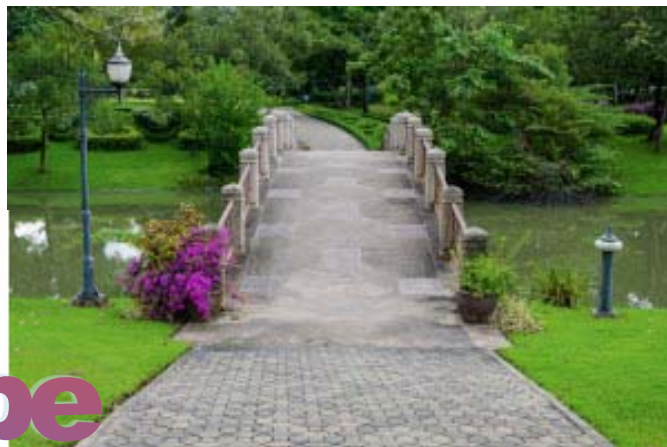


Trauma & Dissociation Bridge of Hope



Note About BoH:

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Check Out Summer

During this time of social distancing, many of us haven't been out to have much fun, and during this pandemic, there has been much anxiety and frustration. With loss or reduced access to our support systems in person, for some of us, suspension of services with our treatment providers, and for others, just the struggle of being stuck inside for months has created challenges of coping and managing.

As many of us are beginning to move out of this time of isolation, I believe it's important to continue to take steps to remain safe. That said, it's also time to do some things we enjoy. Being summer time let's get out and enjoy some time in the sun (unless your medication prohibits that). Whether you enjoy walking, running, water skiing, swimming or another type of physical activity, it's a good time to consider getting involved in them. If you like nature, perhaps a camping trip or nature hike. Perhaps you're not really into physical activity such as that, what about spending some time in the park, watching kids play sports, gardening, or another activity that gets you outside.

Perhaps it's a time for you to consider trying something new—an old game such as corn holes or a new game you make up! Perhaps it's time to get re-involved in a hobby you've really not felt up to doing this spring (or perhaps longer). Maybe it's time to try a new hobby. Just some ideas to consider as we enter into this time of the year.

At the same time you're getting out, remember to take good care of you. Enough rest, nutrition and sleep. Take time to learn something this summer. Perhaps take up a new language, take a community class offered near you, or even a free course online. A great website that offers free classes is <https://courses.edx.org/>. It has a lot of college level courses that you can take for free (without credit) and offers a great way to keep yourself mentally fit. There are many areas of study there. They have options to earn certificates (paid feature) and some courses can actually be transferred to some colleges (tuition re-

quirements). There are other web sites as well, but this one offers hundreds of courses on a major variety of subject areas.

I also want to share a bit about what is happening with our support program. We have opened up several support groups. In addition, we have added two additional workshops for survivors. We added a two hour workshop on Coping with PTSD and we just held our first Abuse Prevention in Relationship workshop. These are workshops that are offered monthly. We have additional workshops being added to our program over the next several months. To see our most recent programming, visit our program page at <https://www.hope4-recovery.org/program.html>.

If you have the option, give yourself some time off. Play a little bit, reach out for support. Above all else, treat yourself gently, with kindness and compassion. Not sure about how to do that? Think of what you'd say to or do for someone else in your shoes. :)

Take care and remain safe,
Kristen



Book Review—Breaking Free

Breaking Free is an older book by Carolyn Ainscough and Kay Toon which is a self-help guide for adults who were sexually abused as children. It addresses a variety of issues including feelings, why me, eating and body image as well as a variety of other issues. It provides some great tables of symptoms and issues to consider related to particular topics. It has exercises to do to work on recovery as well.

While it is an older book (1993) there is a wealth of information in it that applies to today's recovery journey. It is published by Fisher Books.

Celebrating Ourselves

As adults, some of us may have those in our lives who validate us, but not all of us do. It's important to become our own cheerleader even if we have others who validate us. Not everything that needs celebrated is seen by others in ourselves. Even if no one else knows we made a positive decision or took a positive step, we did. From this standpoint alone it's important to validate the positive in ourselves.

