

A photograph of a person wearing a light-colored hoodie and blue jeans, standing in the rain against a brick wall. The person is looking down, and their hands are tucked into their pockets. The rain is falling heavily, creating a sense of isolation and struggle. The background is a dark, textured brick wall.

FINDING SHELTER from ADDICTION

Words of hope from
an addict who lost
EVERYTHING...

and then found it
again

K. P. White

2011 Readers Favorite
Award winner

An insightful and beautifully written book about recovery

Testimonials

I remember one time, a client of mine, who'd been clean for one year, was asked by the judge how she'd stayed clean for so long. The young woman pulled out a book and handed it to him, telling him that the book had helped her "more than anything else." "I read it EVERY day," she said.

It was THIS book.

Steven Trenholme
Attorney At Law
Drug Court Public Defender
Butte County, California

It's unheard of to get someone with Kevin's education, experience and writing and storytelling ability to write a book like this, from the perspective of being an addict himself. This book is 'one of a kind'.

John C.,
A fellow addict in NA

Whenever Kevin shares, I ALWAYS listen closely. No one shares with the wisdom and insight that he does. And he says everything in such a beautiful, positive, poetic and inspiring way.

Shelley A.,
A fellow addict in NA

Cover picture from
<http://www.earthshots.org/2009/05/shelter-by-jonathan-munshi/>

** Note that final cover design is pending*

Finding Shelter from Addiction™

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Finding Shelter from Addiction *(Messages of Hope)*

By Kevin W., MD, PhD

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Foreword

I am an addict. In fact, I am multiply addicted... not only to drugs, but also to various addictive behaviors... pornography, sex, work, feeling loved, feeling needed, self-pity. These addictions cost me almost everything. I lost a job, a career, a professional license, a six-figure salary and the respect and support of virtually all my professional colleagues. I lost all this for using drugs and having sex with a fellow addict, who also happened to be a patient of mine. That the sex was consensual was not relevant. Doctors just cannot have sex with a patient, under any circumstances. I knew this but was so lost in my addiction and so co-dependent with her, I didn't care. I did it anyway, and I paid a dear price.

I became a *persona-non-gratis*. Nobody wanted me around anymore. Not because people didn't like me. In fact, everybody loved me until they discovered that I was an addict, and what some of my addictions were.

I went from being able to find work everywhere, to being unable to find work anywhere.

"Are you the same Dr. W. who lost his license?" I eventually would be asked, sometimes AFTER a job offer was being prepared for me or actually had been signed, sealed and delivered... employers had been amazed that someone with my credentials would be available to them... an MD, two specialties, AND a PhD with dozens and dozens of high-profile research papers and awards? They were tripping over themselves coming up with contracts.

"When can you start?" I can't tell you how many times I was asked that.

But then someone, somewhere in the company would ask: "Are you the same doctor who was in the news?"

And I would have to admit that I was.

And then everyone would say how sorry they were... but they could not proceed with the offer any further. They wished me luck... but in their voices I heard the implicit: don't ever contact us again.

Not all that long ago, at about two o'clock one morning, I found myself standing on top of a six-storey parking building directly across the street from the hospital where I had worked for several years, a hospital I no longer even was welcome to step inside of. I wasn't standing up there because I had parked my car. I no longer could afford to pay for parking... my car was parked illegally a couple of blocks away. I wasn't up there for the view. Hell... it was too dark.

I was up there to end it all. The irony of it all is that the only thing that prevented me from jumping the 60 or so feet it was to the pavement below... was my fear of heights. I couldn't even kill myself right.

A year later I returned to that same spot, six stories up. It was about three in the afternoon on an unseasonably cool and cloudy spring day. I still hadn't been able to find steady work. My bank account was near empty. Life had not improved.

But I had improved.

I looked around at the city below... at the downtown in the distance with its new high-rise buildings... at the beautiful trees in the park two blocks away. This time I had come just to look around... to bask in the beauty of the town I live in.

Sixteen months earlier I had felt so cursed.

Now I felt so blessed.

In Narcotics Anonymous, I had found recovery, and with it a happiness and sense of peace I had never known before, not even as a child.

With this book, I want to share with fellow addicts what I have learned from so many in NA who have gone before me. If reading these words helps to keep one addict clean for another day, then it will have been worth the effort.

I also want to share what I've learned with non-addicts, since so much of what I've learned could apply to almost anybody.

And finally, I want to give back... to make amends. And so, proceeds of this book will go to help other addicts like me. Because, by helping other addicts, I am helping the society I was forced to leave, those outside who do not understand addiction even though they live surrounded by it.

