

# PURPOSE

REAL LIFE STORIES

A detailed illustration of a phoenix, a mythical bird that is reborn from its own ashes. The phoenix is depicted with vibrant orange, red, and yellow feathers, appearing to rise from a swirling vortex of fire and smoke. The background is dark with splatters of paint and glowing embers, creating a dramatic and intense atmosphere. The phoenix's wings are spread wide, and its head is turned slightly to the left, looking forward with a determined expression. The overall style is reminiscent of a book cover or a motivational poster.

OVERCOME ADDICTIONS  
JOURNEYS OF RECOVERY  
HEALING WRITING, ONE STORY AT A TIME



PURPOSE



MAGAZINE

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**THE PHOENIX:**

A LEGEND OF MEMORY AND FIRE

# EDITOR'S

PURPOSE  
MAGAZINE

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# NOTE

Welcome to this new edition of our recovery journal, centered around an ancient symbol we return to again and again:

**The Phoenix. A figure of fire, collapse, and rebirth—but in recovery, it is less myth and more mirror.** Because for many, fire is not a single moment. It is a cycle. A repetition of what harms us, even when we recognize it. The slow return to what we already know will burn.

And yet, the **Phoenix was never only about rising.** It was also about what comes before—the ashes. That in-between space where everything unsustainable has already been reduced, but nothing new has fully taken shape. A space of silence, uncertainty, and truth stripped bare.

## THIS IS WHERE THIS ISSUE LIVES.

Welcome to six powerful new stories from our clients—six journeys through fire, six encounters with collapse, and six moments of change that begin not in certainty, but in awareness. Addiction, grief, shame, disconnection—different fires, shared weight. And across each story, the fire is not softened or romanticized; it is recognized for what it is. But what matters most is not the burn—**it is what comes after.**  
**The pause. The ashes. The choice not to repeat.**

Inside these pages, you will find relapse turned into awareness, breakdown turned into clarity, and rebuilding that begins with refusal rather than certainty. You will find people learning, often quietly and painfully, that ashes are not emptiness but evidence—of survival, of endurance, and of the possibility that something different can be built from what remains.

Because the Phoenix is not defined by how often it burns and rises again. It is defined by what it chooses after the fire.

**Six stories, six fires, and six reminders that even in ashes, change can begin.**

*Violet Lozano*

**SUDRC II COUNSELOR**



# The Common Goals



**LOGO:**

## A Symbol of Growth and Transformation

The logo of **The Common Goals** was thoughtfully designed as a powerful visual representation of human growth, personal transformation, and the strength found in collective support. At the heart of its concept lies the image of a tree—an enduring universal symbol of life, resilience, and renewal—used here as a metaphor for the emotional healing and empowerment journey experienced by the individuals served by the organization.



The tree's structure is composed of organic forms and stylized human figures that merge seamlessly into its branches and foliage. This intentional design reflects the idea that every individual is interconnected within a supportive community, where unity, compassion, and shared purpose are essential to personal development. Rather than portraying a literal tree, the symbol embodies a living **network of support—one that continuously grows, evolves, and nurtures those within it.**

The circular composition of the canopy **reinforces a sense of harmony, protection, and balance.** It's encompassing shape visually suggests shelter and inclusion, emphasizing the organization's commitment to creating safe spaces where individuals can find encouragement, belonging, and hope.

The upward-reaching branches introduce movement and aspiration, symbolizing resilience, progress, and the opening of new pathways toward a more purposeful future.



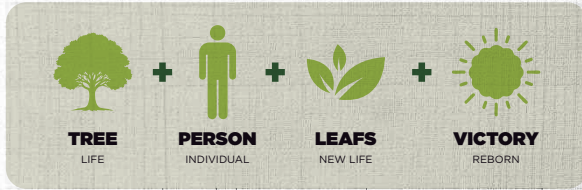
# A Symbol of Growth and Transformation

The color palette, centered on shades of green, carries meaningful strategic significance within the visual identity. The deeper green conveys trust, stability, and institutional strength, while the lighter tones represent healing, renewal, and optimism. **Together, these colors establish a warm, approachable, and human-centered identity that aligns closely with the organization's mission to promote holistic well-being and positive social change.**

From a typographic standpoint, the use of a rounded and approachable typeface enhances the logo's sense of empathy, accessibility, and human connection. Its soft contours avoid the rigidity often associated with institutional branding, allowing the brand to project warmth, openness, and sincerity. The seamless integration of typography and symbol creates a cohesive and memorable visual system that is both professional and emotionally resonant.

Overall, the logo communicates a strong, uplifting, and deeply human identity. More than a visual mark, it represents a space for transformation, connection, and renewal—a place where individuals can rebuild their lives, find meaningful support,

***and move forward with dignity,  
purpose, and hope.***



# RESOURCES & SUPPORT

## PURPOSE MAGAZINE IN THE COMMUNITY

Purpose Magazine has continued building meaningful connections with the community through projects that inspire hope and create opportunities for dialogue. One important milestone was establishing a connection with Wayne Brown Correctional Facility located in Nevada City, California, where around 100 copies of the magazine were provided. This effort allows the publication to reach some of the most vulnerable individuals, bringing messages of hope, reflection, and inspiration to places where they can make a lasting difference.