Don't confuse applauding a job well done or a positive validation with false pride. It's not false pride to give yourself kudos. Pride can be good or bad. Some of us have been taught that "Pride comes before a fall." Others of us have been in relationships where any good pride we had was thwarted by abusive responses from those who we'd expect to validate and encourages us.

Pride that pumps us up over others is not a healthy pride. That can even be hurtful to others and ourselves. If we look at what the definition of pride is, we find the following definition: "A feeling or deep pleasure or satisfaction derived from one's own achievements, the achievement of those whom one is closely associated, or from qualities or possessions that are widely admired."

By the very nature of feeling a pleasure or satisfaction in yourself is a healthy pride. Consider giving yourself this benefit and celebrate you.

Self-Care

It's increasingly important to take care of ourselves each day. Sometimes it's tempting to say we don't have time for self-care. That said, most of us have 15 or 20 minutes that we've spent in our day doing little. It can be as simple as spending a few minutes in quiet or giving yourself a simple pleasure of a phone call to a friend you've been wanting to talk to.

So why self-care you may ask? All of us face stressors and things that can create tension. Anything can cause these stressors—relationships, work, therapy, traffic, children and a number of other things. There are multiple issues that stress can cause. For example there are physical and emotional consequences of not taking that extra time for us, even just a few minutes a day.

Increase your odds of lowering your blood pressure, of giving your heart a better chance to stay in shape, to reduce your stress which can prevent stomach issues, and even more. There are an amazing list of medical issues that self-care can prevent and slow down.

*A feeling or
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or satisfaction
derived from
one's own
achievements...*

Mountain Allegory

The journey of recovery is like climbing a mountain that few have ever climbed before. There aren't worn paths and while you may meet someone on your journey, each of you are headed different ways. There are some signs every now and then.

At the start of the journey, you look up the mountain and you wonder how you are going to reach the top. You know you want to get to the top, but you wonder how you are going to reach it. You can't even see the top yet. You know you want to go and you need to get out of the valley you are in, but you are wondering how you are going to do it.

It is frightening to even think about starting this journey. You don't know what you are going to face ahead and you may even be afraid of what you believe lies ahead of you. You may not have even told anyone that you are going on this journey – what would they think if you told them?

You take a deep breath and begin to walk forward with an ever so slight incline. You're quite anxious and asking questions such as "How long will this take?" "What if I get lost?" "What if I can't make it?" "What if no one believes what I've been through on this journey or what has been in the valley?" "Will I be safe?" Perhaps you even doubt it is possible to reach the top.

You look all around, hesitant in moving forward. It seems like already the incline is getting pretty steep. So you look for someone to step. The gravel in this place looks loose, so you step hesitantly and carefully. You're trying to learn to trust these steps. You feel anxious because you've never done this before.

You look up the mountain and see how far there is to the top. It's discouraging. You want to turn back, second guessing your decision to make this journey. You look back down the mountain and you can see just how far up the mountain you are. You realize the valley seems farther away and just how much the terrain has changed. You see these changes and you feel encouraged and you begin to climb once again.

As you continue to climb you realize how much more you have to get to the top. You have come to a place where it seems impossible to go further. You can't see a place to step or a place to grab ahold of.

*You take a deep
breath and
begin to walk
forward with an
ever so slight
incline.*

You decide at this point to start walking to the side in hopes of finding a new place to continue climbing. While it's discouraging to not continue to make upward progress, you realize that you needed this break from climbing. After time and consideration, you realize you are not losing ground, but you are finding a different way up the mountain.

On this lateral move you find a small area that looks a bit worn. There is a camp fire, nourishment and a tent to rest in. While you're there you realize just how tired and hungry you are. There is a small rustic sign that says "You can do this. Take the supplies you need with you to care for you. It's okay to rest here a bit." While you are resting, another person on the journey to the top of the mountain stops to rest as well. As you begin to talk you learn that there are some things you can do to make the journey easier. You know now that you are not alone in this journey, and take encouragement in this. You not only realize you're not alone but you know now that there are some clearer steps to watch for and some steps to watch out for.

You begin to feel regenerated after taking some time to rest and after having conversation with another fellow traveler. You recognize the need to stop every now and then on this journey to continue to take care of you. You're also learning to stop and observe the good around you – nature, the sun, the birds, flowers, breeze and more. In the focus on making it up the mountain, you've not really taken the time to do this, but now you are more aware of the beauty around you.