Shame is the fuel of addiction.

It is only by losing this deep shame that the addict can lose the obsession to use.

This book brings words of hope and encouragement. I used to be a hopeless dope fiend. Now, I am a dopeless hope fiend.

May you find hope too!

Kevin W.

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Finding Shelter

By Kevin W.

One of the main things I have learned since coming to Narcotics Anonymous (NA) is that I do not have to immediately react to everything. Before, I used to. Sometimes my panicked reaction was making a hurried phone call, only to realize several minutes later that I would have been better off not having made the call... I'd only made things worse. Sometimes, my reaction involved jumping to conclusions and becoming extremely worried or upset, and staying that way for a long time afterwards. And, all too often, my reaction involved using.

In truth, there are very few things in life that require an immediate response. If I am standing in the middle of the road and a huge Mac truck is bearing down on me, I DO need to jump out of the way, as fast as I can, if I want to live. And if I am falling off of a cliff and want to live, I DO need to reach out my hand and grab something. But, for most other events, I have time. In fact, if I wait things out, crises and unpleasant feelings usually pass without any intervention at all from me. That's just the way things tend to work out.

But waiting for things to pass does not mean that I have to stand out in the rain. Before, I used to. In fact, I used to do one of two things when life was pouring down on me. Either I just stood there, getting sopping wet and feeling very sorry for myself.. Man! I did this a lot. Or I stood there actually trying to stop the rain. This is something that certainly never worked for me. In fact, it is clearly flawed thinking that probably never works for anyone. Now I have learned that what I SHOULD do is find shelter and then

wait out the storm. Results: I stay dry and I don't react by doing something senseless and, yes, stupid.

But where do I find shelter? I now know this too. I find my shelter in N.A. and the twelve steps. N.A. is my shelter. Meetings are my shelter... the smiles, the hugs, the sharing and the caring. My sponsor is my shelter. My other friends in N.A.; my step group; my list of phone numbers... you all are my shelter. As are prayer, meditation, the books I have about recovery, and working the 12 steps. Together, all of this forms the umbrella that keeps me dry, so that I can wait out the rain in safety.

None of us deserves to get rained on all the time.

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MAYBE, JUST MAYBE

By Kevin W.

*I*t must have been in childhood that I started to think in such absolutes. I could see gray in most things, but never in my own life. At one moment I was going to save the World. In the next my life was not worth living. And so I traveled, shaken and jarred by every pebble on the road. To smooth things out, I used. When finally I accepted that my life had become unmanageable, I entered an addiction treatment center, where I heard this story...

.....

*T*here once was an older man who had a horse. His was the only horse in the village where he lived, and all the other villagers told him daily just how lucky he was to have it. He just smiled at them and said: "Maybe."

One day, his horse ran away. And all the villagers came to the old man's home to tell him just how terribly unlucky he was to have his horse run away. But he just smiled at them and said: "Maybe."

A few days after his horse had disappeared, it returned. And it returned not alone, but accompanied by two other wild horses, both strong and beautiful. The villagers flocked to see the horses and again remarked just how lucky this man was, now to have not one but three horses, the only horses in the village. But he just smiled at them and said: "Maybe."

That very afternoon, the man's only son fell off one of the new horses while trying to train it, and the

boy broke his arm. The villagers all told the older man just how unlucky this was. "Maybe," he said.

Three days later, soldiers from the nearby capital came to recruit all the young men in the village to fight in the war. All the young men were taken, except for the one with a broken arm. The villagers could not believe how lucky the old man was to have his son be the only one spared. And he just smiled.

.....

*I*n Northern Texas, where I have spent some time, the weather changes can be so drastic that locals often say: "If you don't like the weather... just wait a minute."

Life brings changes, and sometimes they are drastic. I, myself, lost my career. I still remember the exact moment I was asked to resign, something I had come to because of my addiction. My first response was to say that my life was no longer worth living. I could not survive. This wave of self-righteous self-pity led to my second response, which was to dip deep into my addiction, feeling justified because of my bad fortune... even though I had brought that misfortune on myself. Fortunately, I was ultimately able to begin the road towards recovery.

As I write this, I am still very early in recovery. But I have learned, through others, what I now need to do when unfortunate or unwanted events happen again in my life, as I know they will. I need to do two things.

First I need to... Wait a minute. Go to a meeting. Call my sponsor. Spend time with friends. Anything, just to put some time between the event and my response. Don't use and lose. Wait and win.

