

# H&I Newsletter

## LA Hospitals and Institutions Newsletter

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January 2014

### Los Angeles H&I Committee:

**H&I Director**  
Andy V

**Director's Assistant**  
Claire W

**Director of Policy Council**  
Frank A

**Director, Correctional**  
Greg B

**Director, Hospitals**  
NoehB

**Panel Screening Chairpersons**  
Laura A and Mark S

**Treasurer**  
Fredrick J

**New Member Mentor/Information Booth**  
Matthew

**Can Person**  
Mark

**Signs**  
Tunde B

**Forms Chairperson**  
Devon

**Raffle**  
Piper G

**Coffee**  
David

**Literature Chairpersons**  
Kim J

**Webmaster**  
Needed

**Literature Fund Chairpersons**  
Needed

**Convention Booth**  
Gabriel

**Bridging the Gap**  
Johnathon

**LA Intergroup**  
Needed

**So Cal Rep**  
Needed

**Greeter/Smoking Police**  
Terry W

**Newsletter Publisher/Editor**  
Lizzy

## Emotional Sobriety

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By Ingrid Mathieu, Ph.D.

What is emotional sobriety? Some might think that it means being "happy, joyous, and free," a common adage in 12-Step meetings, taken from AA literature. Of course, people like this definition. It means that if they work a good program, they will achieve physical sobriety (abstinence) and become happy in the process. I hate to be the bearer of bad news but this definition puts a lot of recovering people in a tough spot. For example, what does it say about a person's emotional sobriety if they are having a hard time? What if they are afraid, anxious, sad, angry, confused ... the list can go on and on. Does this mean that they aren't emotionally sober? I believe that emotional sobriety is less about the quality of the feeling ("good" or "bad") and more about the general ability to feel one's feelings. Being restored to sanity isn't about getting the brass ring—or cash and prizes—or being "happy, joyous, and free" all the time, but it is about being in the present moment, whatever it happens to look like. What are you experiencing right now? And how about now? Can you be present to all of your feelings without any one of them defining you? Sometimes emotional sobriety is about tolerating what you are feeling. It is about staying sober no matter what you are feeling. It means that you don't have to blame yourself or your program because life can be challenging. It means that you don't necessarily need to *do something* to make the feeling go away. Many people will take their bad feeling and try to pray it, meditate it, service it, spiritually distract themselves from it, thinking that this means they are working a good program. This experience is actually called spiritual bypass.

John Welwood coined the term spiritual bypass and defined it as "using spiritual ideas and practices to sidestep personal, emotional 'un-finished business,' to shore up a shaky sense of self, or to belittle basic needs, feelings, and developmental tasks, all in the name of enlightenment." The shorthand for spiritual bypass is when a person wears a mask or presents a false spiritual self that represses aspects of that person's true self. Spiritual bypass involves bolstering our defenses rather than our humility. Bypass involves grasping rather than gratitude, arriving rather than being, avoiding rather than accepting. I am forever interested in how mind, body, and spirit interact for people in recovery and how the "ism" (alcoholism) is always trying to steal the show. "Ism" doesn't want you to acknowledge that you are scared, ashamed, lost, or angry. (Continued on Page 3)

## ***Letter from the Director of H & I***

The holidays are over and I'm excited about the New Year. I have been blessed with a wonderful responsibility - that of Director of Los Angeles Hospitals and Institutions. I am so grateful to my teachers - specifically Kurt F., Jeff L., Laura A., Miki, Meryl and Frank for showing me how to do what we do each month. I am also indebted to everyone who has taken on a new commitment this year. I wanted to mention a few of you at this time: Lizzy is our new Newsletter Director. Claire W. is the new Assistant to the Director. Congratulations to Noeh C., our new Director of Hospitals and big thanks to Greg, who is in the director of jails position for another year. Piper is our new raffle caller. Kim J. has taken over as Literature Chief. For all other commitments, please refer to the front of the newsletter. It takes a lot of work to keep H&I running as smoothly as it does.

Thank you for attending each month and signing up for panels. Your service is so important to those of us that cannot get to outside meetings. Your stories and experience saves lives. This type of service can be the deciding factor for a sick alcoholic that needs to hear your message. For this I thank you for allowing me to be a small conduit of the tremendous power that is Los Angeles Hospitals and Institutions.

We want to hear from you, dear reader. If you have a story or article that you feel should be in this monthly newsletter, please send it to us. If you have questions or comments, please contact me. Let's make 2014 a year filled with service and love for all!!

***Andy V.***  
Director, H&I

### **Does your meeting have an H&I can?**

Help get literature to AA's who are locked up and cannot get to meetings. Bring a can to your regular meeting and take up a collection. The money you collect pays for AA literature handed out on panels. Ask for an H&I LABEL at the "Cans" table at H&I. Your meeting can donate a portion of its 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition, or members can make personal donations. However you choose to participate, donations are gratefully appreciated. Thank you!

