



KOLMAC

ALUMNI

N E W S L E T T E R

W A S H I N G T O N D C • S P R I N G 2 0 1 3 • N ° 3



IOP in session

40 Years of Change and Constancy, 1973-2013

by Dr. George Kolodner, MD
Co-Founder and Medical Director

When the Kolmac program started in November of 1973, the Vietnam War had just ended. President Nixon had yet to resign. E-mail had just been invented. Cal Ripken, Jr. was 13 years old and eight years away from starting his 17-year winning streak. Outpatient detoxification was in its infancy and there was no such thing as intensive outpatient treatment or “IOP.” Most people confidently believed that the only effective treatment for alcohol and drug addiction was residential – that outpatient treatment had never and would never work.

Being the first outpatient program of its kind, the Kolmac method took years to gain credibility. Now, many other programs have followed in its footsteps and IOP treatment has gained mainstream acceptance for its effectiveness as an alternative to inpatient care. One thing that has not changed, however, is that some addicts do not get better despite receiving the best treatment available, whether residential or outpatient. When addicts do not recover, some people claim it is because the addict is “not ready” to recover. I believe that this explanation borders on “blaming the victim.” The onus is on the professional community to explore innovative ways to improve treatment.

One of my goals as the head of Kolmac is to consider ways to improve our patient care. Sometimes this means exploring treatments that are controversial or turn out not to work. During 2013, our 40th anniversary year, I will describe in this column some of our past innovations and perhaps some of our present ones as well.

“One of my primary goals as the head of Kolmac is to always be looking for ways that we can do a better job for our patients.”

Trivia from 1973

Back in 1973, bell bottoms and paisley were hip, and hippity hops, transistor radios, gas lines, and Watergate were new happenings. In addition, the Kolmac Clinic opened its doors. Test your 1973 pop culture knowledge:

- 1) Best Picture of the year:
 - a) American Graffiti
 - b) The Sting
 - c) The Exorcist
 - d) The Way We Were

- 2) Song of the Year:
 - a) Superstition
 - b) Let's Get It On
 - c) First Time Ever I Saw Your Face
 - d) Behind Closed Doors

- 3) Top rated TV show:
 - a) The Waltons
 - b) M.A.S.H.
 - c) Sanford and Son
 - d) All in The Family

- 4) Super Bowl Winner;
 - a) Dallas Cowboys
 - b) Miami Dolphins
 - c) Washington Redskins
 - d) Pittsburgh Steelers

Answers: 1) b, 2) c, 3) d, 4) b

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY KOLMAC!

From our Editor, AJ M

My birthday is July 28, 1981. That was the day I was taken to the Silver Spring Kolmac Clinic. I had a blood alcohol level of .22 and had not had a drink for eight hours. I was kicking and protesting that they had the wrong guy. I held on my denial until it became clear to me that I could return to my fear, sickness, shame, isolation, and feelings of impending doom any time I wanted. I could return to the fear of being found out, the desperation, the chronic searching for something else, something better. I could return to the delusions that someday it would be my turn to be happy and have it all. Well, in those days, we were given the whole Antabuse (250 mg) tablet and the requirement to attend meetings was in every treatment plan. I wish I could tell you precisely when I started to feel better. First came the signs of physical recovery: good mornings, wanting food and being able to eat it, not having to reread everything. Slowly, being sober started to feel good. I must have gone to my last AA meeting 25 times. Next, I received custody of my children and got back in good standing with work. And then it happened: an experience that baffles me to this day. It came on a day not unlike today, a warm spring day. While resting in my recliner, it was as if I had an out-of-body experience. I felt a peace I had never known, a peace I had thirsted for in hundreds of bottles. That's my story and I'm sticking to it. So 30 years later, "Happy Birthday, Kolmac."

Finding Acceptance in Recovery When You're Gay

BY STEPHEN G.