Another significant achievement was the opportunity for **Purpose Magazine** to be presented during the **Sierra Poetry Festival**. In this space, the magazine was shared with the broader community, from established writers to young enthusiasts who are passionate about literature and creative expression.

This event strengthened the magazine's visibility as a platform for storytelling, art, and community engagement.





**Through these initiatives, Purpose Magazine** has continued expanding its reach, connecting not only with community members but also with agencies and organizations that share a vision of positive social impact. The magazine keeps moving forward, opening doors, creating possibilities, and generating meaningful change wherever its message can inspire and uplift others.

# REBUILDING THE COST OF DESTRUCTION

EGO, AND REBUILDING FROM RUIN **BY C.O**

I didn't arrive here in some dramatic movie scene where everything exploded at once. It was slower than that. Less chaos and more repetition. A long series of bad decisions that slowly became a lifestyle, then eventually became who I was.

My father was a hardcore alcoholic and a coke head. He died at 66 after years of drinking himself to death one slow decision at a time. Growing up around that kind of chaos changes your understanding of normal. Destruction wasn't shocking to me. It was familiar. Familiar enough that I spent years convincing myself I had everything under control simply because I wasn't as bad as the people I grew up around.

My mom raised two boys on her own. She worked hard and did the best she could, but I had way too much freedom and very little supervision. I was a latchkey kid who learned early that if nobody was watching, I could pretty much do whatever I wanted. Looking back, that freedom felt a lot more like neglect disguised as independence.

*I started growing weed when I was 13.*

*By high school I was selling it.*

By college it had become part of my identity. Eventually weed turned into coke, ketamine, and mdma. Money came fast and I loved what came with it. Freedom, status, confidence, and the illusion of power.



**AND HONESTLY,  
FOR AWHILE, IT WORKED.**

I had money. I didn't look at price tags. I traveled, bought what I wanted, and lived with the belief that consequences were things that happened to other people. I thought I had figured life out. Looking back, I was confusing success with momentum.

The truth about self-destruction is that it rarely looks dramatic while you're inside of it. Most of the time it just looks like normal life with slightly worse decisions every year. That's what happened to me. Little compromises became habits. Habits became lifestyle. Lifestyle became identity.



Then came four DUIs. Jail. Courtrooms. Years of consequences stacked on top of each other. I wish I could say one moment changed everything, but that's not what happened. I didn't suddenly become wise. I mostly became exhausted.

#### ***Exhausted from lying to myself.***

I got very good at rationalizing. That's probably one of the most dangerous skills an addict can have. I always had a reason, a justification, a technicality. I wasn't a bad person, just misunderstood. I wasn't out of control, just stressed. I wasn't destroying my life, just going through a rough patch that somehow lasted years.

#### ***Eventually even I stopped believing my own explanations.***

That's the ugly part nobody talks about. There comes a point where you realize you're becoming someone you wouldn't even respect if you met them. That's a different kind of pain. Not dramatic pain. Quiet pain. The kind that follows you around even when you're laughing.

## **JAIL DIDN'T FIX ME.**

Consequences didn't fix me. Fear didn't fix me either. If anything, ***I just became better at surviving inside the mess I created.*** Human beings can normalize almost anything if they do it long enough.

Residential rehab was different. Not because it was magical, but because it forced me to stop running. For the first time in years, I had to sit face to face with the patterns I had spent most of my life avoiding.

# THAT HONESTY WAS BRUTAL. BUT IT WAS ALSO FREEING.

For the first time in a very long time, I stopped trying to be the exception. I stopped blaming bad luck. I started admitting that my life wasn't collapsing because of circumstances. It was collapsing because of choices. Repeatedly.

I think people misunderstand recovery. They imagine some dramatic transformation where suddenly everything becomes clear. That's not been my experience. Recovery is mostly small decisions nobody applauds. Choosing discipline over impulse. Choosing honesty over image. Choosing responsibility over excuses. Over and over again.

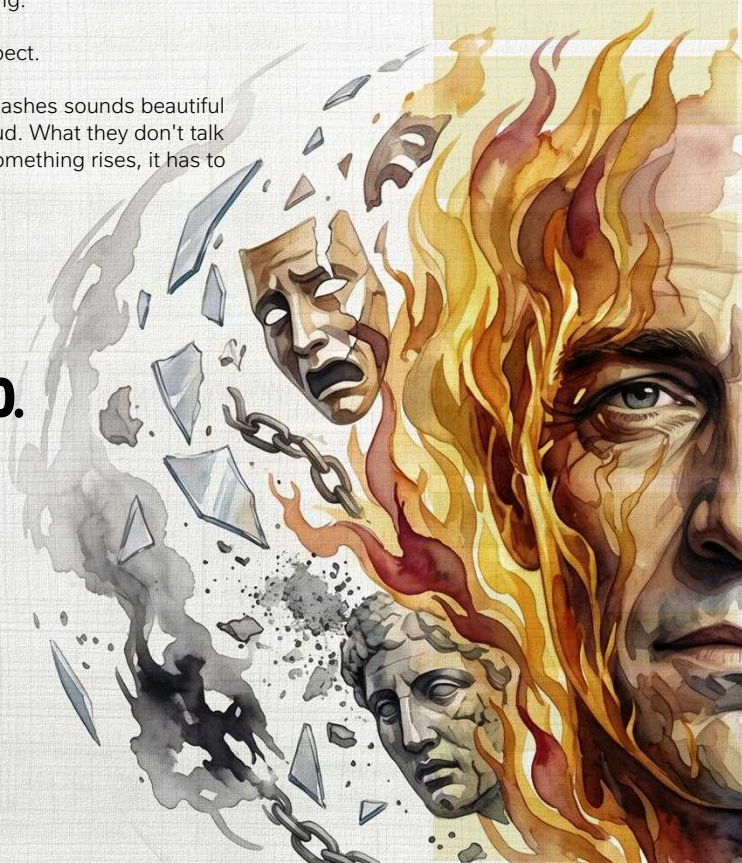
It's painfully unglamorous.