### **Central Office Needs You!**

A great way to be of service and enhance your sobriety. You can come and train any time to be a phone volunteer. Of more information, just come in or call (323) 936-4343 any time

*Continued from page 1 (Emotional)*

In my own spiritual journey, I have experienced spiritual bypass many times. As a defense mechanism, we are all susceptible to this unconscious drive to protect ourselves from our painful realities. And using spirituality as a defense certainly looks a lot better than using drugs or alcohol. But it is a defense mechanism nonetheless and most people in recovery want the ability to access all of their feelings, because being present to what is real is what enables choices, and choices propel people towards their most authentic and fulfilling sober life. I have spent a great deal of time studying and researching the experience of spiritual bypass in 12-Step recovery. I've written a book called *Recovering Spirituality: Achieving Emotional Sobriety in Your Spiritual Practice* that goes into great depth on this topic. Every person in recovery who I have interviewed or worked with in my psychotherapy practice has gained tremendous insight by looking at their own experiences of spiritual bypass and I hope that you will gain similar results. If nothing else, give yourself permission to feel all of your feelings. Know that we don't have the sort of surgical precision to only feel the feelings that we enjoy. Happiness might be sitting right next to regret, joy might be right next to overwhelmed. That is just the human condition. And experiencing all of our feelings is true emotional sobriety.

Ingrid Mathieu, Ph.D. is a clinical psychologist and author of [\*Recovering Spirituality: Achieving Emotional Sobriety in Your Spiritual Practice\*](#).

Follow her on [Facebook](#) for daily inspiration on achieving emotional sobriety. Watch her short [videos](#) or visit her website at [www.IngridMathieu.com](http://www.IngridMathieu.com)

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/emotional-sobriety/201107/what-is-emotional-sobriety>

## 2014 Calendar of Events

Jan 13 <sup>th</sup> , 2014	Los Angeles Monthly H&I Business Meeting
Feb 10, 2014	Los Angeles Monthly H&I Business Meeting
March 10, 2014	Los Angeles Monthly H&I Business Meeting
Apr 3-6, 2014	All California Young People in AA Round up <a href="http://2014.acypaa.org/"><u>http://2014.acypaa.org/</u></a>
Apr 14, 2014	Los Angeles Monthly H&I Business Meeting
May 12, 2014	Los Angeles Monthly H&I Business Meeting
May 23-26, 2014	LA AALA Roundup <a href="http://www.aalaroundup.org/"><u>http://www.aalaroundup.org/</u></a>
June 9, 2014	Los Angeles Monthly H&I Business Meeting
July 4-7, 2014	South Bay Roundup <a href="http://www.southbayroundup.org/event/list"><u>http://www.southbayroundup.org/event/list</u></a>
July 7, 2014	Los Angeles Monthly H&I Business Meeting
Aug 11, 2014	Los Angeles Monthly H&I Business Meeting
Sept 26-28, 2014	Annual Southern California A.A. Convention <a href="http://www.aasocal.com/events.asp"><u>http://www.aasocal.com/events.asp</u></a>

## ***Greetings from the Corrections Side***

The following is a recap of 2013 Alcoholics Anonymous jail panels for Twin Towers, Men's Central Jail, CRDF, and Wayside. It has been a tremendous year of growth and opportunity for AA within the LA County Jail System.

In 2013, we added 65 new jail panels and lost 15 due to closures or movement. We have increased the amount of panels by 50 in 2013 which represents an approximate increase of 27%. Our total is now 231 jail panels. Amazing! We have also added 113 new jail clearance members and have another 33 applications pending which brings us to 326 active jail clearance members with over 30 new members about to be added. We will continue this grow into 2014.

In addition to starting new panels in 2014, we are also working closely with EBI (Education Based Incarceration) to help the inmates start their own daily AA panels. H&I will supply the meeting format, literature, and any support they need to keep the meeting running. These meetings will be run by the inmates and will allow them to participate in daily recovery. Twin Towers pod 252 Merit (female inmates) was the first to start a daily AA panel with our help several weeks ago. We are also working with other pods at Twin Towers and have a meeting set up with CRDF. This is very exciting.

It was a really amazing year for H&I inside the LA County Jails. I look forward to a year of growth in 2014 as well.

Thank you so much for your service.  
Sincerely,

***Greg Baldwin***  
Director, Corrections

### **Hello Hospitals and Institutions!**

I am Lizzy, your incoming Newsletter person. I am excited for this opportunity and would love some input from you. Each month, we would like to pose a quote from the book Alcoholics Anonymous to H & I Newsletter readers. We have created an email address and would love to hear from you for February 2014's Newsletter. It gives us a chance to think about portions of the book Alcoholics Anonymous, our own personal recovery, and read about the experience of other "Trudgers" along this path of recovery and spirituality. We are trying it out this month and will see how it goes. Any feedback would be greatly appreciated! The email address to respond to is: [hnnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:hnnewsletter@gmail.com). Please contact me with any questions, concerns, article submissions, or feedback – as well as with the response to the following February 2014 quote from the book Alcoholics Anonymous:

