

# The New Dawn Eating Disorders Recovery Newsletter

Issue 3

March, 2010



## The New and Improved New Dawn!

*A Letter from our Clinical Director*

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Over the past few months there have been very exciting changes happening at New Dawn. We have a new and impressive staff, and the structure and philosophy of our program has transformed to provide better services and more treatment options for our clients. Some of the highlights of our **new Intensive Outpatient Program** are:

- 3 - 4 hours of service daily up to 6 days a week
- Weekly individual nutrition counseling
- 2 - 3 hours of weekly individual psychotherapy
- 1 hour of weekly family or couples therapy
- Client prepared meals
- A support and educational group for loved ones

Our new **Medically Supervised Day Treatment Program** offers 6 to 8 hours of treatment per day and includes the above mentioned services, two meals and two snacks per day, plus free housing at our Pacific Heights residence. A Psychiatric Evaluation and medication monitoring, as well as frequent vitals checks by our staff nurse will also be provided. Furthermore, we will be opening our **Residential Program** in the Pacific Heights

neighborhood of San Francisco in the next month. This 24-hour medically supervised home-like setting for women (ages 18 and older) who are seeking long-lasting recovery from their eating disorder is the **only residential eating disorders treatment program licensed by the California Department of Health** in Northern California, and we are proud to be able to offer it to individuals both locally and across the country.

### Our Nutritional Philosophy

The most striking change is with regard to our nutritional and psychological philosophies. Our Registered Dietitian, Shelly Starrett, has facilitated in the improvements to our **nutrition program**. It is widely accepted that Exposure Therapy is the method of choice for treating anxiety. Therefore, because clients who present with eating disorders have intense fear and anxiety around food, we expose them to feared foods in a safe and therapeutic setting. We believe that eating within a treatment setting is critical to normalizing eating patterns and the therapeutic meal is a crucial part of our program. Our Dietician plans a meal that includes a set number of exchanges and each patient is required to eat the

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## The New and Improved New Dawn—A Letter from our Clinical Director (Continued)

meal, along with a staff member and peers. Our Dietician designs the meals so that they are simple and indicative of what non eating-disordered individuals eat, and are easily duplicated in the clients' homes. We create an environment of safety and casualness so that clients can try previously feared foods and incorporate them back into their diets. The beauty of this is that because a nutritional exchange system is used, all foods fit into the exchange system categories (see American Diabetes Association). Furthermore, there is a sense of **safety** clients feel when they cannot engage in eating disordered behaviors while in treatment. In the end, the goals are to teach clients that they will survive if they eat certain foods that are frightening and that they are able to work through the anxiety that comes up through this process.

### Our Psychological Philosophy

In terms of our **psychological philosophy**, we believe that eating disorders are multi-factorial, and arise from biopsychosocial (i.e., genetics, personality, family, trauma and sociocultural) factors. Eating disorders are complex and require a multidimensional treatment team of therapists, RD's, and MD's, and a solid, positive support system. It is

critical that those in recovery **feel connected to and supported by** at least one person. It is that healing connection that allows the person to strive towards recovery. Therefore, we believe that the integration of family and friends into treatment is of the utmost importance. The support person must be someone who the sufferer feels they can go to for support and safety when they want to engage in their eating disorder. An eating disorder is akin to an abusive relationship, according to Jenni Shaffer (Life without Ed). Therefore, when the individual with an eating disorder can replace the abusive relationship with food with a caring supportive one, recovery becomes all the more possible.

### Our Staff

We now have a **talented and integrative treatment team** with each staff member bringing something unique to our programs. We have licensed Expressive Arts therapists who are certified in a variety of modalities from movement to art therapy. Our therapists also are skilled in dual diagnosis and have worked in substance abuse programs. Further, our licensed therapists provide **Dialectical Behavioral Therapy** as well as **Cognitive Behavioral Treatments**.