But somewhere inside all the wreckage there was still something left worth saving.

That's the part I didn't expect.

A phoenix rising from the ashes sounds beautiful when people say it out loud. What they don't talk about is the fire. Before something rises, it has to burn first.

# THAT WAS THE PART I UNDERSTOOD.



RECOVERED

My life had to burn down far enough for me to stop pretending it was still standing. The ego. The lies. The chaos. The need to escape myself. All of it had to catch fire before I was willing to face what was underneath.

And weirdly enough, that's where hope showed up.

Not in money. Not in success. Not in pretending everything was okay. Hope showed up in honesty. In finally being tired enough to change. In waking up and trying again even when it felt pointless.

## **TODAY I AM 8 MONTHS AND 15 DAYS CLEAN AND SOBER.**

That's not a lifetime, but for me it's the longest stretch of real honesty and clarity I've had in years. Long enough to understand that recovery isn't about becoming a different person overnight. It's about becoming the person you were supposed to be before all the chaos took over.

I don't have everything figured out. I'm still rebuilding. Still learning how to live without escaping myself. Still dealing with consequences from decisions I made years ago.

But for the first time in a long time, I'm trying to become someone I can respect instead of someone I'm constantly trying to defend.

***And honestly, that's more valuable  
than all the money, freedom, and  
chaos I spent years chasing.***

***Turns out peace is a lot less  
exciting than destruction.***



## **BUT IT LASTS LONGER.**

# BURIED ALIVE

HOW GRIEF, ADDICTION,  
and survival changed my life forever. By T.H

**My story begins in 2021. At that time,** I was already a big alcoholic and cocaine addict, but I was still able to function, so I didn't think I had a problem.

My brother and I would always go to our good friend's house after work to drink every day. It was like clockwork — the same thing every single day. Until one day, on my way to his house, I got the call that changed everything. He had taken my gun and shot himself after my brother and I left his house the night before.

A lot of his family blamed me and even tried to have me charged with murder. For six months they pushed for it.

One night, while my brother and I were drinking and arguing like always, I walked him home and left. When I came back, I found out he had broken into my room, taken my rifle, gone into the backyard, and shot himself.

I found my brother lying in a pool of blood, and I completely lost my mind.

Within six months, I lost the two closest people in my life — both because of my guns.

After that, I spun completely out of control. I didn't care about anything anymore. I didn't care if I lived or died. I did whatever I wanted, and nobody could stop me.

That was the point in my life when I started smoking fentanyl, heroin, and crank, while drinking even more than before. I started overdosing on fentanyl constantly and eventually became homeless around the Folsom area, where things only got worse.

The cops would find me overdosed, hit me with Narcan, lock me up, and then release me. But it never changed anything, because as soon as I got out, I would go right back to using again.

I started robbing people and fighting anyone who had drugs. I was going to get them one way or another.

My mom tried to help me, but I didn't want help. My little sister had to hear from people that I had overdosed again in the alley behind their house. I had lost everyone.

My girlfriend of 11 years finally left me in the ICU because I refused to get help. I just didn't care anymore.

It wasn't that I wanted to die — I just didn't care whether I did or not.



I overdosed so many times that after doctors shocked me back to life, they had to explain that Narcan was no longer working on me the way it used to. They told me it was only a matter of time before I overdosed and didn't come back.

At one point, I checked myself into a treatment facility to try to get help, but it didn't last long. I ran away, relapsed, overdosed again, and ended up back in jail.

There were many times when I would overdose, get released from the hospital, and overdose again the very same day. It happened so many times that I ended up in the Folsom newspaper more than once because of my crimes and drug use.

Finally, my dad called one of my best friends — someone I thought had stopped caring about me. That friend drove four hours, tracked me down, and brought me back to his house so I could get clean.

**And I did.**

But once again, being me, I ran away and started getting loaded until I ended up back in jail again.

For some reason, though, I just wasn't allowed to die.

Eventually, I got sick and tired of being Narcaned all the time. Then, on June 1, 2025, my grandma came to see me after I had already been Narcaned twice that same day. She had a counselor on the phone and told me there was a treatment place far away where I could detox and get help — somewhere I couldn't just run from.

**This time,  
I agreed to go.**

After a long battle with the demons in my head and the battle of addiction itself, **June 2, 2025, became the last day I ever used drugs or alcohol.**

By the time this story is published, I will have one full year clean from all drugs and alcohol.

Today, I have my license back. I'm working. I've completed three treatment programs, and I'm rebuilding my life.

