



KOLMAC

ALUMNI

NEWSLETTER

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Letter from our Founder

George Kolodner, MD

Co-Founder and Medical Director

Q and A taken from: An interview with Dr. Kolodner by Carol Ross Joynt for Capital Comment in the *Washingtonian*. February 15, 2012

What is the main struggle with addiction?

When you use drugs addictively, you change the nervous system biologically in a way that favors the perpetuation of drug use. There's certainly the physical withdrawal, but even after you get past the withdrawal, there are subtle changes in the brain. We have an expression, "Neurons that fire together wire together." If you keep using drugs in a way that sets off impulses in your nervous system, your brain rewires. There are new physical connections. Instead of the playing field being level, it's tilted.

At what point should a person come to a place like Kolmac?

When their attempts to stop or moderate a substance use have failed repeatedly. That's when they ought to consider help from the outside. Most people either stop on their own, or they go to AA. For many people, that's all it takes. Some people won't go there, or it's not enough.

Chasing The High

The Power of Spirituality in Recovery – by Dr. Jerry Faith

Recovery is a journey defined in multiple personalized ways. Often people desiring help with chemical dependency seek professional treatment after countless attempts to stop using "on their own" or through their own will power. Others are forced into professional treatment programs due to adverse consequences or external ultimatums. Once the substances leave the body, the mind and the spirit open up to the process of healing.

For many years, I have been at Kolmac, privileged to be on the recovery journey with many of you. At Kolmac, patients start questioning what recovery might mean for them. As recovering addicts look back upon the progression of their disease, many begin asking; "I'm sober, now what?"



Treatment is intended to help individuals to answer this question by addressing the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors associated with their addiction. This type of therapy, known as cognitive behavioral, provides recovering people an invitation and opportunity to look at their triggers, set up rationalizations and beliefs, emotional life, and situational choices that are

directly associated with their addiction. Furthermore, treatment helps monitor the progressive stages of the recovery along with the potential for relapse. Simply put, treatment is designed for patients to cognitively restructure addictive thoughts and beliefs, delve into their emotional lives, and make necessary behavioral changes to promote recovery.

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Quote of the day...

“Everyone has an inner guidance system. This inner guidance can come in the form of intuition, emotions, and gut feelings. It is critical to listen to this inner guidance, because it will lead you to where you should be. Have you ever ignored a gut feeling, and then wound up regretting it later? That is because you let your head take control over your inner guidance. Sometimes, reason takes precedence, but intuition often prompts you more effectively than the best-laid plans.

Listen to the small inner nudges about what to do in your life and how to progress in your evolution. This may be God speaking to you. Your inner nudges will often prompt you to take an action that is the exact next right step in your journey. You will know it is right if it agrees with the way circumstances line up in your life, and also if after seeking wise counsel, others agree with you. Go for it!”

Dr. Anita Gadhia-Smith
from: Live and Love Each Day

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We encourage you to participate in the Kolmac Alumni Association

The Kolmac Alumni Association is a membership organization formed to provide continued support for patients who have either completed Kolmac Clinic’s Intensive Outpatient program, or Continuing Care Program or for current continuing care patients. Membership is granted regardless of length of recovery, substance used or level of recovery support. The Association does not judge any members’ approach to recovery. The primary goals of the alumni are to enhance fellowship opportunities, broaden member support and increase community involvement. In the spirit of “giving it back,” members are encouraged to speak wherever their experience demonstrates that treatment works and recovery is possible. Alumni members may also serve as mentors to those beginning on the road of recovery and work with the Kolmac Foundation by making treatment available to those in need of financial help. In undertaking our mission, each member remains mindful of one’s anonymity in all communications and contact outside of the membership meetings.

