



The Fence Post

Monthly Newsletter of the White Picket Fence Counseling Center, LLC.



A personal note from Sandee Nebel

At this time of year, many people are getting ready for new starts. Some have a new job, some are settling into a new home, while others are going back to school. Typically, colleges have a few days – or even weeks – of orientation before the school year begins, to help students adjust to their new surroundings and routines. My daughter's school also has a wonderful program in place to welcome newcomers to their school. It is called the "Blue and Gold Society" where current students look out for these newcomers and guide them through uncharted territory - middle school! All of this has gotten me thinking about the power of mentorship – the theme of today's article.



Best regards,
Sandee

Feature article: Recovery from an Eating Disorder - How a Mentor Can Ease Your Way

While group orientation sessions like they have at schools are extremely helpful in dealing with the anxiety of a new situation, mentorship goes one step beyond. Mentorship is a uniquely powerful one-on-one relationship with someone who is farther along at whatever is it you're embarking on.

I've had my own mentors, both as a student and as a therapist, and I've also had several informal mentors. These are people I go to for specific guidance – like a friend who's also been married for 25 years, other parents whose children are older than mine or inspiring people who have had business successes.

Ideally, a mentor is someone who has your best interests at heart and so just wants to help. Usually, this person will have their own mentor, and helping you is a way to pay that person back for their time and guidance.

12-step programs use a form of mentorship called sponsorship. One person, who has already applied the 12-step model to recover from addiction and heal their life, acts as a sponsor to another addict who is newer to the program and just starting to deal with their problem.

I recently saw the movie *The Soloist*, about a brilliant musician with schizophrenia and a man who helps him. One character in the movie comments that sometimes you can change brain chemistry just by being someone's friend. There is something so innately healing about the feeling that someone is there for you.

It's important to discuss the difference, though, between a mentor and a friend. In friendship, there are times when we each step into the role of giver and receiver. We're not usually able to be truly objective with a friend or family member, because we may want specific outcomes for them.

Mentorship is more one-sided, although you do help the mentor by giving them the opportunity to help. Helping someone else feels good; it's very fulfilling. Also, remember that mentoring you is a way for that person to pay back their own mentor. As well, sharing their wisdom helps refresh their memory about what's been helpful, for the times that they need to apply those very same strategies in their own life.

In our groups at the White Picket Fence Counseling Center, we sometimes help to match our clients with mentors who are father along the path of recovery from their problems with eating. We're careful not to foster any kind of hierarchy or dependence, but rather to give each new client access to someone who can walk this journey with them, someone they can talk to in between therapy sessions. For many of our clients this relationship with a mentor becomes an important extension of the therapy process.

Recommended resources

Beating Ana is a book about the healing power of mentorship in recovery from an eating disorder (<http://www.key-to-life.com/book/>). Author Shannon Cutts also coordinates a free mentor-mentee matching service and online help forum (<http://www.key-to-life.com/mentorconnect>). I have just recently learned of her service, so if you have some feedback, I am most interested in hearing it from you (email me at sandee.nebel@wpfcounseling.com)

Upcoming Groups and Workshops

Note: Some of our groups do have a waiting list, but please let us know if you are interested and we'll keep you informed up-to-the-minute!

Do you have that all or nothing thinking about food, size and most situations? Join us for this workshop about defeating "Cognitive Distortions". Focus is on tools that you can apply. ([click to download CG Flyer](#))

Family Issues Focus Workshop - Learn coping skills for dealing with family in the midst of an eating disorder here. Monday, September 21st in the evening. ([FM Flyer](#))

Eating Disorder Recovery Group - Four Week Group on Tuesdays 5pm to 6:30pm. [Click to send email and request details of next ED group session.](#)

Moving through Recovery - Monthly Maintenance and Relapse Prevention Group (Anorexia and/or Bulimia) -begins October 14th! ([ED Relapse Prevention Group Flyer](#))

Emotional Overeating Recovery Group - Four Week Group on Thursday evenings 7-8:30pm. Next group session begins in October. [Request flyer here with next start dates.](#)

Back again! --- Coming also in October- Expressive Arts Workshops! These have filled up quickly in the past, so let us know your interest soon. We are facilitating two sessions: one focused on anorexia/bulimia ([flyer](#)) and the other specifically for overeaters ([flyer](#)).