

VOLUME XXVIII

THE VIEW

NEWSLETTER OF THE RIDGEVIEW ALUMNI
ASSOCIATION STEERING COMMITTEE

FINDING BALANCE

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THE
RIDGEVIEW
ALUMNI
ASSOCIATION
3995 SOUTH
COBB DRIVE
SMYRNA GA
30080

RECOVERY IS A PROCESS.
IT TAKES TIME.
IT TAKES PATIENCE.
IT TAKES EVERYTHING YOU'VE GOT.
IT TAKES BALANCE!

UPCOMING EVENTS

EVENT	TIME	DATE	LOCATION
1 st Friday Speaker Meeting	7:45pm	November 6, 2015	Ridgeview – Day Hospital
Bowl-A-Thon	12 noon	Saturday, November 14, 2015	Brunswick Austell–Marietta, GA
Kickball Game	1:00pm	Sunday, November x, 2015	Place & Date – TBD
Gratitude Dinner	5:00pm	Sunday, November 22, 2015	Ridgeview – Gym (Set-up: 3:00pm) Dinner – 5:00pm Meeting – 6:30pm
1 st Friday Speaker Meeting	7:45pm	Friday, December 4, 2015	Ridgeview – Day Hospital
Scottish Rite Santa	7:00am	Friday, December 25, 2015	Scottish Rite Children’s Hospital
New Year’s Eve Dance	8:00pm	Thursday, December 31, 2015	Ridgeview Gym
1 st Friday Speaker Meeting	7:45pm	January 8, 2016	Ridgeview – Day Hospital
GSSA		Friday, January x, 2016	Macon–Date TBD
Super Bowl Party	3:30pm	Sunday, February 7, 2016	Ridgeview – Gym
1 st Friday Speaker Meeting	7:45pm	Friday, February 5, 2016	Ridgeview – Day Hospital
1 st Friday Speaker Meeting	7:45pm	Friday, March 4, 2016	Ridgeview – Day Hospital
Men’s Workshop		Friday, March 18, 2016	Rock Eagle
1 st Friday Speaker Meeting	7:45pm	Friday, April 1, 2016	Ridgeview – Day Hospital
Women’s Workshop		April 1–3 2016	Rock Eagle
Marietta Round-up		April 29–May 1, 2016	Location TBD
1 st Friday Speaker Meeting	7:45pm	Friday, May 6, 2016	Ridgeview – Day Hospital
GSSA		Friday, May 15, 2016	Macon

This issue, as well as archival copies, are available on our website at www.ridgeviewalumni.com. The Newsletter will be in an Adobe PDF format, our website will link to download the FREE Adobe Reader, allowing you to read and print the Newsletter at your leisure. If you would like to be notified by e-mail when a new Newsletter is placed on the site, E-mail us at steering@bellsouth.net or contact us thru the Website. Please put “newsletter” in the subject line.

**Thank you to those who submitted articles for this edition of the Newsletter, if we have learned anything in Recovery it is that
We cannot keep what we have if we do not give it away!**

If you would like to submit an article for the next Newsletter, please email it to Dawn L. at dbliistro@bellsouth.net using “Newsletter” in the subject line.

Dawn B. Liistro, *Communications Co-Chair, Editor, Proofreader, Design & Layout*
Alex Huntebrinker, *Steering Committee Minutes*
Christine Selema & Lisa Pohl, *Bulletin Boards*

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Serenity Garden—Memorial Brick Order Form

Name _____ Phone (____) _____

Message to be engraved on brick: (2 Lines/14 characters per line) Cost \$30.00

(Line 1) _____

(Line 2) _____

* Please fill out name and contact number, even if you wish this to be an anonymous contribution, so we may contact you in case any questions arise about the inscription.

The Ridgeview Alumni Association is a non-profit organization and all contributions are tax deductible.

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AND THE CHAOS INSIDE ME FOUND BALANCE

SUBMITTED BY: CHRISTINE S.

Balance, ha! What's that?! I don't need to learn balance. I can do it all.

I learned at an early age to live my life on one of two speeds—nothing at all or way too much. I worked hard and played hard, often dismissing my inner voice when it begged for respite. My sense of self-worth was determined by the amount I could juggle, and resting was never an intentional part of the act. I was constantly in motion; kind of like swimming through life without paying much attention to the temperature, current, density, or toxicity

My definition of "down time" often left me in a self-loathing frame of mind.

of my immersion. On occasion, I'd hit a rock or get caught a limb tangled up and be forced to take a breather, but it never lasted for more than a few days, if even that. My definition of "down time" often left me in a self-loathing frame of mind. I despised those feelings so much that I refused to see that I was gasping for a simple breath, or flailing around and at the point of sheer desperation and utter exhaustion. The thought of stopping to refill my oxygen tank or defogging my eye mask by spitting in it never crossed my mind...until the day I swam a little far from shore. My body and mind were at the point of being content with just sinking down, but somehow my spirit insisted on staying afloat until I could reach help. Damn will to survive. During my struggle and beyond, the same waves that almost took me out also left me with the insight to realize that I couldn't continue swimming the way I had been. That's the point when I accepted I needed to change my strokes.

Finding and maintaining balance in a world of constant change is

tough. I'm relearning how to take care of myself. I'm learning that moments of strength come with moments of weakness. I'm learning to accept the necessary stillness and not swim away from the feelings that accompany it. The feelings are there to teach me something. The only way to learn from

them is to be present with them. I've learned that the water is clearer when I do, and there's less to get tangled up with.

I'm learning there's a difference between being selfish and taking care of myself. I've learned to have compassion towards myself while learning these new strokes, and to accept the imperfections that go

along with the learning process. I'm learning that "no" is a complete sentence and doesn't require further explanation. I'm learning not to sweat the small stuff, and to let go of things that once bothered me. I've learned how precious my time is and have set boundaries with the people, places, and things that occupy it.

I'm learning to listen to the clues my body gives out when my mind was wandered off in a direction I can't identify. I'm able to recognize when I'm "H.A.L.T.," and use the tools provided by RVI and a 12-step program. I'm learning to ask for and accept help from others without thinking less of myself. Most importantly, I've learned I'm not a school of one and the importance of being part of something that is bigger than myself.

