



Courage to Change

Enhancing Lifelong Recovery and Personal Growth



The world we live in has much that is good and much that is bad. Each day we can seek out the positive or the negative. If we choose to dwell on the negative, then that is what we will experience. But if we dwell on the positive, then that is more likely what we will experience.

The choice today is ours. We are the only ones who have the power to change how we look at the world.

How do I view the world today?

It is remarkable how things change when I decide to change the way I look at them.

--From *A Restful Mind* by Mark Allen Zabawa

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A Story of Hope



Joanna V. Hunter, author of *But He'll Change*, tells the story of how she broke free from an abusive relationship.

The moment our eyes met, it felt as if a bolt of lightning shot through me. He introduced himself and kissed my hand. For a young woman who had been a nobody in high school to have this attractive, intense guy focus on me was heady and wonderful. I was hooked ... I gladly turned over control of my life to him because it made him happy. He gladly accepted it. We became a couple. His passion and desire for justice captivated me. I saw his anger focused on others. I never thought it would come around and land on me.

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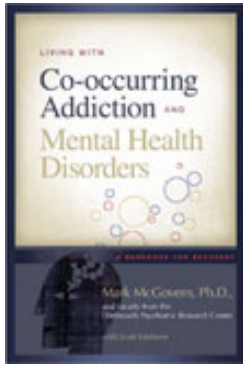
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Mark McGovern, Ph.D., offers tips for people in recovery who are trying to find their way in the world.

Finding a place in the world is not only an important element of recovery; it's part of

everyone's personal journey. Each of us must find our own answer to the question "How do I fit into the world?" and any satisfying answer must be simultaneously practical, psychological, spiritual, and existential.

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Spiritual Reflection

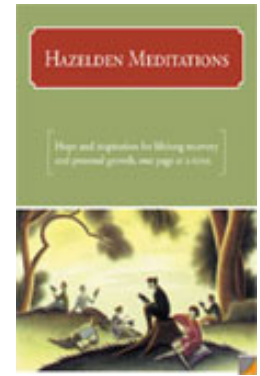


Janet M., a long-time member of AA, tells how cancer brought her to a new understanding of her Higher Power.

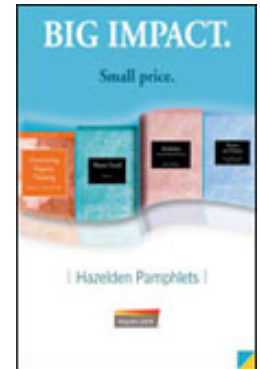
Just as I began making some real progress with my fear of intimacy

and abandonment, I found out that I had throat cancer. God really got my undivided attention with this! ... At first I was angry as hell at my Higher Power, but over the next two years my beliefs gradually changed.

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Joanna V. Hunter, author of *But He'll Change*, tells the story of how she broke free from an abusive relationship.

The moment our eyes met, it felt as if a bolt of lightning shot through me... He introduced himself and kissed my hand. For a young woman who had been a nobody in high school to have this attractive, intense guy focus on me was heady and wonderful. I was hooked...

... I gladly turned over control of my life to him because it made him happy. He gladly accepted it. We became a couple. His passion and desire for justice captivated me. I saw his anger focused on others. I never thought it would come around and land on me.

The first time he hit me was less than a year after we were married. He slapped me. I was stunned. Over the next few days, I convinced myself that it was a fluke and it wouldn't happen again. It did. During the fourth incident, he hit me so hard on the side of my head that he popped my eardrum...

After that incident, my mother's words came back to me: It is *never* okay for a man to hit a woman—never. On a calm evening, I sat beside my partner and said, "Look, I love you with all my heart. But if you continue to hit me, I will have to leave." He stood up and went into the bedroom, shutting the door. I could hear him crying... My people-pleasing heart said, "What have you done? You're a horrible person... Tell him you love him. Tell him you'll never leave—no matter what." My gut shouted, "Shut up. Don't retract the statement." I didn't take back the ultimatum. I set a boundary that day...

After that evening, he did abstain from hitting me; the physical violence in our relationship was limited to him shoving, grabbing, and pinning me up against the wall with his arm across my throat. He ratcheted up the emotional abuse...

He used *constant criticism and name-calling*, telling me that I was a stupid, worthless woman who couldn't do anything right, repeatedly...

Those who know my story often ask why I stayed. First, I stayed because I truly loved him. Then, because I had sympathy for him; I knew he had pain in his life, and I wanted to save him. Also, we had children and I thought I was a stupid, worthless woman who couldn't do anything right. How was I going to take care of my children on my own? Besides, he told me if I tried to leave, he'd take the children from me and I'd never see them again. I was brainwashed to the point where I believed he could. Then I stayed because he had a .357 Magnum—a big gun. He never threatened me with it, but I knew it was there, loaded in his desk drawer...

