



*Poems by Nathaniel Hall*



### **To Fully Understand**

I can tell in her eyes that the darkness consumes her mind. Maybe if they could hear what she hears then maybe they would fully understand. Maybe if they could see what she sees then maybe they would fully understand. In group today I think I thought I saw her smile. I can try and understand and I'll listen to you.

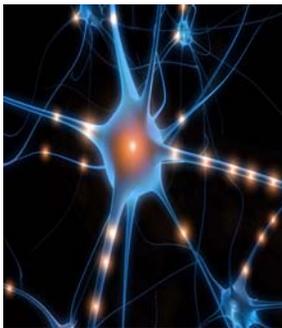
### **My Dim Light**

In the darkest hour of the night my dim light shall not fade away. The wind may blow and the rain may fall but my dim light shall not fade. It leads me down dusky corridors and it guides me down the right path. Through all of the difficult times of my life my dim light has yet to fade. Surely it will continue.

### **Stigma**

So much in our society today you find people who just don't understand. Can we open up their eyes? Can we lead them to realize that mental illness is stigmatized? And how many will be in need before all the people who make all the decisions change all the mistakes that we have made?

## Voices and Visions



What is meant by a person's voices and visions? When we think of voices and visions in the context of mental health we often think of auditory and visual hallucinations. Sometimes words can take on more than one meaning though. The voices and the visions of those with mental illness and or substance abuse issues can reflect the way the general population of people may feel. People with mental illness and or substance abuse issues can and do recover to the

point where their voices and visions can be utilized as effective tools to lead others who struggle to take that first step towards a successful recovery. They may ignite a spark of hope in the life of someone who has given up on potential and possibility. We need more visions of an optimistic future for mental illness and chemical addiction. The more people who boldly lead others to understand how to live with mental illness and chemical addiction the healthier our

communities will be. Creative outlets can often visualize the feelings of the many that do well. Creative outlets can look stigma straight in the eye and say, "I am more than a label that comes with a diagnosis." Have you ever been so affected by a painting, drawing, poem, or music that the hair on the back of your neck stood up? I have heard many public speakers but I can truly tell you that the most powerful voice I have ever heard is the voice of *hope*.

## Peer Specialist Services



“When one lives without hope, the willingness to do is paralyzed. ...It is being disabled, not by illness or disease, but by despair.” –**Patricia Deegan**

The following comes from the [www.netinstitute.org](http://www.netinstitute.org) website: “When working with peers, peer specialists can inspire the hope and courage necessary for a person to move forward. Personal recovery stories, appropriately told, can reverse a downward slide and help a peer overcome even life’s most difficult challenges.”

The editor of this edition of *Our Voices, Our Visions* works in Coastal Behavioral Healthcare’s

Crisis Stabilization Unit. The intended goal is to offer patients of the CSU more than just stabilization and more than just medication management. The editor does have a story of a successful recovery and through this success tries to pass on knowledge, skills and of course, hope to CSU patients. Recovery is possible for all but it is also a choice. Do you find yourself returning to an environment where others

pressure you to use drugs and alcohol? There are ways to learn environmental management and there are resources such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous. Seeking out self help groups will increase your likelihood for a successful recovery.

## Helpful Community Resources

### [Peer Assisted Liaison \(PAL\) Program](#)

Mental Health Community Centers, Inc.  
240B S. Tuttle Avenue Sarasota, Florida 34237  
941-953-3477

Mental Health Community Centers, Inc. (MHCCI) recently started a new program that constitutes a milestone for mental health/substance abuse services in our area. The Peer Assisted Liaison (PAL) program recognizes the potential benefits that certified peer specialists can contribute to the recovery process of others.

The goal is for those who have a history of frequent admissions to a CSU or detox facility to receive peer specialist services through MHCCI. What to do and where to go to stay healthy

can be a difficult time upon discharge. This is what the Peer Assisted Liaison (PAL) Program aims to assist and guide you with. Each person must go through a referral and enrollment process. Understanding that this is an overwhelming time in your life, MHCCI has created a member guide with service information to have at your fingertips when it is needed.



**COASTAL  
BEHAVIORAL  
HEALTHCARE**

**Outpatient**

**GROUPS**

**PLEASE CALL to enroll:**  
**941-331-2530**

**Monday**

11:00am  
Loss and Grief

2:00pm  
Mental Health Process  
Group

**Tuesday**

10:00am  
Anger Management

2:00pm  
Probation SA

**Wednesday**

11:00am  
Relapse Prevention

**Thursday**

10:00am  
Women's Group SA

5:30pm  
DUI Group

**Friday**

10:00am -11:30am  
Women's PTSD

**All groups are located at the CBH  
Outpatient Building at:**

**1451 10<sup>th</sup> Street - Sarasota**

**The Twelve  
Steps of  
Alcoholics  
Anonymous**

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives to the care of God as *we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being that exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as *we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.