And then I need to accept that maybe this event does not mean imminent doom. Maybe this negative event can have a positive side. Maybe if I search for it, I can find a response to it that will bring out the best. Let go and let God. And maybe, just maybe, things will turn out alright.

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The Rock

By Kevin W.

If you listen... if you truly listen... you just never know when someone will say something important.

It is like the story of a man who sold rocks. He was an old man, a homeless man. His clothes were torn and his hair unkempt. He sat on a street corner holding two baskets in his lap. One was for collecting change from passers-by. The other held rocks... dozens of rocks that were in no way extraordinary... normal shape, color and size... some slightly bigger or smoother than others... but basically just rocks. The old man would give each person who had tossed change into the one basket, a rock he had selected for them from the other. If you gave him a nickel, he would give you one of the smaller rocks. A quarter bought you one of the larger ones.

If you passed him and turned the corner, you would see rocks all over the sidewalk, invariably tossed there by purchasers who had held onto them just long enough to get out of sight of the old man, holding onto them that long only to be polite.

One day a young boy came along and tossed a quarter into the old man's basket, for which he received a standard, appropriately-sized rock. Given money for this by his mother, the boy had bought rocks before from the old man.

"Why do you want me to buy rocks from the old man?" he had asked her. "He's just crazy."

But she had insisted, saying: "One day you might buy a rock of value."

And so the boy would come, from time to time, but like everyone else, always tossed away whatever rock he'd bought as soon as he rounded the corner. But on this particular day, he forgot about the rock in his pocket until a few minutes later, when he was crossing a street. He suddenly remembered the rock and pulled it out of his pocket to toss it to the ground. He didn't see the car coming towards him until it was too close for him to jump out of its way. Realizing his predicament, the boy did the only thing he could think of... he threw the rock in his hand at the windshield. The driver, who had been distracted looking for a store, heard the rock hit and immediately jammed on the breaks, screeching to a halt not two feet from where the young boy stood.

And so it was that the boy learned this: You sometimes just never know what little thing will save your life.

And that is why, when I attend NA meetings, or speak with my NA sponsor, or just talk with other addicts in recovery, I always listen to everything everyone says. Words of wisdom are often called 'pearls of wisdom' for a reason.

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The Problem with Mirrors

By Kevin W.

*N*ever will I find freedom in a rear-view mirror.
Lord knows I have tried.

So many times in my life, I have become entirely consumed by the past... in my mind trying desperately to un-say something I have said... to undo something I have done. I have lain awake in bed trying to alter history... replaying inside my head past conversations in sordid detail... I said this, then she said this, then if only, oh if only I had only said this instead of this... as if maybe I could, in retrospect, insert or delete or exchange a word or phrase and hence alter the course of history... but to no avail. This obsession has never yielded any satisfactory result. Instead, each time this useless exercise has done nothing more than keep my awake into all hours of the night and drive me deeper into despair and self-loathing. How can I ever have been so stupid to have said or have done what I did?

This is not to say that looking back should never be done. The proverb goes: "Those who forget the blunders of the past are destined to repeat them." So it IS necessary at times to reflect on what has happened in our lives. But NOT to fixate.

Freedom comes from watching the road ahead. Not behind us. And not around the corner or over the hill. These places are too far away and too unpredictable to be real. The road we should watch is the road we can see.

When I try to read signs in the rear view mirror, inevitably the signs that I see are pointing in the wrong direction than where I wish to go. I find myself directing myself away from recovery instead of towards

it. The printing on those signs is backwards, making them hard to read. And, as time passes, every sign I already have passed becomes smaller and smaller, so that trying to interpret it carries greater and greater risk. I find myself reading things into these signs that never were there to begin with. Recall that every mirror image is, in fact, an illusion, not truth: we look fatter in most mirrors than we really are; and our left side appears on the right side, and vice versa. Putting too much credence in the past ignores the truth of the present, which is far more real. The abuse that my mother did to me as a child cannot truly hurt me any more, not unless I choose, in the present, to let it. But the drug that I consume today may be the end of me; it is an immediate and very real threat.

But the greatest risk with always looking backwards is that it prevents me from seeing the road ahead. This leads me to collisions, wrong turns and other catastrophic events that I might have avoided, if only I had been watching where I was going.

The good driver does glance back now and again, but only for a brief moment, and never without keeping at least a mental eye on the road ahead. Rear view mirrors have a definite purpose. But there is a reason that they all are small and placed away from my direct line of vision. That reason is to allow me to focus most of my attention on the road ahead.

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The Girl in the Doorway

By Kevin W.

