



Transcript:

Multiple Pathways of Recovery for African Americans (M.3)

Presenter: Mark Sanders
Recorded on May 26th, 2020

MARK SANDERS: I ask you to join me in giving Great Lakes ATTC a virtual round of applause for sponsoring this virtual educational experience. But I'd like to also start by sharing with you two stories in honor of the work that you do. In 1983, I had a job where I earned lots of money, \$13,000 a year. I decided I would go back to school so I could learn more, but also so that I could make more money.

So in order to do that, I took an evening job, where I went from earning \$13,000 a year to \$10,000 a year. I don't know if you know what a \$10,000-a-year paycheck looks like. It's about \$300 every two weeks. And I was given 150 of those dollars to the school I attended, Loyola University of Chicago, and \$125 to my roommate, which left me \$25 every two weeks for pretty much nothing.

In my field of study, social work, I had to do an internship, or practicum. My first practicum was at a hospital. And the first day I showed up I was asked to go home because I was wearing gym shoes. They said, we don't where gym shoes to this hospital. We're a professional establishment.

So where was I going to get a pair of dress shoes for \$25? Some of you are thinking Payless, Goodwill, Salvation Army. Years ago, there was a discount shoe chain called Famous Shoes. And I walked into Famous Shoes, and the only shoes I could afford for \$25 were plastic.

The problem was that it was September, and it rains a lot in September. And I quickly discovered that plastic and rain, they don't mix. I was slipping and sliding all over the place. And right around November I had a larger concern. A hole formed right at the tip of the shoe.

So now I'm walking down the street, and my shoes were talking. In December, it was frightening because it snows a lot in my town in December. And my fear was that snow would get in the tip of my shoe, and I would die of frostbite.

So I took my shoe to the nearest shoe shop, and I sat it on the counter. The owner looked at my shoe and said, [LAUGHING] you may as well throw these



away, son. These are plastic. We don't fix plastic. It's not worth, he said. Plastic can't be fixed.

I put my head down, walked about a mile, and I stumbled into another shoe shop. And I sat the shoe on the counter. And the owner looked at my shoe and he said, [LAUGHING] you may as well throw these away, pal. These are plastic. We don't fix plastic here. It's not worth it, he said. Plastic can't be fixed.

So now I'm desperate. I walk about two miles, and I stumble into another shoe shop. I sit the shoe on the counter. The owner looked at my shoe for what felt like a lifetime. My heart was beating so fast because I knew he was going to say we don't fix plastic. Plastic can't be fixed.

Instead he said nothing. He reached back, picked up a magnifying glass, looked at my shoe really closely. Then he looked up at me and smiled and said, I'll fix it. And that was 1983. And this is the year 2020. He's been fixing my shoes for 37 years, not the same pair. But he did fix those four times that year.

But what it said to me is it takes a special person to work at fixing something that the rest of the world says is not worth it. They can't be fixed. And those of you who work with clients with substance use disorder, that's the same thing a lot of people say about the clients you serve, it's not worth it. They can't be fixed. So it really does take a group of individuals to dedicate your life to helping others that other people actually shun. So I salute you for the work that you do.

The second story was told to me by a colleague, a friend named Greg Risberg who started off as a public school teacher, fourth grade, in the backdrops of Robert Taylor Public Housing on the south side of the city of Chicago. Now, these were 16-story tall buildings with poor people stacked on top of each other. He went from a fourth grade teacher to a social worker to a professional speaker.

Greg told me that one day a man called him at midnight and woke him up and asked, are you the same Greg Risberg who taught fourth grade across the street from Robert Taylor public housing 30 years ago? And Greg said, yeah, that's me. He says, I was a student in your fourth-grade class. You were my teacher.

I'm a decorated military man. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if I wouldn't wind up achieving the rank of a Colin Powell. I was just calling you to tell you, you really made a difference in my life. And Greg said, what did I do? He says, every Friday you would stop teaching, and you would sit the whole class in a large circle. And you would have us to read the newspaper from cover to cover.



And in reading the newspaper from cover to cover, what I learned was that there was more happening in the world than simply what was happening in public housing. So it made me curious about the world. I hurried up, graduated high school, joined the military. I went around the world twice since then.