For more than 35 years, the Kolmac Clinic has treated individuals with addiction and associated mental health issues. We know that in isolation, recovery is not possible. The nature of the disease of addiction requires ongoing support to guard against relapse. As Kolmac Alumni, you can help individuals recover by providing a platform for families of recovering people to interact with each other and by serving as a recovery ambassador in our community. We would like to hear from you and hear your ideas about the following possible alumni outreach activities:

- Workshops and retreats
- Participating in social events
- Fundraising
- Participating in a speakers bureau
- Mentoring the newly recovering
- Contributing to the Kolmac Foundation*
- Participating in community recovery projects
- Contributing to an e-newsletter

If our mission interests you, please contact me at: (301) 589-0255 or alumni@kolmac.com

What I found when I was sitting still

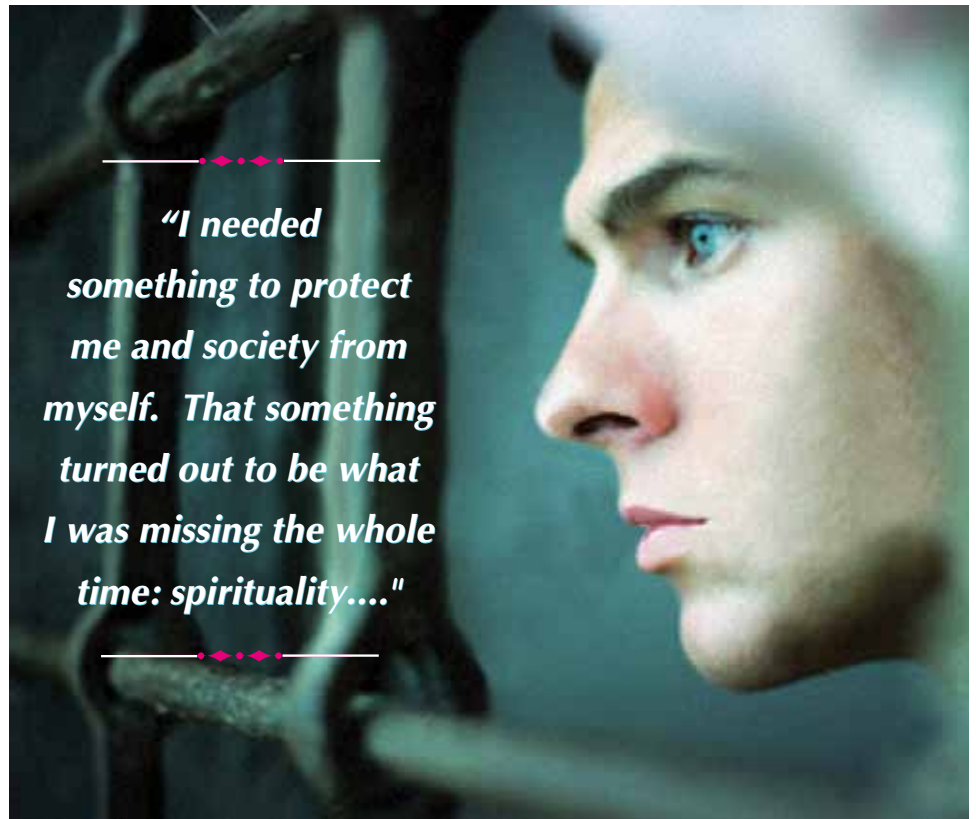
BY JEREMY H.

For the 10-plus years I used and abused every mind-altering substance I could find, I lost something that a “normal” person takes for granted. What I lost was a set of moral principles and what some would call “a good heart”.

Of course, it’s only in hindsight that I see what I was missing. While I was using, the only thing I thought I was missing was my next bag or pill of dope. Now that I can look back, I’m pretty sure that was all I thought about. How will I cop my next bag? Where I find my next fistful of pills? Since my mind spent all of its time tracking down drugs and the money with which to buy them, I didn’t have time to stop and think about what was right and what was wrong. I spent a lot of time wondering which house I was going to break into next. Who can I take advantage of? This was the sick way I spent my days while drugs worked to destroy my mind, body and most importantly, my spirit. When I was finally arrested (today I prefer to say rescued), my spirituality began to awaken. After Intensive Outpatient Therapy at Kolmac, I was clean and in continuing care for three months before I was finally sentenced for my crimes. When the judge ordered me to spend 18 months in jail, I was shocked. I began thinking that all of the hard work I had invested staying clean was for nothing. Once again, only in hindsight can I now see what happening.

