

# RENFREW CONNECTIONS

HOPE, HELP & HEALING



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*Alumni Coordinator*

# LEARNING IN

BY: LARA PENCE, PSYD



Human beings aren't used to being uncomfortable, especially in our current society. Gone are the days of building patience from a busy signal or distress tolerance through staying put. Now we can practically reach anyone at any time and if things get uncomfortable, well, we just call an Uber. Today, there are fewer opportunities to build resilience and make room for discomfort. We are much more accustomed to finding ways out of things and dodging discomfort at any turn. While that may be the 'answer' in the short-term, we miss out on valuable skill building opportunities long-term. Distress tolerance being one of them but conflict resolution, patience, planning, and being okay with the unknown are a few others as well.

As you head down the path of recovery, no matter where you're starting from, what would it be like to consider leaning in to the discomfort instead of running from it? Let's be frank, while your eating disorder may have become uncomfortable for you at one point it was undoubtedly a way of managing, possibly even avoiding, discomfort. It most likely made you feel in control when your life felt out of control. Or provided uncertainty when you faced unpredictability. Or soothed your

# Our Collective Voice:

LETTER FROM RENFREW'S FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT,  
*Samuel E. Menaged, JD*

IT IS WITH GREAT PLEASURE THAT I MAKE THE FOLLOWING ANNOUNCEMENT. Renfrew is opening its 17th location nationally in Orlando, Florida, and will begin accepting patients this fall. The Orlando location will be Renfrew's second facility in Florida — in 1990, we established



a 40-bed, residential campus on 10 acres in Coconut Creek, just south of Boca Raton.

As part of our commitment to excellence in everything we do, all of our sites evolve literally from the ground up — each location is established as a Renfrew site, a part of the Renfrew system — and Orlando is no exception. Each site offers the same

exact treatment protocols and philosophy and all clinical staff are trained according to the guidelines developed by our Clinical Excellence Board (CEB). The CEB was established to ensure that Renfrew's clinical standards and patient care are cutting-edge and consistent at all Renfrew locations and at all levels of care.

Programming at The Renfrew Center of Orlando will consist of day treatment, intensive outpatient and group therapy. This location will provide local access for adolescents, women and families to easily transition between all levels of care while staying within the state and close to home.

As Renfrew continues to grow, we remain a multi-generational, family-run organization dedicated to maintaining the highest quality of patient care in a full range of services. Please join me in welcoming the Orlando location to the Renfrew family.

**SAMUEL E. MENAGED, JD**, is the Founder and President of The Renfrew Centers and The Renfrew Center Foundation. Mr. Menaged founded The Renfrew Center 30 years ago as the country's first residential treatment facility specializing in eating disorders. He is the past-president of the Board of the Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy and Action, an advocacy group based in Washington, DC and a board member of the Residential Eating Disorders Consortium. Mr. Menaged is a former healthcare attorney.

# LEANING IN



anxiety about a looming situation that created stress. Now, however, you are in a different spot — moving in a different direction. What your recovery will entail is a leaning in process, not a leaving one. It will

ask you to stay put when you want to run. To make room for feelings, not close the door on them. To remain in the present.

So how, right? Sounds good in theory but how do you actually DO that? I believe that two elements are essential — trust and faith. Trust is about trusting the process (not even necessarily yourself yet, that may come later). Trust that leaning in to what is uncomfortable is not optional but an essential, worthy process. And then have faith. Not religious faith necessarily, though for some that may be part of it, but faith as a place of not knowing or uncertainty yet embracement of courage. At times, life is supposed to include pain. We are supposed to meet challenges, for those help us build important life skills. The more we lean in, the more opportunity we have.



**LARA PENCE, MBA, PSYD, CEDS** is the Director of Alumni Affairs at The Renfrew Center. She acquired specialized training in the treatment of eating disorders as a pre-doctoral intern at The Renfrew Center in Philadelphia, PA and post-doctoral fellow at the Center for Pediatric Eating Disorders at Children's Medical Center in Dallas, TX. Prior to moving into her current role, she worked as both Clinical Supervisor and Site Director at The Renfrew Center of Texas.

Dr. Pence has a unique expertise and perspective in the field of eating disorders in that she has worked in all levels of care—inpatient, residential, and outpatient alike. She has been featured in various media outlets such as *Good Morning America*, the *BBC*, *WebMD*, *Psychology Today*, *The Huffington Post* and local Dallas print.