I am a musician... a songwriter, guitarist, harmonica player and singer.

For years and years I have written, sung and played. I averaged writing 15-20 new songs every year. I played on professional stages alongside truly amazing musicians. Music became so much a part of my life that, except perhaps for being a father, I considered myself much more a musician than anything else, even though I had made a professional career in Medicine.

I never considered myself to be a doctor. I always considered myself to be a musician. I never was comfortable hanging out with doctors... talking about tax shelters and golfing trips. But I sure loved hanging out with fellow musicians... many of them custodians, carpenters or plumbers by day.

Music was my spiritual food.

The last year of my using, I became so depressed that I lost my love of music. I put my guitar and harmonicas away with no intention of ever pulling out again, just like my father had done with his violin. I remember, as a child, hearing his sweet music wafting upstairs from his downstairs office. And then, one day, realizing that he had put his music away forever. I swore I would never do this. And yet, here I was, doing exactly the same.

The day I left home to enter an addiction treatment center, my wife asked me to bring my guitar. I said... "What for? I won't play it." Not playing my guitar and harmonicas... not singing or even listening to music had almost become a badge I wore, to show everyone just how

miserable I was... I was punishing them for my addiction.
I know now how little anyone else cared.

The only person I truly was punishing was myself.

I relented and agreed to bring my guitar... and I
threw a few harmonicas into my case as well, just to
humor my wife.

At the Addiction Center, three weeks into recovery,
I pulled my guitar out again...

... and started to write:

The Girl in the Doorway

It's morning in Gas Town. The fog's rolling in.
It's casting a shadow, chilling the air.
And there in a doorway where night time has been.
A young girl is sleeping.

It's her long tangled hair that covers her face.
Her hands look so cold and her clothes are so worn.
But morning has found her alone in this place.
She seems barely breathing.

All the people who pass by ignore that she's there.
There's nothing they see that they've not seen before.
And the more they keep walking, the less that they care.
And so they keep walking.

For so long she's been dying inside of herself.
Killing herself, one vein at a time.
But for rhyme and for reason she's now on a shelf,
Just waiting 'til evening.

Now it's evening in Gas Town, the girl's disappeared.
The door once behind her has opened up wide.
And inside she's welcomed by those just like her.
Who've come to this doorway.*
They've all found Your Way.**

Notes

- * Narcotics Anonymous is open to anyone who needs it. It is a doorway.
- ** NA is a spiritual and NOT a religious organization. Every person finds whatever 'Higher Power' means most to them.

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On Happiness

By Kevin W.

*W*hen I first came to NA, I was miserable and had been so for a long, long time. I had hardly smiled in three years. And I am sure that I had not laughed at all in that time... at least not a true, heartfelt, joyous laugh.

At the time, I believed that to have true happiness, true long-lasting happiness, I had to have three things:

1. I had to love myself;
2. I had to love who I was with; and
3. I had to love what I was doing.

Given this, it was obvious to me why I had never been happy... and why I never could be happy, at least not in a long-lasting meaningful way.

I certainly never had loved myself. In fact, I think I loathed myself. I had had this dark, secretive core inside me for so long, any sense of self-love had been eaten away.

I used to love who I was with... but I had slowly but very efficiently and effectively pushed everyone who loved me away... Why?... because I hated the thought of them ever finding out who I really was.

And how could I ever love what I was doing? Even when my career was a whopping success, I had never truly basked in any of my successes. Why? Because I knew that, at my core and in my addiction, I was failing miserably.

I felt this way up until very recently. But in the past little while, I have come to realize this:

True, long-lasting happiness is not important.

It is not. In fact, so few people truly achieve it that it is not worth worrying about.

What is important is: moments of happiness.

That's all... just moments.

All I truly need to be satisfied with my life is to know that, every so often and on a not-so-infrequent basis, I will be happy. I will smile. I will laugh. I will feel good about something I have done or have seen or have had done to me.

I have come to accept that everything bad, irrespective of how bad it is, eventually ends. It may take awhile. But everything bad does eventually come to an end, no matter how horrible it is.

Everything good also eventually must come to an end.

And everything in between.

All I have to do is wait for time to pass when things are bad... and enjoy my time when things are good. While waiting I can find peace in the knowledge that things will turn good again. While enjoying myself, I can gather inspiration to keep on living and loving.

The only exception to all of this is if I cannot wait out the bad times and choose to use instead. When I fall into my addiction, I remove the possibility that the badness will end. Active addiction is an endless cycle, ending only in total despair and death.

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COMING
FALL 2012