

COVENANT

THE SOUTHDOWN INSTITUTE | VOLUME 34 | NUMBER 2 | FALL/WINTER 2018

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Will You Support Me?

Points of Consideration for Successful Re-entry

FROM MY DESK TO YOURS

MAY
9
2019

Annual Benefit Dinner

COLUMBUS EVENT CENTRE
(SALA CABOTO BALLROOM)
40 PLAYFAIR AVENUE,
TORONTO, ON M6B 2P9

Guest of Honour:

Most Rev. Daniel J. Miehms, D.D.
Bishop of Peterborough

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Will You Support Me?

By Connie Dupuis, CSJ, RSSW



Will you support me? A question posed with great courage and in all humility! During times of difficulty and pain have you reached out and asked this question to the caring one standing near?

Individuals face this imperative query as they move through treatment and develop plans for their continued care in their own communities.

As a backdrop for my reflection on the theme of support, I would like to borrow excerpts from the poem, *Reasons, Seasons, Lifetime* (unknown author):

"Some people come into your life for a SEASON because your turn has come to share grow or learn. They bring you an experience of peace or make you laugh. They may teach you something you have never done. They usually give you an unbelievable amount of joy. Believe it. It is real. But only for a season."

As seasons come and go, this is true of those who enter our lives along the way on the journey. Seasons are time-limited. Often, our relationships mirror this. Our teachers, our spiritual mentors, wise sages and role models, leadership teams or representatives, all come into our lives for a season—to educate, to provide expertise and insight. They teach us aspects of ourselves and our capabilities and giftedness, while at the same time they represent the voice of challenge honing our skill set so we become our best selves. But only for a season.

Often times the support person that has been chosen exemplifies these very honourable character traits. The gift of their abiding presence which goes beyond the aforementioned.

The thesaurus uses the following descriptors in relation to the meaning of support: "help, approval, aid, assist, backing, blessing, championship, comfort, encouragement, friendship, furtherance, loyalty, moral support, sustenance, protection." The dictionary defines the same in the following terms: "to pair or hold up, serve as the foundation for, to sustain or withstand without giving way, to uphold by aid, countenance, back, to maintain or advocate, to collaborate." (Source: dictionary.com)

"When someone is in your life for a REASON, it is usually to meet a need you have expressed. They have come to assist you through a difficulty; to provide you with guidance and support; to aid you physically, emotionally or spiritually. They may seem like a godsend, and they are."

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JANUARY
27-31
2019

Responding to the Call: The Gift of Community

**REDEMPTORIST
RENEWAL CENTER
TUCSON (AZ)**

Religious leaders and emerging leaders from their communities are invited to participate in a retreat-style conference which will include input and reflection time on living a joyful, healthy and resilient life as a member of a religious community.

This conference is open to members of Conference of Major Superiors of Men and Canadian Religious Conference, and emerging leaders.

Sponsored by
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Cont'd from previous page

We have all had the experience of requiring support for a particular reason. Some reasons can include relocation, career or ministry change, seeking help and guidance when a significant relationship has ended because of death, a parting of ways between best friends, interpersonal conflicts between members of a community and/or leadership representatives, or family estrangements and sibling rivalries. As a result, we may have experienced physical health limitations or diminishment, emotional instability or spiritual bankruptcy. We have found ourselves at a crossroads and sought moral support, guidance, and direction for a particular reason.

In continuing my reflection, I am struck by how immensely profound it is for one to contemplate their "yes" to this request for support.

Individuals may have a variety of reasons for needing a residential treatment. A key component in their transitioning process and continued success is the element of support. Individuals are encouraged to identify a primary support person who will lend moral support, comfort, assistance, collaboration, and advocacy. Likewise, the person of choice will also stand as a beacon of challenge and affirmation, concern and loyalty. Their presence is that of a trustworthy confidant, able to speak the truth, especially when the truth is difficult to hear or accept. This requires rigorous honesty and fortitude; strength and confidence, with an ability to be objectively insightful. They say that the most loving action is often the most difficult.

"LIFETIME relationships teach you lifetime lessons; things you must build upon in order to have a solid emotional foundation. Your job is to accept the lesson, love the person, and put what you have learned to use in all other relationships and areas of your life. It is said that love is blind but friendship is clairvoyant."

Formally, the role of the support person is to meet with the individual on a regular basis to talk about their re-entry successes and challenges. The support person will offer feedback and affirmation, as well as challenge if the individual is showing signs of a lack of commitment to their Continuing Care Plan or regressing back to maladaptive and familiar ways of coping or managing difficult situations. In addition, the support person will offer helpful feedback to the clinical staff who are involved as the former resident returns for the Connections workshops.

In conclusion, we acknowledge the courage of the one who asks the question: "Will you support me?" And we cannot help but honour and celebrate the one who says "yes" to walking beside them, whether that duration is a REASON, SEASON, OR LIFETIME. Support is an essential ingredient to any healing experience. Without it, we run the risk of believing that we can be "islands unto ourselves." Who, then is it that you will let into your sacred territory? ■

Points of Consideration for Successful Re-entry

By Michael Sy, PhD



Recovery continues when someone returns home after completing the residential program. Over the years, several critical factors have been identified that need to be kept in mind in this process of re-entry into the community or diocesan life.

