

Recovery Month: Be Sure to Connect

September marks the start of National Recovery Month, an international observance held each year to honor and celebrate the millions of people in recovery from mental health and substance use issues. It serves as a critical reminder that behavioral health is essential to overall health.



Maureen Lyn Bernard

This year's theme is "Join the Voices for Recovery: Celebrating Connections" and it could not be timelier as we are several months into the COVID-19 situation and many of us are struggling to make or maintain connections that had once been so easy.

Since mid-March, I and the rest of the staff at Jewish Family Service have been working hard to maintain connections, not only with our clients and each other, but also with our family and friends.

My primary work is with people who have addictions, usually to alcohol or drugs, but also to non-chemical behaviors such as disordered eating, exercise or gambling. Many people I work with have been doing fairly well with their recovery programs in that they've maintained sobriety, are engaged in pro-

ductive, meaningful activities and have made (sometimes even repaired) connections with others. These people have been able to roll with the earlier restrictions placed on us by COVID-19 by participating in online or phone-in 12-step fellowship groups.

Yet, I know of others who went into shelter-in-place mode believing that they could manage on their own and didn't need those connections instrumental to recovery.

Research has shown a positive link between satisfaction with life and feeling connected to other people. These connections can be a simple "hi" to a neighbor out for your daily walks, a phone call, or a Zoom conference with co-workers.

People often fear reaching out to others. They fear rejection or worry that their friends are too busy. But it's clear that we are social animals. We crave interaction with others, with feeling supported, valued and, for those struggling with addiction and/or mental health issues, such interaction is critical to recovery.

No one, even you, needs to suffer alone. Celebrate connections by making new ones. **IN**

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IF YOU'RE LOOKING TO STAY CONNECTED during this challenging time of COVID, join Jewish Family Service's community-wide support group Wednesdays at 1 p.m. Register at jfsdetroit.org/supportgroups. For information on other ways JFS can support you or a loved one, contact (248) 592-2313 or resourcecenter@jfsdetroit.org. For a listing of local AA meetings, visit aa-semi.org.

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Happy New Year



May the coming year be filled with health and happiness and prosperity for all our Family and Friends.

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