I'm also learning to get out of my own way. I'm learning to be comfortable with journeying on an unknown path by practicing mindfulness and

appreciating the experience along the way. I've learned that I'm not Wonder Woman, and that just because I believed I could lasso it all and drag it around, doesn't mean I should continue to. My ego, though bruised at times, understands that even though I was being empowered by it, it was also polluting me.

There are still days when my ego is tempted to bask in the pollution, and instead of beating myself up for it, I appreciate having this school of people around me who help me to be reflective of the process.

I am learning that chaos is natural and constant. For me, the pursuit of finding and maintaining balance begins with mindfulness and breathing.

When I get there, I'll let you know...I still have a ways to swim and definitely need to work on my lung capacity. Regardless, today I'm just grateful to have the wisdom of knowing when I need to come up for air or spit in my mask.

"When you lose touch with your inner stillness, you lose touch with yourself. When you lose touch with yourself, you lose yourself in the

For me, the pursuit of finding and maintaining balance begins with mindfulness and breathing.

world." -Eckhart Tolle



DON'T LOSE YOUR BALANCE!

SUBMITTED BY: ANONYMOUS.

Seeking true balance in recovery is quite a challenge, however, if we look at the issue from a familiar perspective it is not something that we can't overcome.

When we were in active alcoholism or addiction (or both!), we had to balance that with our "normal" lives.

Most people live life on three beams- family, employment, and social/fun (church, civic organizations, hobbies). Alcoholics and addicts have a fourth beam- addiction. It begins as "fun", but the fun soon turns to misery as our disease progresses. Our family relations suffer, we begin to fail at our job and we pay little or no attention to our churches or civic organizations. In other words, we begin to fail at life.

When we come to recovery, we simply replace the addiction beam with a "recovery beam". We are taught that recovery is all about finding a Higher Power. Our family can't be our Higher Power. Our job can't be

our Higher Power. Our social activities or hobbies can't be our Higher Power. We must become grounded in a Power greater than ourselves.

Should we become over-involved with any beam on the scale, the other three will

lose weight. If we work too much, more than likely we're taking weight off our recovery beam and placing it on the employment beam. If we become over-involved in family matters, weight is again more likely to be moved from the recovery beam. Our meeting attendance and sponsor contact begins to falter. More than likely our Step work is suffering too. If too much weight is moved to any other beams, the result will most likely be relapse.

This is what we call "losing our balance". We must somehow find a way to achieve near-perfect balance, or the results can be catastrophic.

We are told that we can be selfish with our program. Usually our family understands that we must attend meetings and meet with our sponsors.

If our employers are aware of our situation, they most likely will be cooperative. We certainly get support from our churches and civic organizations.

If we begin having balance issues, it is likely that our sponsor or someone we're close to in the program will detect it before we do. If that is the case, we'll be "called out".

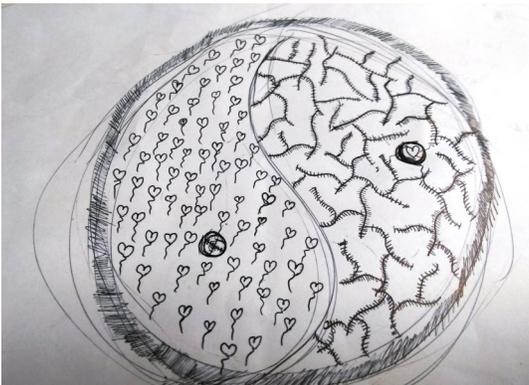
So, in your nightly inventory make sure that you do a balance "spot check". Be sure that you keep the weights on your recovery beam up to par.

By any and all means, ***DON'T LOSE YOUR BALANCE!***

When we come to recovery, we simply replace the addiction beam with a "recovery beam".

BALANCE

SUBMITTED BY: MICHELLE L.



My drawing here represents the challenges and the victories that I have come through. The hearts represent my heart and the static symbols represent my brain. My brain and my heart are in a constant battle. This picture also represents balance. Balance in the sense that my heart and my brain can work together to create a healthy balance. And also learning how to balance everything else in my life that way.

BALANCE? WHAT'S THAT?

SUBMITTED BY: EDDIE C.

Balance is a concept that was always hard for me to comprehend. The idea that a healthy life in recovery should consist of a holistic approach is something I struggle with, even as I approach seventeen years in recovery. My approach to things I enjoy doing was always to take them to extremes. This explains why I was very comfortable being a full-blown alcoholic and drug addict for decades. That is, until it got to be too painful.

I spent thirty years escaping into a hazy fog of booze and drugs. You can say I was seeking a perfect balance of mood altering substances by doing enough cocaine to keep me awake in order to drink for longer periods. That was as close as I got to experiencing balance in my life. My spiritual life was non-existent since I discarded my childhood religion and found the sweet effect of alcohol at the age of thirteen. I ran from God, and the only higher power I relied on came in a bottle or a baggie. The physical toll that drinking and drugs took on my body started appearing in my early twenties. Ulcers and severe acid reflux became chronic health issues for me.

I gradually came to the realization that my friends were all maturing emotionally and I was stuck in an adolescent mindset of selfishness and self-centeredness. I lived to get drunk and high. Everything I found pleasure in gradually lost its appeal. The vice grip of addiction had accom-

plished its objective: it controlled every area of my life. Every waking hour was consumed with obsessing about drinking, drinking, or recovering from drinking. The fact that I was

I have witnessed many folks in early recovery suffer from burnout, and inevitable relapse, if they did not eventually seek balance in their lives.

in the bar business made it all too easy. Near death, and praying for a miracle, I was admitted to Ridgeview after they sent me to the hospital first. The pendulum starting swinging back that day, the turning point of my life.