**What I can say is this:**

**If I can survive everything I went through and still come out on top, then so can you. Believe in yourself, and never give up.**



# BETWEEN PLACES BETWEEN PIECES

ROUGH AROUND THE EDGES

**I was born in a small town on the Mississippi river down south near the Gulf.**

My story begins late 2025 when I found myself homeless and fairly hopeless in a relatively small town, Nevada City. My girlfriend had kicked me out because of my erratic behavior and there I was, looking for myself.

Smoking pot was my thing. I smoked habitually, adding a little of a seemingly endless supply to my rolled cigarettes. I was roaming the streets like a fool, falling in with random strangers and communing with a God.

I was on a path of self-realization, I just didn't know how or what direction to take. That direction came sooner than later in the form of the police.

I had gotten into some trouble some months before and now found myself destabilized and manic.

**By A.F**

My mental health has plagued me since I was 19; consistently being arrested, hospitalized or both. I was now 49.

Thirty years of dealing with Manic Depression and I was soon going to spend my 50th birthday in custody.

The struggle was real, but at least in jail the stimulus was less and I had a chance to think. A chance to think about who I was; to think about who I wanted to be.

I had a couple of felonies hanging over my head, but a Mental Health Diversion program was being held out to me along with rehab, and soon I would find myself in a T-House(transitional house).

Just before I was arrested I had stopped using: no alcohol, no pot, no ketamine, no coke. Now I was feeling everything; feeling everything for the first time in a long time.

Still, I didn't know what I wanted. I didn't have direction or a place to live. It took getting arrested to see the light. It took being alone in jail for a month to become completely regulated and grounded.



My 50th birthday came, and there I was, in jail. It could have been a lonely birthday. It could have been a heart breaking birthday, but it was neither. That birthday was a come to Jesus moment. It was a moment of realization-I am too old for this; I have to get my life on track.

As of now I have 190 days clean and sober. My life is not completely on track. I am still looking for employment and a place to live that is more permanent. I am back with my girlfriend and have been spending weekends with her, rebuilding trust and stability.

You know, i had a life once, and to the ground I burned it. I got little warmth from the inferno I had created. Into the ashes I dove. The result was a cloud of smoke so dense and choking I could not see my way out.

**Despite the fire. Despite the seemingly irreconcilable wreckage I knew I would rise again.**

**I knew the flames that licked and lapped the flesh of my ego would not kill me, but would only make me stronger. On this assurance I relied.**

Sometimes the life we present is actually the casket of despair buried in the unspoken words of our inner depths. What do we truly want when all our creature comforts are accounted for? When we have everything and yet are haunted by an emptiness. Challenged by a question that gnaws daily on our serenity, robbing us of our inner peace. An inner peace that doesn't come from what we possess,

**but from what we let go of.**



# SAFE PLACE



# PLACE

## BUILT FROM STRENGTH

BY E.J

As a young child my father was the first person to break my heart. I was just 3 years old when he left. I didn't understand it as heart break back then.

I just knew something disappeared that I deeply cared for. And I didn't have language for that kind of deep loss but looking back it was the first burn-and it cut deep.

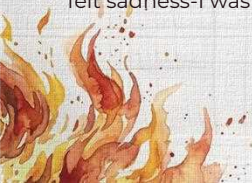
I cherished the good memories I had with him-sitting on his lap while he sang me **"you are my sunshine"**. After he left the confusion, resentment & anger set in. I became a **"madman"** as my sisters would call me.

I remember how the smallest thing could set me off and I would become a full fledged fire ripping & burning through the house; wailing and clobbering anything or one in my way. It was the only way I knew how to express myself.

That fire didn't go away as I got older. It just learned how to hide inside me. I learned how to internalize and hide the pain. Sub consciously I was searching for relief, trying to understand the absence of a father figure.

I remember a deep sadness that seemed to follow me everywhere. I would sometimes find my mom crying in her closet and I would join her.

Over time, that closet became a place I would go to on my own. It became a sort of containment of safety for me. A place I could shut out the world-even though it was a place I felt sadness-I was safe in that sadness.



I distinctly remember the smells of leather-to this day these smells bring me back to that feeling of sadness & comfort. I hated that my mom was alone from my dad abandoning her, my sisters and me. My mom was hurting, I was hurting- but it was a calm sort of chaos.

I may have grown out of my **“madman”** phase but I was still living around instability. My dad remarried quickly after the divorce was finalized, but the visits to his new home were not peaceful.

There was domestic violence burned into my mind that I felt and witnessed.

I was raised in emotional fire and learned to survive by normalizing it. Until I started trying to escape it. In my college days, partying was **“normal”**, just dabbling socially. I was crushing through my classes and getting good grades-so partying didn't seem dangerous. Going out for drinks, using cocaine, ecstasy, opiates. It just felt like letting go- or relief. It was justified. Right?! There was no reason to be concerned?

Over time, it stopped being something I did just for fun. I started reaching for pills in moments when I needed something to quiet my mind. It wasn't about partying anymore- it was about relief. I didn't want to feel the weight of everything I had been carrying throughout my life.

What once felt like a choice quickly became something I was now dependent on. Opiates became my chemical containment. My mind slowed down enough that I wasn't constantly trying to process everything at once. It was my safe, quiet space.