But you did something that was more special than that. One day you invited the class on a field trip. This wasn't an ordinary field trip. This was special. You invited the entire class to your house. And you asked everybody to bring a bag lunch to your house.

And I looked at my refrigerator that night, and I saw that I had no food. And when I made it to your house with no food, you went in your refrigerator, and you fixed me a sandwich. Anyway, the reason I'm calling is because we still have a home in Chicago, and I'll be coming home next month. And I want to invite you over to my house so I can fix you a sandwich.

And when he told me that story it dawned on me that it took him 40 years to see the fruits of his labor. Your work is like that as addiction specialists. You're like farmers who plant seeds, who may not see the fruits of your labor in a season that you plant the seed. And sometimes it takes many seasons to see the fruits of your labor.

So it takes patience, faith, and grit in order to do what you do. I recognize you for that as well. Our webinar's entitled Multiple Pathways to Recovery for African-Americans. And there's a widely held belief among service providers that there's primarily one way to recover. That is treatment followed by 12 step attending. Let's take a moment to talk about the history of that, this 35-year practice.

In the 1950s, there was a development of the Minnesota model. The director of the Hazelden Foundation in Minnesota, Willmar State Hospital in Minnesota, and Pioneer House in Minnesota, the executive directors of these three great programs came together to develop the model program for the treatment of substance use disorder. And through the development of the Minnesota model, they gave us the 28-day residential treatment stay, the multidisciplinary team consisting of a psychiatrist, a psychologist, a social worker, a counselor, a nurse.

The Minnesota model gave us the model of a persons in recovery as paid professionals in the field. And that's huge. They also introduced us to family week. Even in the 1950s, the Hazelden Foundation believed that addiction was a family illness. And so whenever possible, they would like to have the whole family stay in the hospital for the week in order to heal.

And then they introduced us to the integration of treatment and 12-step programming while the person was in treatment, followed by a referral to 12-



step groups upon a discharge. So we pretty much had, for 35 years, a one-size-fits-all model. The challenge with that is that we're learning now that clients are uniquely different. And that one-size-fits-all model has led to a great deal of tension between counselors and clients. That tension increases resistance and leads to premature termination and ultimately relapse.

And so then there was the cocaine crisis of the 1980s, which changed everything. Specifically the year was 1986. And 1986 was the year that crack cocaine replaced marijuana as the number-one street drug.

I remember in 1985, stand-up comic Richard Pryor was running down the street in California, and he was on fire. He was burning up. If you remember, Richard Pryor was free basing cocaine. And when one freebases cocaine, ether is used, and ether is very flammable.

So in 1986, street scientists decided that there needed to be a safer way for people to use cocaine. So they took out the ether, and they replaced it with baking soda. And that was the birth of crack. And the reason they called crack "crack" is because when baking soda is heated, it makes a cracking noise.

I remember it as if it were yesterday. January 15, 1986, I was graduated from Loyola University Chicago School of Social Work. I had just received my master's degree. And I remember at the commencement exercise, the speaker said, I would like for all the proud parents of the graduates to please stand up. And I looked up there, and I saw my father stand up. That was our big moment.

May 29 of that same year, 1986, I was giving my first speech. And someone came and opened the door and said, is there a Mark Sanders here? And I went-- there's a phone call for you. Take it now. My mother was on the other end of the line. And she was crying hysterically. She told me that my dad had just died at work, and he was smoking the drug of his choice, crack cocaine.

Two weeks later, there was a basketball player from the University of Maryland named Len Bias, who was drafted number one by the Boston Celtics. And he decided to celebrate having been drafted number one. So that night he went to a party and celebrated with the use of cocaine. He had a heart attack, and he died.

And following his death, Congress intensified the war on drugs. So prior to his death, there were 500,000 inmates in the nation's prisons. By 1995, a decade later, those numbers increased to 1 million. And by 2005, 2,000-- 2 million, I'm sorry-- 2 million inmates in our nation's prisons, disproportionately individuals who use alcohol and other drugs stigma increase.

And the Center for Addiction and Treatment shifted from treatment centers to prisons and a child welfare state. Specifically, there were lots of women who



were thought to use cocaine. And if cocaine were found in their baby's system upon birth, the babies were taken away from the mothers. So historians such as William White in the mid 1980s and early '90s make the statement, we can no longer afford to debate styles of recovery. All of our faces and voices are needed.