We embrace diversity and have experience working with a variety of races and ethnicities, gay men and women, and individuals of all ages. I believe this strength will greatly benefit the Bay area community as we are aware of the unique issues that minorities face with regard to eating and their bodies. We also treat children who present with Anorexia, utilizing the Maudsley Method to get the child back to a state of health. Because of our ability to provide individualized treatment programs, we welcome all age groups, men and women, the LGBTQ community, and individuals with varying backgrounds to our program.

In closing, I would like to welcome and introduce our new staff members: Shelly Starrett, RD, Kelly Girard, RN, Christine Pappas, Psy.D, Jamie Lopez, Ph.D., Alecia Singer, MFT, and Linda Shanti McCabe, Psy.D. We all look forward to collaborating and working with you in the future.

Should you have any questions about our programs please do not hesitate to contact us. Have a happy and healthy New Year!

*Katie Polsky, Ph.D*

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drpolsky@newdawnrecovery.com

## Other Changes at New Dawn

### Website

A lot of wonderful changes are happening at New Dawn, and we have updated our website to reflect these changes. You will soon find pictures of our Staff, content that is updated weekly, and a calendar of events that highlights treatment related activities. Take a Look!

[www.NewDawnRecovery.com/eating-disorder](http://www.NewDawnRecovery.com/eating-disorder)

### Newsletter

Unlike in prior issues, we now have contributors from all over. This should bring a broader voice to our publication, and we hope you like the change! To be involved in our next Newsletter, please email **Outreach@NewDawnRecovery.com**. Have a poem? Send it in! Want to highlight your next event? Email it over! Please remember, you can always remain anonymous if you prefer.

## Recovering PeRfECtly—April Vancelette, MFT

For many people suffering from eating disorders 'perfectionism' is a central underlying issue. Healing from the demands of needing to be 'perfect' (perfect eater, perfect body, perfect dieter) takes time and sometimes can feel elusive. The critical voice of the ED can be heard long after other symptoms of the disorder have diminished. For many, the critical voice inside that demands perfection becomes even louder the more they move away from their disordered eating patterns.

Eating disorder specialist Angela Harmon from Woodleaf Eating Disorder Center in San Francisco believes these feelings may be a good sign: "as painful as the internal demand for perfection can be, it also signals us that we are reaching the very root of what prompted the disorder in the first place."

For most people these feelings of perfectionism are paired with self hatred, low self esteem and self criticism. When asked to remember when these feeling began many say early childhood, long before the eating disorder developed: "Understanding the origin of these feelings and the context in which they developed is a very important part of the healing process" says Harmon, "Exploring this 'critical voice' is vital to the healing process."

The all or nothing mentality that afflicts ones eating can create unrealistic expectations about recovery. Before recovery, the eating disordered person believed they must "eat and live perfectly" and now once in recovery they may similarly expect themselves to "recover perfectly." Giving themselves permission to struggle, ask for help or have a moment of relapse can be very hard for them to bear.

What is important to realize is that recovery from eating disorders is fundamentally "imperfect" and is an on-going ever changing process. Recovery can feel easy some days, difficult others and just like life can be diverse and bring the unexpected. For many people with eating disorders like anorexia and bulimia learning to be 'imperfect' is at the very core of recovery. Beginning to accept with compassion the peaks and valleys recovery brings is where we find freedom. Beginning to allow ourselves to

be human again and stop judging our every move as our worst enemy takes time and practice. Recovery does not happen overnight, and that really is okay. There is no perfect "recovery" and letting go of this illusion can be the most liberating thing of all.

Let me give you an example: a female client in her early twenties comes to me to treat her symptoms of Bulimia. She explores her feelings, begins to identify certain triggers to her ED behaviors and greatly reduces the amount of bingeing and purging she had been doing. A week comes where she finds out her stepfather is terminally ill, she is laid off her job and within days she finds herself on a two day binge. She comes to therapy beating herself up and announcing she has "failed" and had been doing so well until she "messed everything up again." I point out to her how very stressful the last few days have been and how harshly she is beating herself up. She agrees full-heartedly and then goes on to say "Oh my GOD your right, I am beating myself up, what the hell is wrong with me!!" Now the client has found a way to beat herself up about beating herself up! This kind of self imposed perfectionism and self criticism is all too common. I cannot tell you how

many clients I have worked with IN TREATMENT who beat themselves up over not doing recovery "perfectly". One of the most important things for people in recovery from eating disorders to learn is that recovery is "imperfect" and if it were not, it would not be recovery at all!