**By 2019 I was fully submerged in using heroin & meth. What once had been occasional had turned into daily use. That line between relief and dependence faded and I was a fully functioning addict.**

**The more my use grew-so  
did the shame inside me.**



Looking back, it reminded me, in ways I didn't fully understand at the time, of being a child again. Finding small enclosed spaces where everything felt quieter, even if only temporary.

This pattern wasn't just in my substance use, it showed up in my relationships too.

I found myself drawn to guys that were also struggling with addiction, trying to cope in similar ways. It felt easier to focus on someone else's pain than to fully face my own.

One of my boyfriends tragically passed away in a car accident and that became another loss in my life already shaped by it.

At the time, his death allowed me to justify my use- A couple years later I ended up in a similar drug dependent relationship. After about 6 years together he over-dosed on the same day my last boyfriend passed away.

He lived. But that was the day I decided to never touch opiates again. This time the lesson was burned into me. Opiates were no longer going to run my life.

I use to think rising from the ashes meant leaving behind the fire completely-now I see it differently.

**The fire was never something I could escape-or outrun, it was something I learned to survive.**

It had been apart of my life for as long as I can remember. What I was really searching for through addiction, through relationships, through all the ways I tried to cope-was a sense of safety and to feel loved-to feel like someone worth staying for.





**By finding sobriety, by going to treatment, counseling, therapy & groups I've had the opportunity to rebuild myself & my relationships.**

## Common goals has become my safe place

Somewhere I can fully open up without judgement. I've learned coping methods that are healthy-and meeting others that have had similar struggles has given me the space to feel seen and supported. I have been clean for almost four months.

In more recent years, my relationship with my father has grown and flourished. We have become closer than I thought possible. It's still a work in progress but it's no longer defined by absence. I'm closer than I've ever been with my whole family. They see a different me. I see a different me.

**Rebuilding myself hasn't erased the past but it has allowed me space for understanding it.**

I don't look at my life as something I have fully risen out of yet. I think healing is something that continues as long as we never stop learning.

**Never stop trying.  
Never stop rising above.**

**Don't let fear of the uncomfortable moments hold you back from the beauty you so lovingly deserve to see in yourself.**

# RISING

## FROM THE ASHES OF ADDICTION

BY B.B

I'm an addict in Recovery. I'm coming back from a relapse after nearly ten years clean. For a couple of years, I fought to return to sobriety, stumbling through the smoke of my own choices, trying to find air. In the winter of 2023, everything collapsed. After huffing nitrous for a few months, my body shut down. I didn't know it could drain the B-12 my spinal cord needed to communicate with my arms and legs. My brain hit an emergency brake. Suddenly, I could barely speak in full sentences. I couldn't walk, shower, clean, or think clearly. I spent weeks in a wheelchair and months using a walker. I still can't jump or run the way I used to, but by grace, I recovered far better than anyone expected.

I stayed clean for over eight months, but I wasn't working a program. Walking back into the rooms after so long felt like stepping into a fire I wasn't sure I could survive. I felt ashamed and convinced people were judging me. Instead of leaning into the "WE" of Recovery, I isolated—and the flames crept back in. There's a saying: "Build a life you're not willing to lose for getting loaded." I truly believed I had. I had a beautiful daughter. I finished college. I bought a home. I found my dream job helping others. But the hollow place addiction knows too well reopened inside me, slowly swallowing the life I'd built.

During those eight months clean, I was working 32 hours a week and homeschooling my daughter while burning the candle at both ends. I burned myself out completely and relapsed. I convinced myself I was functioning fine, just needing to escape for a moment. Ketamine became that escape. And like every fire I thought I could control, it consumed more than I intended. One day, my daughter found me unconscious on the bathroom floor. She didn't know what to do. She called my parents, and by the time the ambulance arrived, I was coming to. I was arrested, and CPS detained my daughter. I wish that moment had been enough to snap me out of it, but it wasn't. I kept using until I finally got a bed in rehab.

**MY CLEAN DATE IS  
SEPTEMBER 12TH, 2025.**

**It hasn't been easy, but I'm here. And God willing, my daughter will be home September 3rd, 2026. I'm grateful I found Recovery again. It takes what it takes. I joined the writing class at Common Goals because I know the healing power of putting truth into words.** Writing helps me breathe again. I want to share the pain of active addiction and the gratitude, connection, and rebirth I've found in Recovery. If my story helps even one person understand addiction—or choose to fight their way out of the flames—then it has done its job. My poem has two parts: how addiction can burn a life down to embers, and how, like a phoenix, Recovery lets us rise from the ashes—reborn, reshaped, stronger.

# ADDICTION IS

Addiction is burning alive from the inside out, a slow spiritual combustion you pretend you can survive.

It's waking up in the ashes of yesterday's promises  
—“never again”—

only to feel the spark catch in your chest, unwanted, unstoppable, pulling you back into the flames.

It's using even while your soul screams, watching your own hands strike the match that destroys you.

It's knowing every hit is gasoline, feeling the fire crawl through your body, scorching everything human left inside you.

It's watching your life ignite— jobs, cars, family, children— burning one by one while you stand frozen in the smoke.

It's the hollow crater left behind after everything meaningful turns to char and dust.

It's wanting the fire to numb you because every emotion burns worse than the blaze itself.

**No oxygen.  
No escape.**

Just the choking air of the life you can't stop feeding to the flames.

It's sinking into a heat so deep you forget what cool air even feels like.