It was that time in jail that I truly found spirituality. I didn’t attend Bible classes; I didn’t meet with the jail’s chaplain. In fact I still have qualms with organized religion to this day. What I did was I took society’s advice. I sat still! The judge had sent me to a place where I had nothing I needed to do, except make my bed and sit still. It was like torture in the beginning. For years I had bounced around scoring drugs and committing immoral actions to obtain the money to score drugs. Here I was with nothing but my thoughts. What was I going to do?

Since I had been clean for three months already, I sure as hell wasn’t going to give that up. So I signed up for a program called JAS (Jail Addiction Services). It’s like boot camp



“I needed something to protect me and society from myself. That something turned out to be what I was missing the whole time: spirituality....”

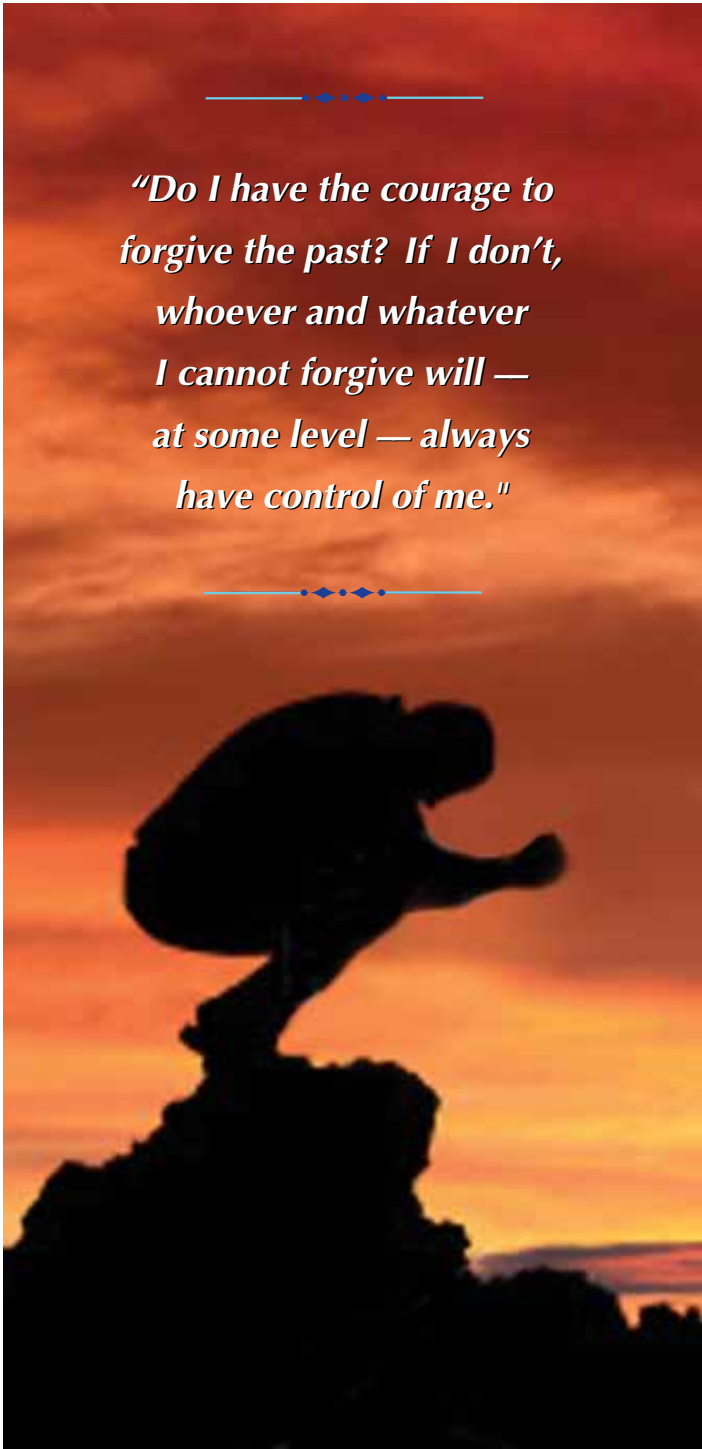
for addicts who need help. Every day we had 12-step meetings, group therapy, meditation, and morning reflection. This was the kind of “sitting still” I needed. I didn’t need to sit around feeling guilty for everything I had done. I needed something to protect me and society from myself. That something turned out to be what I was missing the whole time: spirituality. My spirituality has given me a conscience, a sense of right and wrong, a love for my friends and family and a direct link to my higher power. It’s through my faith in a higher power that I am able to proceed in a positive direction with my second lease on life.

