

RENFREW CONNECTIONS

HOPE, HELP & HEALING



The hardest part of recovery is when **you don't want to recover.**

By: **Rachel Tenny, MA, LPC**

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HAVING MOMENTS WHEN YOU DON'T WANT TO RECOVER IS A NORMAL THING. It's okay to have moments when you may feel fearful, overwhelmed and unsure of what the future looks like. Just like motivation towards anything else, there will be moments when you want to quit and give up. That's okay.

You've likely heard the phrase "recovery isn't linear" many times and the same is true for motivation. Nothing will be consistent ALL of the time. Lots of external factors can impact our motivation, especially when change is happening, or we are experiencing more distressing emotions than normal.

In the moments when recovery doesn't feel like you imagined it would be, remind yourself it doesn't mean you are going back to where you started. Even if you relapse, you never go back to the very beginning. I had a supervisor early on in my career tell me "it's like a baby learning to walk, they may fall down, but they are never back where they started. They pick themselves up from the place where they fell and keep moving forward."

So, the real question is what do we do in those difficult moments when you want to give up?

1) Be kind with yourself and patient too. Remind yourself this is part of it.

It can be easy to jump into the "I'm not trying hard enough" and "I'm a failure" mentalities, but you aren't.

2) Remind yourself why you started this journey. Why did you want to recover? Write these down, put them on a sticky note and post where you will see them daily.

3) What is your long-term motivation? What are the things you know you won't be able to do if you go backwards?

a. *What are goals you have relationally?*

b. *What are goals you have career wise?*

c. *What are places you want to travel or things you want to do?*

In this edition of *Connections*, you will find stories from Renfrew alumni, an interactive check-list to help you when you're feeling lost or "stuck," as well as articles written by Renfrew staff to help you feel re-inspired and encouraged!



Rachel Tenny, MA, LPC, is the Alumni Coordinator for The Renfrew Centers. She received both her Bachelor's degree in Psychology, with a concentration in Creative Art Therapy, and her Master's degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from Lenoir-Rhyne University.

Ms. Tenny has worked in Residential, PHP, and IOP levels of care in both South Carolina and North Carolina. She is passionate about helping women embrace recovery and find their value outside of their eating disorder.

Our Collective Voice:

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

With the end of 2019 approaching – and our 35th anniversary nearly in sight – it is the perfect time to reflect upon the past year's achievements and milestones. We're thrilled to announce our newest site, The Renfrew Center of Philadelphia – Center City is now open! Our fourth location in Pennsylvania and nineteenth in the United States, The Renfrew Center of Philadelphia – Center City will offer the same high level of care that has helped countless adolescent girls and women move toward recovery



since our opening in 1985. Programming at the site consists of a comprehensive range of services including day treatment, intensive outpatient and group therapy.

Along with this exciting opening, we continue to offer digital services through the recently launched virtual therapy groups. These weekly therapy groups offer structured care in a web-based setting and are great for students, frequent travelers, those with busy schedules and anyone in our Renfrew community who would like to utilize outpatient programming online. Virtual therapy is currently available to adolescent girls and women residing in the following states: California, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Texas. We're bringing virtual therapy to additional states in the near future – meanwhile, don't forget to take advantage of our additional digital services, the alumni support website (www.renfrewsupport.com) and monthly free webinars.

As all of us at Renfrew both celebrate the accomplishments and acknowledge the challenges 2019 has brought, I encourage you to do the same. This fall's alumni reunions in October and the winter events in December are great opportunities for identifying the ups and downs of your recovery journey. Be sure to attend these free events for support, reconnection with fellow alumni and staff and motivation to keep moving forward. We can't wait to see you there.

SAMUEL E. MENAGED, JD, is the Founder and President of The Renfrew Centers and The Renfrew Center Foundation. Mr. Menaged founded The Renfrew Center 34 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.

Working Through Challenges in Recovery

By: **Aimee Lightburn, MA, LMHC**

There are times when patients we work with share they don't want to recover because they fear leaving their eating disorder behind. They fear letting go of their safety net, giving up control. A patient once told me that letting go of her eating disorder and body image ideal meant letting go of the only thing in her life she felt she had any control over. However, in treatment she learned she had control over many things, including recovery and the ability to move forward.

For those of you who feel like you're struggling to get started, remember that motivation is the starting point and it will keep you moving forward during the hard times. There will be days when you are tired, feeling down and want to give up. In those



times remember why you started the journey toward recovery and remind yourself of your long-term recovery goals.