It's living like a ghost made of soot, a half burned thing wandering through ruins.

It's sanity curling up like singed paper, integrity melting down your ribs, choices evaporating into smoke.

**ADDICTION IS DYING IN THE FIRE  
YOU KEEP LIGHTING— SLOWLY, PAINFULLY,  
UNTIL ALL THAT REMAINS IS THE FAINT  
OUTLINE OF WHO YOU USED TO BE.**



# RECOVERY IS

Recovery is rising from your own ashes,  
coughing out years of smoke  
that once clung to your bones.  
It's the first breath of clean air  
after believing you'd never breathe again.  
It's a small ember of spirit glowing in the wreckage—  
fragile, stubborn, impossible to kill.  
It's finding people who see the burn marks  
and say,  
***"You're still worth saving."***

It's belonging to a tribe of survivors,  
all of you carrying your own flames,  
all of you learning to heal without burning.  
It's choosing—finally choosing—  
to walk toward life  
instead of toward the fire.

It's studying every scar,  
every scorch mark,  
and realizing they are proof  
of how hard you fought to stay alive.  
It's discovering the self the fire could not consume,  
the core that stayed solid  
even when everything else melted away.  
It's stepping into a world that feels warm,  
not scorching.

It's trying new things with trembling hands,  
like your soul is learning how to hold light  
without catching fire.

It's sitting with your emotions  
instead of running into the flames to escape them.  
It's trusting a higher power—  
whatever force carried you through the inferno  
and refused to let you die there.

Recovery is learning to live with intention,  
to love with a heart that has been burned  
but not destroyed.

It's feeling freedom rush through the cracks  
where fire once lived.  
It's filling old voids with connection, humility,  
empathy, gratitude—  
the things that survive flames  
and make life worth rising for.

**RECOVERY IS REALIZING THE FIRE  
DIDN'T END YOU; IT PURIFIED YOU.**

**YOUR ASHES WEREN'T THE FINISH—  
THEY WERE THE BEGINNING  
OF YOUR RISE.**



# THE DOOR WAS THERE ALL ALONE

BY J.G

How did I get here?  
If I'm honest, I didn't fall all at once.  
It was slow... deliberate.  
A thousand small decisions dressed up as survival  
that quietly turned into chains.  
My addiction didn't just trap me—  
it closed doors.

One by one.  
Opportunities, relationships,  
**pieces of myself... gone.**  
And every time one shut, the voices  
in my head got louder.  
Telling me I wasn't enough.  
Telling me this was all I'd ever be.  
Eventually, I stopped arguing with myself...  
and started believing them.  
The day-to-day life of using wore me down.



Every decision revolved around it.  
Every consequence stacked up.  
And before I knew it, those choices turned into  
three years of my life behind bars.

***Prison isn't something you romanticize when you've lived it.  
It takes everything.***

Your freedom. Your identity. Your sense of control.  
It stripped me down to nothing.  
Cold floors.  
Concrete walls that don't care about your excuses.  
Silence... until your own thoughts get so loud  
you can't escape them.  
And there I was—

**with nothing left to hide behind.**

Being sober inside wasn't the same as being free.  
I wasn't using... but I wasn't living either.  
So I started doing something different.

I read.

I wrote.

I explored my own mind, trying to understand  
what got me there in the first place.

It kept me occupied...

but the voices were still there.

Louder some days than others.

Still telling me I wasn't enough.

And then something shifted.

I started going to meetings,

attending self-help groups.

Not just showing up—actually listening.

Actually trying.

That's when it hit me:

I didn't just need to stop using.

I needed to understand what

I was running from.

Working the 12 steps.

Finding a sponsor I could trust.

Facing things I spent years avoiding.

That's where the real work started.

And it was brutal.

**Thinking about my daughter . . .  
my mom . . .  
my family I left behind—  
it sat on my chest like I couldn't breathe.**



Like I was underwater and couldn't come up.  
It was the hardest thing I've ever done.  
But somewhere in all of that...  
I started to see it.  
Not just a crack in the ceiling—  
but a door.

It had been there the whole time.  
I just couldn't see it  
because I was too busy chasing something  
that was never meant to save me.

And those voices?  
They weren't truth.  
They were the thing keeping me trapped.  
That's the thing about darkness—  
it isn't always a prison.



Sometimes it's just a room  
you haven't learned  
how to leave yet.  
Recovery didn't come like  
a lightning strike.  
It came quiet.

Like a whisper I almost ignored:  
**"Stop fighting everything.  
Surrender."**  
And for the first time in my life...  
I did.

**Not in defeat—  
but in surrender.  
I gave it to God,  
because I finally understood.**

I was never meant to carry it alone.  
And something shifted.  
Not instantly.  
Not perfectly.  
But steadily.  
Step by step,  
I started turning toward the door.  
Learning how to walk again  
without leaning on the very thing  
that was killing me.  
And somewhere along the way...  
the light changed.  
It wasn't above me anymore.  
It was in front of me.  
The door wasn't just an exit—  
it was a way out of my own head.  
A way back to myself.  
To the man I was always meant to be.

**Today, I walk through  
that door with  
182 days sober.**

The voices that used to tear me down?  
They don't control me anymore.  
Now I've got something stronger—  
truth, recovery, and a foundation  
I'm building every day.  
Working the program.