He talked about the best day to have a substance use disorder in America was in 1978, when First Lady Betty Ford said, my name is Betty Ford. I'm an alcoholic. And the idea was that if the First Lady of the United States could be an alcoholic, then anyone could be an alcoholic.

So gradually the face shifted from first lady to Len Bias, to poor African-Americans living in urban America. So historians know that there was more than one face of recovery and how important it was show all of our faces. And then historians and researchers began to study pathways and styles of recovery. And we began to learn that there were really ultimately multiple styles of recovery.

We could have figured this out in 1944 if we had listened. In 1944, the co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, Bill W. said, "the roads to recovery are many. We have no monopoly on reviving alcoholics."

In recent years, other authors have agreed with Bill W., citing research that revealed that addiction's recovery can be professionally guided, peer guided, and self guided. People are using multiple pathways to reach long-term recovery, including spiritual, non-linear-- or non-spiritual, I'm sorry-- secular, and religious pathways. So our webinar today focuses on multiple pathways and styles of recovery for African-American.

One style of recovery, it's what we call resistance to oppression. I often ask audiences the reason African-American history month is in February, and eventually somebody said, because it's the shortest month of the year. But actually the real answer is because they put it in February to celebrate the birthday of Frederick Douglass, who was thought to be born February 14, on Valentine's Day.

Frederick Douglass was the first prominent American recovering alcoholic. And his famous quote is that "we can't stagger to freedom." What good is it for people to be enslaved by liquor while free? So he started what was called the Black Temperance Movement.

And in his autobiography he wrote-- Frederick Douglass wrote-- that in many ways, alcohol was used really as medicine for the torture that the slaves endured. He said, they would beat us Monday through Friday and then allow us to drink on Saturday, believing that once we got drunk, we would never want to run away. So he thought that alcohol was one way to control the slaves.



So with no 28-day treatment program, no Alcoholics Anonymous, Frederick Douglass stopped drinking. And his method of recovery, style of recovery, is known as resistance to oppression. This style of oppression exists today. There are individuals who consider themselves to be Afro-centric or members of the Nation of Islam or the Black Panthers, who also feel that alcohol and drugs in the black community is a way to control the community. So they refuse to drink or use any drug.

Other styles of recovery include maturing out. You've heard the expression. He got sober because he got sick and tired of being sick and tired. And I've interviewed many African-American men who say they got tired of going to jail, tired of hustling to pay for drugs. So their style of recovery was they quit. They got sick and tired of being sick and tired.

Another pathway is solo recovery. And that would be recovery without treatment. And then there is treatment-assistant recovery, peer-assisted recovery, including the uses of the recovery coaches. And I'm happy to report that in African-American communities, that the use of recovery coaches to help facilitate recovery is increasing.

And then of course, there's 12-step recovery. People often say that 12 steps are not an attractive form of recovery for African-Americans. Nothing can be further from the truth. They are vibrant 12-step meetings all over African-American communities as we speak.

And then there's a method of recovery that's called quantum change, overnight transformation, an instant spiritual awakening. Incredible story of a young woman I work with. She was 14 years old. And she loved the smell of marijuana.

You could take the smell of marijuana, and you could put it in a perfume bottle, and she would buy the bottle. She smoked marijuana every day. But she loved the smell of marijuana, even more than she likes smoking marijuana. She wasn't much of a drinker. But once she went to a party, and she did what we tell all teenagers not to be when they go to party.

She had a drink in her hand. And she left the drink on the counter, and she passed out. And she told me that an entire street gang, when she passed out, sexually assaulted her. We asked her how, does she know? She said, they posted it on Facebook. They were arrested.

Interestingly enough, amazingly enough, she didn't have called post-traumatic stress disorder. Because she was passed out, she had no memory of what happened to her. All she remembers about that night was that she smoked lots of marijuana.



So from that moment on, whenever she smelled marijuana, she had a negative reaction. She could no longer stand the smell of marijuana because it reminded her of this bad thing that happened to her. She hasn't gotten high in seven years. Her recovery was instantaneous, a form of quantum change.

Young man who I knew, whose family was wealthy, he was 17 years old. And by the way, my friends, if most of my clients that I work with could afford their drug, you'd be shocked how many people would go to treatment. He could afford his drugs.