Make self-care and self-compassion a priority – the most important relationship is the one you have with yourself!

Reach out for support and encouragement. I often tell my patients not to be afraid to use their support team throughout the various stages of recovery. When feeling overwhelmed or lost your support team can provide the encouragement you may need to keep moving forward.

Work through the challenges, push yourself through the times when you feel like giving up on yourself. Everyone has “ups” and “downs” throughout their journey. Remember, recovery is not a race – it may take longer and be more difficult than you thought but, if you stay with it, the payoff is worth it!

And, YOU are worth it!

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Aimee Lightburn, MA, LMHC, is the Primary Therapist at The Renfrew Center of Orlando. She received her bachelor's degree in Psychology from Albright College and her master's degree in Applied Clinical Psychology from The Pennsylvania State University. Aimee has many years of experience working in the mental health field and is excited to continue her journey working with eating disorders.

Recovery check-list:

Recovery is a journey, with ups and downs. Some days may be more challenging than others, and that's okay! But that's why it's so important to check in with yourself when things do get hard.

When you encounter challenges along your journey, reflect on these questions and simple ways to make sure you're meeting your needs:

✓ **Am I sleeping?** Getting regular sleep (and enough sleep) is vital for your brain to function properly. You deserve to rest, and it doesn't make you lazy if you find yourself sleeping more during difficult times.

✓ **Am I fueling my body?** Are you eating? This is the hardest one sometimes but maintaining a consistent schedule of eating at least three times a day is helpful to fuel your body adequately, so you have energy to do the things you want and need to do.

✓ **Am I drinking water?** Are you hydrating yourself? The average human needs about 80 ounces of water daily. Lack of water can lead to dizziness and tiredness, and it can cause your body to not function properly.

✓ **Am I letting myself experience my emotions?** What emotions are you experiencing? Try to approach your emotions curiously with a non-judgmental stance. Ask yourself: what am I thinking? What am I feeling? What do I want to do as a result of those thoughts and feelings?

✓ **Am I sharing those emotions and connecting with others?** When things feel more challenging, it can get easy to want to isolate or retreat. Continue to check in with others as you feel able to and continue to challenge the urges to isolate.

✓ **Am I going to appointments with therapist, dietitian, psychiatry or other providers?** Having regular support from your team is invaluable. It is also important to share openly and honestly with them, identifying how you're feeling and doing from an open perspective.

THE RENFREW CENTER OFFERS VIRTUAL THERAPY EATING DISORDERS GROUPS

These online, virtual therapy groups actively engage participants with each other to explore and understand the emotions and relational functions of their disordered eating.

Participants must be located in one of the following states:

**California • Connecticut • Florida
Illinois • New Jersey • New York
North Carolina • Pennsylvania • Texas**



To get started, please call 1-800-RENFREW.

You will need to have access to Wi-Fi and a device such as a smart phone, computer or tablet with a camera and screen.

What is Recovery?

By: A Renfrew Alumna

*Recovery is a decision,
A decision to make a different choice.
The moment you decided you've had enough,
And you're ready to find your own voice.*

*Recovery is changing,
Changing how you cope.
The fight is hard and the journey is long,
But I promise you there's hope.*

*Recovery is a battle,
A battle fought each day.
To change the black and white thinking,
And learning to find the grey.*

*Recovery is crying,
Crying because you want to escape.
Because no one is perfect and sometimes you mess up,
But with time you learn to forgive yourself for each mistake.*

*Recovery is a process,
A process that takes time to accept.
Each day will bring its challenges,
It's a process you cannot perfect.*

*Recovery is feeling,
Feeling the guilt, anger, and fear.
You will be tempted to give up,
But you've worked so hard to make it here.*

*Recovery is tiring,
Tiring from fighting a constant war.
It's easy to get discouraged when it feels like no one sees you fighting,
But you have to remember who this is all for.*

*Recovery is strength,
Strength to resist the easy way out.
It takes strength to leave behind old habits,
And to leave behind your doubt.*

*Recovery is searching,
Searching for the person you want to be.
Each day is a chance to learn something new,
And a chance to take a step towards being free.*

*Recovery is happiness,
Happiness when you see the progress you've made.
It's hard to let go of everything from the past,
But with time the desire to go back will fade.*

*Recovery is worth it,
It's worth it for the moments you truly feel alive.
For every little victory that keeps you going,
And for the moments your thankful you made the choice to survive.*