Taking the steps.  
Standing beside a sponsor.  
Doing the work—really doing it.  
That's what's building me now.  
I know how far I've come—  
from the bottom  
to where I stand today.  
And for the first time in a long time,  
I'm not stuck in yesterday.  
I'm not running from who I was.  
I'm walking forward—clear, present, awake—  
actually looking forward to tomorrow.

**Because now I know . . .  
The door was always there.  
I just had to become the man  
willing to walk through it.**

**INNER VOICES**

**STAFF**



***Welcome to Staff: Inner Voices***, a new space dedicated to the lived experiences behind our work. Here, we open the door to the personal stories of our team—reflections shaped **by challenge, growth, and recovery.**

We are deeply grateful to everyone who has contributed to this section, sharing their honesty and courage with us all.

This is also an ongoing invitation to our wider team: we welcome more voices, more stories, and more journeys that continue to inspire the way we understand and carry out our mission.

# EVERYONE

Hello

**Hello everyone.** Our Editor Violet Lozano has asked me to share a bit of myself in this auspicious Newsletter before I move to Arizona. I have always been a big fan of writing and I consider it an honor to have been asked, although This will most likely be longer than she anticipated.

Most of you know me and hopefully know that I absolutely love addicts & alcoholics and have a severe dislike for addiction, most of the time.

I mean, if it weren't for addiction I would not have the life I have today.



I am going to miss being here, interacting with all of you, groups and sessions and watching you learn and grow in your recovery, struggle and succeed and entertain the ego-serving notion that I have hopefully played some small part in your life of recovery.

For those who are taking the time to read this, thank you. Hopefully you will find something that will help you on your recovery journey. My story is much like yours, full of dire consequences due to some very drastic actions just to get high. We have all of us given up things most precious to us.

Things we swore we would never give up: self-respect, moral ideals, relationships of every type, dreams, hope, happiness, freedom and life, all for a few hours, minutes or even seconds of a lie, until we are left with nothing and still find that we will continue because addiction owns us, and it will continue to control us until it kills us dead, forever. Or for as long as we allow it to.

Most of us here have had some real breakthroughs in early recovery and managed to get a few months clean, only to relapse again and again, and this would discourage anyone, frustrating. Yet here you are, still trying, and trying to figure out the whys, what happened,

## **what's next?**

**You are why, you are what happened and you are what's next. You get to decide all of these things through the choices you make, this is my truth as well. We are never free from the consequences of our choices.**

**For me, it took years of trial and error, experimentation on new ideas and methods of what to do and not do, and in the end I discovered that none of it was new. We have all tried them before for centuries, and I ended up just like them, defeated, still broken, humbled through self-humiliation and only one place to turn for help.**

One of the most important lessons I have learned is that I need help. All of my inner strength, independence, self-sufficiency and intellect were no where near enough to keep me clean, in fact, they only helped keep me loaded.

This was when I truly began to recover. I actually started to listen what others were trying for years to get me to hear without trying to find some flaw, some loophole in their logic to justify not doing what they suggested just because I didn't like it.

Yes I still stumbled and fell and obviously got back up and tried again, and tomorrow I will try again if I am fortunate enough to wake up. I have **over 32 years being clean/sober and it has taken all of that time to get another day, which, in early recovery**, I though would be impossible, I have never been so proud to be proven wrong.

To those still reading this, know that you can do this thing called life without getting high. Rely on your Higher Power, support people and yourself as much as you can, trust the process and whatever path you choose for your life and recovery and if you are thorough it can work for you. The support of this community truly blows my mind. **Common Goals, Probation, Parole, CPS and NCBH** all have a vested interest in seeing you succeed, take advantage of them.

Hell, even the UPS driver has said **"I'm really glad you guys are here."**

As for me, **well I've drank and used for 27 years**, tried a lot of different drugs, meth, alcohol, hallucinogens, inhalants, heroin and assorted unknown pills, homeless for 17+ years, been to jail a lot, prison, beaten, stabbed, shot and even drank myself to death once.

So much more I have been through, and yet I am still here. I could have stayed dead, should have been sentenced to die in prison, instead, I have found a purpose for my life which gives my life meaning to me.

A chance to help others as others have helped me, which is a tenant for recovery. My life is finally mine and I am free to do with it what I choose, which is be as positive an influence for others as I can be

# **I AM FREE.**

**BY JEFFREY JOHNSON, SUDCC II**

**I REMEMBER**

**T H A T**  
**APARTMENT**





I REMEMBER THAT APARTMENT  
NOT PERFECT, NOT QUIET,  
BUT FINALLY MINE AND THEIRS.

FOUR YEARS OF NOWHERE  
STILL CLUNG TO ME,  
AND A YEAR OF TRYING  
TO STAY CLEAN  
LEFT MY HANDS A LITTLE UNSTEADY.

BUT THERE THEY WERE  
MY KIDS AT THE TABLE,  
EATING, LAUGHING,  
LIKE SAFETY WAS SOMETHING  
WE WERE LEARNING TOGETHER.

I PAINTED FLOWERS THAT DAY,  
TOO BRIGHT, MAYBE,  
AND BEHIND THEM  
A STORMY SKY  
THAT FELT MORE LIKE THE TRUTH.  
BECAUSE LIFE WASN'T EASY  
IT WAS NEW, UNFAMILIAR,  
HEAVY IN A DIFFERENT WAY.

