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Resilience Inc. Newsletter: Feb 9, 2018 (Volume 30)

This month's newsletter includes:

A Message from Lori Ashcraft, Ask Emily and The Power of Love.

A Message from Lori Ashcraft.

Hello friends,

Well here it is February already. The month of love and chocolate!!! Two of our favorite things! I'm going to keep this short since I am including an article on LOVE written by Sarah Brown and me for a publication in Canada. Hope you like it and find it helpful in your recovery work. Please eat all the chocolate you want this month and next month we can go on a diet together.



Much love to all of you.

Lori

Ask Emily.

Hello Folks,

How do you like my glasses?
I'm viewing the world through
the lenses of love, literally!!

We have two special guests
this month (Jack and Wally).
These lovely cats have
recently been adopted by
Laverne Miller. Laverne
currently works across many
projects with the SAMHSA
funded National GAINS
Center. She provides
technical assistance to a
diverse group of grantees to
assist them in recruiting,
hiring, integrating and advancing peer staff in the workplace. At the GAINS
Center, Laverne is responsible for developing learning communities for justice
involved peers. Laverne is deeply committed to eliminating health disparities
and the collateral consequences that any involvement with the criminal justice
system has upon an individual's ability to enjoy all the benefits of citizenship.
Laverne loves her two new housemates and speaks very highly of them. Yes,
it is still the honey moon period, but still....



Let's hear what these two cats have to ask about.

Dear Emily,

We feel so blessed to be in the home of our new owner, Laverne. We are trying to be on our good behavior. We are trying to be entertaining and loveable, cute and happy. We try to look relaxed and at home. The truth is; however, we are a little stressed out by all this trying to be good. How can we ease up on ourselves and enjoy our new home without worrying about being kicked out due to bad behavior?

Jack and Wally



Dear Jack and Wally,

Believe me, I know how hard it is to be good! I used to work on it all the time. Now I relax, maybe a little too much. I feel safe at home and have stopped worrying about being kicked out. This took some time, so don't expect this to happen overnight. First, be as good as

you can, but if you slip up, don't worry about it. Just let it pass and start over with all your cuteness and charm. I know cats aren't known for being humble, but you don't have to live up to that stereotype. Let your slip-ups provide a little humility and ask, in your own cat-like way, for a little forgiveness and grace. Humans like this. It actually sort of endears them to you. We all get stuck sometimes in who and what we think we are and what we are supposed to do and be. Try not to let this define you. Just be yourself and try not to automatically act like a cat. (I know a dog should not say that, so pardon the cat profiling, couldn't help myself).

Emily

The Mysterious Third Practice: The Power of Love Instead of the Love of Power

*About the authors: Lori Ashcraft, PhD is the Director of **Resilience Inc.** A training and consulting group dedicated to the development and promotion of recovery and resilience. Sarah Brown is a highly effective trainer and playwright. Both have had years of experience in creating and delivering recovery programs and both have a lived experience of recovery.*

There is a lot of talk these days about *best practices*. If a method does not have the distinction of being a *best practice* it is sometimes not taken seriously. Methods that are on their way to becoming a *best practice* (it often takes 6 to 8 years for a practice to become best at which point it may be obsolete) are often referred to as *promising practices*. In the wake of these conversations we want to introduce yet a third practice. This third practice can stand alone as an effective practice and it can also be combined with all other practices. It has been around forever and never fails to produce remarkable results. This third practice, while powerful, is quite unassuming. It's called *the power of love*.



Despite the effectiveness of the love practice, there seems to be a lot of hesitation to using it. This is not surprising. This practice requires courage to experience the possibility of pain that comes when we are vulnerable enough to

love each other. In our business, we work with folks who have often not had much of an opportunity to have a fulfilling life. Loving them is even more risky than loving those with fewer wounds who are less likely to cause us pain.

There is a way to connect with those we serve and love them without being taken out by their pain. We call it, *Being in two places at the same time*. The first place to be is in genuine contact (love) with the person being served. The second place to be is a step back, just enough to take in the big picture. This allows us to be in solid loving connection without being pulled into the same energy warp the person we are serving is in. We have both had extensive experience with the third practice and can vouch for its effectiveness.

Lori remembers the first couple of times she used the word, “Love” in a behavioral health setting. The first time was at the beginning of the recovery movement in the year 2000. She was conducting a training on recovery for psychiatrists working in a crisis program. A young doctor, frustrated with the concept that recovery is possible, lost his cool and impatiently asked, “Tell me how I am supposed to do everything that needs to be done around here and do this recovery thing too? Sometimes we have people waiting on floormats and all I have time to do is get them a pillow and blanket. What do you call that in your recovery concepts?” Lori didn’t have an academic answer backed up by best practice research, but she got a glimpse of this doctor’s heartfelt desire to be of service. Her answer, “Well doctor, I call that love.” As you might guess, *love* is not a word used in any version of the DSM. Talking about *love* in a room full of doctors who had not yet been exposed to recovery concepts caused some discomfort expressed through laughter and some teasing of the young doctor who had asked the questions. But Lori knew it was the right answer.

The second time Lori used the word love was in a training of multidisciplinary staff wanting to gain a better understanding of the recovery process. This incident took place in the early days of 2002 and was right at the inception of the mental health recovery movement. Before the session began, the sponsors of the training called her aside and said, “We’ve



heard that you talk about love in your trainings. Please don’t do that here. It won’t go over well with our staff.” Out of courtesy, Lori tried not to use the word love, but that didn’t last long since love is the bottom line of serving people who wish to recover. By the end of the training some of the staff were singing songs about love -- *Love is in the air* and *All you need is love*, and so on.