You continue to look for another place to resume climbing. You have supplies now and are better equipped to care for you on the rest of this journey. Finally you come to a place you can start climbing again. You slowly begin your ascent once more. It's difficult climbing, but you are making progress.

At one step you step onto loose stones. The next thing you know you've slipped back three to four feet. It's discouraging because you were making progress. You realize however, that sliding backwards actually gave you an opportunity to look for better footing that would make it easier to continue to make the progress. You are now able to recognize those areas where you need to be careful and you know how to prepare for those places.

It's hard when the way up seems to take a downward turn through the wind up the mountain. After much time and energy, you've finally made it to the top of the mountain. Looking down the way you came up, you see all the progress you've made. As you look down from the top, you see green grass, beautiful scenery and so much more beauty than you've experienced before. You feel peaceful. You know you've got this now. When you look at where you came from, you can see the dark valley, but as you see this, you realize that the memories from the valley are still there, but the pain of them are not.

*You begin to
feel
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after taking
some time...*

*Give yourself
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on the way.*

As a survivor, this journey of healing is a challenge. It can be helpful to look back six months and see the progress you've made. Sometimes you can take a "break" where you aren't pushing through the trauma, but actually are taking good care of yourself and using good self-care to regain some strength to not keep processing so hard. We all need a break sometimes. This doesn't mean stopping therapy, but perhaps working more on coping skills intermittently to remain stabilized during your treatment.

Yes, recovery is tough, but it is possible to reach the top of the mountain. Give yourself time to rest along the way. Remember to take care of your basic needs – emotional, physical, mental and spiritual. Continue to reach out for support. It can make the journey of healing easier and reduce isolation. If you choose to join a support group for survivors, you can find a common bond and realize you are definitely not the only one on this difficult journey.

Give yourself grace on this journey, and affirm yourself on the way. Give yourself kudos for the successes, and compassion and kindness during the rough patches. You are worth this journey. The other side of the mountain is a much nicer place, and definitely a great place.

Here's to the other side of the mountain!



Submitted by:
Erin

Laughter is the Best Medicine

It's fun to share a good laugh, but did you know it can actually improve your health? Learn how to harness the powerful benefits of laughter and humor.

The benefits of laughter

It's true: laughter is strong medicine. It draws people together in ways that trigger healthy physical and emotional changes in the body. Laughter strengthens your immune system, boosts mood, diminishes pain, and protects you from the damaging effects of stress. Nothing works faster or more dependably to bring your mind and body back into balance than a good laugh. Humor lightens your burdens, inspires hope, connects you to others, and keeps you grounded, focused, and alert. It also helps you release anger and forgive sooner.

With so much power to heal and renew, the ability to laugh easily and frequently is a tremendous resource for surmounting problems, enhancing your relationships, and supporting both physical and emotional health. Best of all, this priceless medicine is fun, free, and easy to use.

As children, we used to laugh hundreds of times a day, but as adults, life tends to be more serious and laughter more infrequent. But by seeking out more opportunities for humor and laughter, you can improve your emotional health, strengthen your relationships, find greater happiness—and even add years to your life.

Laughter is good for your health

Laughter relaxes the whole body.

A good, hearty laugh relieves physical tension and stress, leaving your muscles relaxed for up to 45 minutes after.

Laughter boosts the immune system.

Laughter decreases stress hormones and increases immune cells and infection-fighting antibodies, thus improving your resistance to disease.

Laughter triggers the release of endorphins, the body's natural feel-good chemicals.

Endorphins promote an overall sense of well-being and can even temporarily relieve pain.

Laughter protects the heart.

Laughter improves the function of blood vessels and increases blood flow, which can help protect you against a heart attack and other cardiovascular problems.

Laughter burns calories.

OK, so it's no replacement for going to the gym, but one study found that

*Best of all,
this priceless
medicine is
fun, free, and
easy to use.*

Just for Fun



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laughing for 10 to 15 minutes a day can burn approximately 40 calories—which could be enough to lose three or four pounds over the course of a year.

Laughter lightens anger's heavy load.

Nothing diffuses anger and conflict faster than a shared laugh. Looking at the funny side can put problems into perspective and enable you to move on from confrontations without holding onto bitterness or resentment.

