.org

Find our newsletters at <http://www.hope4christianrecovery.org/publications.html>

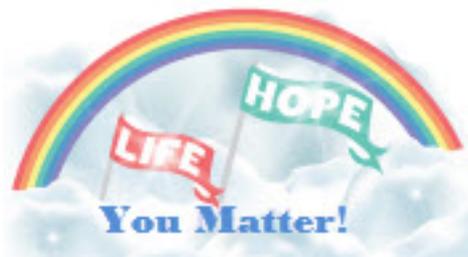
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**You Are
Not Alone!**



When all seems like a struggle, there is hope.