I thought that after a short stay in detox and some information about staying clean and sober that I would be able to start my new life. Thankfully, I discovered that to give myself the best chance at living a happy, healthy, productive life, I needed more than a few days in the inpatient unit. I made a commitment to stay a month in the partial hospitalization program and lived at the residence on campus. That is where the mental obsession was lifted and I realized that I could make it through thirty days without a drink or a drug. I needed that foundation in early sobriety. That is also where I met many other wonderful, sick people who were trying to recover from the same terminal malady that was sucking my soul dry.

Thankfully, there was no balance in the beginning of my recovery journey. I needed to concentrate on getting a stable foundation to this new way of living that suddenly seemed possible. Ninety meetings in

ninety days were followed by many more meetings in the first few years. I got involved with Sam Anders and the Ridgeview Alumni Association in order to give back to the recovering community while learning to have fun again. My sponsor took me through the steps and I sponsored as many men as time allowed. Looking back, I was one of the people who was "on fire" for recovery. Gradually, I realized that I needed to devote some of my day to other areas of my life.

I have witnessed many folks in early recovery suffer from burnout, and inevitable relapse, if they did not eventually seek balance in their lives. Fortunately, I recognized signs of recovery fatigue at different points in my sobriety and I have not succumbed to the tempting whispers of this insidious disease. Resentments over slights (real, or imagined) have been red flags for me over the years. Sometimes, I step back from service work by learning to say no when I used to always say yes. Switching up meetings is also a way for me to keep recovery invigorating. Sponsoring a newcomer is something that is always a boost for my recovery. I was told, "keep things fresh."

My issue today is that I am too busy. There was a time in my early sobriety when I wondered aloud to a friend in recovery, "what do you guys do all day?" It was inconceivable to me that I could fill all those drinking hours of the day with anything worth doing! Today, I have a new career that I am passionate about, attend graduate school that is both challenging and rewarding, go to meetings to stay connected, and I am still

A BIG THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS!

Allison	\$25 Visa GC
AMC Parkway Pointe 15; 3101 Cobb Parkway Suite 201; Atlanta, GA 30339-3497	4 Admission Passes
Atlanta History Center; 130 West Paces Ferry Road NW; Atlanta, GA 30305	2 Family Passes
Audrey Castracane	Handmade necklace, earring, bracelet set
Barbara W.	\$25 Kroger GC
Cottonwood Gifts; 1675 Cumberland Pkwy, Suite 406; Smyrna, GA 30080	Gift and Gift Certificate
Danny	2- \$25 QT GC
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Don and Linda W.	White water rafting passes
East Cobb Hypnosis- 1000 Johnson Ferry Road; Suite B-115; Marietta, GA 30068	5-Gift Certificates- 2 Group Sessions for Quieting the Mind- 2 consecutive Saturdays
Hill Street Warehouse- 1357 Collier Road NW; Atlanta, GA 30318	2 Italian handpainted ceramic dishes (\$150)
Hudson	Cash
Indigo Bath & Body; indigosoaps.com	Gift Basket
Jali Art- Jali Taccone	Butterfly Oil Painting
John M.	150 (AmEx GC)
Lisa	Spa Gift Basket; Avon products
Liz V.	Gift Basket
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Lynda N.	1 Week- St. Augustine
Mary Beth	Children's summer toys
Mary Jean & Perry	Amazon GC
My Sister's Style- Dawn Stokes- 501 Brooksdale Drive; Woodstock, GA 30189	Handmade necklace
Paces & Vine; 4300 Paces Ferry Road SE; Atlanta, GA 30339	2- \$50 GC
Philly Connection- 2980 Cobb Parkway SE; Atlanta, GA 30339	Dinner for 25
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Yoly'z Salon of Vinings; 3689 Atlanta Road SE; Smyrna, GA 30080	2- Gift Certificates
Zoo Atlanta; 800 Cherokee Avenue; Atlanta, GA 30315	4 Admission Passes (Online)

Answers to Puzzle on Page 14

ACROSS

1. Honesty
3. Today
5. Willing
9. RVI
10. Patience
12. Clean
14. Unity
16. Serene

17. Wins
19. God
20. Bill
23. Tolerance
24. Amen
25. Trust
27. Time
28. Sponsor
30. Mean It

33. Steps
35. Love
36. Eve
37. Nicer
38. Free

DOWN

1. How
2. God

4. Acceptance
6. Love
7. Gratitude
8. Let
11. Joyous
12. Can
13. Willing
15. Pray
16. Spiritual

17. Wilson
18. Surrender
21. Fun
22. Meetings
26. Humble
29. Service
31. Twelve
32. Sane
34. Alone

BALANCE

SUBMITTED BY: MICHAEL D'E.

My recipe for balance in sobriety. What works for me...

I have to say that for an addict like myself finding balance in anything is one of the hardest things anyone can ask me to do. For us, excess is the name of the game, right?

Before treatment everything was to an extreme. Then detox, treatment and the program. Talk about extreme – wow! Once out of treatment the program came - sobriety, meetings, aftercare, meetings, therapy and more meetings – another extreme, almost to the point of being all consuming. I had to go, if I didn't go I did not feel good. If I missed a meeting or two, I would start thinking thoughts that were not healthy. A few more meetings and I could literally see myself heading towards the signs of relapse. So I would go back and consume myself with the program. But sometimes I questioned whether I just replaced my addiction with another addiction – meetings. In the beginning, finding balance was tough.

I was reminded by others, almost daily, of things like “you did not become an addict overnight”, “there is not a cure for your affliction”, and “this has to be a lifestyle change”. I did not want to go back where I came from, so I continued each day doing what “they” told me to do, hoping one day to make it to the finish line. As some point, looking for answers I added a spiritual healing program to my regimen. I added daily meditation/prayer and daily readings to my regime. I began to volunteer at the access center and for alumni activities, giving back where I can. As ad-

dicts we tend to take quite often, in the quest for balance we must give back. Helping others on this journey is a great way to remind myself of how far I have come and being around peers shows me it can be done.

All of this work actually began to work. As I healed and grew, I tried different meetings. Some meetings were not for me. But I did not stop going, I continued seeking the right ones until I found a good fit. When I did, I met wonderful new people each one playing a significant part in my healing journey to sobriety.