Laughter may even help you to live longer.

A study in Norway found that people with a strong sense of humor outlived those who don't laugh as much. The difference was particularly notable for those battling cancer.

The Benefits of Laughter and Humor

Physical health benefits

- Boosts immunity
- Lowers stress hormones
- Decreases pain
- Relaxes your muscles
- Prevents heart disease
- Adds joy and zest to life
- Eases anxiety and tension
- Relieves stress
- Improves mood
- Strengthens resilience
- Strengthens relationships
- Attracts others to us
- Enhances teamwork
- Helps defuse conflict
- Promotes group bonding

Mental health benefits

- Adds joy and zest to life
- Eases anxiety and tension
- Relieves stress
- Improves mood
- Strengthens resilience

Social benefits

- Strengthens relationships
- Attracts others to us
- Enhances teamwork
- Helps defuse conflict
- Promotes group bonding

A study in Norway found that people with a strong sense of humor outlived those who don't laugh as much.

There's a reason why TV sitcoms use laugh tracks: laughter is contagious.

Laughter helps you stay mentally healthy

Laughter makes you feel good. And this positive feeling remains with you even after the laughter subsides. Humor helps you keep a positive, optimistic outlook through difficult situations, disappointments, and loss.

More than just a respite from sadness and pain, laughter gives you the courage and strength to find new sources of meaning and hope. Even in the most difficult of times, a laugh—or even simply a smile—can go a long way toward making you feel better. And laughter really is contagious—just hearing laughter primes your brain and readies you to smile and join in the fun.

The link between laughter and mental health

Laughter stops distressing emotions.

You can't feel anxious, angry, or sad when you're laughing.

Laughter helps you relax and recharge. It reduces stress and increases energy, enabling you to stay focused and accomplish more.

Laughter shifts perspective, allowing you to see situations in a more realistic, less threatening light. A humorous perspective creates psychological distance, which can help you avoid feeling overwhelmed and diffuse conflict.

Laughter draws you closer to others, which can have a profound effect on all aspects of your mental and emotional health.

Laughter brings people together and strengthens relationships

There's a good reason why TV sitcoms use laugh tracks: laughter is contagious. You're many times more likely to laugh around other people than when you're alone. And the more laughter you bring into your own life, the happier you and those around you will feel.

Sharing humor is half the fun—in fact, most laughter doesn't come from hearing jokes, but rather simply from spending time with friends and family. And it's this social aspect that plays such an important role in the health benefits of laughter. You can't enjoy a laugh with other people unless you take the time to really engage with them. When you care about someone enough to switch off your phone and really connect face to face, you're engaging in a process that rebalances the nervous system and puts the brakes on defensive stress responses like “fight or flight.” And if you share a laugh as well, you'll both feel happier, more positive, and more relaxed—even if you're unable to alter a stressful situation.

How laughing together can strengthen relationships

Shared laughter is one of the most effective tools for keeping relationships fresh and exciting. All emotional sharing builds strong and lasting relationship bonds, but sharing laughter also adds joy, vitality, and resilience. And humor is a powerful and effective way to heal resentments, disagreements, and hurts. Laughter unites people during difficult times.

Humor and playful communication strengthen our relationships by triggering positive feelings and fostering emotional connection. When we laugh with one another, a positive bond is created. This bond acts as a strong buffer against stress, disagreements, and disappointment. Humor and laughter in relationships allows you to:

Be more spontaneous.

Humor gets you out of your head and away from your troubles.

Let go of defensiveness.

Laughter helps you forget resentments, judgments, criticisms, and doubts.

Release inhibitions.

Your fear of holding back is pushed aside.

Express your true feelings.

Deeply felt emotions are allowed to rise to the surface.

Use humor to resolve disagreements and tension in your relationship

Laughter is an especially powerful tool for managing conflict and reducing tension when emotions are running high. Whether with romantic partners, friends and family, or coworkers, you can learn to use humor to smooth over disagreements, lower everyone's stress level, and communicate in a way that builds up your relationships rather than breaking them down.

How to bring more laughter into your life

Laughter is your birthright, a natural part of life that is innate and in-born. Infants begin smiling during the first weeks of life and laugh out loud within months of being born. Even if you did not grow up in a household where laughter was a common sound, you can learn to laugh at any stage of life.

