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# Recovery a hard journey from darkness into light

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Recovery means we must be willing to be scathingly honest about ourselves and our failings. It means we must look for the good that is intrinsic in all of us. Failing to find good and owning it sets us up to fail again and again. Understanding we can be and are fundamentally decent is what we use to begin to rebuild our lives. Recovery means nourishing our psyche, body and soul.

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# Earning record is both your history and future



Social Security Kimberly Yellow Robe Guest columnist

Social Security is an earned benefit. Your earnings history is a record of your progress toward your benefits. Social Security keeps track of your earnings so we can pay you the benefits you've earned over your lifetime. This is why reviewing your Social Security earnings record is so important.

If an employer didn't properly report just one year of your work earnings to us, your future benefit payments from Social Security could be less than they should be. Over the course of a lifetime, that could cost you tens of thousands of dollars in retirement or other benefits to which you are entitled. Sooner is definitely better when it comes to identifying and reporting problems with your earnings record. As time passes, you may no longer have easy access to past tax documents and some employers may no longer exist or be able to provide past payroll information. While it's the responsibility of your employers, both past and present, to provide accurate earnings information to Social Security so you get credit for the contributions you've made through payroll taxes, you should still inform us of any errors or omissions you find. You're the only person who can look at your lifetime earnings record and verify that it's complete and correct.

The easiest and most efficient way to validate your earnings record is to visit socialsecurity.gov/myaccount to set up or sign in to your own my Social Security account. You should carefully review each year of listed earnings and use your own records, such as W-2s and tax returns, to confirm them. Keep in mind that earnings from this year and last year may not be listed yet. Notify us right away if you spot errors by calling 1-800-772-1213.

Remember, you can access important information like this any time at www.socialsecurity.gov and do much of your business with us online.

Kimberly Yellow Robe is the Social Security Administration's public-affairs specialist in Phoenix.

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It's important to know that recovery from mental health challenges is possible. Recovery is real. It is rewarding and permits the individual to take what has been a dark and desolate time in their life and turn it into a time of joy and hope. You can even help others.

Paul Rubi is a peer support specialist at Southwest Behavioral & Health Services.

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#### **Your Turn** Paul Rubi Guest columnist

My mental health issues surfaced in childhood. However, no one was able to tell me or my parents that my struggles would affect the decisions I would make throughout my life and that ultimately, those choices would have dire consequences. My poor choices affected me and my family in negative ways. I believe my mental health issues and my parents' views on child-rearing fueled my poor decisions.

While I am not a Ph.D., I've lived long enough to arrive at my own conclusions about the effects that mental health challenges can have on human beings. I believe how a child is raised makes a huge difference in how mental health challenges will develop and manifest themselves. Nurturing is stronger than genetics. Family defines who we are as a person. One sad truth about having a mental health problem is the stigma that goes along with it. People, especially our families, often think that erratic or not quite "normal" behavior is due to moral defects, especially if mental illness is coupled with addiction. Both bring tragedy, broken trust and horrible consequences. Personal experience tells me that the one who is sick suffers the most, because he or she has to live with the consequences of their poor decisions.

Unfortunately and all too often, individuals who suffer from mental illness don't have the awareness or tools necessary to change their life. They have to hit rock bottom. Hitting rock bottom is really the painful realization that how one has lived his or her life up to that point in time has been a complete and devastating failure. But the good news is that once an individual hits rock bottom, the opportunity for recovery begins.

Recovery is an alternative. We say

goodbye to demons of the past and learn to recreate our lives according to an enlightened self-awareness about ourselves, our life and our relationship to it. We stop being self-centered. It's not easy.

Recovery means we must be willing to be scathingly honest about ourselves and our failings. It means we must look for the good that is intrinsic in all of us. Failing to find good and owning it sets us up to fail again and again. Understanding we can be and are fundamentally decent is what we use to begin to rebuild our lives. Recovery means nourishing our psyche, body and soul.