When I first “came out” as a gay man in 1983, Kolmac was only ten years old. At the time, the only place I could find other people like me was in a gay bar. If there were alcohol-free places to meet other gay people, I wasn’t aware of them. Not surprisingly, when I found a group of gay friends my age, alcohol and drugs were a HUGE part of our social life. As time passed, friends came and went, but gay bars and alcohol remained. With each passing year, I drank more and more, until I woke up eight months ago, nearly beaten to death by alcohol addiction.

Coming home from inpatient rehab, settling into treatment at Kolmac and attending AA meetings for the first time, I found myself having to “come out” again. This time for the sake of my newly found sobriety. It didn’t matter that I first came out 30 years ago. Each time I have to do it, a fear of rejection that reverberates deep within me, and it’s a fear a lot gay people share. We don’t know how people are going to react when they find out we’re gay. They could care less, as most people do, or they could respond with judgment or even violence.

I’ve also been in AA meetings where people didn’t know I was gay, and heard men and women making derogatory gay jokes at which other people laugh. To get a sense of what that feels like, imagine being able to attend a meeting, but also remain invisible. Then someone publicly insults you because they don’t know you’re there, and others laugh.

This partial invisibility is something gay people deal with every day, but I cannot afford to be invisible in meetings. After all, “Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not give themselves to this simple program... which demands rigorous honesty.”

For the sake of my recovery, it’s crucial that I not only be honest with myself about every aspect of my identity, but also that I am able to share all that ails me. I need feel comfortable sharing about anything – my alcoholism, my career, my relationships, my dog, my fear of one-armed orangutans, or being part of a marginalized minority. (I don’t really have a fear of one-armed orangutans, but you get the picture.)

The need for “rigorous honesty” is also one of the reasons I attend at least one gay meeting a week in addition to my other weekly meetings. Because in a gay meeting, I know I can be completely honest without fear of judgment.

If you’re looking for gay meetings in Silver Spring, there are many. Here is one: Thursdays, 7:00 p.m., Christ Congressional Church, 9525 Colesville Rd., Silver Spring MD

Check your Where and When, or WAIA’s website for information about other gay meetings in the area.

Wherever You Are, You Are Here

BY ANN Y.

“The roses under my window make no reference to former roses or better ones; they are what they are; they exist with God today. There is no time to them. There is simply the rose; it is perfect in every moment of its existence.”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Recently I had the pleasure of working on a community event titled “The Space Between”. Speakers from various professional backgrounds came and spoke of their interpretation of that theme based on their individual life experience. As I worked on this event last fall, I found myself wondering how I interpret “the space between”. Given that I am in my first year of sobriety, it’s no surprise that I considered the theme through the lens of a sober life.

I am no longer the person that I used to be – which is both challenging and exciting. My identity (how I perceived myself and how others perceived me) was so tied to drinking that when I stopped drinking I started wondering, “Who am I without alcohol?” This question haunted me throughout my adult life.

So, here I am. A little over one year into a life of sobriety. I am no longer “that” person, and yet I have not fully evolved into a new person. For me, this was/is “the space between.” What’s life like here? Honestly, it is a bit of a mess. It can be a deeply vulnerable, emotional place. As challenging as it is, it’s the best place to be. For the first time, I feel like I am capable of real, intimate, mature relationships. I feel like I am capable (not there yet) of becoming someone who can give more than I receive. I feel, for the first time in my life, that I can say no to people and situations that I know are not good for me. It’s powerful and scary. This is life – and for the first time I feel like



I am actually living it instead of avoiding it. Here is the kicker: “the space between” is suggestive of not yet having arrived.

A month or two ago, I spoke during an IOP session and a young man asked me what happens when you’re done with treatment. “You’re never done,” I said. I mean, right, I knew that – but saying it out loud made it hit home on a different level. There is no end game. You just wake up the next day trying to be a better person than you were the day before. And some days you won’t be, and that’s OK.