As I worked my program I noticed that my relationships were healing as well as witnessing my spirituality blossoming. I was finally beginning to see the rewards of my rigorous hard work on my program.

Once I began to feel better, I noticed that this was a much healthier and productive way to spend my time, but I was spending less time with my family than before and recovery began to feel like a full time job. My relationships were healing and my family wanted to spend time with me. We wanted to go and see and live life. So, I found myself skipping a meeting here, stop my morning routine meditations and readings, going away for the weekend and spending time doing things, healthy things with my family, things I have not done in years. Finally living life. But I was not doing what got me here in the first place.

Things were out of balance once again. My old thought patterns sneaking back in, the depression and anxiety would wake me up before my alarm.

Then one day I realized doing all

“Doing recovery” every day is what works for me - my program comes first without it I have none of the other things.

these things slowly brought me to the place I am today. My family and friends will tell you I am a much different person today than I was 3 years ago. “Doing recovery” every day is what works for me - my program comes first without it I have none of the other things. I cannot stop doing what makes me better and I have to make room in

my schedule to reap the rewards. (Keeps me busy for sure!) Finding a good balance between recovery, work and home is essential to staying healthy.

They both (my program and my healthy personal life) have me in a place that I thought I would ever be. Like I said, finding this balance is not easy. Occasionally work may take more time or my family or recovery. That is when my network of friends, family and peers in the program see me slipping, they always help me find my way home. It is not perfect, nothing ever is. But I strive for balance and as long as I am trying and as long as I stay connected I will always find my way back. That is what keeps me well. I thank God, my family, RVI, the program and my true spiritual self for the life I have today, and the rest of my life.

IS MY RECOVERY BALANCED?

SUBMITTED BY: GEORGE M.

When I was newly sober, my uncle Fred gave me a pamphlet where the writer shared about finding balance in recovery and what is was like at 7 years and 14 years sober. Recovery is a balancing act. Learning to become dependent upon certain things and independent of other things is balance. Learning to be responsible for many things and not so much for others requires balance. Learning when to say “no” and when to say “yes” requires balance. These are just a few of the ways that balance is the goal in recovery.

What was it like for me? I wasn't happy with things as they were. I was sick and tired. My search was for happiness and contentment. We have all heard that it is an inside job. And there is nothing outside of ourselves that will ever provide happiness or contentment. So we get a sponsor and do the work of the 12 Steps. And when we have finished, we begin again, and again, and again. And here is the beginning of the path to happiness, contentment—even balance.

One of the promises says that we will not forget the past or wish to shut the door on it. As we continue on our sober path, we will be asked, time and again, to open those doors more completely. What is there from my past that still has not become conscious? Where do I find that frightened and wounded part of myself? What measures can I use to try to dis-engage from my ongoing addiction to my small self? Why do I experience anger and desire and a sense of bewilderment, of folly?

One thing to keep in mind is that recovery is a constant learning

process. Learning to live life sober takes time, and my life will never be completely balanced. What I should strive for is progress, not perfection. For a recovering alcoholic or addict, learning to find balance can be particularly challenging. Leading a balanced life means avoiding extreme highs or lows. It also means paying attention to tendencies that many addicts have to focus or obsess too much on one activity, such as exercise or work. When the scales are tipped too far in one direction, it can trigger the urge to turn to mind-altering substances. Action is required to re-balance my life.

Life can become unbalanced when I expect to feel good all the time. Addiction is a disease of “more.” I want what I want and I want it now. I want to experience good things, and more of them. Finding balance in recovery is not so different than trying to find a way to balance myself on a bicycle. If I move too much to one side or the other, I can't keep my balance.

Here are some ideas or questions to ask myself as I strive for balance.

Ask for help. Time takes time. It takes time to learn to experience my emotions sober. It's important to ask for help from others who have experience dealing with life on life's terms.

Keep it simple. Slogans such as “easy does it” and “first things first” are reminders to simplify my program and my approach to life. An acronym helps is HALT. Reminds me

to avoid being hungry, angry, lonely or tired. These are areas that frequently can cause me to lose my balance.

Be responsible. Set boundaries. Is there time for self-care? Am I taking responsibility for my own actions, reactions and recovery? Am I blaming others for the things that aren't working in my life? I had to use the 50% Rule: Only obligate myself to 50% of what I thought I could do. Keep striving for progress, not perfection. My life will never be perfectly balanced. I will make a lot of mistakes along the way, but as long as I don't pick up a drink or a drug, I will have another chance to try again tomorrow.

Self-talk and Role-playing to develop better conflict-resolution and interpersonal relationship skills help me. I miss the extreme highs and lows of active addiction as I get sober, and life seems, well, boring. I noticed I enjoy “making mountains out of mole hills.” Once I get through the initial rollercoaster ride of newly felt emotions, I found myself thinking, “is this all there is?” Now that I'm sober, I wasn't quite sure what to do. I can't always avoid painful feelings, and I can't intensify or exaggerate good feelings. My emotions may seem to consume me at times, or it might seem like I didn't feel much of anything at all.

Running from feelings is what I was used to, and since I know I can't pick up a substance, I may try to run from my feelings in other ways. It's not uncommon for a recovering addict, like me, to turn to overeating or gam-

Keep it simple. Slogans such as “easy does it” and “first things first” are reminders to simplify my program and my approach to life.

LIVING A BALANCED LIFE

SUBMITTED BY: SEAN C.

What is balance? What is moderation? These are all new concepts to me, or at least they were. They are an integral part of my life today but it wasn't easy to learn them. I was always an "all or nothing" guy. If it wasn't pedal to the metal, then it wasn't even worth considering.

It seems to me that the greatest unmanageability in my drinking days was the unbalanced life I was living. It was a double life as explained in the "Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous". There was no fun or play. I was always plotting, scheming and trying to hide the evidence. There was the constant uncertainty of "Will this be the day that I am confronted?"

During the day I was trying to be good. I thought that if I could control my drinking, then I might not be detected. However, at night and on weekends, it was an all out blitz! Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Only an alcoholic knows the loneliness of the last few months and year of his or her addiction.