And this 17-year-old got his drugs from an economically poor community. And one day he went to get his drugs, and they saw his car. They stole his car, robbed them, stomped him, and paralyzed his left hand.

And doctors told him he would never use that hand again. Except it had good veins in it. So one day he injected a needle in the vein. He felt the sting of the needle and saw it as a miracle. He never used heroin again.

You might be familiar with movie director Spike Lee and actor Samuel L. Jackson. And years ago, Samuel L. Jackson was in treatment for coke, crack cocaine. And while he was in treatment for crack cocaine, he received a call from then director Spike Lee and said, I told you I have a role for you. So Samuel L. Jackson left crack cocaine treatment to play the role of a crack user in a movie called Jungle Fever.

He already did the research. And if you remember in the movie, his girlfriend in that movie, Halle Berry, was also using crack cocaine. And Samuel L. Jackson in the movie would do this crazy dance for his mother, hoping that she would be so annoyed by watching the dance that she would give him money to buy the crack. And while they were auditioning that scene, Ossie Davis, who played the role of Samuel L. Jackson's father in the movie, pulled out a revolver gun and shot and killed Samuel L. Jackson in the movie. Samuel Jackson said that when he heard the sound of the gunshot, it sort of triggered his recovery, and he never used crack cocaine again.

And then there are what we call religious styles of recovery. So evidence indicates that in the height of the crack cocaine epidemic of the 1980s and '90s, that every denomination of African-American church formed its own faith-based drug ministries. The most popular of all was the program at GLIDE Memorial Church, started by Pastor Cecil Williams.

You might remember the movie No Hiding Place starring Will Smith, who played Chris Gardner, who went from homelessness to millionaire. So during the '90s, Cecil Williams noticed all of the crack and heroin abuse in his neighborhood in San Francisco, a poor neighborhood in San Francisco. And he was feeling a sense of pessimism.



And he received the phone call from the President of the United States, who says, I want you to join our war on drugs. And after a while, Pastor Williams concluded it is not a war on drugs. This is actually a war on men of color because more and more men of color are being incarcerated.

So he formed his own church-based drug ministry. On any given Sunday, one of his services consisted of 2,000 people. And approximately 80%-- that's 1,600 people in that congregation meeting-- were working on recovery. So every Sunday, individuals seeking recovery can go to a revival for recovery.

GLIDE Church's program allowed room for shouting and communal relating. I had a discussion last week with a group of clinicians, where we asked the question, why do Black people shout? In fact, there's a book by Ralph Wiley called Why Black People Shout. And he said it has a lot to do with stress relief, that shouting actually helps with oppression. Good for those who felt alienated in other self-help groups. Tell you a quick story.

Years ago, I went to a self-help group. And at the end of each meeting, we would say the Serenity Prayer and the Lord's Prayer and followed by a hug-- Serenity Prayer, Lord's Prayer, followed by a hug. And I was the only African-American that attended that meeting.

And when it was time for the hug, the person to my left would hug the person to their left. And the person to my right would have the person to my right, leaving me no one to hug. I was always the second hug. One my high school buddies, I just found out, went to treatment. And he left Illinois and went to a state where he was the only African-American in that residential treatment facility.

So no one would speak to him, he said, while he was in treatment. He felt alienated and isolated. He said that he and 15 other clients contracted COVID-19 while they were there. And he said that when it was time for him to leave treatment, to get to the airport, he said no one in the facility would offer him a ride to the airport. So he walked from the treatment facility to the airport. And as soon as he made it back home, he returned to drinking.

Members are allowed to openly talk about and express their anger and rage. There are lots of people who are frightened by the anger of African-Americans. I remember when I was a social work student, I worked in an addiction treatment program as my internship.

[00:21:45.58] And there were two TV rooms in the facility. The Black patients hung out at one TV room. The white patients hung out in the other TV room. And you could hear shouting and noise in that room where the African-Americans were hanging out. And my colleagues would say, are they about to riot? I'd say, no, that's how they're expressing themselves in order to deal with tension and stress, et cetera.



So the program at GLIDE Church is not anonymous. It reads in the book that the members have no reputation to protect. Most of them are homeless. The reason Alcoholics Anonymous is anonymous, according to historian Ernie Kurtz, is because the original members of Alcoholics Anonymous were empowered men. They had reputations to protect.