Recovery means there will be hard days, painful days, challenging days as well as liberating, joyous and happy days. Life contains both and so will our recovery. The important thing is that we begin to learn to support ourselves in our recovery no matter where we are at. Hitting a bump in the road does not mean we need to beat ourselves up, but that we need support more than ever because we are having a hard time. Opening ourselves up to the idea of self compassion is not easy, but can be done, and once we learn to accept our humanness, our lives become brighter than ever before.

"One of the most important things for people in recovery from eating disorders to learn is that recovery is "imperfect" and if it were not, it would not be recovery at all!"

*April Vancelette is a Psychotherapist, Writer and Clinical Director of Woodleaf Eating Disorder Center in San Francisco, California. Please see her website at <http://woodleafeatingdisordercenter.com/>*

## Forgiveness—Michelle E. Minero MFT

When I was asked to contribute an article for New Dawn, I was not sure what I topic I would choose. The next day a client told me she was contemplating what she would focus on for Lent, which started the next day, Ash Wednesday.

At the end of that long and fruitful day at the office, the idea of Lent kept coming back to me.

What did Lent have to do with my work in the field of eating disorders? Well, the basic premise of Lent is forgiveness. I realized that the topic of forgiveness would be timely as well as an important focus for this article for New Dawn.

All of my clients who are in recovery from eating disorders, regardless of their spiritual beliefs, have hurt their bodies in one way or another. Even when

much progress is made in abstaining from restricting, bingeing, purging, or compulsive eating, I find that my clients continue to battle their bodies. Body hatred is a common trait in most of my clients. Forgiveness is needed.

Therapists and clients alike all have a history with our bodies. I'm sure you will agree that there have been times when you have pushed your body too hard, criticized it, or neglected its needs.

One challenging aspect of healing from an eating disorder is to regain, or create a healthy relationship with your body. Part of keeping any relationship healthy and vital entails taking responsibility for your actions, and apologizing when necessary.

When you ask your body for forgiveness, it's not enough to say "I'm sorry".

Here are the components to a satisfying apology.

- Take responsibility for your actions
- Acknowledge how your actions affected your body
- Try to understand how your body "felt"
- Make amends; have a plan so you will not hurt your body again
- Say you're sorry
- Ask for forgiveness

After reading this article, I encourage you to write an apology letter to your body. If you are sincere, I am confident that your body will forgive you. Here is an example to get you started:

**Dear Body,**

I am taking responsibility for all the years of discomfort I gave you by overeating, followed by starvation. I recognize the ill effects of all the diets I have been on. I've learned that by denying you food when you were hungry, I messed with your metabolism, and put you at risk for a heart attack. Each time I over-ate, you told me so by causing pain in my stomach, but I didn't listen to you. I'm sure it was difficult for you as well as confusing. You must have felt hurt when I criticized you and called you fat.

From this day forward my intention is to listen to you, and nurture you to the best of my ability each day. I will look into my eyes and tell you I love you. I will touch you lovingly and rub lotion on you after my showers. I will thank you daily for all you do for me. I will eat three meals a day, and have snacks. I will stop eating when I'm satisfied, stay home when I'm sick, and go to sleep when I'm tired more times than not.

I am truly sorry for not listening to you, and criticizing you instead of honoring all you do for me.

Will you forgive me?

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## Forgiveness—Michelle E. Minero MFT (Continued)

Here is a template to help you get started.

### ✧ Forgiveness Letter ✧

Dear Body,

I am writing to acknowledge and take responsibility for all the times I

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I know this affected you by

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You must have felt

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I commit to love and honor you by:

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I am sorry, (Ask for forgiveness)

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Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Witnessed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Many people do not have support for body acceptance from the people in their lives. Our culture is full of messages that tell us all we need to change our bodies. We do not get messages of body forgiveness.

