

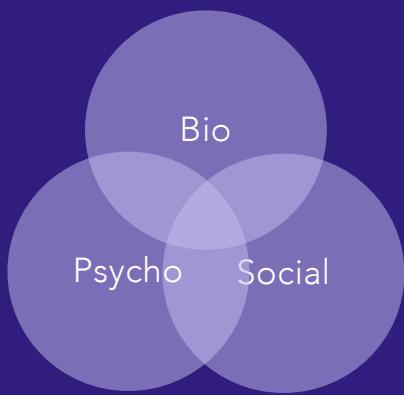
SeekHealing

#RethinkRehab

HEALING ADDICTION THROUGH HUMAN CONNECTION

Behind the **opioid overdose epidemic** is a much greater **loneliness epidemic**: an increasing lack of meaningful connection in society, and the **trauma** that goes hand-in-hand with isolation.

In a new approach to the epidemic, **SeekHealing** teaches people **how to build healthy relationships** through free trainings, 1-on-1 practice with volunteers, and invitations to a different kind of recovery meeting. We also give anyone who is at risk for a drug overdose **free services** to help them heal from trauma (*counseling, acupuncture, bodywork, etc.*)



Medical science has long understood addiction as a disorder on the **bio-psycho-social spectrum model.**²

Yet the social component is largely missing from traditional addiction treatment models.

The only existing models for long-term support and creating new social networks are 12-step programs, many of which create difficult social experiences by perpetuating shame. They tend to exclude the broader community from participating in the recovery social support network. Rigid requirements for abstinence from some chemicals and not others create confusion, and alienate people on medication-assisted treatment (MAT). Some people in these programs experience unnecessary shame in response to relapses, which are vulnerable milestones in recovery.

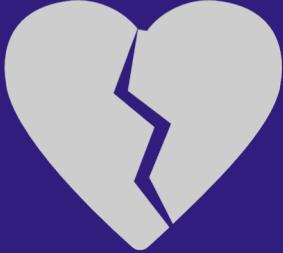
“

*I have attended rehab nine times. All the months I spent in rehab, everything I learned, **does not compare with how valuable one weekend with SeekHealing was for me.”***

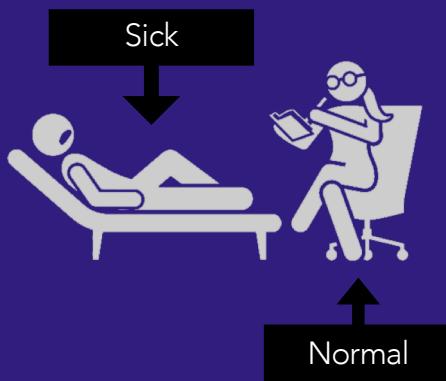
- Former heroin user

SeekHealing's model works for people in any stage of addiction, and it can reach people who are turned off by religious language or who feel like such programs are "not for them." And for those in 12-step fellowships, it provides an unconditionally welcoming community to complement their program. In an atmosphere of complete acceptance, all participants are free to discover and express their own truth.

At the heart of the SeekHealing model is programming designed to minimize **shame**. Research shows that shame is the number one factor that prevents humans from being able to meaningfully connect with each other.



Shame often stems from **trauma**: either from major traumatic events or smaller traumas of rejection and isolation that accrue over time. It results from feeling like a bad person because of the things you've experienced. Shame is the experience of hiding your real truth because of a perception that it's abnormal, or unwelcome, or both.



Most people recognize that shame is elicited by stigma around addiction, but too often, it's exacerbated by the addiction treatment process itself. The "patient" is the "**sick**" person talking to doctors, therapists, and case managers who are "**normal**." Sober living environments promote a sense of being **supervised** and **not trusted**, where people are rejected and sometimes expelled into homelessness for returning to patterns they were trying to change.



Although 12-step programs were originally designed to be all-inclusive, some modern meetings perpetuate shame, too. **Social cliques** in the recovery scene create experiences of isolation and in-group/out-group dynamics. Many find the practice of publicly **identifying as an "addict"** or announcing that you are "counting days again" to be **humiliating** or shameful.

Perhaps this is why some studies estimate that 12-step programs have a success rate of less than 8%.¹

1: <https://americanaddictioncenters.org/rehab-guide/12-step/whats-the-success-rate-of-aa>

How do we change the addiction recovery narrative?