A KEY IN MY POCKET,  
CUSTODY IN MY NAME,  
EVERYTHING I FOUGHT FOR  
SITTING RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME

I WAS LEARNING HOW TO BREATHE  
IN A LIFE THAT DIDN'T FEEL  
FULLY MINE YET.

BRUSH IN HAND,  
WATCHING MY KIDS AT THAT TABLE,  
UNDER A ROOF THAT HELD  
PAINTING FLOWERS  
IN FRONT OF A STORM,  
AND CALLING IT  
A BEGINNING.



BY SHARAL KRZYZOPOLSKI,  
SUCC.

# THE PHOENIX:

## A LEGEND OF MEMORY AND FIRE

At the edge of the Egyptian desert near the Nile Valley lived an ancient Phoenix. It was never truly immortal, as the legends said—it was a creature of cycles: burning, falling, and rising again. But there was something no one ever told: between each rebirth, the Phoenix never remembered who it was.

One day, after yet another fire, it did not rise. The ashes held it longer than usual. And for the first time, silence did not feel like rest—it felt like weight.

The Phoenix began to understand: the fire did not only consume its body, it consumed its memory, its will, its identity. It was a loop—burn, forget, repeat.

And in the quiet ruin of itself, it saw the truth. It was not the flames that defined it, but the choice to stop returning to them. Rebirth did not come like lightning. It came slowly, painfully, imperfectly. Each pull toward the fire felt familiar—like an old voice whispering,

**“JUST ONCE MORE.”**





But this time, it did not obey.  
Instead, it stayed in the ashes. It felt the craving  
without acting on it. It breathed through the  
emptiness. And little by little, it built new  
wings—not of fire, but of choice.  
When it finally rose again, it was not brighter than  
before.

## IT WAS AWAKE.

Because it learned the most important truth:  
recovery is not about how many times you burn  
and return—it is about learning not to choose the  
fire that destroys you.  
And in that moment, the cycle broke.

# LEAVE A PIECE



OF YOUR STORY

# IN THIS SPACE

A MEMORY, A FEELING, OR A DREAM. WHEN YOU FINISH, YOU MAY BRING IT TO  
COMMON GOALS ( 256 BUENA VISTA ST, SUITE 100 GRASS VALLEY, CA. ) OR KEEP IT AS  
A REMINDER OF YOUR OWN STRENGTH AND JOURNEY.

# HOW DID IT



**ALL BEGIN?**

# REFERRALS

## RECOVERY

- **Common Purpose/  
Common Goals Inc.**  
(530) 274-2000  
256 Buena Vista St. STE 100  
Grass Valley, CA
- **Nevada County Behavioral Health**  
(530) 2651437  
500 Crown Point Cir, Grass Valley, CA  
95945
- **Aegis Methadone Clinic**  
(530) 280-0553  
109 Margaret Ln,  
Grass Valley, CA 95945
- **Pathways-Addiction  
Treatment**  
Center (Yuba City)  
(530) 674-4530
- **Buddy's Ranch (Yuba City)**  
(530) 684-4015  
737 Lask Dr,  
Yuba City, CA 95991
- **Yuba Harm Reduction Collective**  
(530) 362-8163  
<https://yubaharmreduction.com/>  
-Outreach  
-Supplies  
-Sharps collection  
-Low barrier MAT services  
-Delivery of fentanyl test strips  
& Narcan
- **Faith Fueled Recovery**  
(530) 368-4169  
1864 Ridge Rd.  
Grass Valley, CA 95949
- **Spirit House Peer  
Empowerment Center**  
(530) 274-1431  
276 Gates Pl,  
Grass Valley, CA 95945
- **Project H.E.A.R.T**  
(530) 446-6025  
522 Brunswick Rd.  
Grass Valley, CA 95945
- **Narcotic's Anonymous**  
(530) 645-1635  
<https://www.sfana.org/meeting>
- **Alcoholics Anonymous**  
(530) 272-6287  
<https://dist20aa.org/>
- **Turning Point  
Community Programs**  
(530) 273-5440  
333 Crown Point Cir #125,  
Grass Valley, CA 95945
- **Truckee Adult  
& Children's Services**  
(530) 582-7803  
10075 Levon Avenue,  
Suite 204 Truckee, CA 96161
- **Community Connection Center  
- Grass Valley School District**  
530-273-9528 x 4081  
235 S Auburn St.  
Grass Valley, CA 95945
- **Bright Futures for Youth**  
(530) 265-4311  
200 Litton Dr suite 308,  
Grass Valley, CA 95945
- **211 Connecting Point**  
(530) 280-0553  
109 Margaret Ln,  
Grass Valley, CA 95945
- **Crisis Services**  
\*24-hour services to help  
resolve crisis situations  
1-888-801-1437 or (530) 265-5811
- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**  
<https://988lifeline.org/>



256 Buena Vista St. STE 100  
Grass Valley, CA  
(530) 274-2000



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for their professionalism, dedication, and support.**



To visit the Common Goals website  
and view the magazine online,  
**scan this QR code.**



"ASHES ARE THE EVIDENCE OF THE BATTLE;  
REBIRTH IS THE PROOF OF VICTORY"

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