There are as many different "final straws" as there are victims. For me it was when he began to turn the violence on our children. Often women can do what seems the impossible when their children are at risk. He'd hacked off my love for him with each violent, disrespectful act toward me--and then the children.

It came to a head at a Fourth of July party. We were staying with Robert and Jane in our old neighborhood. All our old friends from the block were there. I was listening to one of Robert's great stories. My partner came to the kitchen door. He said, "Come out and sit with me while I play cards."

I said, "Okay. As soon as Robert is finished with his story, I'll be out."

"No. You'll come now."

... My partner charged across the room and grabbed me by my arms. He pulled me up into his face and began screaming at me. The stunned neighbors watched in silence as he berated me... He shoved me toward the bedroom and told me to pack--we were leaving. I did what he said. One of my friends followed me to the bedroom and asked, "What is he doing? Is he really like this?" Shame burned my face...

While packing, I could hear Jane talking with him in the kitchen. He was yelling; she kept her voice calm. When I went to the kitchen door, they were nose to nose. He was screaming in her face. I was afraid he would hit her. He snatched the suitcase from me and walked out to the car. I didn't move. He returned and said, "Let's go." Everything around me went black. I saw myself standing in a dark room. The door was open. There was light out there, but it didn't shine into the blackness. A voice said, "If you don't leave now, the door will close and you will live in this darkness forever." I looked at my partner. For the first time in our life together, I told him no.

"I'm not going with you," I said.

His eyes narrowed. The purple-blue veins in his neck stood out, crimson spider-webbed across his face. He started batting around the chairs and hitting the table, bellowing threats. The other men at the party gathered around him and walked him to the vehicle . . .

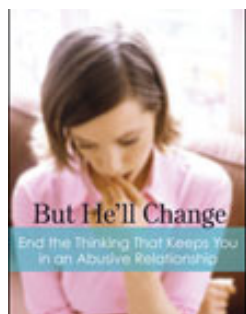
...The next day, I flew to my parents' home and contacted a lawyer. It was over. I was divorced within ninety days of filing. A couple months later, I realized I'd left him on Independence Day. God has a sense of humor.

When I left the relationship the mantra running through my head was, *Why couldn't he love me? What's so awful about me that he couldn't love me?* It took therapy to turn around that thinking and teach me that it wasn't me--it was him...

... I learned to take back my power without wielding it as a weapon or using it as a shield to protect me from pain, to express my needs, and to look at men not as the enemy, but as equals. I learned to be wise about protecting my children and me... As my self-respect grew, my abuser's power over me diminished . . .

... I rediscovered myself and found that I could provide for my children and myself... With the guidance of therapists, my children and I stumbled along, reconstructing our lives. We came out stronger and wiser. Our reward was living in a peaceful home that held no fear--one that allowed us to focus on our own lives instead of keeping one disgruntled member happy.

Excerpted from *But He'll Change*, by Joanna V. Hunter. Hunter is a popular speaker, volunteer, and trainer on domestic violence who works with victims and those who serve them.



[But He'll Change](#)

End the Thinking That Keeps You in an Abusive Relationship

Softcover, 222 pages

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Hunter addresses self-defeating messages that keep you in an abusive relationship and offers counter messages designed to help you build strength and hope.



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Mark McGovern, Ph.D., offers tips for people in recovery who are trying to find their way in the world.

Q. Since I got into recovery, I've had a hard time feeling comfortable around my friends and family. I used to be the life of the party, but that was when I was using. How do I get that feeling again without going back to my old habits?

A. Finding a place in the world is not only an important element of recovery; it's part of everyone's personal journey. Each of us must find our own answer to the question "How do I fit into the world?"--and any satisfying answer must be simultaneously practical, psychological, spiritual, and existential.

Many people with mental health and substance use disorders struggle with this question. In fact, some people drank and used drugs in hopes of feeling "at home" and more comfortable in the world. Of course, the more they drank and used, the less "at home" they felt and the more separated and lost they became. Some used to have a comfortable place in the world--but because of their disorders, everything fell apart, and now they need to rethink and remake their lives.

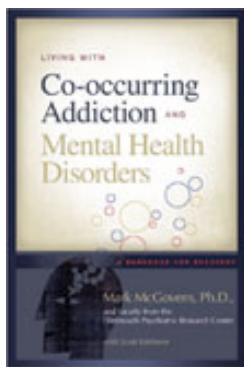
Other people with co-occurring disorders feel they've *never* had a place in the world. This very lack of security may even have contributed to their disorders. Yet now, in recovery, they sense that such a place may exist after all--or that they can create it.

Finding a place in the world involves trial and error, intuition and discernment, success and failure, love and effort. It requires us to draw on the skills we have learned and the knowledge we have gleaned--yet it also requires us to feel our way forward, step by step, one day at a time, into an unknown future that our recovery helps shape...