The space between is exactly where you are, wherever you are. With all its vulnerability and messiness, you have arrived. You are here. Thinking that there was always something else, something better – this was all part of the disease.

It's not my problem. Why am I here?

BY STEVE R.

That was my question the first night I came to the Family Group at Kolmac almost 11 years ago. My wife had recently enrolled in the Intensive Outpatient Program to get help with her alcoholism.

Neither of us stayed very long the first time or the second time for that matter, but we did eventually make it back. What we learned at Kolmac, other treatment programs, and in AA and Al-Anon has changed our lives.

When I came to the Family Group that first night, I hoped to learn how to make someone stop drinking. Nothing I'd been attempting with my wife for the past several months had worked. Instead of learning how to get my wife to stop drinking, I was introduced to the term "enabler" and handed a schedule of Al Anon meetings. Granted, I got to air my grievances with "my alcoholic" to several other attendees who really seemed to understand what I was talking about. At the time, I was uncertain as to how my participation in the Family Group could help my wife's recovery. Like I said, we didn't stay very long the first couple of times through but, after several more months of "research", an inpatient stay at NIH got us on the right track and we returned back to Kolmac for support. We've been a family in recovery ever since.

My reasons for coming to the Family Group had changed. By the time my wife entered inpatient treatment at NIH, I was going to Al-Anon and I knew that while I wasn't the cause of her drinking and that I could not control it, I sure could do plenty to help myself. Accepting the fact that alcoholism is a disease and not willful misconduct was a huge step forward. I came to understand that I could be part of the solution by working on my anger and resentment over past events; I began to find new freedom to begin setting those old resentments aside. Discovering that I was not alone and that there were plenty of folks that had walked this path before us gave me hope. I got an Al-Anon sponsor and made a commitment to attend meetings regularly both at NIH and at Kolmac. I started feeling relief, and the language of recovery worked its way into my everyday life; I began rebuilding my relationship with my wife. The disease had taken its toll, but we both worked hard to learn how to navigate our new sober lifestyle.

It's been over 10 years and our lives have been transformed. We still attend plenty of meetings, have sponsors in our programs, and sponsor others as well. I'm clear that I will never "be done" or "graduate" from this personal work. Coming face to face with the demon that is alcoholism is a traumatic experience for the alcoholic AND for those that love them.

Thank goodness there's help for us all!

More trivia from 1973

How much did it cost back in 1973?

- 5) One dozen eggs:
 - a) 23 cents
 - b) 45 cents
 - c) 35 cents
 - d) 28 cents
- 6) Billboard's R&B song of the year:
 - a) Superstition
 - b) Love Train
 - c) Let's Get It On
 - d) If You're Ready
- 7) A gallon of gas:
 - a) 40 cents
 - b) 25 cents
 - c) 37 cents
 - d) 45 cents
- 8) Gallon of Milk:
 - a) 50 cents
 - b) 70 cents
 - c) \$1.00
 - d) \$1.31
- 9) A first class stamp:
 - a) 08 cents
 - b) 05 cents
 - c) 10 cents
 - d) 12 cents
- 10) New home (average):
 - a) \$50,000
 - b) \$35,000
 - c) \$28,000
 - d) \$42,000

Answers: 5) c, 6) b, 7) a, 8) d, 9) a, 10) b.

Jeremy's Run

MEMORIAL DAY
Monday, May 27th

Fair Hill Shopping
Center, Olney,
Maryland (in front of
the Greene Turtle)

Registration @6:30am
Race starts @8:30am

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

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- Bring a dish to share, the coals will be hot!
 - Lots of stuff for the kids to do...
 - Kolmac staff is invited.
 - Miniature golf, swimming pool, and more.

FAMILY PICNIC AND CELEBRATION OF KOLMAC'S 40TH YEAR

May 19th, 11am – 4pm at Bohrer Park

506 S Frederick Ave.,
Gaithersburg, Md 20877
Route 355 on the grounds of
Gaithersburg High School