By building a **community-level addiction treatment program**. We need a program that includes all kinds of people: folks who are still using drugs, people in early recovery, people in long-term recovery, and people who have never used drugs but are isolated for different reasons (like mental health struggles, or aging and retirement)

- Provide free access to professional trauma-healing services to those at risk for overdose
- Eliminate shame by shifting language from “**addict**” to “**seeker**.”
- Support all intentions for wellness: safe drug use, 100% abstinence, abstinence from drug-of-choice only, medication assisted treatment (MAT), etc.
- Teach the wider community how to build healthy relationships and practice mindfulness
- Provide hands-on experiences of real, shame-free connection with others

How SeekHealing Works





Listening Training

Training in the fundamentals of connection: listening. How to listen to others without just planning your next sentence, and how to listen to yourself so you can set good boundaries.



Seeker Pairs

A great complement to having a sponsor, seekers can get paired up with another seeker to meet weekly. In these meetings, seekers practice how to talk and hang out without trying to fix each other or give each other advice.



Community Service

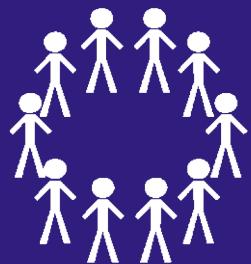
Service work is a critical part of recovery. The program includes a number of opportunities to support other seekers during meetings as well as creating experiences of meaningful, shame-free connection at MAT clinics, emergency housing shelters, prisons and more.



Connection Boosters

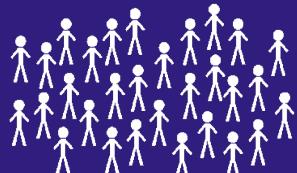
Free access to activities, workshops, classes and new experiences of connection.

Connection Practice Meetings



A different kind of meeting that eliminates shame and where no conversation topic is off limits. Seekers are invited from all walks of life to open up, practice mindfulness, and get real in a safe space.

Socials & Gatherings



Safe social gatherings that are both substance-free and small-talk-free.



Extra Care Program

A voluntary program that provides 100% free access to professional services that help people heal from trauma: counseling, EMDR therapy, acupuncture, bodywork & massage, nutritional support, etc.

Note: The Extra Care Program is limited to people who have a bonding history with opioids or amphetamines and who have recently experienced a major transition or crisis.



"SeekHealing has expanded not only my sober community but my mind & heart. It is refreshing to find a workable program outside of the same old, tired 12-step programs which, while I'm glad exist, are too limiting for my [recovery] style."

- Former IV heroin user

*"I walked in to find the energy and strength of an individual who had been struggling with sobriety, loneliness and life in general to be **completely transformed energetically**. They were no longer wanting to isolate or use for the most part. Seek was providing meaningful connection and they were feening for more of that and not the other. The change in strength they were exuding was magical ... truly empowered by the program and paradigm."*

- Clinical Director, PHP Substance Use Disorder Treatment Facility



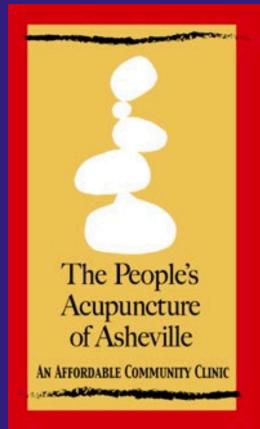
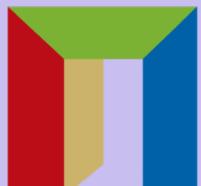
*"Seek meetings are **where I go to feel human again.**"*

- 4x overdose survivor & former IV drug user



"This organization is truly invaluable to our population of people involved in the justice system. 90% of the people coming through the center struggle with mental health and substance use challenges. Many of them need more than traditional 12 step programs, they need connection, they need to heal holistically, and SeekHealing is the community in which they can do this. SeekHealing provides people with hope through genuine connection and community, and that is imperative for anyone justice-involved. I cannot express enough how much the Justice Resource Center values the relationship we have with Seek Healing.

- Amanda Jo Cary, BA, CSAC-I, CPSS, Case Manager/Job Placement Specialist, Buncombe County Re-Entry Council



Pilot Program Results

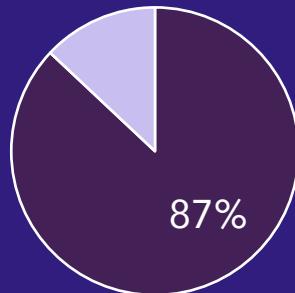
141 total seekers enrolled
88 in recovery from substance use
52 with opioid bonding history
62 seekers completed Listening Training
116 seekers have been or currently paired

Spring 2018 – Spring 2019
Asheville, NC

Approximately **65 seeker pairing meetings** took place each month

Whereas industry relapse rates for opioid use disorder show that 91% of patients return to use within a year,² **only 33% of SeekHealing participants returned to use** -- and all of them stayed involved with the program, returned to their recovery, and communicated with program management the entire time.