Things began to change once I decided to give up the fight. Upon entering recovery, life seemed to be a contrast between good and evil. AA was good and I was trying to belong. But the way I had been living was pretty dark and that's where I thought I belonged. So where do I focus my attention? Do I go to three or four meetings a day and hang out at the clubhouse? Do I work 12 hours a day to prove to my employer that I am

responsible again? What about my family; how do I make it up to them? As I ventured into my new journey, a lot of things began to change. I had a sense that the ship was turning around. This proved to be true.

Balance was simple in the beginning, although I didn't think so. Unreservedly, I did what my sponsor suggested. He told me to go to work, call him at lunch, stop by Dunkin' Donuts after work and meet him at a meeting (with his coffee). New friends were entering my life quickly. Actually, I formed two sets of friends. I had my friends from my home group in Gwinnett County and I had another set of friends from the Ridgeview Alumni Association. "What about weekends?" I asked. He told me to hang out with your Ridgeview buddies. This was my first lesson in balance. Over the years, my group of friends have grown and have shown me the love I had always yearned for.

I have learned that there is a balance between the material world and the spiritual world. By applying the principles of the 12 Steps in my life, I have found a natural balance where my values and integrity have been restored - most days. Although my learning curve was long and wide, today I live a life that is full and rewarding. My soul is full. Joy is all encompassing and it is evident in my life. The spiritual world has taken over and that has been the key to my contentment.

Hugh Mulligan was a writer for the Boston Globe. He once wrote "What I do today is important because I am exchanging a day of my life for it." That quote has always had a special meaning to me. When I align my will with that of my Higher Power (sounds corny doesn't it?), stability in my life seems to fall into place. Our literature states that happiness is a byproduct of living well.

There are a lot of things going on in my life today. Job search, doctors' appointments, sponsees, being a newlywed, a new sponsor and home group, weekends filled with activities. As long as I center my day around a meeting, everything else will take care of itself. It always has. If I hadn't gotten sober, the idea of having balance in my life would never have been on the radar.

"First Things First" is the beginning. In the morning, I ask my Higher Power to keep me sober and direct my thinking so that I can perform His will to the best of my ability. I try not to get overwhelmed with my "To Do" list. As I proceed with my day, I try to remember to be grateful for what a wonderful gift I've been given. Unless it's "Date Night", I center my day around a meeting. When I go to bed, I thank my Higher Power for another day of sobriety.

It's a wonderful, fulfilling, balanced life! It all started by willing to get rid of my old ideas and try something different.

BALANCE

SUBMITTED BY: TOM S.

My life was completely out of balance when it was dictated by alcohol. In early recovery it went the other way and got out of balance with nothing but meetings, meetings and more meetings. It took a little time and listening to others in meetings that I learned I was going to too many meetings. Hiding out in AA is better than the alternative but still not reality. So with the guidance

of my sponsor we made a realistic schedule of recovery "stuff" and other real life "stuff".

We have 8 hours to sleep 8 hours to work and 8 hours to play. I try to keep that balance in my life today; so far so good.

Tom Scott Interior Contractors
check out our website: www.pbstjsinteriors.com

BALANCE FOUND ME

SUBMITTED BY: ANTHONY R.

I remember the feeling of being out of balance for the first several months of my recovery. It was a particularly uncomfortable feeling. I was accustomed to being left to my own self-destructive devices and without any accountability what so ever. Now, all of a sudden, I felt pushed and pulled towards meetings that I didn't feel like going to and phone calls that I didn't want to make. And that was on top of going to college and my normal responsibilities. At times, I felt as though I was on the verge of a panic attack.

Sure, I could have chosen to skip meeting and not call my sponsor, but the fear of relapse was greater than my fear of imbalance (I am still grateful for that fear to this day). Just one day at a time, I managed to persevere. The 12 steps taught me how to trust in my higher power and turn my will and my fear over to Him. Yet I was still plagued by this uncomfortable feeling of imbalance. I thought to myself, "Am I doing this right?" Of course no one works a program of recovery perfectly. This concept gave me comfort as I pushed ahead. Despite the fact that I could always do better, I had to acknowledge

My level of trust was growing and I began to have faith. Then I was offered more service opportunities. I wanted to say "no way" to these intrusions on my personal time. Hadn't I done enough?

the fact that my life was getting much better. Whatever it was that I was doing was working. The people that had witnessed my recovery also pointed out to me that I was getting good results and that if I wanted these results to continue, I should keep doing what I had been doing. Encouragement from a fellowship of other people in recovery has been invaluable to me.

I became used to feeling out of balance after a few months. My level of trust was growing and I began to have faith. Then I was offered more service opportunities. I wanted to say "no way" to these intrusions on my personal time. Hadn't I done enough? This was my will asserting itself. After consulting with my sponsor and utilizing the tools of prayer and meditation, I was blessed with more opportunities to be of service. Just when I was getting comfortable in my recovery, my higher power (through the help of the fellowship) re-intensified the balance problem. All I could do was my best. I left the results up to my higher power. Success or failure was in His hands. This way of thinking about results was not the way I was raised to think, nor was it the way I had thought before. Accepting this concept has been the key to solving the balance problem.

Another obstacle to balance has been my relationship with my girlfriend. After a rather tumultuous four years together, she now began to trust me. Our love for each other was recovering in leaps and bounds. As it did, she wanted me to spend more and more time with her. A couple of years earlier she was kicking me out of her home, now, she didn't want me to leave for even an hour! I had to explain to her that if I didn't continue to grow in my program (not just maintain but grow), then I would surely relapse, and the guy that she had to put out would return with a vengeance. If I put her before my recovery, I will loss both.

I wish I could tell the newcomer that I mastered balance through controlling my life within a few weeks. That would be much more comforting than my experience of feeling out of balance for nearly the first year. For me, to work the 12 step process was hard, but to go on with life the way it had been was impossible. Being uncomfortable is part of the deal. The great news is that a psychic change has occurred. The courage to change, trust and faith in a higher power, acceptance of things I can't change, and letting go of results have brought me to a point where I no longer fear being out of balance. It was the fear of being out of balance that was more troubling than actually being out of balance. Today, I do not try to control the scale. I do the next right thing and move on. The fear is gone.