Begin by setting aside special times to seek out humor and laughter, as

*When we laugh
with one
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positive bond
is created.*

you might with exercising, and build from there. Eventually, you'll want to incorporate humor and laughter into the fabric of your life, finding it naturally in everything.

Here are some ways to start:

Smile.

Smiling is the beginning of laughter, and like laughter, it's contagious. When you look at someone or see something even mildly pleasing, practice smiling. Instead of looking down at your phone, look up and smile at people you pass in the street, the person serving you a morning coffee, or the co-workers you share an elevator with. Notice the effect on others.

Count your blessings.

Literally make a list. The simple act of considering the positive aspects of your life will distance you from negative thoughts that block humor and laughter. When you're in a state of sadness, you have further to travel to reach humor and laughter.

*The simple act
of considering
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distance you
from negative
thoughts...*

When you hear laughter, move toward it.

Sometimes humor and laughter are private, a shared joke among a small group, but usually not. More often, people are very happy to share something funny because it gives them an opportunity to laugh again and feed off the humor you find in it. When you hear laughter, seek it out and ask, "What's funny?"

Spend time with fun, playful people.

These are people who laugh easily—both at themselves and at life's absurdities—and who routinely find the humor in everyday events. Their playful point of view and laughter are contagious. Even if you don't consider yourself a lighthearted, humorous person, you can still seek out people who like to laugh and make others laugh. Every comedian appreciates an audience.

Bring humor into conversations.

Ask people, "What's the funniest thing that happened to you today? This week? In your life?"

Simulated laughter

So, what if you really can't "find the funny?" Believe it or not, it's possible to laugh without experiencing a funny event—and simulated laughter can be just as beneficial as the real thing. It can even make exercise more fun and productive. A Georgia State University study found that incor-

porating bouts of simulated laughter into an exercise program helped improve older adults' mental health as well as their aerobic endurance. Plus, hearing others laugh, even for no apparent reason, can often trigger genuine laughter.

To add simulated laughter into your own life, search for laugh yoga or laugh therapy groups. Or you can start simply by laughing at other people's jokes, even if you don't find them funny. Both you and the other person will feel good, it will draw you closer together, and who knows, it may even lead to some spontaneous laughter.

Creating opportunities to laugh

Watch a funny movie, TV show, or YouTube video
 Invite friends or co-workers out to a comedy club
 Read the funny pages
 Seek out funny people
 Share a good joke or a funny story
 Check out your bookstore's humor section
 Host game night with friends
 Play with a pet
 Go to a "laughter yoga" class
 Goof around with children
 Do something silly
 Make time for fun activities (e.g. bowling, miniature golfing, karaoke)

Tips for developing your sense of humor

An essential ingredient for developing your sense of humor is to learn not to take yourself too seriously and laugh at your own mistakes and foibles. As much as we'd like to believe otherwise, we all do foolish things from time to time. Instead of feeling embarrassed or defensive, embrace your imperfections. While some events in life are clearly sad and not opportunities for laughter, most don't carry an overwhelming sense of either sadness or delight. They fall into the gray zone of ordinary life—giving you the choice to laugh or not. So choose to laugh whenever you can.

How to develop your sense of humor

Laugh at yourself.

Share your embarrassing moments. The best way to take yourself less seriously is to talk about times when you took yourself too seriously.

Attempt to laugh at situations rather than bemoan them.

Look for the humor in a bad situation, and uncover the irony and absurdity of life. When something negative happens, try to make it a humorous anecdote that will make others laugh.

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*Pay attention
to children and
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them...*

Surround yourself with reminders to lighten up.

Keep a toy on your desk or in your car. Put up a funny poster in your office. Choose a computer screensaver that makes you laugh. Frame photos of you and your family or friends having fun.

Remember funny things that happen.

If something amusing happens or you hear a joke or funny story you really like, write it down or tell it to someone to help you remember it. Don't dwell on the negative. Try to avoid negative people and don't dwell on news stories, entertainment, or conversations that make you sad or unhappy. Many things in life are beyond your control—particularly the behavior of other people. While you might view carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders as admirable, in the long run it's unrealistic and unhealthy.

Find your inner child.

Pay attention to children and try to emulate them—after all, they are the experts on playing, taking life lightly, and laughing at ordinary things.