I've added a section for a witness. By having a supportive witness that you trust, you get the advantage of accountability, and the experience of sharing your intentions with a caring person. Building a community of body-love supporters is paramount to your recovery. If you would like to share your apology letter with a greater audience, and become an advocate to others, please add your letter to the guest book of my website, [www.theselflovediet.org](http://www.theselflovediet.org). I send you blessings on your journey of self love and forgiveness.

*Michelle E. Minero MFT has a private practice in Petaluma, Ca. She has worked in the field of eating disorders since the late 1980's. She is the founder of EDRS, Eating Disorders Recovery Services, ([www.edrs.net](http://www.edrs.net)) a volunteer group of people dedicated to the elimination of eating disorders. Michelle is currently working on a book titled Self Love: The Only Diet That Works.*



## Ten Things to do When You Hit the Top of the Mountain—Carol Normandi and Laurelee Roark

Recovery from an eating disorder is a process—it doesn't happen overnight. It's easy to get overwhelmed, frustrated and hopeless during the recovery process. It's like climbing a mountain in a huge snowstorm: you can't see where you've been or where you are going. For all you know you've been walking around in circles!

There's a certain place in the recovery process that is very challenging, that Beyond Hunger calls "The Top of the Mountain". This is a point in the recovery process where you have done enough work to be conscious of your behaviors and to be aware of the many feelings underlying those behaviors, but you are still overeating, restricting, or purging. You are overwhelmed with feelings and yet you also can't stop the behaviors; it can feel very frustrating and hopeless.

Below is an edited excerpt reprinted from our book *It's Not About Food* that we wrote to help remind us of the things we can do to take care of ourselves when we get to this very difficult place.

### **1. Stay Connected With Your Self - Don't Abandon Your Self**

When things get difficult or overwhelming, many of us have learned to go numb, check out, be defensive, blaming, critical, busy, or just not be present with our selves. Yet it is at this point, when everything feels chaotic and out of control, that it's important to be present, accepting, nurturing and loving with ourselves. When we walk with ourselves then we can be conscious and have compassion for ourselves simultaneously.

### **2. React Lovingly Towards Your Body - Don't Attack Your Body**

When the going gets tough, we get tough on our bodies. For some of us, we learned this as children or teens when our identities were forming. Overwhelming feelings or thoughts become translated into something simple and tangible like, "I am bad because I am too fat", or "I am different because my body is wrong" or "If only I could make my body perfect everything in my life would be in control". This pattern of attacking our bodies becomes so habitual and unconscious that we don't realize the extent of the abuse and stress this creates in our lives.

It takes a lot of energy to try to resist this pattern and know that it's not about your body. Your body, no matter what its weight, still deserves your love, acceptance and compassion.

### **3. Back to Basics - Hunger, Fullness, Satisfaction**

When things get overwhelming, we go back to our old coping mechanisms. These patterns, overeating, under eating, obsessing, and wanting to go back on a diet might become more intense as we begin to unearth the underlying issues. Yet as you experience being pulled back into these behaviors, you can also continue to practice checking in with the basic wisdom of your body which is always there: hunger, fullness and satisfaction. It's important to understand that we all need transition time -- time to integrate the new tools until we are ready to give up the old ones. This means that as you can, even if it's one time per day, check in with your body. Feel your hunger, even if you can't eat. Feel your fullness, even if you can't stop. Try to satisfy yourself, even if you're not clear what might satisfy you.



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## Ten Things to do When You Hit the Top of the Mountain (Continued)

### 4. Be Willing To Feel Your Feelings - Don't Judge Them

The top of the mountain is where the feelings erupt, and the issues that were underlying the struggle with food and weight come to the surface. For some, the feelings come quickly and forcefully, and for others they slowly trickle into consciousness. In order to learn from them, we need to accept them, let them be present, and not judge them as wrong. They might be surprising, freeing, disrupting, or frightening. Whatever your experience, it is important to find a way to accept them and process them.