The co-founders included a surgeon, a stockbroker, and a third member of AA was a lawyer. These men at GLIDE-- and women at GLIDE-- have acknowledged powerlessness their entire life. For them, this is not a revolutionary idea.

Historian William White wrote a book called *Feminine and Masculine Language in Recovery*. And he says, for many people to get into recovery, they need to have a revolutionary experience, a way of viewing the world different than they viewed the world before. So if you think about the history of Alcoholics Anonymous, which began in 1935, back then, the number-one selling book was *Self Reliance*, that each man had to rely on himself.

So in Alcoholics Anonymous, the revolutionary idea is that you can't do this by yourself. You're not all powerful. You need help from others. Well, members of GLIDE Church, living in poverty, have acknowledged powerlessness their entire life. Part of recovery for them is to acknowledge that they're powerful.

Members of GLIDE Church recovery program were taught that their recoveries were important to the Black community. The community needs you sober. And the program is multi-generational. So that when I read the book, there was 16 different generations in the church working on recovery. For example, generation one might be working on staying sober a day at a time. These were the members of the congregation that were in early recovery.

Generation eight might be focusing on getting a job, gainful employment. Generation 16 might be focused on helping to rebuild the community. I've been sober for a while. I'm grateful. How can I help to rebuild the community?

And then at the church's program, GLIDE Church, there were special groups for men and women. And one such group that caught my attention was a woman's group called *African Queens Revisited*. And that group was led by a woman who used to be Stevie Wonder's hairdresser when he went on the road to perform. And also she was Maya Angelou's niece.

[00:24:25.83] As a cosmetologist, she would work with these women in recovery and help to increase external beauty through makeup, hair, et cetera. And then these women would sit together in groups, and they would read stories about prominent and successful African women and African-American women and talk about some of those qualities that they, too, possess. Now, said she was feeding both the internal part of the woman going through the program, but also the external part, et cetera.



Let's take a moment to talk about rites of passage. And by definition, a rite of passage is a culturally prescribed ritual that transfers our boys into men and girls into women. When we lived in a more rural societies, more tribal societies years ago, it was really clear when a boy became a man. So visualize a boy years past, living in a hut near his mother and only to be awakened by men in the village at age 13.

And they would take him into the wilderness, where he would learn bravery and how to hunt, et cetera. And back then, a girl would be introduced to womanhood after she experienced her first menstrual cycle. The women in the village might take her to a hut and explain to her what's happening with her body. And then teach her the things that she needed to know in order to be a woman.

So when I do a live seminar, I'll often ask people, in the neighborhood where you live, how does a boy know when he's a man? And how does a girl know when she's a woman? And I hear things like, well, if she gets pregnant, she's a woman. If he gets someone pregnant, he's a man. If he sells drugs, he's a man. If he has his driver's license, he's a man. It's not so clear. If he can guzzle shots of liquor without coughing, he's a man.

So 25 years ago, me and seven African-American social workers took a trip, a journey to a country called Ghana located in West Africa. We were on a plane for 18 hours. Have you ever been on a plane for 18 hours? I will never do that again.

When I was on that long flight, I couldn't sleep. My sinuses were acting up. I couldn't breathe. I had a headache you couldn't believe. And on top of all that, when the plane landed in Ghana, West Africa, my luggage was lost. Didn't have a clue what to expect.

Our first stop was to a village. And there were a group of elders between the ages of 60 to 90 years old. And these elders was sitting in a circle. And they asked the seven of us to join them in the circle.

And one of my friends asked the elders a question, so how do you feel about us as African-Americans? When he asked that question, how do you feel about us as African-Americans, the room was so silent you could almost hear a pin drop. I then asked him, why'd you ask that question?

He said, man, I waited my life, my whole life, to ask that one question, how do you feel about us as African-Americans? We were not prepared for their response. They said, we love you. We think about you more than you know. And we pray for you. We were crying like babies.

Actually, as soon as they said we love you, we think about you more than you know, we pray for you, an 85-year-old man stood up and started singing a



song. The lyrics were "you've come back home." And all 30 of them were singing a song you've come back home.

Then they told us a story of a Ghanaian, an African, 200 years ago that was being captured and forced on a ship to the Americas to be a slave. He looked back on the shores of Ghana and said, I'll be back home one day. They looked at us and they said, for all we know, one of you could be the descendants of this man. Welcome home.