Deal with stress.

Stress can be a major impediment to humor and laughter, so it's important to keep your stress levels in check. One great technique to relieve stress in the moment is to draw upon a favorite memory that always makes you smile—something your kids did, for example, or something funny a friend told you.

Don't go a day without laughing.

Think of it like exercise or breakfast and make a conscious effort to find something each day that makes you laugh. Set aside 10 to 15 minutes and do something that amuses you. The more you get used to laughing each day, the less effort you'll have to make.

Using humor to overcome challenges and enhance your life

The ability to laugh, play, and have fun not only makes life more enjoyable but also helps you solve problems, connect with others, and think more creatively. People who incorporate humor and play into their daily lives find that it renews them and all of their relationships.

Life brings challenges that can either get the best of you or become playthings for your imagination. When you “become the problem” and take yourself too seriously, it can be hard to think outside the

box and find new solutions. But when you play with the problem, you can often transform it into an opportunity for creative learning.

Playing with problems seems to come naturally to children. When they are confused or afraid, they make their problems into a game, giving them a sense of control and an opportunity to experiment with new solutions. Interacting with others in playful ways helps you retain this creative ability.

Here are two examples of people who took everyday problems and turned them around through laughter and play:

Roy, a semi-retired businessman, was excited to finally have time to devote to golf, his favorite sport. But the more he played, the less he enjoyed himself. Although his game had improved dramatically, he got angry with himself over every mistake. Roy wisely realized that his golfing buddies affected his attitude, so he stopped playing with people who took the game too seriously. When he played with friends who focused more on having fun than on their scores, he was less critical of himself. Now golfing was as enjoyable as Roy had envisioned. He scored better without working harder. And the brighter outlook he was gaining from his companions and the game spread to other parts of his life.

Jane worked at home designing greeting cards, a job she used to love but now felt had become routine. Two little girls who loved to draw and paint lived next door. Eventually, Jane invited the girls over to play with all of her art supplies. At first, she just watched, but in time she joined in. Laughing, coloring, and playing pretend with the little girls transformed Jane's life. Not only did it end her loneliness and boredom, but it sparked her imagination and helped her artwork flourish. Best of all, it rekindled the playfulness in Jane's relationship with her husband.

As laughter, humor, and play become integrated into your life, your creativity will flourish and new opportunities for laughing with friends, coworkers, acquaintances, and loved ones will occur to you daily. Laughter takes you to a higher place where you can view the world from a more relaxed, positive, and joyful perspective.

Get more help [Laughter Therapy – Guide to the healing power of laughter.](#) (Cancer Treatment Centers of America)

[Laughter-Based Exercise Program for Older Adults has Health Benefits – The benefits of simulated laughter.](#) (Georgia State University)

[The Science of Laughter – Laughter, humor, and play as social tools.](#) (Psychology Today)

[Humor in the Workplace – Series of articles on using humor to reduce job stress, improve morale, and boost productivity.](#) (Laughter Remedy)

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Authors: Lawrence Robinson, Melinda Smith, M.A., and Jeanne Segal, Ph.D. Last updated: November 2019.

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/laughter-is-the-best-medicine.htm>

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STATEMENT OF FAITH

Psalm 147:3 He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

MISSION

The mission of Hope Recovery is to provide support and compassion in the lives of adult survivors of abuse and sexual trauma.

VISION

To offer support and compassion as survivors make their way on the journey of recovery and healing.

Hope Recovery

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Tuesday - Friday—3p—7p Eastern

Other hours by appointment.

If you're feeling **suicidal**, please contact 800-SUICIDE or if outside the US, go to www.befrienders.org

If you are being **abused**, experiencing incest or rape, please contact RAINN at 800-656-HOPE. RAINN provides links to international agencies.

If you are in a **violent relationship**, call 800-799-SAFE. For international contacts, go to www.hotpeachpages.net/a/index.html

We're on the Web

www.hope4-recovery.org

Find our newsletters at <http://www.hope4-recovery.org/publications.htm>



Free to Survivors.

\$4 donations recommended from supporters and professionals to cover the costs of the website and printed copies.

Donations may be sent to our PO Box, or online via our website.

**You Are
Not Alone!**

When all seems like a struggle, there is hope.