### 5. Trust Your Process!

Recovery from the struggle with food and weight is extremely complex. It is not a linear model that moves directly from A to Z. There are many layers of learning that happen along the way. Complete recovery from an eating disorder requires spiritual and emotional growth, along with changes in behavior. It is in the process itself, the day-in and day-out reflections of who we are, that miracles happen. When you are on top of the mountain, and you are experiencing both the behaviors and the feelings, it is understandable to feel frustrated and scared; and it is exactly at this point in the process where you learn the tools you need to take care of yourself.

### 6. Connect With Spirit

At this point in the recovery process it is extremely important to remember that underneath the struggle with food and weight is a spiritual desire to awaken and to embrace our whole selves. It requires us to see past the limitations we have put on ourselves and to deepen our understanding of who we really are. Sometimes the behaviors and feelings get so overwhelming that we slip into judging ourselves with our ego, thinking we are bad and out of control. We forget there is a spiritual self that holds our desires and passions to grow, heal and fulfill our dreams. We forget that we are all divine no matter what we eat or what we weigh. At the top of the mountain it is very important to stay in touch with this part of ourselves to ground us, guide us, and hold a sacred space for us.

### 7. Take Care of Yourself

This is the time to become very assertive in taking care of yourself. Unfortunately, when we hit the top of the mountain, most of us can't check ourselves into a retreat center for six months, even though this is probably exactly what we need. Instead, we must find ways to reduce the stress in our lives and nurture ourselves as best we can. This can be difficult when the pull is to get busier so we don't have to feel, or treat ourselves badly because we're upset about our behaviors. It may take extra effort to resist this tendency and try something different like actively finding ways to nurture ourselves.

### 8. Simplify

At the top of the mountain, it gets very crowded. Your outer life is still full of behaviors you are trying to change, and your inner life is exploding. This is a good time to keep things simple. This is not a good time to invite Aunt Gertrude out to live with you for three weeks, or to agree to oversee the school fundraiser. It's a good time to practice setting limits and saying no. Simplifying your life allows you to create space for the extra energy needed to get through this challenging time.

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## Ten Things to do When You Hit the Top of the Mountain (Continued)

### 9. Get Support - Ask For Help

The changes you make in this recovery can sometimes feel alienating. This is an important time to find other people who can understand what you are going through and be supportive. You may find family or friends who can support you, or you may need professional help such as an individual therapist or a body worker. Even though it may be a very vulnerable time to ask for help, it is a crucial time. When we can share our experiences in a loving, supportive atmosphere we create very intimate and caring long lasting relationships.



### 10. Breathe Acceptance

At the top of the mountain, it's important to continue breathing. There is so much flying around that if we can't stop and breathe, we will get blown over. And the breath's mantra is acceptance. The most important action you can take, over and over again, is to practice acceptance: acceptance of your body, of your behaviors, of your struggle, of your feelings, of your history, of your life, of your process. As you accept what is happening, and don't fight it, you allow love and awareness to come in and be with you in it. And from here it is much easier to move through the challenges and learning this recovery process brings.

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Felicia King, LCSW is the Executive and Clinical Director of Beyond Hunger. You can reach Beyond Hunger at (415) 459-2270 and view their website at [www.beyondhunger.org](http://www.beyondhunger.org)

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## April Opening of New Dawn's Residential Program

We are excited to be opening our **NEW Residential Eating Disorders Program** in the vibrant and upscale Pacific Heights neighborhood of San Francisco, CA. The **first and only one in all of Northern California that is licensed by the CA Dept. of Health**, this new level of care will afford our patients the opportunity to be treated by a unified, multidisciplinary team of licensed psychotherapists, clinical dietitians, registered nurses, physicians, and family therapists throughout their entire treatment.