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4th Location in Pennsylvania,
19th Location Nationwide



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OUTPATIENT SERVICES • VIRTUAL THERAPY

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nearby at The Renfrew Center
of Philadelphia - Spring Lane.*

2019 RECOVERY WEBINAR SERIES

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16TH

*The Path to Body Acceptance:
How it Affects All Aspects of Recovery*

PRESENTERS



CHELSEA WOODARD
LPC-MHSP

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 20TH

*Self-Care: More Than
a Manicure and a Facial*



MEGAN MCINTIRE
MS, LCMHC

REGISTER NOW: WWW.RENFREWSUPPORT.COM

Webinars are held at 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm & 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm EST

RECOVERY SUPPORT WEBSITE

Because we know the journey of recovery from an eating disorder can be daunting, our goal is to make sure you and everyone in your family receives the support they need.

Our alumni website has a variety of resources for both yourself and family and friends, to support you as you move through the many stages of the recovery process.



WWW.RENFREWSUPPORT.COM

Recovery Blog • Upcoming Events
Recipes for Success • Support for Family/Friends
Video Testimonials • Virtual Tours • & Much More!

ITEMS FOR SALE

Our online store features empowering and supportive items for sale, like our Art Calendar, cookbook, t-shirts, and much more.



All proceeds support The Renfrew Center Foundation's mission of advancing eating disorders education, prevention, research and treatment.

To view these items and others, please visit:
www.renfrewsupport.com/items-for-sale

RENFREW'S ANNUAL WINTER EVENT

Save the date for our annual winter event, this December 2019!

This event is **FREE** and will be held at several Renfrew locations. More information, dates and locations will be announced soon.

To stay up to date on event announcements, please visit www.renfrewsupport.com or call **1-800-RENFREW (736-3739)**.

Let's Talk About Self-Compassion

Let's talk about self-compassion! This is an untapped resource for recovery that is right at your fingertips to practice anytime, anywhere. It's especially useful during times of stress or suffering that could lead to urges to avoid painful emotions and reinforce ED behaviors.

Over the past ten years, the practice of self-compassion has been the focus of research studies across the country and has been shown to significantly reduce levels of depression, anxiety, stress, and shame and increase levels of happiness, life satisfaction, self-confidence, physical health, and positive body image. On a physiological level, this practice helps us learn the skills to decrease the reactivity of our "threat defense system" (fight, flight, freeze) and increase the activation of our "care system" (sense of safety, comfort, and security). Not only is it a helpful practice, but there is research and science behind it!

So, what is self-compassion anyway?

There are three components to practicing self-compassion:

1. Mindfulness – This means a non-judgmental, receptive state of mind. We cannot both ignore our pain and feel compassion for it. At the same time, requiring that we not "over-identify" with thoughts and feelings, and be swept away by negative reactivity.

2. Common Humanity – This means recognizing that suffering and feelings of inadequacy are part of the shared human experience – something we all go through, rather than being something that happens to "me" alone.

3. Self-kindness – This means being warm and understanding toward ourselves when we suffer, fail, or feel inadequate, rather than ignoring our pain or flagellating ourselves with self-criticism. Recognize that being imperfect, failing, and experiencing life difficulties are inevitable, so be gentle with ourselves when confronted with painful experiences rather than get angry when life falls short of set ideals.



Samantha Abplanalp, LPC-MHSP, Primary Therapist at The Renfrew Center of Nashville.

Sam is from Memphis, TN, graduated from Vanderbilt University in 2011 and worked in residential and IOP programs for women with addictions and mental health before coming to Renfrew in May of 2018. In her free time, she can be found with any excuse to be outside, kayaking, watching a new documentary, or hanging out with her 13-year-old lab Molly.

VOICES OF

By: Jenna W.

WHEN I WAS FIRST ASKED TO WRITE THIS ARTICLE, I IMMEDIATELY THOUGHT, “WHY ME?” I began to reminisce on my time at Renfrew, and even before. I started to see a trend of “Why me?” Why do I have to struggle with an eating disorder? Why do I have OCD? Why do I have to put up with anxiety? Why do I have to be so stubborn? Why did I end up in treatment? Well, I finally figured out the answer to those questions.

Why me? So, I could be here today, continuing to fight through recovery, and to show others that recovery is possible. We are worth it.

During my time at Renfrew, I gained back control of my life. I rediscovered who I truly am. Before going to treatment, I felt like a robot, a hollow shell just moving through the motions. I was no longer the smiling, giggling, bubbly, outgoing Jenna that I once was.