# Q&A: Melanie Smith, *Training Manager at The Renfrew Center* discusses the *Renfrew Unified Treatment Model*.

**Q:** *Melanie, we've heard that Renfrew has made some notable changes to the clinical program. Can you tell us about the Unified Treatment Model that Renfrew has adopted?*

**A:** As the first residential treatment center solely dedicated to the treatment of eating disorders, Renfrew has long felt a commitment to blazing a trail, so to speak, in the field. We have collaborated with experts to produce a unified approach to conceptualizing and treating eating disorders, as well as other common co-occurring disorders. The Renfrew Unified Treatment Model (often referred to as the UT) focuses on increasing emotional awareness, flexibility and tolerance in the context of empathic, mutual relationships. Our primary goal is to help create sustainable change in relational, emotional & behavioral areas by teaching skills that are useful in everyone's day-to-day life. Through the use of therapeutic exposure exercises patients gain the skills and confidence to tolerate difficult internal emotional experiences in response to external life stressors. We remain rooted in our belief that healing happens in the context of relationships, thus we aim to dually emphasize the interplay between one's internal emotional experience and one's external relational experiences.

**Q:** *Is this model being used at all levels of care?*

**A:** Yes, the Unified Treatment Model is fully implemented at all Renfrew sites, across all levels of care. This is extremely helpful in providing continuity of care and allows patients to essentially pick up where they left off at Residential when they step-down to Day Treatment or IOP. As a staff that is spread across the country, we are proud to have the same shared goals and have a clear framework for providing high-quality care that can help our patients lead more fulfilling lives.

**Q:** *Is this model helpful for all types of eating disorders?*

**A:** Yes, we firmly believe it is. In fact, the appeal of this particular type of approach is that it is a "Transdiagnostic" Model, meaning that the approach was specifically designed to treat a wide variety of emotional and behavioral disorders. The beauty of this treatment is that it uses an evidence-based set of principles that addresses core, underlying mechanisms that maintain eating disorder symptoms as well as other emotional disorders.

*(continued above)*

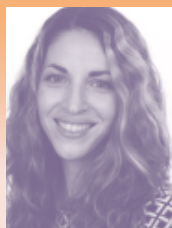
This is so important because we believe that diverse symptoms (e.g. restricting, bingeing, purging, self-harm, substance use, etc.) function similarly; therefore, the treatment we provide to someone that restricts as a means to numb out difficult emotions should not be categorically different than the treatment for someone who binges for that same purpose. We recognize that while every individual is unique, the internal emotional suffering that is experienced during an eating disorder is not really that different from one person to the next based solely on their symptom picture.

**Q:** *What do you see as the most beneficial piece of this model?*

**A:** I believe that the most helpful outcome from this shift has been the change in emphasis from learning short-term quick fixes to manage emotions to actually moving towards and "leaning in" to difficult emotions and experiences. I realize that can be a tough sell in the beginning, but it is important to recognize that avoidance methods can only take you so far. If there is one take-away that I would hope for every person that participates in treatment at Renfrew is that I want them to walk away and believe "I can do hard things." We want you to learn and trust that you are capable of experiencing the difficult things that life inevitably throws your way and that you can even experience those things without using your eating disorder or other unhelpful symptoms to help you get through.

**Q:** *What has the response from clients been so far?*

**A:** The response has been very positive. Our research department collects a significant amount of data from patients at admission and discharge, including satisfaction with programs and services. Patient response continues to be increasingly positive and we are thrilled with our new direction.



**MELANIE SMITH, LMHC**, is the Training Manager for The Renfrew Centers. She is a member of the corporate Clinical Training Department that is responsible for developing and implementing clinical training and programming that is consistent with emerging research and evidence-based practice across the Renfrew system. She has presented workshops on various topics related to eating disorders for community mental health agencies, treatment centers, hospitals, high schools, colleges & universities, insurance companies & professional conferences. Melanie has extensive training & experience in the Unified Protocol for the Transdiagnostic Treatment of Emotional Disorders (UP) and is a Certified UP Therapist (Center for Anxiety and Related Disorders, Boston University).

Announcing the 2016 Renfrew Alumni Reunion

# Lessons on Learning In

Join us on **Saturday, June 4, 2016**, to reconnect with old friends, reinvigorate your recovery and discover new ways to seek support. We invite you to experience a **new reunion schedule** where you will have the opportunity to attend a variety of workshops and activities that will stimulate new thinking and further support your journey of recovery.

