

publisher's note

Looking Ahead to Recovery Month

By BARBARA NICHOLSON-BROWN

While National Recovery Month is six months away, we at the Art of Recovery Expo are excited to announce our 7th Annual event on Saturday, September 22, at the Phoenix Convention Center. As always the Expo is FREE to the public. Joining us this year is nationally renowned author John Bradshaw and NFL Football legend Herschel Walker.



For the past four decades, John, has combined his exceptional skills as the role of counselor, author, management consultant, theologian, philosopher, and public speaker, becoming one of the leading figures in the fields of addiction/recovery, family systems, relationships, spiritual and emotional growth. He currently leads workshops around the country, and is a Senior Fellow at The Meadows treatment program in Wickenburg, Arizona. John has written three *New York Times* best-selling books: *Homecoming: Reclaiming and Championing Your Inner Child*, *Creating Love*, and *Healing the Shame That Binds You*. A much sought out speaker, John has truly touched and transformed the lives of millions.

At the University of Georgia, Walker set an NCAA freshman rushing record and helped capture the national collegiate football title. He earned consensus All-American honors three consecutive years, set 10 NCAA records, 15 Southeast Conference records, 30



Georgia all-time records, and capped a sensational college career by earning the 1982 Heisman Trophy in his junior year.

Walker joined the Dallas Cowboys in 1986, where he led the entire NFL in rushing and earned All-Pro honors.



Walker moved to the Minnesota Vikings as starting running back in 1989. In 1992, he joined the Philadelphia Eagles football team, but returned to the Dallas Cowboys in 1996. In 2002 he was voted into the Collegiate Football Hall of Fame, and was selected as the second greatest player in college football history, just behind the legendary Red Grange. In a 2008 memoir, *Breaking Free*, Herschel Walker revealed that he had suffered for many years from dissociative identity disorder, a mental illness previously known as multiple personality disorder. With psychotherapy, the disorder can be treated, and Walker decided to make his affliction public, to advance understanding of the disorder and encourage others so afflicted to find the help they need. **Save the date now!**

I personally want to thank Rob Weiss for his outstanding feature on Tech, Sex and Porn Addiction. While the topic of sex addiction may be uncomfortable, it too, is one we need to discuss openly without shame or the fear of being judged. No addiction, in my opinion is any worse or better than another. We must focus our attention on help, hope and treatment.

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Some Reflections on Sanity

By JEFFREY C. FRIEDMAN, MHS, LISAC

Psychology is an area of philosophical inquiry dating back to the civilizations of ancient Greece and Egypt.

But in over two thousand years of psychological research, what seems to have most successfully eluded organized investigation is any definition of the qualities of sanity — that which makes for soundness, rationality and healthiness of mind. For as long as the human psyche has been studied, psychologists have largely focused their energies mainly on cataloguing, analyzing and generally fussing over the myriad ways in which a person can be psychologically ill. *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders of the American Psychiatric Association: Fourth Edition – Text Revision* (DSM-IV-TR), the standard reference for psychiatric diagnosis describes in clinical detail over 400 distinct syndromes of psychopathology. But when one searches the DSM or even the greater body of psychological literature for any unified theoretical or clinical description of the qualities of sanity, they will find little.

For readers of *Together AZ*, an essay on the characteristics of sanity may be of some interest since the readership of this publication are people engaged in the process of recovery — an ongoing and proactive passage from neurotic suffering to more optimal mental and behavioral health.

What is recovery but a journey to greater sanity?

But the sad fact is that many of the people on this journey to sanity are likely to be more familiar with the qualities of insanity than with those of sanity. At some point, we who dedicate our energies to improving our mental and emotional health might be wise to wonder if we would even recognize sanity if it came our way.

But recognizing sanity is not as easy as it might at first seem. Ideas on sanity will differ from person to person. These differences are the natural result of our own individual struggles and unique life experiences. This is not only as it should be, but as it only can be. If this commentary serves as the impetus for reasoned discussion on the qualities of sanity it will, I think, have served at least some good purpose.

So this is an article that will dwell more in the question of “what is sanity” than in the answer. It is meant to be an inquiry into, rather than a definitive or comprehensive description of, the qualities of sanity.

But readers must be warned. Distilling the constituents of sanity is a process that contains several moving parts and is one that is constrained in several ways. Because of the lack of psychological research on the subject, there is little broadly accepted theory on what exactly constitutes sanity. Even societal and cultural norms appear to be of little help here. In his book *A Sane Society*, psychologist Erich Fromm pointed out, “The fact that millions of people share the same vices does not make these vices virtues... and the fact that millions of people share the same form of mental pathology does not make these people sane.” We all seem to possess a mix of both sane and insane qualities. And the elements of sanity and insanity, like those of joy and sadness, may exist only in relation to one another. Aristotle recognized this when he wrote: “No excellent soul is exempt from a mixture of madness.”

One way to approach the task of describing the qualities of sanity is to start with a model of its opposite, insanity and sort of work backwards. Dr. Dan Siegel, a Harvard-trained neuropsychiatrist and author of *The Mindful Brain*, offers a simple model for insanity, which he describes as “either rigidity or chaos.” When Dr. Siegel uses this paradigm in his conference presentations, he purses the fingers of his hands and holds them a couple of feet apart, carving out of the air a continuum terminating in two extreme and differential states of being. Siegel’s gesture is instructive because it implies a middle ground between the two extremes. Could sanity reside in the space between the doctor’s hands — between rigidity and chaos? Might the middle ground of sanity contain the qualities of flexibility, resilience, moderation, tolerance and adaptability? This idea may be worth some thought for anyone for whom the premise feels right.

And what feels right to any given person may, itself, be a clue to sanity. Many psychologists believe that all human beings have in innate attraction to what they instinctively experience as “sane.” People seem to sense the inherent health in others. Could it be that a journey to sanity might best be taken in the company of trusted others — especially if those others are also trying to improve their own emotional wellness?

This premise can be turned into an exercise. Find a person you admire and experience as a particularly sane person (a personal hero, perhaps). Make a list of the personal qualities in that person that you most admire. This list might be the beginning of your personal template of sanity.



Jeffrey C. Friedman, MHS, LISAC is a primary therapist at Cottonwood Tucson, a 50-bed inpatient behavioral health treatment center located in Tucson, AZ. He is a summa cum laude graduate of The School of Human Services of Lincoln University (PA). Jeff’s work at Cottonwood includes treating chemically dependent and disordered gambling patients, lecturing on the neurobiology of addictive and mood disorders, and presenting workshops on a range of behavioral health issues at counseling conferences throughout the United States, Europe and Asia. His articles have appeared in *Together AZ*, *Counselor Magazine* and *Addiction Professional*.



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