I was sad, angry, frustrated, closed off, on edge and consumed with the constant thought of food and exercise.

I battled various eating disorders for about five and a half years. It consumed every bit of me. My obsessions around food and exercise grew every day. I lived my life based on

a clock, and everything had to happen at specific times each day. I was lost and scared, and I convinced myself that this was just how my life was going to be. However, Renfrew proved that theory wrong.

When I first got to Renfrew, I thought, “There’s no way I’m going to last here.” I felt trapped and overwhelmed. I cried (A LOT), doubted the process and desperately wanted to leave, but I chose to stay. I knew that if I had the mental capability of living with an eating disorder for over five years, I had the mental capability and strength to overcome it. Through the discomfort, I began to accept and trust the process. My time at Renfrew showed me how strong I am and gave me the tools I need to overcome this terrible disorder. Yes, bad days still happen. Remember, it’s OK to not be OK. Be honest with yourself. Recovery is tough, but we’re tougher.

We’ve been assigned this mountain to show others it can be moved. Renfrew helped me gain my life back. I’m finally Jenna again. I am no longer in bondage to E.D. I am (and so are you) a warrior.

Jenna is 25 years old and lives in Dunedin, FL. She is an alumna of The Renfrew Center of Coconut Creek, FL. In addition to her full time job as an executive assistant, she works for the Tampa Bay Rays. In her spare time, she loves to be out on the water, go to sporting events and spend time with her puppy, Emmitt.

By: Alexa K.

IT’S HARD TO POINT TO THE EXACT MOMENT I DEVELOPED THIS ILLNESS; often, it seems like it has always been there. I recall my sixth birthday and the presence of the voice inside my head telling me that I did not look good **enough**, that I was not good **enough**.

As I grew, the voice inside my head became taller and louder and my insecurities and lack of self-confidence grew together with it. At a certain point, my own insecurities had fed away from who I was and suddenly, that “spark” and “light” within me vanished. At that point, I was - both emotionally and physically - surviving, not living.



In 2015, at sixteen, Renfrew created a space in which I could learn, talk and write about my eating disorder. From the program, I acquired coping mechanisms to deal with triggers and I became familiar with the causes of my emotions and the ways I could address them. All skills that I use, years later, to this day.

Renfrew handed me the rope that allowed me to get out of the black hole my eating disorder had pushed me into. Coming out of the program, I realized that the problem wasn’t the way the mirror made my body look. It was how I looked at myself in the mirror.

Calories would not change my life. Yet, the decision to evade them – the decision to remain married to my illness, the decision to not fight back, and the decision count insignificant numbers as if they somehow measure the weight of my worth - that would alter my life every time.

And for that, I will be forever thankful.

Suddenly, the boundaries that had seemed like brick walls surrounding me, the limits and rules that caged me within four walls, were broken.

My success is not tied to my weight, my success is not tied to the way I look, and neither is yours.

Today, I am able to look at this period of my life glad I didn’t give up and glad I gave myself the opportunity to heal. Today, I aspire to contribute to a world in which people bring each other and themselves up, not tear themselves and others down.

Today I no longer survive. Today I live.

Alexa is 18 years old and lives in Mexico City. After she received treatment at The Renfrew Center of New York, she was able to go back to freshman year in high school where she continued to learn and grow. Since, she has read over a hundred books, met new supporting and encouraging friends, participated in several running races and even given a TEDx talk about battling and recovering from her illness. With senior year approaching, she looks forward to getting admitted to a college in New York City where she can continue to pursue her passions and leave a mark on the world.

RECOVERY

By: Celina T.

WHEN I CAME TO RENFREW IN MARCH 2019, I had been battling an eating disorder for almost eleven years – in secret. I spent half my life trying to make myself small – literally and figuratively – and convincing myself I did not deserve to take up space in this world. I hadn’t “looked” like I had an eating disorder since I was 13 years old, so I convinced myself that meant I was okay. However, an eating disorder is about so much more than what you see on the outside. Over the years my eating disorder presented itself in many different ways – excessive exercise, restriction, obsession with “health” foods, and more. At times, the voice of my ED would quiet down, although those periods never lasted long. My eating disorder was the only coping mechanism I knew for when life got stressful.



Graduating from college was a moment of major change for me. I moved to a new city to start my first job as an adult in the “real world.”