BALANCE? WHAT'S THAT? (CON'T. FROM PAGE 5)

active in the Alumni. I am looking forward to spending more quality time at home with my wife and dog once I graduate. Like a good addict, I have gone from one extreme to the other. Thankfully, my sponsor and network of friends keep me grounded.

I have seen boredom become a trigger for relapse in others and I may have over-reacted to that threat. However, keeping busy with a job, school, and the spiritual growth of recovery has given me a purpose. I did not expect that gift when I crawled through the doors of Ridgeview all those years ago. The

out-of-balance areas of my life that I currently need to work on are: more exercise, better nutrition, and taking time for meditation and leisure activities. That is why you hear that this journey is about "progress, not perfection." There is not enough time in the day for all I want to do, and that is truly a high quality problem indeed!

BALANCING THE UNBALANCED

SUBMITTED BY: STEVEN F.

I looked up the word balance in the dictionary. Two of the definitions that stood out to me were 1) Mental steadiness or emotional stability and 2) Habit of calm behavior.

Really?? What is that?? I can't speak for you, but on the other side of the bottle, none of this made an appearance in my life. Thank god things are different now.

Prior to recovery, there was very little balance in my life. I couldn't balance a checkbook. Not that I had one. I juggled work, family, problems and emotions around my drinking. What appeared was chaos. My life was in constant turmoil. I met a lot of new people living that way. Judges, prosecutors, bail bondsmen, correctional officers, probation and parole officers. It wasn't until I got sober that some of this "unmanageability" took a different course.

It is written that the alcoholic can be one of the finest fellows in the world but let him drink for a day and he becomes disgustingly, and even dangerously anti-social.

My sponsor and I went through the big book of alcoholics anonymous. He pointed out the unmanageability in the first few chapters. We read stories about a bunch of unsta-

ble drunks. It is written that the alcoholic can be one of the finest fellows in the world but let him drink for a day and he becomes disgustingly, and even dangerously anti-social. He has a positive genius for getting tight at exactly the wrong moment. He is often perfectly sensible and well "balanced" concerning everything except liquor. He seems quite rational and well "balanced" with respect to other problems. However intelligent we may have been in other respects, where alcohol has been involved, we have been strangely insane. I saw myself in all these illustrations. I believe that's when I began

paying closer attention to what the solution was; a route that leads to some balance in my life. Heaven knows I need some of that!!

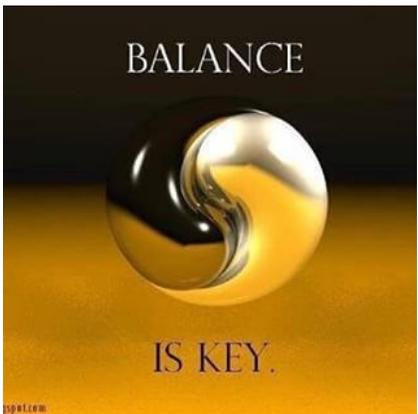
In the 12 & 12, there's further mention of balance. In step 4 it speaks of clearing away morbidity and encouraging balance. In step 10 it talks about the change in our attitude in order to keep balance. Step 11 reveals that meditation can be the 1st fruit of emotional balance. Step 12 warns the reader of getting off balance by having our priorities in wrong order.

I just want you to know that the solution to acquiring some balance in your life can be found in our literature. I tipped the scales for long enough. Today, I find balance in staying connected, working with others and the fellowship of recovery; Faith in my higher power ensures that. I pray that you, too, will find balance in your life.

IS MY RECOVERY BALANCED? (CON'T.) FROM PAGE 8

bling or relationship addiction. I may sleep too much or I might become obsessive about a hobby, such as going to meetings. People turn to various forms of compulsive behavior when they don't want to live in reality. What helps me to face reality and walk through the fear are discussing my fears with others, at AA meetings, working the 12 Steps, in prayer and meditation. Intellectual understanding is not enough. I must be willing to

face my suffering and see it for what it is: suffering is pain, dramatized, chaotic. I need to Be Still and know God. Breathe in God, breathe out me. A sober life doesn't have to be a boring life. How can I enjoy my life sober without intensifying all my experiences? Finding Balance is the answer. My 15th sober birthday is next week.



BALANCE & SERVICE WORK WERE THE MISSING INGREDIENTS OF MY RECOVERY

SUBMITTED BY: ALEX H.

After my last relapse, I was skeptical about returning to Ridgeview and AA. My addictive thinker told me rehab and AA was not for me. Once my pain became unbearable, I reluctantly went to back Ridgeview...

After detox, and living at the residence for 3 weeks, I began to understand why I was not able to maintain sobriety. And it was the result of listening to lectures, group therapy, and reading recovery literature. There I was finally, putting together the missing pieces of the puzzle. I realized that I did things to an extreme or did not do them at all. I had been a "holic" in several aspects of my life. Drugs and alcohol were replaced by other obsessions that made me feel good and kept me busy. For example:

Exercise-holic:

I exercise/trained 10 to 12 hours a week and I was obsessed about winning triathlons.

Body image-holic:

I was obsessed with what I ate, how much I weighed, and my physical appearance. I continuously measured my body fat, counted daily calories and wrote all of it in logs.

Workaholic:

I was obsessed about being the best at work, being on the top. So I worked day and night and sought perfectionism.

And at the end there was no time for recovery.