## Symptoms of Mental Illness

The Wellness Self-Management (WSM) Personal Workbook was created as a joint effort between the New York State Office of Mental Health (NSOMH) and the Urban Institute for Behavioral Health (UIBH). The following information related to symptoms of mental illness comes from the WSM Personal Workbook.

### **Positive Symptoms**

“Positive symptoms do not refer to symptoms that are ‘good.’ They refer to symptoms such as thoughts, beliefs and sensations that you may

experience but are not real. You might experience sounds, voices, or images that other people don’t experience. These are called *hallucinations*.

Noises may seem louder than usual. It might be hard for you to focus on a conversation or to understand what other people are saying. Colors may seem brighter than usual or you might see shadows. *Delusions* (believing things that are not true or real) are another type of positive symptom. You might feel afraid of being followed, harmed or killed and not know why. People sometimes describe delusions as their mind playing tricks on them.”

### **Negative Symptoms**

“These are symptoms that mostly affect a person’s motivation. Negative symptoms may be described as lack of energy or motivation. You don’t feel like doing the things you used to do when you were well. They are symptoms that may be hard to explain to other people. Some examples include:

- You don’t feel like talking to other people.
- You don’t have much energy to do things.
- You don’t care much about how you look.”





"...a friend is someone who inspires, who challenges, who sends you in search of some truer sense of your self." "It is possible to cause seemingly biochemical changes through human involvement. You literally have changed his chemistry by being his friend." **Steve Lopez, *The Soloist***

## Symptoms of Mental Illness (continued)

### ***Symptoms of Mania***

"Extremely high moods can be part of a manic episode. People often report that they sleep very little and have very high levels of energy. Some report having thoughts that are racing all the time. Manic symptoms lead some people to make quick decisions without thinking of the consequences. It is very

common for the person having a manic episode to not recognize his or her own symptoms. The problem is often noticed first by others who know the person well."

### ***Symptoms of Depression***

"Feeling depressed can be normal. Depression may occur after a

setback like losing a job or breaking off a romantic relationship. However, when depression lasts a long time or become so severe that it takes over your life, it's considered to be a mental health problem. Symptoms of depression may include hopelessness or suicidal thoughts."

## The Editor's Recovery Story



I have a recovery story. I remember a time when the darkness consumed my mind and I could not separate what was real and what was in my mind. A long time ago I began hearing voices outside of my door threatening my family because of the thoughts the voices knew I was having. This led to a brief period of

homelessness as I began to sleep in the back of my station wagon on top of a parking garage. I pawned all of my belongings so that I could drive the streets aimlessly. I would bathe at a nearby spring water pool. With the support of my family I sought out treatment. It has been a gradual recovery. One of the

biggest personal accomplishments in my recovery is that I have never gone off my medication. I have been employed since 2006 and maybe I have helped a lot of people through my work. There have been times when working was difficult but what keeps me going is when someone walks up to me and says, "thank you."

## *The Soloist (2009)*

Steve Lopez: "Points West" by Steve Lopez. "A year ago, I met a man who was down on his luck and thought I might be able to help him. I don't know that I have. Yes, my friend Mr. Ayers now sleeps inside. He has a key. He has a bed. But his mental state and his well-being, are as precarious now as they were the day we met. There are people who tell

me I've helped him. Mental health experts who say that the simple act of being someone's friend can change his brain chemistry, improve his functioning in the world. I can't speak for Mr. Ayers in that regard. Maybe our friendship has helped him. But maybe not. I can, however, speak for myself. I can tell you that by witnessing Mr. Ayer's

courage, his humility, his faith in the power of his art, I've learned the dignity of being loyal to something you believe in, of holding onto it. Above all else, of believing, without question, that it will carry you home."

***Steve Lopez, *The Soloist: A Lost Dream, and Unlikely Friendship, and the Redemptive Power of Music****

## Lyrical Corner – *Everybody Hurts*

When your day is long and the night, the night is yours alone. When you're sure you've had enough of this life, well hang on. Don't let yourself go. 'Cause everybody cries and everybody hurts sometimes. Sometimes everything is wrong. Now it's time to sing along. When your day is night alone (Hold on, hold on). If you feel like letting go (Hold on). If you think you've had too much of

this life, well hang on. Everybody hurts. Take comfort in your friends. Everybody hurts. Don't throw your hand, oh no. Don't throw your hand. If you feel like you're alone. No, no, no, you are not alone. If you're on your own in this life. The days and nights are long. When you think you've had too much of this life to hang on. Well, everybody hurts sometimes. Everybody

cries. Everybody hurts sometimes. And everybody hurts sometimes. So, hold on, hold on. Everybody hurts. ***Lyrics by R.E.M.***



### Editor:

Nathaniel Hall, BA, CRPS-A  
Peer Specialist  
Coastal Behavioral Healthcare  
Crisis Stabilization Unit  
941-364-9355 x4433  
[nhall@coastalbh.org](mailto:nhall@coastalbh.org)