The transition was hard and the job didn’t work out as I expected. My physical health started deteriorating as well and I didn’t realize how far down I had spiraled, until a few months into my second job I realized getting myself out of bed exhausted all my energy. Six short months later, I had to take a medical leave. Taking this time for myself and my health was one of the best decisions I’ve ever made. A few months into my leave, I found myself preparing to leave DC and go to Coconut Creek, FL to begin treatment at Renfrew. I didn’t know how long I’d be gone or what my time there would bring, and I knew it was time for me to take my life back.

Renfrew was my first time receiving formal treatment for an eating disorder. Although I knew I needed treatment, I still resisted the process at the beginning. The voices in my head saying “you’re fine, you don’t deserve help” were louder than ever. However, once I gave into the treatment process and finally opened myself up and allowed myself to be vulnerable and admit “I am not ok,” everything changed. I knew my time at Renfrew would be difficult, not only for myself but for my parents, brothers, grandma, and boyfriend, and I also could never have known how transformational it would truly be.

I left Renfrew a better version of myself – stronger physically, and even more importantly, emotionally and mentally. I will be forever grateful to the team at Renfrew for all they did for me. They challenged me, encouraged me, and believed in me when I did not believe in myself. It is because of them I came to learn the truth that through discomfort comes change and growth, and in my case that change was necessary.

Things don’t get “easy” when you leave treatment because the work doesn’t end there. To be completely honest, life has thrown some major curve balls at me since I left Renfrew. However, the way I approach these tougher days has drastically changed. I now have the skills to cope without turning to my eating disorder or other emotionally driven behaviors. I’ve learned to accept not every day will be a good day and that is OK. More importantly, it is ok to not be ok and it is more than ok to feel and acknowledge your emotions.

Recovery is a choice I continue to make every day. Yes, there are days when that choice is harder and on those days, I remind myself of all that recovery has given me – a stronger mind and body, stronger relationships, greater confidence, and the ability to live freely.

Celina Ticoll-Ramirez is 24 years old and lives in Washington, DC. She was a patient at The Renfrew Center of Florida in spring 2019. She is continuing to focus on her personal growth and working every day to become a stronger and happier version of herself. She currently is working on freelance projects for local DC clients and recently moved to a new apartment. In the past, this change and uncertainty would be difficult for her to face, and now, she welcomes opportunities to continue to improve on the skills she began to learn at Renfrew.

By: Emily G.

WHEN I FIRST ARRIVED AT THE RENFREW CENTER OF BETHESDA, I was convinced I didn’t have an eating disorder.

I had always had an interesting relationship with food, but I never thought it was a disorder. The only reason I agreed to treatment was to get my outpatient team to stop nagging me. Little did I know that going to Renfrew would be one of the best decisions I have ever made.



As I worked with the treatment team and the women at Renfrew, I quickly discovered that I did, in fact, have an eating disorder but that my disorder wasn’t my entire story. In addition to being a woman with an eating disorder, I was also a teacher, a student, a daughter and so many other things that make me... me. I discovered I was worth fighting for.

I quickly learned UT skills would become vital to my success, not only in overcoming my disorder, but in all of my other roles as well. I learned I can’t be my best in all my other roles if I am not healthy. While I was in treatment, I had to make what felt like the impossible decision between continuing treatment and graduate school. I chose to continue treatment because I realized I wouldn’t be able to graduate on time without taking the time to do treatment.

The transition from Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP) to Outpatient was a rough one, but adding more and more people to my treatment team helped, and getting involved with Alumni and Outpatient groups helps me stay grounded and honest in my recovery.

I am frequently reminded recovery isn’t linear, and my recovery doesn’t have to be perfect like my “Eating Disorder Mind” would like me to believe. The important thing to remember when I have a slip is to keep moving forward. I know, with time, the “eating disorder mind and voice” will fade as I continue to make recovery choices. I am excited to see what the future holds.

Emily is an alumna of The Renfrew Center of Bethesda. She is 25 years old and is currently a special education teacher living in Rockville, MD. Emily is passionate about decreasing the stigma around mental illnesses and increasing awareness of eating disorders.



The Renfrew Center Foundation
475 Spring Lane
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Support The Renfrew Center Foundation

The Renfrew Center Foundation is a nonprofit organization that helps to advance eating disorders education, research, advocacy, and treatment. 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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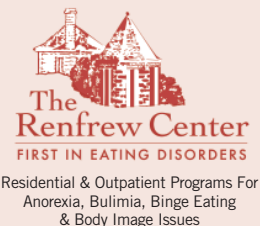
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