

TOP OF MIND

News from Portage Path Behavioral Health

What Exactly Does Portage Path Do...?

If you asked people this question, you'd get a lot of interesting answers. Some people think we're a "mental hospital." We're not, though we do operate Summit County's emergency psychiatric service, which has a 16-bed unit. Others imagine we have offices with big couches where clients lie down while a bespectacled man asks questions and takes notes on a legal pad while stroking his gently graying beard. Again, not really us — though we do have some employees with beards. And I wish we had nice couches.

The best way we've found to really explain what we do is to have our clients describe it. We received the letter below from a client who wanted to thank us for helping her. Hopefully it will provide a glimpse into what we do and why it matters.

How do you thank someone who has traveled with you through the (expletive deleted) and horror that was your childhood?

How do you thank someone who has given you a safe place to heal? Who has held your heart and hand while you cried the tears your soul has been shedding for years? Someone who planted the seeds of health and well being? Someone who has not judged you once for your flaws and failings? Someone who not only helped save your life, but who also made it one worth living?

How do you thank someone who has helped you become? How do you thank that person?

I can usually come up with words, but they fail me. I can usually come up with pictures when words fail, but the pictures are eluding me. I guess the best way I can think to thank you is by continuing to grow. By blooming right here where I am. By continuing this path of new experiences, by stretching my health muscles, by being me. The me you knew I could be.

I did the work, I'm not trying to take anything from myself - but I could not have done it without you. I was lost in the fog and you shined the light that guided me out. I was buried in pain, the cause of which I didn't even know, and you helped me lance the wounds so I could begin healing. I was aimless, and you illuminated the path. I was alone, so alone in and with only pain and you sat with me so we could explore this together. Because you urged me to join a group, I met my BFF! I was a lost and hurt child and you helped me discover not only the adult in me, but also the adult I am (and I kinda like that adult! Who thought in a million years I'd say that?). You introduced me to all the people inside me. Though I wasn't thanking you for that at first, I am now!

All these things and so much more you've done for me. I thank you. I'm not deluded enough to think that I'm healed - I know hard times will come. Maybe memories, pain from the old ones, and times of struggle. But I think - I know - that I can plant a flag here where I stand today. This is truly the first day of my life.

Before I wrote this, I prayed. I prayed that I'd have the words, the means, to bless you. And while I did the work, this is about you - about all the ways you've helped me. So I hope you are blessed, I hope you are encouraged, I hope you know how grateful I am.

So how do I thank the person who has helped me become? I just hope I was able to communicate at least some of my gratitude.

Thank you.

Libby



With its focus on family, friends, and faith, December is a great month to give back. You can help make sure affordable services continue to be available to clients like Libby by making a donation to Portage Path.

[Click here to be taken to a secure page where you can help.](#)

There are other ways you can help too. Many Portage Path clients don't have the means to afford basic necessities - things like soap, deodorant, shampoo, detergent, toilet paper, toothbrushes, etc. We're conducting a drive to collect these kinds of items, which will be distributed to needy clients through our Case Managers. If you'd like to contribute to the cause, drop off personal care items at any Portage Path clinic, or email jcrouse@portagepath.org.

Thanks, and Happy Holidays from all of us at Portage Path Behavioral Health!

Seasonal Depression: Beating the Winter Blues

As the sun sets earlier, the weather gets colder and the holidays may have you missing someone, we're all feeling it — the winter blues. Some may feel it more severely and experience Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). We get tired and moody and just want to hide away under a blanket. So how do we fight this feeling? How do we combat the sadness and lack of motivation that come with the winter months?

Here are a few tips from RealSimple to consider:

Brighten up your environment. Our bodies crave more light this time of year so open the blinds, turn a few more lights on and maybe even invest in an artificial light box to keep your mind awake and alert.

Exercise. A Harvard study suggests that 35 minutes of walking a day under daylight improves general mental health, social functioning and depressive symptoms.

Help others. Volunteering your time or donating to help others during the holidays improves mental health and life satisfaction. Studies show that the act of giving triggers the release of "feel good" chemicals in the brain, such as serotonin, dopamine, and oxytocin.



How To Make Your Resolutions Doable

Most of us set some sort of New Years resolutions. Whether it's lose weight, exercise more often, be more organized, we all want to improve with the new year, start fresh. But so often, the motivation wears off by the time February rolls around. So how do we create goals that we can actually achieve and not overwhelm ourselves?



Here are some tips:

Reward Yourself—You're more likely to stick to something if there is a reward to work towards.

Share Goals with Friends—whether your friends are working towards the same goal, or you simply tell them about your goal, someone is keeping you accountable.

Write Them Down—Find a place in your house that you look at daily, maybe your bathroom mirror and write

down your goals so you never lose sight of them.

Set Smaller Goals—"Lose Weight" is a bit vague, and "lose 50 lbs" is a bit much. Set a goal that is reachable like 5 pounds in the next 3 weeks.