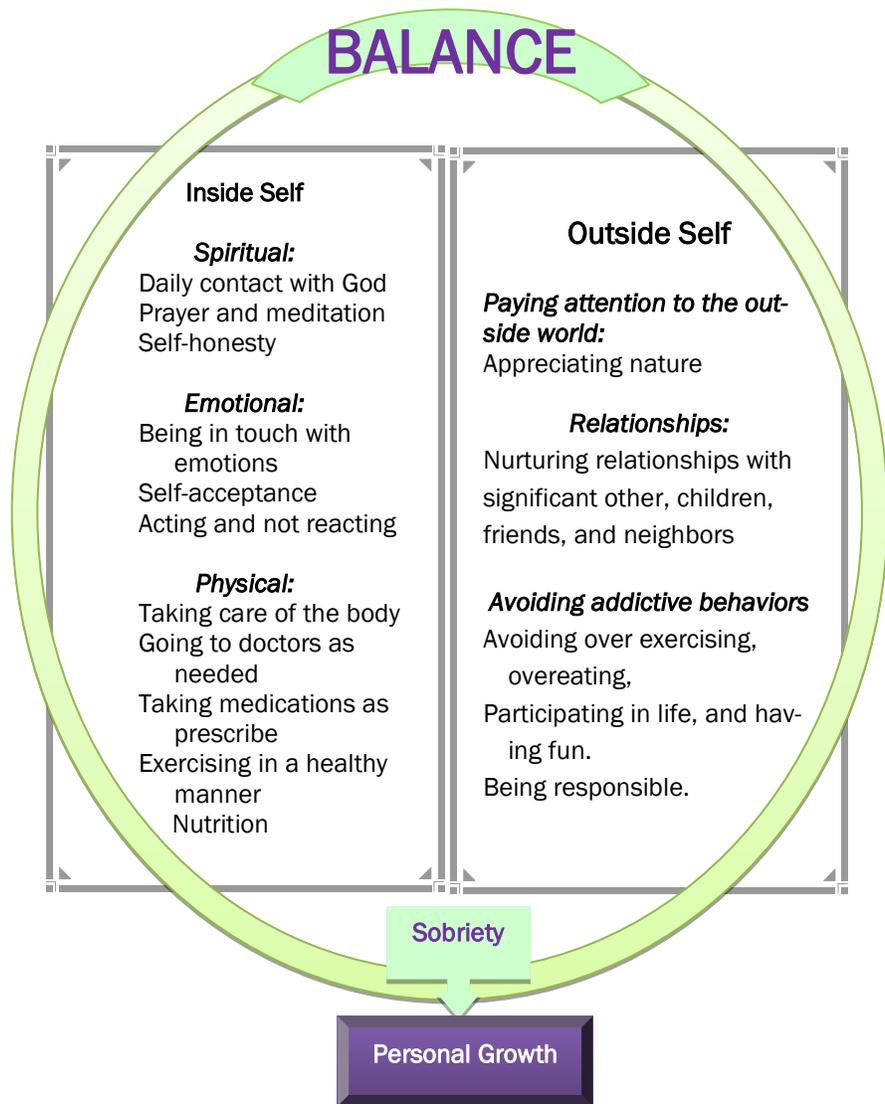
I heard a counselor say that recovery and true sobriety is not only staying dry but also staying away from addictive/obsessive/compulsive behaviors. I was determined to stay clean and sober and I realized I needed to change. So the word *balance* became part of my daily prayers and goals.

Balance in my life, as I understand it, is synergy of inside-self and outside-

self. These terms are also referred as interiority and exteriority.

Inside-self includes taking care of spiritual, emotional, and physical areas. Outside-self includes paying attention to the outside world, relationships, avoiding compulsive/obsessive behaviors, participating in life, having fun, and being responsible.

Balancing daily activities is challenging, but do-able. To elaborate a little further, I created an illustration of what I mean by balancing "self" with examples of routine activities:



Balancing is a continuous effort. As I am learning to take care of my interiority and exteriority without avoiding or overdoing things, I am experiencing personal growth. I always keep in mind that I need to practice "progress" and not perfection.



**RIDGEVIEW ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
STEERING COMMITTEE
4TH ANNUAL**



BOWL-A-THON

DATE: SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2015
TIME: 12 NOON–2PM
WHERE: BRUNSWICK ZONE–AUSTELL
2750 AUSTELL ROAD, SW, MARIETTA

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT MEREDITH B. @ 678-650-1621 OR DAWN L. @ 404-790-4497.



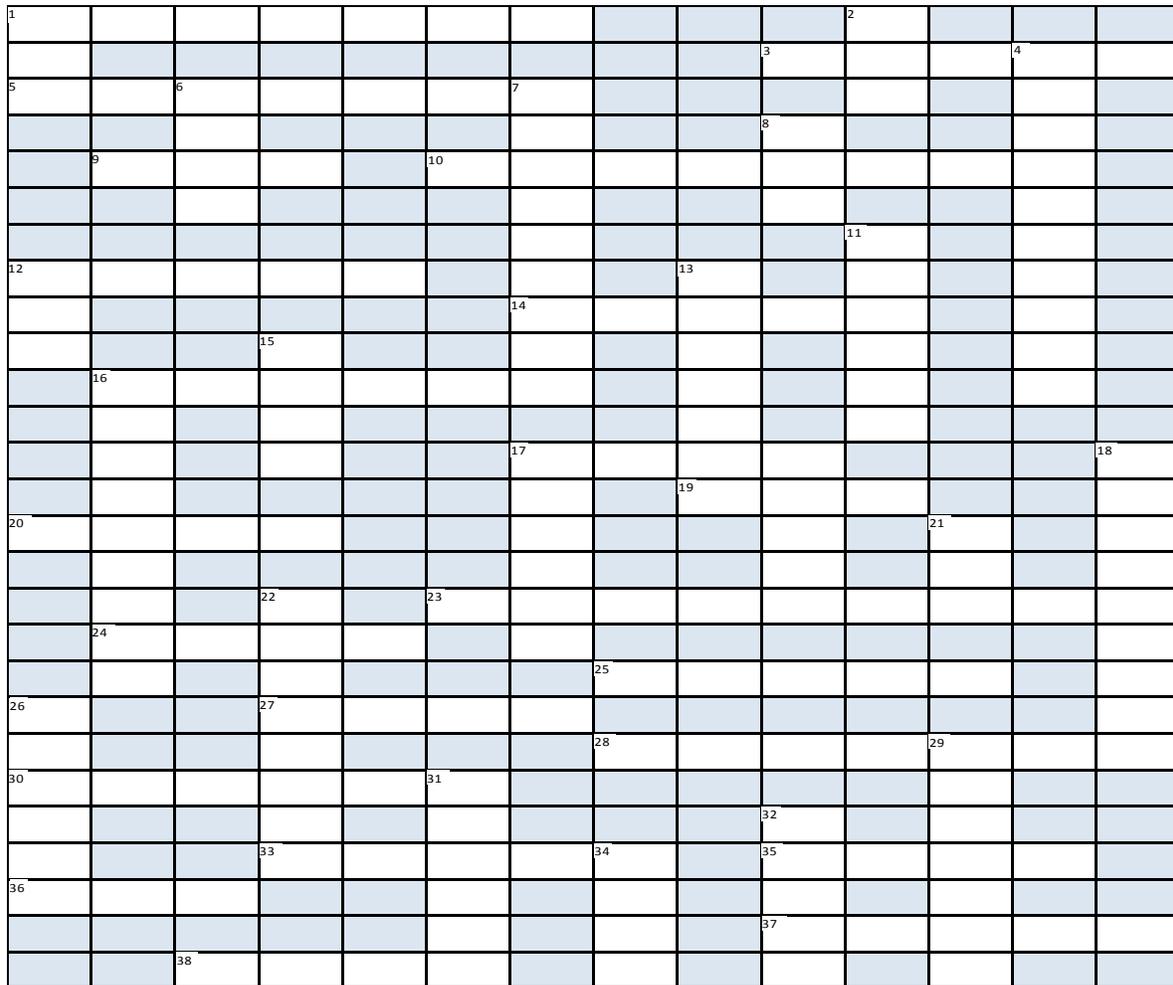
Open to five-person teams, donors may make a flat donation or donate on a per pin basis. All donations are tax deductible.