The reunion is being held at The Renfrew Centers of Philadelphia, PA, and Coconut Creek, FL.

### The Renfrew Center of Philadelphia

475 Spring Lane  
Philadelphia, PA 19128  
9:00am – 3:00pm

### The Renfrew Center of Florida

7700 Renfrew Lane  
Coconut Creek, FL 33073  
9:00am – 3:30pm

Light breakfast and lunch will be provided.

For more information, please visit [www.renfrewcenter.com](http://www.renfrewcenter.com)



## FREE WEBINARS

For alumni and those needing support in their journey.

### May 18 Open Forum – Let's Talk Recovery!

*Presented by: Lara Pence, PsyD, CEDS and Johanna Kandel*

### June 15 The Urge Surge

*Presented by: Lara Pence, PsyD, CEDS and Laura Minch, PsyD*

All webinars are FREE and run from Noon to 1 PM and 6 PM to 7 PM EST.

To register, please visit [www.renfrewcenter.com](http://www.renfrewcenter.com)

In conjunction with National Eating Disorders Awareness Week, The Renfrew Center Foundation once again sponsored its 5th Annual **Barefaced & Beautiful** campaign. This year's campaign was titled **Barefaced & Beautiful Presents: Reflections on Being Real**.

Throughout the week, we encouraged women, men and adolescents nationwide to go without makeup for one day in order to start a dialogue about healthy body image and inner-beauty. Participants were encouraged to post a picture of themselves without makeup to their social media networks – **Facebook, Twitter** and/or **Instagram** – in celebration of their natural beauty.

The response we received was tremendous! Many of you shared your **Barefaced & Beautiful** photos with hundreds more viewing the pictures and offering comments of support and encouragement.

To view some of the **Barefaced & Beautiful** pictures visit Renfrew's Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages. Media coverage from the campaign can be found in the media section of our website.



## The Art of Recovery: Art Book

In this 64-page paperback book, readers are provided a unique visual lens through which to view stories of struggle and healing and to make sense of underlying patterns of behavior that can often seem incomprehensible. Many of the artists have accompanied their artwork with written statements allowing readers to see and understand the connection between artistic expression and a kind of self-discovery that can be put into language only by engaging with the work of art.

To purchase your copy of *The Art of Recovery*, please visit our website. All proceeds go to support The Renfrew Center's Foundation mission of advancing the education, prevention, research, advocacy and treatment of eating disorders.



## We're Expanding

The Renfrew Center is pleased to announce the opening of its **Orlando** location this fall. This is Renfrew's 17th facility.

*Programming will consist of a comprehensive range of services including:*

- Day Treatment
- Intensive Outpatient
- Group Therapy
- Nutrition Therapy

**For more information on the site or its services, please call 1-800-RENFREW.**



## FROM THE LIBRARIAN

**I Like Me** by Nancy Carlson. Puffin Books, 1988. Submitted by: Eileen Binckley, Librarian



This issue's book review may be a bit of a surprise, but surprises can be both fun AND helpful. Yes, *I Like Me* is a children's book, but its underlying message about body image is universal and timeless. Those of us in the eating disorder field, as well as those of us who have personally suffered, know that a positive body image is one of the most important and complex issues in eating disorder treatment. Nancy Carlson's *I Like Me* addresses self-esteem and positive body-talk with subtle simplicity and whimsical illustrations.

The book's main character is an adorable pig (dressed in adorable outfits) who states on the very first page, "I have a best friend. That best friend is me!" She then goes on to describe the many things she is able to do well - including taking care of herself, eating good food and telling herself "Hi, good looking" every morning when she looks in



the mirror. She goes on to list all the physical attributes she loves about herself, especially her round tummy. Finally, if she is feeling bad or making mistakes, she knows she can keep trying. Her ultimate declaration is that no matter what, "I'll always be me and I like that!!!"

Whether you read this to yourself or to your favorite young one, share it with someone who is struggling or needs a reminder about how to stay on track, or just want to give a friend a humorous, delightful and uplifting surprise gift, the author's message is powerful and inspirational. Perhaps if we practice saying "Hi, good looking" to ourselves each and every morning, we might begin to shift away from negative self-talk and begin to embrace the valuable lesson of self-acceptance. This tiny book has much to offer.