I don’t go to church; I don’t recite the Bible. I just talk to my higher power every day and give thanks for what I have. If I hadn’t found my spirituality, I would be out on the streets today destroying our community and myself. Today my family trusts me. I’m gainfully employed, I have a great sponsor, I try to go to a meeting every day and most importantly, I don’t use! I’ve learned to love myself. I accept the fact I did horrible things because of my addiction. I can’t change what the past, so I accept it. I can, however, change who I am today and what I do from here on out. That’s how I’ve learned to love myself again.

Courage: Straight Ahead

BY STEPHEN G.

I boarded the train to recovery on August 13, 2012. Like many of you reading this, I paid dearly for my ticket with years of pain. As a new arrival, here are some of the signs I saw: “Much to Learn: Keep Right”...“Sobriety 101: Deck Level”...“Avoiding Relapse: Video Room”...“Sponsors: 2nd Floor”...“Service Jobs: Lobby Bulletin Board”...“Courage: Straight Ahead.”



“Do I have the courage to forgive the past? If I don’t, whoever and whatever I cannot forgive will — at some level — always have control of me.”

That last one caught my eye immediately. “Courage: Straight Ahead.” I hear a lot about courage in Continuing Care groups, in the rooms of AA, and in daily messages from my Higher Power. I am learning that courage comes from the willingness to ask questions. Do I have the courage to forgive the past? If I don’t, whoever and whatever I cannot forgive will—at some level—always have control of me, especially if the person I most need to forgive is myself. Do I want to continue relinquishing control of my present to my past?

Do I have the courage to let go of resentments? Resentments, I have begrudgingly discovered, are a result of holding others responsible for living up to my expectations. When they fail, as they inevitably do, I develop resentments. Is it realistic to expect someone else to behave in any particular way at all? Can I control someone else’s actions? Since I can’t, why should I let someone else’s behavior dictate how I feel?

Not surprisingly, the above questions lead right into questions like these: Do I have the courage to understand that people who have harmed, abused, or mistreated me are—or were—broken inside just like me? How can I be angry at someone for being broken? No one breaks themselves on purpose; we come to be broken through acts of brutality at the hands of another broken person. Abuse can be a vicious cycle with one person passing it on to another like an incurable disease. But the truth is that the disease of abuse is curable, if I have the courage to break the cycle. Wouldn’t that be a powerful sign of healing?

So as I approach another day of sobriety, I ask myself, “Can I summon the courage to answer all these questions through the lenses of compassion and understanding? Do I have the courage to let go of the anger, release the need for control, break the cycle of abuse, accept life on life’s terms, stop trying to escape as I used to with alcohol and drugs, and learn to be truly free?” I hope so. My life depends on it. Maybe yours does too.

Creating a Service Center to make art

How can we, the Kolmac Alumni, be of service to the Kolmac family itself, to the recovery community at large, or to the Silver Spring community in general? What are the rules of engagement and the limits of our autonomy? Presumably, Kolmac would need to establish guidelines and review proposals for anything to be done in its name. Indemnity issues would likely have to be addressed and resolved. How would this work? (Don't ask me . . . I'm only eleven months sober, and still in Continuing Care.)



