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At NorthStar Regional, our purpose is to help those struggling with mental health or substance use disorders move forward in hope.

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Progress on the Continuum of Care: A Case Study

by Dr. Hal Baumchen PsyD, LP, LADC

A Troubled Beginning

Because co-occurring substance use and mental health disorders are complex, treatment must be specialized, and providing a continuum of care is important. Let me illustrate with a recent case, a man I'll call Marcus.

By the time he was 13, Marcus had bounced in and out of a dozen homes. He was smoking weed regularly by his teen years and had dabbled with a handful of other drugs. School was tough for Marcus because of ADHD, and a less than happy home life. Depression crept unnoticed into his life and surrounded him like a dense gray fog.

Chronic Disappointment

After his dismal sophomore year of high school, Marcus quit. His life was now riddled with drugs, petty crime, and damaged relationships. Unable to get or keep a job, he wandered from couch to couch. He spent his twentieth birthday in jail serving a short sentence for fifth degree possession. He was in and out of unhealthy relationships. He had one son, age 5, whom he rarely saw.

For Marcus, life had been reduced to a boring assortment of disappointments and depression, followed by another round of attempted escape through his addiction to alcohol and opioids.

Addressing the whole problem

When I look at Marcus' case, it is evident that he is held captive in a tangle of interrelated problems common to people with chronic mental health and substance use disorders. To help people like Marcus, a holistic approach may offer the best chance for sustained recovery.

In treatment for someone like Marcus, the following psychosocial concerns need to be addressed:

1. Co-occurring mental health and substance use treatment and relapse prevention
2. Resolution of legal problems and criminal recidivism
3. Stable, affordable housing
4. Psychiatric services follow through
5. Relational stability with partner and children

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Meet Dana Knight, MSW, LICSW

Dana is a Clinical Social Worker who earned her MSW from St. Thomas/St. Kates in 2011. She spent approximately 10 years working with adolescents and their families in residential treatment for co-occurring Mental Health diagnoses and Substance Use Disorders and has been working with adults with Mood Disorders at a partial hospitalization level of care for the past three years.

Dana has a passion for working with individuals who have experienced trauma and has specialized training in both Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy as well as Prolonged Exposure. She is excited to join the NorthStar Regional Team as the Program Supervisor and Lead Therapist in the Bridges Intensive Outpatient Program in Chanhasen, where she can continue working with individuals to help them determine and obtain their goals.

September is National Recovery Month and National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

National Recovery Month

Each September, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) sponsors National Recovery Month through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This observance celebrates the millions of Americans who are in recovery from mental and substance use disorders, reminding us that treatment is effective and that people can and do recover. It also serves to help reduce the stigma and misconceptions that cloud public understanding of mental and substance use disorders, which potentially discourage others from seeking help. (Source: recoverymonth.gov)



National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month—a time to share resources and stories in an effort to shed light on this highly taboo and stigmatized topic. While suicide prevention is important to address year-round, Suicide Prevention Awareness Month provides a dedicated time to come together with collective passion and strength around a difficult topic. The truth is, we can all benefit from honest conversations about mental health conditions and suicide, because just one conversation can change a life. (Source: nami.org)



National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-TALK (8255)

The Benefits of Sober Housing

One of the most valuable things people can do after addiction treatment is to live in sober housing. Spending time in sober housing can give a recovering addict the space to get a head start on a new sober lifestyle.

If you or someone you love is struggling with drug or alcohol addiction, NorthStar Regional offers sober housing that may be the right solution.

Our homes help those recovering from active addiction stay sober by keeping expectations high and giving them support while allowing them to resume normal activities such as working or going to school. Recovering addicts can also get support from one another in the home and make new friends who are committed to sobriety.

Sober Home Locations

- Carver
- Chaska
- Shakopee



Legion House in Shakopee



Interior of Harrison House in Shakopee

Daily Insight for the Journey



Dr. Hal has started a daily meditation which is delivered by email or available on his blog at JourneytoRecovery.com or on the NorthStar Regional Facebook page.

To receive Dr. Hal's Daily Insight in your inbox, visit northstarregional.com and go to Resources/Journey to Recovery and complete the subscription form.

Rising to the Challenge

Instead of seeing five unrelated obstacles, these difficulties became one interrelated challenge. Marcus entered residential treatment this time with a high level of determination. He was started on a depression medication within the first few days, and was given naltrexone to reduce cravings for opioids and alcohol. In group and individual therapy, he addressed issues of anxiety, depression, and relational problems.