# VOICES OF

**By: Kelsey Dintino**

**T**REATMENT AND RECOVERY ARE GIFTS that one may not recognize until they are almost taken away. During my stay at Renfrew, my lack of motivation, compliance, and overall enthusiasm for recovery almost cost me my spot in the program. It was not until I was nearly kicked out that I suddenly begged to stay. I believe that Renfrew saw in that moment of desperation my need to stay and my desire, deep down, to get better. From that day forward, when I wanted to run away, I stayed. When I could not feel hunger, I ate. When things felt unbearable, I spoke up. I went through the program until eventually, the program went through me. I started accepting my feelings, because I learned that when you numb yourself from the bad ones you miss out on the good ones too.



I don't claim to be "recovered," but I know that I'm a world away from where I was when I first arrived at The Renfrew Center. The program taught me how to feel again, gave me the support I so desperately needed, and helped me grow as a person. I am forever in debt to Renfrew and will never forget all the staff members who gave me courage, help, and support. I won't give up. My word for graduation was "remember," because I will always remember where I came from, where I am today, the people who helped me get here and give me the strength to keep going.

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**Kelsey Dintino is 26 years old and currently a full time student. She first entered treatment at The Renfrew Center of Southern New Jersey in the winter of 2015 where she spent six months in treatment. She is dedicated to recovery and compassionate to those who are on the same road. She enjoys staying connected with the many alumni outlets offered. She wouldn't be where she is today without the help of The Renfrew Center.**

**By: Gretchen Hoechner**

**F**ROM A VERY EARLY AGE, I HAD BEEN A PEOPLE-PLEASER, competitive in sports and school, and a perfectionist. Things began to change after graduating from high school. My confidence was at an all-time high and I decided to attend a university far from home. The pressure I put on myself to immediately be accepted and liked pushed me into exercising excessively.

After a short six weeks, I was forced to withdraw from college. I had run myself into the ground with an obsessive exercise addiction which quickly turned into obsessing over what was going into my body.

After being forced to realize the severity of my condition, I was then admitted to The Renfrew Center. For three months, I did some serious soul-searching and came to understand that I am powerless over my addiction. With the help of my team at Renfrew, I began to love the pounding of my thighs when I walked and the rolls on my stomach when I sat down. I had come to know my worth outside of a number on the scale or size of my jeans, but most importantly, I began to understand how to no longer base my self-worth on what others thought or how they perceived me.



Withdrawn from college for the second time, and struggling with the weight gain and not having anyone around that could relate was tough. I was celebrating my 21st birthday with my family and became acquainted with my first drink of alcohol. My eating disorder was a thing of the past. I had found my new escape.

I had no idea how my life would change in a matter of eight months. What felt like almost overnight, I lost sense of who I was, yet again. My addiction took on a new form, which led to another "bottom." This time, it wasn't as pretty, neat, or hidden as the anorexia.

Deep down, I knew my life was not supposed to look the way it did at that moment. I had admitted I was powerless once, I knew I could do it again, with help. My faith pulled me through the days that seemed too difficult to face alone. I had to pull myself back up by putting one foot in front of the other, one day at a time, and continue to do the next right thing.

On January 20th, 2009, I was admitted to a substance abuse treatment center and had a moment of clarity: that was the first day of the rest of my life, finally living in freedom.

My life has been forever changed. People came into my life that helped save me and I have been inspired to do the same for others. The truth is, I saved my own life. I do it every single day that I live my life in moderation, take care of my body, eat well and stay sober.

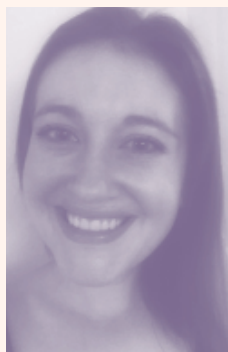
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*Gretchen Hoechner is an alumna of The Renfrew Centers of Florida and Nashville. Since then, she has graduated from Western Kentucky University with a bachelor's in Advertising and Sales and currently works in Nashville, TN with a health insurance company as a wellness consultant, inspiring others to live their best life mentally, physically, and spiritually.*

# RECOVERY

By: Susan Morrison

**M**Y NAME IS SUSAN MORRISON, AND I HAVE BEEN IN SUCCESSFUL RECOVERY of my eating disorder for over 11 years. I am compelled to share my story with those that are struggling now because, in the midst of the fray and tumult of my eating disorder, there was a time when I didn't believe I could ever change, let alone envision long term recovery. Hearing stories of women who went from struggle to triumph was incredibly inspiring to me, and helped me believe that maybe I could succeed too.