Here are a few projects that have occurred to me as possibly useful (and fun):

- **Task Forces to assist newcomers:** Perhaps we could organize task force" groups of alumni on stand-by, to help people new to recovery who might initially struggle to cope with those pesky day-to-day needs, like transportation, shopping, meals, house and yard maintenance, home repairs, etc.
- **Intensive Outpatient Program electives:** IOP electives could include painting, sculpture, or murals. There are plenty of alcoholic artists besides me who would lend a hand, and lots of good interior and exterior display spaces for temporary displays (check out the street show of works on paper from Pyramid Atlantic,

currently on view in the display windows where Borders used to be). All we'd need is a free work space, donated materials, and someplace where we could show our face. A few of our potential resources are the aforementioned Pyramid Atlantic Gallery, Plaza Art, the Discovery Channel, the AFI, the Roundhouse, the Fillmore, and our neighboring Community Center, all of which are user-friendly and supportive of the Silver Spring community.

- **A communal memoir:** I've noticed that there are a lot of AA folks—many of them now retired—who have spent most or all of their lives in the DC area, and seem to possess total recall. We already belong to the same club, as it were, so how about whipping up a communal memoir of our "inextricably intertwined" lives and times? AJ, Lee Manley and I, for instance, were all in grade school at the same time in the '40s and '50s, and Lee and I lived only a half mile apart for some of that time. We all saw the same thing, but from different angles. Collated, that would be the history of DC, growing up and getting sober.

Anybody interested? We need lots of ideas, and lots of help, and if you're reading this you've got our number.

(Continued from *Chasing the High* on page 1)

Treatment is a beginning, not an end in itself. Unfortunately, fear of the unknown, pride, and rugged individualism often inhibit the recovery process. Eventually, there comes a point when recovering patients begin to let go of their defenses and surrenders to a power greater than themselves, and start experiencing the uncharted journey of recovery. Bill Wilson calls this letting go a spiritual awakening. Because this process of letting go is often dismissed because of its historic associations with institutional, formalized religion, it may become a stumbling block for many people in the recovery process.

A true spiritual awakening is filled with wonder, awe, creativity, insight, mystery, and hope. It touches something in all of us, a human desire for desires meaning, purpose, and fulfillment. To experience a spiritual awakening, the addict must surrender, take a leap of faith, live life on life's terms, let go of unanswered questions, transcend one's "old ideas" about happiness and walking the walk of recovery. Spirituality is limitless, and it cannot exist in isolation. It is a challenge to embrace spirituality as an aspect of recovery. Still, there are multiple ways to access spirituality. With hope and an open mind, may we continue "chasing the spiritual high" that lasts a lifetime.

CONGRATULATIONS!!
The AA Meeting
at Kolmac in
Silver Spring is turning
4 in February.



Remember the agony?

Where would your life be today if you
hadn't been able to afford treatment?

Help someone break free from the chains of addiction.

*"I personally want to
thank the Kolmac
Foundation for
helping to make
a difference in my
life and in the lives
of so many others."*

Troy W.
Kolmac Foundation's first
scholarship recipient.



Sharing the Gift of Recovery

You can help someone struggling to break free from the chains of addiction by making a tax-deductible gift to the Kolmac Foundation today. 100% of your contribution will be used to help patients who otherwise would not be able to afford it pay for their Continuing Care program at Kolmac Clinic. Since 2007, more than 200 people have been helped by contributions from generous people like you to the Kolmac Foundation. Thank you.

Donate Today:

No matter how little or how much you give: Your tax-deductible contribution will make a difference for the rest of someone's life. Make a secure contribution online right now at: www.kolmacfoundation.org, or mail your donation to:

Kolmac Foundation – 8561 Fenton Street, Suite 250, Silver Spring, MD 20910
For more information call: (301) 589-0255