#### **\*\*\*February's 2014 Quote**

***"I was not too well at the time, and was plagued by waves of self-pity and resentment. This sometimes nearly drove me drink, but I soon found that when all other measures failed, work with another alcoholic would save the day. Many times I have gone to my old hospital in despair. On talking to a man there, I would be amazingly lifted up and set on my feet. It is a design for living that works in rough going."***

– From Bill's Story, page 15 of the book Alcoholics Anonymous

## ***January 2014 Quote Responses:***

***"...either God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is, or He isn't. What was our choice to be?"***

Page 53, of the book Alcoholics Anonymous

"Personally, I believe that as addicts we tend to struggle with all or nothing thinking. Day to day I struggle with the idea that everything is either perfect or a disaster, I'm either joyous or I'm miserable. This kind of thinking is exhausting and self-defeating. I would therefore be wary of a statement that perpetuates the idea of anything as ALL or NOTHING. When I came to this program as a newcomer, God was such a foreign concept to me that I became fearful that I was incapable of really "getting" AA sobriety. Feeling like I had permission to open my heart to God slowly and gently was one of the things that kept me coming back early on. Now that I have come to believe and accept and seek, the idea of "God being everything and everywhere" gives me comfort and hope. However, I am a strong supporter of allowing those who are new to the concept of God, and are filled with fear and doubt, the time and the freedom to let God in in their own way. Doing this also allowed me to feel I was having a real, honest experience. As opposed to pretending to believe for the sake of appeasing others, or fitting in. I still don't know that I see God in EVERYTHING. But a growing faith that God IS present, and that God can and will be there to love and guide me IF I SEEK HIM, is enormous progress for me. And my gratitude continues to grow." –Abby

"Of course it is better, in my opinion, to have a strong faith in a sponsor than a weak faith in a higher power. While our experience of walking the path, and being of service, without expectation of being compensated...in essence "doing the right thing", starts to net us the benefits which are unfathomable when we're living on the hamster wheel of addiction and self-serving behavior. Once these actions become automatic, proof of the existence of "source energy" connecting us all is realized as the quality of our lives and those around us markedly improves. We are rewarded for doing the right thing and living in love and service. Without a cathartic experience, we are unable or unwilling to believe in the possibility." - David

"For me, in sobriety, God must be the center of all because God is the core of me and of you. God IS all. God is IN all. God is the piece of you that understands the piece of me - that beautiful, tender, truth that connects all of us and all of creation. In sobriety, when I ignore or distrust or curse God, I am hurting myself and you. As alcoholics in recovery, we commit to life. We commit to ourselves and to one another to live a life where God is the center - where we honor that God inside of us. The day I ignore that God, that light, life and truth within, is one day closer to a drink. A drink, for me, is death. So yes, God is everything." – Jane A.

"The great thing about this is that it can applied to anything on any given day...it is so versatile. For example, if things are going great, it's because of God (ie Program stuff). If things are shitty, I better turn it over to God b/c he is everything and that helps get me out of self will (self will usually makes a shitty situation shittier). This phrase keeps me out of self no matter what the situation!" – Patrick

"That line has always had me wondering. I don't believe in a god that does and doesn't do things. I believe in a loving force at the heart of every being that connects everyone and everything. I also believe that with our limited brain use we have no comprehension of why things happen. I don't believe god wants us hurting others but I believe in karma and past lives so what we reap we sow. I think my challenge is to see the loving or opportunity in every situation or person around me so that's basically what I take away from that quote." – Laura

"I have to admit to disagreeing with the idea that God is everything or God is nothing. Although I often find that these arguments come down to semantics and not deep spiritual differences. For me God is the thing that can get me through everything. When I think God is everything, it leads my critical brain to think God is rape and murder and genocide and countless other atrocities and tragedies. For me, I believe that God is the love and power that gets me through all of life's challenges. God is the power that keeps the human spirit alive in the face of struggle and fear. And of course, God is the love and goodness I celebrate with when life is wonderful. When things are beautiful and kind and loving. So for me, no, God is not everything, but God is the peer to stay sober and possibly serene through absolutely everything." - A

# We need your HELP!

## **Become a Member of H & I**

The Los Angeles Hospitals & Institutions Committee organizes over 500 panels of AAs each month to carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous to those confined in hospitals and institutions. It's easy to become a member of H&I! Just come to the monthly H&I meeting, and sign up to speak on a panel. There are many opportunities for service, including panel leader and chairperson positions. See Frank D. for details.

To speak on hospital/recovery home panels, six months of continuous sobriety is suggested. For correctional facilities, a year or more is required, and, depending on the facility, a background check and/or clearance is also required.

See Andy V., Director, Hospitals, for information on hospital panels, and Greg B., Director, Correctional, to apply for jail clearance.

**H&I Monthly Business Meeting:**  
**2nd Monday of each month:**  
**Veterans Memorial Complex**  
**4153 Overland Ave. @ Culver Blvd.**  
**Culver City, CA 90230**

Orientation for new members: 7:30pm  
General Business Meeting: 8-9pm

Check out the Online Newsletter at: [www.lachic.org](http://www.lachic.org)  
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA H&I INTERGROUP: [www.schii.org](http://www.schii.org).