*When I was a young girl, I experienced abuse, and later in my adolescence experienced a painful breaking of my family through my parent's divorce. I felt like my world spun out of control, and thus turned to my eating disorder to deal with life. I wound up needing professional help, and came to The Renfrew Center. They helped me to learn that my eating disorder was not about*

*food or weight; it was about my desire to regain a sense of control in my life. Renfrew gave me a toolbox that I continue to use up to this day. After 11 years of successful recovery, I still use many of the same healthy coping skills: talk to someone I trust, read self-help and inspirational books, or play a game just to name a few.*

*One of the hardest and most important skills was letting go of shame and guilt. Now, my life looks completely different. I achieved a Master's Degree, got married, had a beautiful baby boy, and currently work as a preschool teacher. One of the most powerful coping mechanisms I have gained over time is reflection. I would never have completed grad school; I would never have completed grad school, become a mother or had gotten married. I would never trade my life for an eating disorder now. I took my power back, and guess what? Now, I'm in the driver's seat of my life... and it feels really good. Recovery is not only real and possible, but it's literally worth your life.*

**Susan Morrison is an alumna of The Renfrew Center of Philadelphia. She is currently 29 years old and resides in Arlington, VA with her husband, Keith and son, Kelly. She has an MBA in Global Enterprise Management, and currently works as a preschool teacher in Arlington County. Susan has been in successful recovery from anorexia and bulimia for over 11 years.**

By: Nettie Reeves

**C**HRISTMAS 2015 WAS UNLIKE ANY CHRISTMAS THAT I CAN REMEMBER, because it was the first Christmas of freedom from B.E.D. (Binge Eating Disorder). The past (I now realize) had been years of life-long conflict; pretending there was no issue, that I was normal, hiding in plain sight, that my mind wasn't playing tricks on me, and justifying that I could eat massive amounts of food while proclaiming, "If I gain weight, I'll just do 2 or 3 workouts a day and get it off." I knew how to because my professional business is fitness and



nutrition. Ironic, you think? That's why I knew I didn't have a problem. At least not one such as this – and certainly not one like this that I couldn't solve. The real irony is that I was helping others with their issues all the while denying my own.

That was then, and this is now. I'm excited about today. This past Christmas was the first one that I can remember with my eyes wide open. Open to see what my mind refused to acknowledge in the past. Open to possibilities that there was something going on with me that I couldn't control and needed help. Open to the fact that I allowed outside forces to dictate my standard of beauty. Open to seeing just how far over the edge I headed. Open to realize that it was a blessing to seek help to make a change.

After spending some time in treatment at The Renfrew Center of Charlotte in 2013, I was able to see myself objectively, from the outside in. The group and one-on-one sessions helped me gain the strength and fortitude to kick my B.E.D. in the butt! And since attending, it's taken a good year for me to see who I really am, and more importantly, what I can now become. Although the year wasn't met without triggers, they were met with the forces of breathing, self-care and the countless activities that I refer to from group. I feel free and open! There is no more obsessing over my outward appearance. My focus is on the characteristics that make me unique. Now I'm looking forward to the memories to come. Oh yes, and I am very careful in how I relate fitness and nutrition to myself and others.

*Nettie Reeves is a fitness, life, and health coach; advising around the world. What began as a desire to help individuals' health, grew into a lifelong passion for all to improve the quality of their lives by leading, motivating, teaching, and sharing her story. She is the creator of Nettie Reeves' FUNky Fit which has been a fitness force in communities across the country over the past 20 years. Her mantra is "The mind, not the mirror is the judge." Nettie holds a BA in Communications and many certifications in the health and fitness arena.*



The Renfrew Center Foundation  
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## Support The Renfrew Center Foundation

The Renfrew Center Foundation is a nonprofit organization that helps to advance education, research, advocacy and treatment of eating disorders. Please help us to continue these efforts by making a tax-deductible donation to the Foundation.

**Donations can be sent to:**

The Renfrew Center Foundation, 475 Spring Lane, Philadelphia, PA 19128

Your donation, or that of a family member, may help someone receive the crucial care she requires. In addition, we can continue to educate the public about eating disorders and provide necessary training for professionals in the field.

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