Making Progress

Marcus began to challenge his own negative thinking, replacing the irrational distortions with positive, reality-based thoughts. He completed his residential treatment portion and moved to intensive outpatient treatment with lodging for the next four months. Stable in his mental and emotional health, he continued to resolve relational problems and managed to reestablish his connections with his son.

Finding a job in a warehouse, Marcus saved a few dollars and transferred to sober housing, living with five other guys. Living in a stable and sober environment gave him the structure he needed to stay in the job. Having money made it easier to resist the petty crime and drug dealing that Marcus usually relied on for income.

Marcus continued to see an individual mental health counselor to help him continue to improve his emotional coping



skills. He made great progress because he had addressed the interrelated psychosocial issues that had so often derailed his recovery.

Putting it Together

Hope is not wishful thinking and effortless fantasy. Hope arises through strategic and disciplined effort, infused with the belief that good things and better days are ahead. The successful conquering of the challenges in every recovery journey come through the numerous touches of a hundred hands, knowing that “burdens shared are easier to bear.”



Dr. Hal Baumchen is the president and clinical director of NorthStar Regional. A licensed psychologist and licensed alcohol and drug counselor with over 30 years of counseling experience, he is the author of the Journey to Recovery curriculum series.

The Best Treatment in the World

The best treatment is the one you get the most from. It's not the treatment center that has the best staff, or the one with the shortest program. It's not the center with the best cook and the best food. The best treatment is the one that does the most to reduce symptoms of mental health and substance use disorders and helps prevent relapse. That happens in direct correlation with how hard someone works. Simply stated, the best treatment program in the world is the one where someone works the hardest.

What we do

Our job in the treatment center is to get the client to work hard, but not by demanding or commanding, because all too often those tactics bring resistance and defiance. Instead, we motivate, encourage and support. We work in groups-the weaker ones being extended

a helping hand by the stronger ones. We inspire participants with stories of success. We supply structure, which is often lacking as an addiction gains ground. We teach skills – skills to regulate emotions, skills to communicate, skills to resolve conflict, and skills to resist temptation and prevent relapse.

What the client does

To make progress, we expect self-examination, an honest appraisal of strengths and weakness. We expect changes in the way our clients think and believe and to come to terms with their denial and self-deception. We anticipate they will take feedback, listen to advice from others, and receive encouragement as it comes. We want our clients to make headway in their social life, occupation, education, finances, housing and in their health. But the biggest gains we



ask for are changes in character. We want our clients to become more honest, patient, respectful, and responsible.

Moving Forward in Hope

We identify what works and we applaud the person who thoroughly works the program. It isn't what I believe, think, or resist. It is what our clients believe and think, and what temptations they resist that makes a difference. All these things working together form the most fundamental and important element in treatment-hope. Hard work – expertly guided – results in the belief and hope that better days lie ahead.



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NORTHSTAR REGIONAL'S CONTINUUM OF CARE

RESIDENTIAL CO-OCCURRING TREATMENT

Residential treatment for the co-occurring disorders of substance abuse and mental health issues is the most intensive treatment option. Treatment, food and lodging are all provided in the same facility. Average program length is 30 days.



INTENSIVE OUTPATIENT WITH LODGING

Clients at this level of care are provided a place to live while in this group treatment program. They are encouraged to look for work and/or volunteer their time as they begin re-integrating into the community. Average program length is 90 days.



INTENSIVE OUTPATIENT TREATMENT

NSR's Intensive Outpatient Programs (IOPs) provide group treatment for three to six hours per day, three to five days per week, for clients who are living on their own. We have IOPs for both mental health and co-occurring disorders.



SOBER LIVING HOMES

As a client progresses in their recovery, sober homes provide a safe and supportive living environment and allow further reintegration into the community. NSR has nine sober homes for both men and women in the Southwest metropolitan area of the Twin Cities.



INDIVIDUAL & FAMILY COUNSELING

NorthStar Regional provides mental health counseling for individuals of all ages, families and couples. Our licensed counselors provide help on a wide variety of issues. We have counseling centers in Chanhassen, Chaska and Maple Grove.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ANY OF OUR PROGRAMS, CALL US AT 952-448-6557