By now you, and even we, may wonder what the meaning of *love* is in this context. How is it appropriately put into action? What does it look like in practice? Why is it so important? How does it support and promote the recovery process? We wish we could explain this and you probably do too. We just know that if we are willing to be courageous enough to feel love for those we serve, that love will build a bridge of trust that can create enough safety to inspire a recovery journey. Here are *seven things* we know about Love and how to make it flourish in the Mental Health System:



Love flourishes in the space of unshakable respect.

Carl Rogers coined the phrase, *Unconditional positive regard*. Having the mindset that we’re going to respect and honor someone no matter who they are sets the stage for a loving relationship. There are always people we may have more of a natural affinity for than others, but if our respect and kindness is unconditional somehow it protects us from falling into treating people differently. Some people may have issues that push our buttons more than others and this is where unconditional high regard gets tested. We can still

find things to validate about that person and avoid disagreements even if that's what they may want. The goal is to feel love, even for the people who trigger us the most

Love flourishes in the space of authenticity

(vulnerability). In the peer world, authenticity and disclosure are key parts of building a successful peer relationship. This counteracts the pre-existing hierarchy that separates professionals from the people being served. Sharing the appropriate parts of our own story levels the power balance and invites others to share their own story. There are as many ways of sharing parts of our self appropriately. Some share a little of their story with a beginning, middle and end; some speak about a turning point in their recovery; others offer snapshots of their experience. This authentic sharing often sparks a connection that creates a safe place to be vulnerable and open to change. The energy shifts and people feel they can be just a little bit more themselves. This also opens a space for us to be more of who we are. Thus, a kind of affinity begins to form, and a little bit of love begins to grow. Peers are particularly good at this and have a lot to teach other professionals about this skill.



Love flourishes in a community environment.

Charlotte Sohia Kasl, PHD said, "Isolation breeds addiction." It also breeds illness -- physical, mental and psychological. We humans are meant to be together, to support each other, and to love each other. When we isolate, we give up one of our primary ways of healing. We cut ourselves off from the very relationships that can sustain us. Love calls for relationships of reciprocity – where we give and take in balanced ways.

Love flourishes in the space of straight

communication. When Sarah arrived in Harlem at *Howie the Harp*, she was scared to death of straight conversations. As a white Midwestern woman who grew up in the culture of “Nice,” she interpreted being direct as being confrontational. In Harlem, she learned that “nice” can sometimes be seen as fake, while direct can be seen as being respectfully honest. If we point out something that may be *getting in the way of a person’s growth* with the intent to criticize and take them down, we create distance and division. When we speak the same thing with the intent of supporting the person to succeed and flourish, it can yield the opposite response.



Love flourishes in the space of clear agreements that everyone understands (boundaries):

Boundaries provide a safe place for the expression of deep feelings and thoughts. Boundaries outline a space for a loving relationship that protect both the professional and the person being served from being taken advantage of. We both rest on a complete set values and ethics. We tend to train professionals in the boundaries, values and ethics, but we leave it up to the person being served to figure all this out. For love to flourish within the protection of these elements the person being served needs to be given a clear picture of what they are and why they exist. It is not personal. It is universal.

Love flourishes in the context of acknowledging

strengths: Too often behavioral health services have focused on what is wrong with us so they can find the right label for our situations. Until this changes, this needs to be overcompensated for by using a strong focus on strengths. When we learn to trust our strengths, we can use them to help us move beyond the things we need healing from.

When we use our strengths to give us the courage to keep moving beyond our wounds, we gain confidence in ourselves and begin to build resilience. We are better able to give and receive love.



Love flourishes when our wounds are respected:

Yes, our strengths need to be acknowledged and validated, but our wounds need to be respected and integrated. If ignored they will go underground and remained unhealed. If respected and integrated, they can add depth to the meaning of our experiences and even provide energy to move beyond the pain they inflict. Love can provide a safe

space for healing to take place.

There are probably more than these **seven things** that can provide a healing space for love to flourish. We suggest you each come up with a few more that have given you a place to love and be loved in. If you are inclined, send them to us and we will add them to a growing list that we can all learn from.

As we come to the end of this article, lets circle back to the title of this piece: *The mysterious third practice: The power of Love Instead of the love of power.* We called this the third practice (the practice of love) because it is more powerful than the “best” or “promising” practices, yet it can be integrated into both. It is definitely the oldest practice of healing and references to it can be found in writings that are thousands of years old. We want to bring it back and

give it legitimacy that is held within the safe boundaries that protect our loving relationships.

We described seven ways love can flourish but have left the *love of power* unclear until now. Suffice it to say – *recovery* cannot be forced or controlled. Using the healing relationship as a way of controlling or managing someone is an abuse of power. Loving power is seductive. It gives one the feeling of being important and needed. It creates the illusion of control. It doesn't work. It does not set the stage for healing and does not promote self-determination. We need to be on our guard to prevent the slide into what Dr. Pat Deegan calls the *power robbing* mind frame. So, use the *power of love* and not the *love of power* to be the most effective in your work. We wish you the best as you practice the *third way*.

A Request From Emily.

If you have a question that you would like to send me – I would love the opportunity to respond!! Send your question to mail@resilience4u.us and I will respond in an upcoming Newsletter. And – feel free to send me picture of your cuddly self!!

Don't forget to check out Lori Ashcraft's Blog!!

To read and contribute to Lori's blog, click on the link below:

www.resilience4u.us



For more information on our Consulting and Training Services or information on our Peer Support Learning for the 21st Century - Building Resilience on a Foundation of Recovery and Whole Health Workbook and Training Program,

call 530-362-7070.

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