And we were healed in places that we did not hurt. While we were in Ghana for a few weeks, we went through rites of passage ceremonies. And we concluded that in some of our economically poorest African-American communities, what's missing amongst the youth are positive rites of passages, because youth will be initiated, whether it be a gang initiation or they go to college and they join a fraternity or a sorority, that type of initiation.

So we went to the court system, and we said, we want to work with the African-American young men and women who are on intensive probation. And we want to take them to the rites of passage programming. So the first thing we would have them to do as a group is to identify a group name, a group logo, and a group mission statement, sort of a bonding exercise.

Well, what we learned is that it also helped, because in many of these young people's lives, they are competing with street gangs-- we were competing with street gangs for their attention. And every street gang has a name, a logo, and a mission statement. And then we asked them to research the history of their own name.

And I would never ask a teenager to do anything I wasn't willing to do myself. So I researched the history of my name. My name is not Mark Sanders. My name is Mark Anthony Sanders. I know there's nothing clever about the name Mark Sanders. But Mark Anthony, that's a clever name. The reason I know is that I took a trip to a British island called Tortola. And in order to come back into the States, I had to go through customs in Puerto Rico.

And when they looked at my passport, and they saw my name was Mark Anthony, they were so excited in Puerto Rico. That was around the time when he had just married-- Marc Anthony had just married Jennifer Lopez. So I asked my mother, how'd you name me?

And she said, Mark, when I was pregnant with you I was living with your father. And his mother, who thought that I was not good enough for her son and your father was cheating on me, I felt so isolated and alone. When I was pregnant carrying you, I used to watch a show called The Steve Allen Show.

He had a wife named Jayne Meadows, who was the sister of Audrey Meadows, who was Jackie Gleason's wife on The Honeymooners. They had



a son named Mark Anthony, and they were such a close family. So while she was fighting with my mother, my grandmother, and my father, she pretty much named me to be a family man.

I asked her how she named my sister Vanessa. She said, when I was pregnant carrying Vanessa, I used to watch a soap opera. And there was a man named Mark Anthony who had a wife named Vanessa. And they were so close.

How'd you know my sister Lisa? She said, in that same soap opera, Mark Anthony and Vanessa had a daughter named Lisa, and they became even closer. How did you name my sister Donna? In that same soap opera-- or I used to watch another soap opera called The Donna Reed Show, a sitcom, The Donna Reed Show. And boy, were they a close family.

So my mother was telling me through our names, the purpose of our lives were to be family people. So we sent these young men and women back to their families to explore the histories of their names. And often they'd come back to report, I didn't think they liked me. But they really went to great lengths to name me.

As a part of that rite of passage, we had them do a family tree. Specifically, we asked them to interview three elders to learn about their family before they were born and to find out from these elders what were their hopes, wishes, and dreams for their generation based upon their migration from the Southern states to places like Chicago, Detroit, et cetera. We asked them to secure, as a part of a rite of passage, a library card, a Social Security card, a state ID, and one more, a voter registration card.

We asked them to read two books, one on African-American culture, and then to complete a community project together, something that uplifts the community and makes the community better. That might include shopping for older adults or picking up graffiti-- or paper off the ground or removing graffiti with paint, et cetera. And then we do this personal growth work, where we take them on weekend retreats to work on those things that have them stuck, those things that have them smoking marijuana every day.

I should add that the great majority of young people who've gone through these rites of passage with us have substance abuse disorder, the things that have them stuck. When we were in Ghana, West African, the chief in the village told us that human beings are made up of four spiritual components, the spirit of God, the spirit of our fathers, the spirit of our mothers, and the spirit of our ancestors.

And the chief reported that human beings will have difficulty throughout their life if they have tension in any one of these four spiritual domains. And so often I'll ask the audience, when it's time to do that healing work, we use a



[INAUDIBLE], the empty chair work, a punching bag, letter writing, et cetera. Where do you want to do your work?

And the great majority of young men that we work with, these African-American men, report that they want to do some work in terms of their relationship with their fathers. There are so many young men across this country who suffer from what I call father hunger, father wounds, father hunger being they didn't get enough fathering growing up, and then father wound, they were somehow injured or harmed by their father. I was watching a program with the talk show host David Stern.

