

PAIN

management

120
million adults
suffer from pain
worldwide

Natural Drug
Alternatives



Understanding
Chronic Pain



Psoriatic
Arthritis



All Roads Lead to The Bridge:

Experiential Program Links Codependency to Childhood Trauma



By Annette Racond, *Staff Writer*

For the most part, every movie has an antagonist. Consider the Joker in Batman; Nurse Ratched in One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest; and General Zod in the new Superman flick Man of Steel. Sometimes, though, the antagonist lies within us. If our lives were depicted on the silver screen, many of us would find our antagonist to be codependency. Codependency wrecks relationships; destroys friendships; ruins careers; breaks up families; fuels addictions; and, ultimately, strips us of our dignity and self-worth. It's our own worst enemy. Codependency smothers our inner child, the person who used to shine within us and depicted our true nature. This antagonist is worthy of a place at The Oscars.

Carol Cannon, who devoted much of her life to helping individuals suffering from codependency through her work at The Bridge to Recovery (a.k.a. The Bridge) in Bowling Green, Kentucky, defines codependency in her book *Never Good Enough* as "the pain in adulthood that comes from being wounded in childhood and leads to a high probability of relationship problems and addictive compulsive behavior. It is a combination of immature thinking, feeling, and behaving that generates an aversive relationship with self (self-loathing), which the codependent individual

acts out through self-destructive or unduly self-sacrificial behavior." The Bridge to Recovery (www.thebridgetorecovery.com), which opened its doors in Kentucky in 1972, recently introduced a second site in Santa Barbara, California on a sprawling 160-acre ranch that once belonged to Jane Fonda.

Codependency affects beautiful people, not-so-beautiful people, fat people, skinny people, educated people; and uneducated people. It adversely impacts people from all walks of life who depend on things outside of themselves – including other people, drugs, alcohol, food, work, and relationships – to validate their self-worth.

Individuals struggling with codependency tend to repress their emotions and needs, resulting in relationship trauma and low self-esteem. Such behavior invites disappointment and disillusionment – even a life of misery. If ignored, codependency fuels substance abuse and process addictions (sex, love, and relationships, along with workaholic and other addictions). Essentially, if we don't tap into our own unique power, we're destined for failure.

Much of the magic of The Bridge is that the program takes a two-fold approach to working with individuals struggling with codependency, trauma, and sundry addictions. The experiential aspect of the program

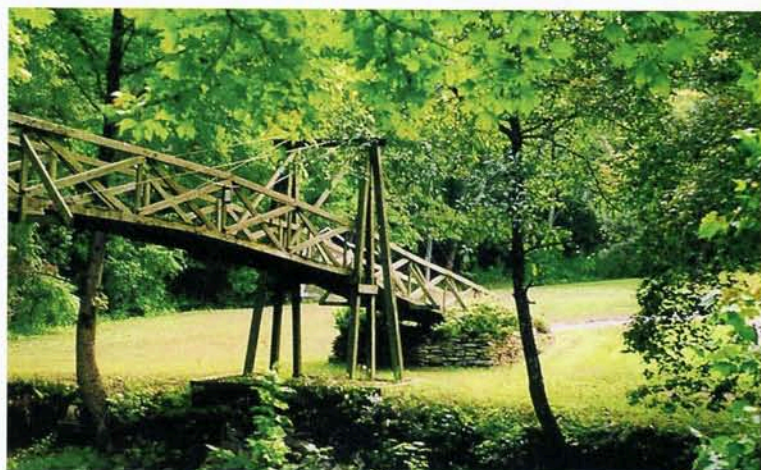
spotlights equine therapy; inner child work; meditation; yoga; mindfulness; sharing stories; and reprocessing negative emotions through the act of revisiting painful or traumatic events. The programs also incorporate 12-step work that directly addresses addictions and other compulsive behaviors. Boundary work is another integral component of the program. There are currently three program phases that allow clients to stay for up to twelve weeks with the first phase being two weeks.

It's important to note that The Bridge is not a drug & alcohol treatment center. Individuals first need to deal with these addictions before they can effectively address the underlying

problems. Once the addiction is addressed, they can learn to deal with the underlying pain, shame, and fear. That's where The Bridge steps in. The non-profit organization recently launched a series of Weekend Workshops to be rolled out nationwide, along with a week-long program tailored to behavioral health professionals who are prone to burnout.

"The bottom line," according to Rawland Glass, MSW, LCSW, Brainspotting Therapist and Chief Clinical Officer of The Bridge to Recovery, "is learning to love and to care for ourselves more. Doing so lays

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free from distractions. Close your eyes if you like, and take time to focus on your breathing. Don't worry if you keep losing your focus. Simply turn your attention back to your breathing. Start by aiming for a period of five minutes and build from there.

• Finally, medication can be very effective in managing chronic pain, when prescribed by a pain management specialist. A pain specialist can help to monitor dosage, ensuring that you do not become dependent.

With proper care and a combination of professional and self-treatment, chronic pain doesn't have to interfere with life.

For more information, visit the American Chronic Pain Association at www.theacpa.org.

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the foundation for us to gain traction in our lives so we can forge fulfilling relationships with ourselves, with others, and with our higher power. It is through this process that we realize the crowning gifts of recovery."

By providing clients with a safe environment, participants are in an optimal position to bond with each other and to fully embrace the meaningful work provided by the profes-

sional team employed by The Bridge. Among other factors, self-care, the ability to express one's feelings and setting appropriate boundaries are critical to the recovery process.

One 45-year-old woman who recently attended The Bridge says the program allowed her to dig deeper than she could in traditional therapy. "The experience allowed me to touch base with deep-seeded childhood issues that permeated my adult life. What happened to me as a child created a lot of shame and anxiety that I still carry around with me. It made me realize I needed to overcome my self-destructive behavior and learn to love myself more fully in order to live the life I had always imagined. The Bridge helped me begin this journey and gave me the tools and insight to continue on this path."

About the Author

Annette Racond, who is a Certified Health Coach, has had her work published in The New York Times, The Miami Herald, Chicago Sun-Times and Newsday, along with numerous other major publications.



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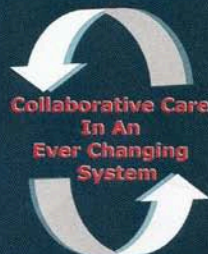
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