New Dawn's **complete continuum of care** eliminates the constant shifting of providers which often prevents the profound and enduring kind of healing that should always be accomplished. By being available to guide our patients through their entire journey of recovery, and by doing

so responsibly with medical supervision and oversight, such a journey promises for a **safer, and ultimately more successful transformation of the mind, body and spirit.**

Our new residential program offers a **medically monitored and structured environment** with a clear set of guidelines and expectations that encourages residents to shed unhealthy behaviors, thoughts and feelings by replacing them with **positive coping skills.** Traditional individual, family and group psychotherapy, supervised meals/snacks, and nutritional counseling are integral to the treatment, as are more holistic avenues of healing and self-discovery, such as expressive arts, movement therapy, meditation, life coaching and acupuncture.

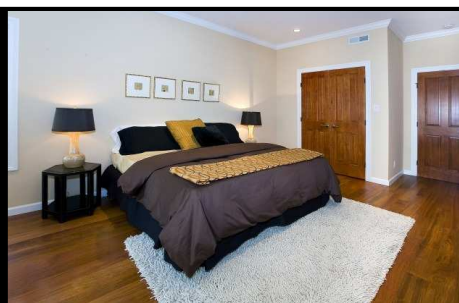
The communal aspects of residential treatment allows for

learning to occur in even the most routine interactions of daily life, which often leads to **improved communication, assertiveness, and feelings of connectedness.** Like all of our programs, the Residential Program aims to **empower its patients** by instilling in them notions of personal responsibility and self-care qualities that will ultimately be among their strongest allies in their fight to maintain a **healthy and sustaining recovery.**

New Dawn is now accepting applications for pre-admission, and will be fully operational on April 7th, 2010. Females 18 years of age and older that are ambulatory and that have been medically cleared by our staff physician will be eligible for admission.

**For more information, please call Dr. Katie Polsky at (415) 331-1383.**

## Our Residential Facility



# New Dawn

Eating Disorders Recovery Centers



[www.NewDawnRecovery.com](http://www.NewDawnRecovery.com)

New Dawn's chemical dependency and eating disorders programs have been providing a pathway to recovery for nearly a quarter century. Founded by the Morton family in 1987, what began as a modest transitional living center for women is now comprised of residential and outpatient clinics throughout Northern California. Our internationally accredited programs are comprised of the most talented and committed experts in their fields, and we continue to strive towards improving the lives of those who choose New Dawn as their sanctuary for help, hope and healing.

## Mark Your Calendars!

We are proud to be hosting a moving presentation given by renowned author, **Doris Smeltzer**.

**Date:** April 9, 2010

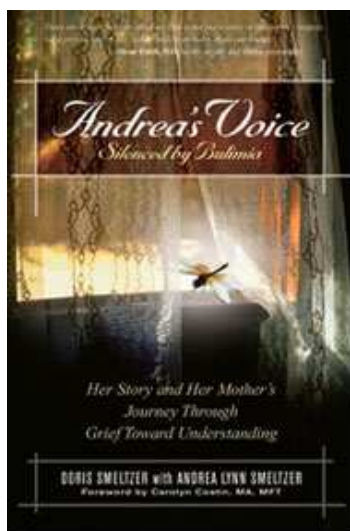
**Location:** 2320 Marinship Way, #240, Sausalito CA

**Time:** 3:30-5:30

## Andrea's Voice

### The Effect

Doris' honest exploration of the emotional issues surrounding her daughter's development of bulimia provides insight and guidance not only for families, friends, and caregivers, but also to any young woman who is struggling to find her independence.



### About The Author

Doris Smeltzer, co-founder of the eating disorder prevention nonprofit organization, Andrea's Voice Foundation, lives with her husband in Northern California. Andrea Lynn Smeltzer was working on a degree in International Business & Politics and planned to use her multilingual talents to speak out for human rights.

### Their Story

"Andrea Smeltzer had the world at her feet; she was vibrant, talented, strong, and beautiful. After a one-year struggle with bulimia, Andrea died in her sleep at the age of nineteen, catapulting her mother, Doris, into a journey of self-discovery and realizations. By combining Andrea's poetry and journal entries, mother and daughter tell the story together, capturing the bond that connected them."

Please RSVP by emailing [AnitaG@NewDawnRecovery.com](mailto:AnitaG@NewDawnRecovery.com)