The Continuing Care Plan is usually developed before the end of the residency. While every effort is made to share this plan with leadership and support persons, its practical application can in some instances only be determined when someone returns home. Arrangements that were not addressed at the time of discharge need to be finalized; up-to-date information needs to be shared, and continuity of care should be coordinated once again.

There can be some changes in leadership or the designated support persons that can occur during that time. Timely notification of these changes, and continuity of information transferred are helpful in maintaining a smooth transition. This includes the completion of the necessary release of information forms with new leadership or support person.

Recommendations for continuous medical attention, counselling, spiritual direction and Twelve-step work need to be followed up as well. When recommended, they form an integral part of the Continuing Care Plan and are significant to the quality and success of recovery. Any changes need to be shared with all parties involved in the Continuing Care Plan. Particular attention needs to be paid to modifications in medication, which can have an effect on emotions, cognitions, and behaviours that can be challenging to correct. Resumption of the same prescription can in some instances not work immediately and may result in having to find an alternative, which takes time to take effect. In the interim, other factors such as personality disorders, impulsivity, and poor judgment may surface, needing additional attention.

Returning home poses many emotional challenges. The most frequently described concern is how one will be received upon return. Individuals oftentimes feel anxious about what is expected of them or how they are remembered by their community, parish, or diocese. Residential treatment results in insights, changes in self-image, and ministerial plans. Individuals frequently worry if they will be understood or accepted.

Every so often, questions arise about how best to share or discuss the experiences and the results of treatment with members of the community. The process begins long before the individual returns home when leadership is updated on how a resident is faring the program. It is essential to be mindful that these updates are also opportunities to bring forward concerns or limitations that need to be considered in planning for future ministry and/or placement. Things come together shortly before departure when a discharge planning meeting occurs. It is at this time that plans and recommendations are discussed and settled. The changes, gains, and insights the individual has realized are listed in the form of a Covenant. All elements of what is needed to sustain treatment accomplishments are also presented. A final letter is written and shared with the leadership which includes a description of as a resident's course of treatment in more detail.

Individuals oftentimes feel anxious about what is expected of them or how they are remembered by their community, parish, or diocese.

The way information is shared with others varies and needs to be discussed. It matters if one is returning to where they were before treatment or if one is starting off in a new placement and/or ministry. The sharing can take a form of a meeting with the community or through a direct communication. The process might need facilitation in some instances.

The Continuing Care Program has two dimensions. The Connections component that consists of a return to Southdown three times for group and individual sessions as well as a conversation with leadership. As to when this begins and the intervals involved are discussed and determined as one gets closer to departure. The second dimension is the duration of time to when someone remains within the scope of Continuing Care. This can extend up to five years after completion of the residential program and includes the time for the Connections workshop. Contact with leadership is continued and support is available.

Returning home is an active and integrated process that begins during residence and comes into its own after one finishes the program. The goal is for the healing and growth to continue. Mindfully tended, the various issues discussed are important considerations to ensure a successful outcome. ■

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to watch the newly released videos with Sr. Elaine Dombi, SSJ, Addictions Counsellor, Southdown. Sr. Elaine speaks about stages of addiction and recovery in three brief videos.



FROM MY DESK TO YOURS:

Fall colours are beginning to appear in the Northern Hemisphere. It is time for some countries to celebrate Thanksgiving. We are grateful for the graces bestowed upon us this year and look forward to the winter season when nature takes a rest in anticipation of renewing itself for springtime. For our Southern Hemisphere readers, your winter has given birth to the beauty and joy of fresh beginnings and new life. The seasons always remind me of gifts for healthy living. Each season brings renewal and a fresh vision of each gift.

I was reminded of one of these gifts upon reading an article recently. It spoke of the importance of "Vitamin F." Have you heard of vitamin F and its marvellous attributes? "Vitamin F" is Friends. Friends are critical for our mental health. Research tells us that those who have friends experience higher levels of joy, well-being, resilience and happiness. Ministers who thrive have close friends with whom they share laughter, concerns, sadness and joy. Research also indicates lower levels of depression and anxiety in individuals who report friendships.

We all suffer loneliness—it is part of our human condition. Friends assist us in navigating those experiences in life. Friends help us with stress management. Balancing life as a minister is challenging. It is easier to accomplish this when we have someone with whom we look forward to confiding our hopes, dreams, successes and failures. There is a higher survival rate when dealing with life-threatening illness as well as evidence of a stronger, more resilient immune system improving longevity in those who report strong friendship.

As you note in our articles this season, having a support person after residency is critical in consolidating the learnings acquired during the 14-weeks at Southdown. This person commits to walking with another—challenging, supporting, and encouraging. It is someone that is trusted to have his or her best interest and who truly cares for the individual. Friends boast our emotional world, call us inward to prayer, strengthen our sense of peace and contentment, invite us to reflect on our self-truths, improve our self-awareness and self-acceptance, and ensure our overall sense of well-being. So, have you had your "Vitamin F" for today?

"It is the hand we go on holding in our hearts at the end that defines the kind of life we have led." (unknown author)

May your season be filled with a heart of gratitude, new energy, and deep friendships.

Peace and all Good,

Dorothy Heiderscheit, OSF, MSW, ACSW, RSW
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Covenant is produced and published by The Southdown Institute. Its purpose is to inform and educate the readership about clinical issues that surface in our work and to invite integration of the emotional and spiritual aspects of our lives.