**Adherence to recovery intentions
(6 months to 1 year later)**



The 13% who were not are still enrolled and actively engaged in the program.

By the end of the year, **87% of all participants** were following their intentions for their recovery.

(60% had intentions for total abstinence, 40% for abstinence from their drug-of-choice only).



Questions?

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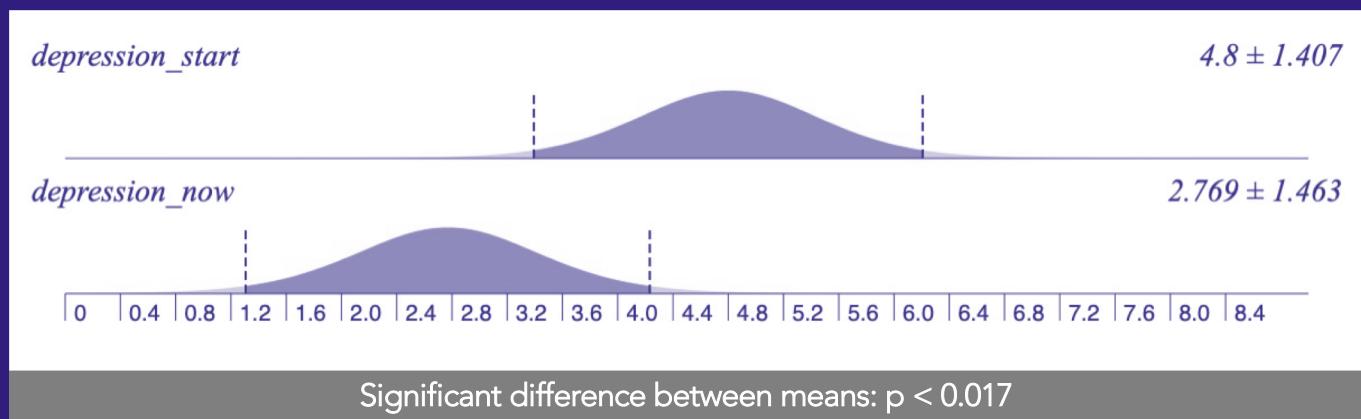
2: Smyth, B. P., Barry, et al. (2010). Lapse and relapse following inpatient treatment of opiate dependence. Irish Medical Journal. 103(6),176–179.

Pilot Program Results

SeekHealing doesn't measure success in terms of relapse, because relapse means something different for every person. It measures success in terms of how capable participants are to form meaningful social connections for themselves.

In the pilot program study, all seekers significantly **improved their sense of connectedness** over time engaged in SeekHealing.

The results also showed that a seeker's overall, self-rated experience of **depression decreases over time** with engagement in SeekHealing's Extra Care Program.



“ Since the day I completed Listening Training, I have seen my depression symptoms decrease dramatically for the first time in my life. I have been diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) for more than 15 years, and nothing, including medication, has been as effective for making my life worth living again as my participation in this community.

- SeekHealing participant

**"SeekHealing
saved my life."**

- Multiple participants



*"I used to keep different parts of myself hidden from everyone in my life: I was a different person at work than I was with my family, than with my girlfriend, than with my drug dealer. Now, I live my life in the light. It's because **I have people to talk to** about what's really going on, people who care about me and who will listen to me and not judge me for which chemicals I choose to use or not use."*

- Former heroin user



*"Since joining I have found myself trying so many new things in an effort to re-build my identity, since that identity was overtaken by drugs for so many years. SeekHealing has given me **an outlet to open up** since I have always held personal feelings and emotion inside."*

- Former IV drug user

Advisory Council Members



*"Addiction cannot be healed unless its source in childhood suffering is addressed, and unless the cycles of relapse are stopped through empathic human connections. **SeekHealing** is dedicated to healing trauma, and it provides the necessary connections that empower people to break from that self-defeating cycle."*

Gabor Maté, M.D.

"Drugs alone do not address the root cause of disease."

Andrew Weil, M.D.



Bill White
Emeritus Senior
Research Consultant at
Chestnut Health
Systems, Former Board
Chair of Recovery
Communities United



**Hilary Jacobs
Hendel, DDS, LCSW**
Trauma-informed
Psychoanalyst,
International Author of
The Change Triangle
Tool for Emotional
Health



Peter Strong, MD
Former Medical Director
of Hartford Dispensary

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