Here are some tips for people with co-occurring disorders who are attempting to find their way in the world...

- Much of what happens to us is outside of our control. So, instead of trying to control other people or the world, focus on those things you *can* control: your own actions and decisions. Remember the Serenity Prayer: "the courage to change the things I can." Practice acceptance.
- It's essential to set goals. The best goals are ones that you can achieve, but only with some effort and stretching.
- If what looked like a good goal turns out to be impossible, or too easy, or no longer helpful, replace it with a better one.
- Be flexible. It's important--and helpful--to make plans. But be willing to amend those plans if your situation changes--or if your original plans prove less than helpful.
- When you see trouble or danger is heading your way, don't freeze up. Get out of harm's way quickly, and if you need help, ask for it immediately. Have your sponsor's phone number handy. Or call a friend.
- Don't try to force solutions. Do your best; then let go of the outcome. "You're responsible for the effort not the outcome" and "Progress, not perfection," say many in Twelve Step groups.
- Take reasonable risks. Don't take unreasonable ones...
- Ask for help when you need it. This includes using your personal support network, but it also means asking people outside of that network for help as well. One common trait of successful people is that they regularly ask others for what they want or need. Practice asking for help on little things, so when the big things come, you'll find it easier to ask for help.
- Be patient. Rebuilding a life takes time. In fact, most good things take more time and effort than we want, hope, or expect them to.
- No one knows exactly how his or her life will unfold. No one has enough information to be a pessimist. Your life will be full of surprises, just like everyone else's. Each new surprise is an opportunity to learn and grow. Sometimes the best things happen for us when it seems like we didn't get what we wanted. (Some of the worst things may have happened for us when we *did* get what we wanted.)
- Life can only be lived in the present. Stay in the here and now, and deal with what's in front of you. Take things one day--and, when necessary, one hour--at a time.

Excerpted from *Living with Co-occurring Addiction and Mental Health Disorders* by Mark McGovern, Ph.D., and faculty from the Dartmouth Medical School, with Scott Edelstein. McGovern is an associate professor of Psychiatry and of Community and Family Medicine at Dartmouth Medical School. He is also one of the authors of the Hazelden Co-occurring Disorders Program.



[Living with Co-occurring Addiction and Mental Health Disorders](#)

Softcover, 200 pages
Item 2943

Informative, thorough, and easy to follow, *Living with Co-occurring Addiction and Mental Health Disorders* offers practical tools and steadfast advice to help millions of people with co-occurring disorders thrive and be their own best recovery advocates.

List Price: \$15.95
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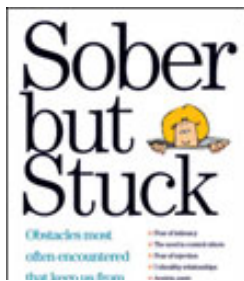
Janet M., a long-time member of AA, tells how cancer brought her to a new understanding of her Higher Power.

Just as I began making some real progress with my fear of intimacy and abandonment, I found out that I had throat cancer. God really got my undivided attention with this! My affliction also put a lot of things into clearer perspective. I learned in cancer psychotherapy that my life depended on my speaking up for myself and communicating my needs directly and honestly. I had to learn to express fear and tell other people what was happening with me, rather than push them away. I also had to let go of my need to control, as well as the opposite problem--my clinging, dependent behavior. This all involves an overwhelming effort when you are afraid for your life and trying to draw strength and support from others. I shared my cancer experience openly in my therapy group, and in my AA meetings. My future depended on my speaking up.

I had thought that my degree of faith was pretty solid until my cancer experience. At first I was angry as hell at my Higher Power, but over the next two years my beliefs gradually changed. I let go of the reward/punishment idea and worked the Eleventh Step to find God within me as well as outside me. I came to understand that my God wanted my best and highest good to be experienced and manifested. Through all my prayer, meditation, and belief in the Third Step, I became less needy and more reliant on my Higher Power.

When I had my cancer operation, I was full of fear. I recall thinking that when I was young I had no choice over who abandoned me, but now the only one who could really abandon me was me. I made a promise that day to do my best never to abandon myself again, never to hold on to a sick relationship or to use men to fill my abandoned space. After the episode with cancer, I fully recovered, physically and emotionally. I've discovered a much healthier way of relating to men. I'm now in a committed relationship and have a new career. In a way, I'm in a whole new life.

Excerpted from *Sober but Stuck: Obstacles Most Often Encountered That Keep Us from Growing in Recovery* by Dan F.



[Sober but Stuck](#)

Obstacles Most Often Encountered That Keep Us from Growing in Recovery
Softcover, 228] pages
Item 7648

Almost all recovering people "get stuck" at some point during their recovery. This book shares straight-from-the-heart, personal stories by men and women who are long-time members of Alcoholics Anonymous to help



readers get unstuck.

List Price: \$14.95
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