Children are welcomed and encouraged to participate. The outing provides two hours of bowling and shoes. Per pin donations will be calculated over the three games. Suggested donation per team is \$100, but more is always preferred.

All donations will be used in support of the various sponsored events within the recovering community.



PUZZLE CREATED BY DEBBIE W.



ACROSS

1. Billy Joel's Lonely Word
3. Just For _____ .
5. Step Work Precursor
9. Local Psychiatric Institute, abbreviation
10. Homonym for Patients
12. "Keep your side of the street _____".
14. First word on Chip
16. Peaceful
17. Loses' opposite
19. The "Almighty"
20. Debt Notification
23. Patience and _____.
24. Conclusion of Prayer
25. Rely
27. Jim Croce's' bottle contents.
28. Assists with step work.
30. "Say it like you _____" (2 words)
33. Stairs
35. It makes the world go round
36. Holiday precursor
37. More Friendly
38. No Charge

DOWN

1. Tonto's greeting
2. Also known as H.P.
4. Key to Problems
6. Whitney Houston's "The Greatest ____ of All
7. Partner with Attitude
8. "_____ freedom ring!"
11. Happy, _____, and Free
12. is able to
13. Trio of Ready and Able
15. Prior to "Amen"
16. Intangible, nonphysical
17. Last name of one of AA Founders.
18. Admit Defeat
21. Beach Boys' activity until the car is taken away.
22. Makers, make it?
26. Lower Pride
29. Assist, help
31. Number of Steps or Traditions
32. Opposite of Together
34. Of Sound Mind

Remember hitting your bottom? Do you remember that moment when you first began to feel some hope? Looking back, can you remember those angels who appeared at that precise moment when you needed help the most? I can.

I can also remember the abject fear of, "How am I going to pay for this?" No insurance, no real savings, no trust fund, no golden benefactor. Scared, having hit my bottom, finally able to ask for help. I was in a safe place. The rest would just have to take care of itself.

Treatment costs money, real money. Programs, therapies, prescriptions, food, housing and all the while life continues to go on outside without us. As active members of the Ridgeview Alumni Association our fund raising goal is an endowment fund that will one day be able to help financially that person currently in treatment. Whether it's more time in treatment, another couple of days in a halfway house, medications, daycare so the patient can make it to the program that week, the needs can be overwhelming at times. We all know how powerful a helping hand at that critical moment can make or break a spirit.

Our goal for the Endowment Fund has to be set high if we are to be able to generate any kind of meaningful income. To date we have raised \$93,500 towards our first \$500,000. Every single dollar raised goes into an asset management account over which the Alumni Steering Committee has sole control.

When the day comes, and it will, that we are in a financial position to begin offering grants to patients, a review committee will be established. This group will be comprised of active Steering Committee members who have demonstrated a record of service, and a representative from the hospital. The committee will review the requests and make grants based on need, the patient's participation in their own recovery, and the patient's treatment team's input.

Obviously we are a ways down the road from making any grants. The next several years are about increasing awareness of our project, raising and investing the donations that come our way. Today, you can make a difference in the life of that person who is still out there.

Won't you make a commitment to be someone's angel, just for today? We have.

Ridgeview Alumni Association Endowment Fund Campaign

Date: _____

YES, I want to contribute to the Alumni Endowment Fund. I've been in Recovery _____ years and would like to give back \$ _____.

YES, I am not an Alumni; however, I wish to contribute to the Endowment Fund. As a family member, friend, business owner or corporate representative/sponsor. Here is my donation of \$ _____.

Name _____ Phone (____) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

The Ridgeview Alumni Association is a non-profit organization and all contributions are tax deductible.

Make checks payable to: Ridgeview Alumni Association Endowment Fund

Announcement:

If you would like to be removed from the mailing list and no longer receive this newsletter in printed form, please return this postcard with your address on the line below or send an email to sysadmin@ridgeviewalumni.com with Postcard in the subject line.

We are also considering publishing all future newsletters to be available **only** through the Ridgeview Alumni website. If you agree with this concept, please check "Yes", otherwise select "No" Yes in the boxes No below.

We thank you for taking the time to return this postcard.

Love & Service,
Communications Committee

**Alumni Steering
Committee**

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THE VIEW

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