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#### CALENDAR

To list an event, go to

http://submit.azcentral.com. Create a username and password, then log in and submit details on the event.

#### Wednesday

State Farm Stadium Tour: Discover why State Farm Stadium is recognized as one of the top multi-purpose sports & entertainment facilities in the country and a marvel of engineering, technology, and design. Guests are invited for a "behind the scenes" tour of the areas rarely seen by the public and some of the unique operational features of the only stadium in North America with a roll-out natural grass field and retractable roof. Wednesday, Sept. 11, through Saturday, Sept. 28. Call for times. State Farm Stadium, One Cardinals Dr., Glendale. \$7. 623-433-7101, www.statefarmstadium.com.

**Teen Library Council:** Our Teen Library Council is open to teens ages 12-18 and meets once a month to brainstorm new ideas, plan programs, and more! Help us plan the redecorating of the teen department! Sept. 18 through May 20. On Wednesdays from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm. Glendale Public Library - Foothills Branch, 19055 N. 57th Ave., Glendale. Free. 623-930-3847.

**Digital Help Spot:** Bring your smartphone, tablet or eReader and join librarian Marlene Jacobson to learn how to get free downloadable eBooks, audiobooks and more. Wednesdays, 2-3 PM. Creative Space. Sept. 11 through Dec. 18. On Wednesdays from 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm. Glendale Public Library - Main Library, 5959 W. Brown St., Glendale. Free. 623-930-3589, www.glendaleaz.com/library.

Griefshare - Grief Recovery Support Group: GriefShare - Journey from mourning to joy is a nationally known support group for people grieving loss through death. Using a video featuring experts on grief, along with a workbook and group discussion we help each other sort through those erratic emotions and peaks and valleys. Each session is "self-contained" so you can attend any time you want and you do not have to attend in sequence. No matter when you begin, you will find encouragement. You do not have to be a member of or attend the church to

participate. Following is the repeating GriefShare meeting schedule: September 4Is This Normal?, September11Challenges of Grief, September18The Journey of Grief: Part One, September25The Journey of Grief: Part Two, October 2Grief and Your Relationships, October 9Why? October16Guilt and Anger, October23Complicating Factors, October30Surviving the Holidavs (special), November 6Stuck, November13Lessons of Grief: Part One. November 20Lessons of Grief: Part Two, November 27Heaven, December 4What Do I Live for Now? December11New Beginnings (no video), December18New Beginnings (no video). Office closed for holidays December 25 & January 1. Sept. 11 through Dec. 18. On Wednesdays from 9:30 am to 11:30 am. Willowbrook United Methodist Church, 19390 N. 99th Ave., Sun City, Free admission. 623-974-5637, www.willowbrookumc.org.

#### Insight (Mindfulness) Meditation

Group: Welcome! This is a group for anyone interested in learning and practicing meditation. Each session includes basic instruction and a silent 35-40 minute sit followed by a reading and discussion. We practice in the Western Buddhist Vipassana tradition, also known as insight or mindfulness meditation. Beginning and experienced practitioners are welcome. We meet on the 1st, 3rd and 5th Wednesdays of the month. For more information visit Insight Meditation Northwest Phoenix at meetup.com. Sept. 11 through Dec. 18. On Wednesdays from 5:30 pm to 6:30 pm. Unity Church of Surprise, 14495 W. RH Johnson Blvd., Sun City West. No cost to attend; donations grateful accepted, 623-521-2242.

**Drop-In Tennis:** Social round robin doubles. Men and women of all abilities welcome. Format is one set of regular scoring doubles, if players are sitting out, the losers rotate out so the new players can play. During the week we have 3 to 5 courts going, on the week-ends there 8 to 12 courts going. Cost is \$4 per person, play is 8:00am to 11:00am daily. Wednesday, Sept. 11, through Tuesday, Dec. 31. Call for times. Paseo Racquet Center, 6268 W.