And some people who may not agree with his content will say that he is one of the more effective people on the radio. And he shared a story of his relationship with his father. Howard Stern said that when he was a little boy, he would always try to get his father's attention. You'd be shocked how many young men want their fathers to be proud of them.

He said, but I could never get his attention. I would sit next to him, and all my father did, Howard Stern said, was stare at the radio while listening to it. So he said to himself as a young boy, if I could just get inside of that radio, I would have my father's attention. And if I could really be good on the radio, I'd really have his attention.

Incredible story about the father and son who were trapped in a snow storm. And the father asked to son to stay in the car. Stay in the car, son. I'll find us some help. And the father found a cabin nearby. And just when he was about to go out there and get his son, he was restrained by men in the cabin.

They said, we can't let you go out there. Five people disappeared in that snowstorm. And he was fighting to get free. And just when he thought he would never get free, he heard a familiar voice in the room next door. It was his father's voice. Or his son's voice, I'm sorry, his son's voice, and it brought a smile to his face, tears to his eyes.

So he ran in the next morning and gave his son a big hug, said, son, how'd you make it? I thought I'd never see you again. He said, dad, when you left, I was scared to stay in the car. And I know that you didn't want me to walk in all that snow. So I watched you walk. And what I noticed was that you left footsteps in the snow. He said, dad, what I did was I walked in your footsteps.

Research indicates that nearly 70% of African-American males are raised without their fathers in the home. One response is anger, rage. Another response may be gang affiliation. Another response might be to get high every day to deal with that pain.

There's a book that's called Whatever Happened to Daddy's Little Girl? And it really chronicles what happens with teenage girls who are deserted by their



fathers. When they're young, they often said, they often go through what's called "the search." They're walking to school, and the men are driving cars, and they're wondering, is that my father driving the car?

The phone rings, and they wonder, is he calling? There's a knock on the doorbell. Is that my father knocking? When does the search end? Some women have told me they're still searching, even when they're in their 50s.

Research says that young girls deserted by their fathers are six times more likely to be sexually abused. And as you know, there's a link between sexual abuse and substitute abuse disorder. Young girls, teenage girls deserted by their father are 140 times more likely to have a baby as a teen. Her mindset is my father didn't love me. But I will be able to produce something that will never be able to leave me.

So these young people, when we do the rites of passage groups, 89% of them want to do work in their relationship with their father. Another 10% have some unresolved issues where their mother's concerned. And 1% are angry with God because everything else wasn't working out for them.

And so one such young man that went through our group stayed with me. I was one of the facilitators of the group. The kid went through six inpatient treatments-- African-American male-- and said he would never stayed sober more than a week. Because whenever he would get into sobriety, the memories of what happened in his childhood would come back to him.

He had a stepfather that sexually abused him and would physically abused his mother in front of him. So he joined a gang, started drinking everyday, and he was filled with rage. So the men facilitating the process listened to his story and said, well, how old? I was nine. How tall were you? And he showed his height. He said, will you get on your knees, they asked him, to be about the height you were when you were nine years old and you encountered this trauma?

So he got down on his knees. And then they had three men sort of stand on each other's shoulders to be three times their natural height. And they represented his stepfather. And the purpose of that reenactment was they helped him to see how powerless he was in that situation as a nine-year-old. He never drank again. He's in long-term recovery, sober for 15 years.

Medication-assisted recovery-- yes, there are African-Americans who are maintaining recovery-- suboxone, methadone, naltrexone, Narcan-- and yet there's a challenge because in many African-American communities, there are not enough doctors prescribing medication for addiction treatment. And then there's a lot of stigma, just like in other communities. So more work is needed here. We need more doctors in the community and of course, stigma-reduction activities.



Reading and education-- so there's book a that's called The Autobiography of Malcolm X. And as we speak, there are African-American men walking around in prisons with dictionaries under their arm because of Malcolm X. Here's a story. So in January of 1986, I began my college teaching career at a community college, an Alcohol and Drug Studies course.

And I have 40 students and the class. And there were-- one student in that class, who sat in the first row, center aisle seat, who was leaning forward while everyone else was leaning back. And I could look in his eyes, and he was hungrier for the subject matter, how to be a drug counselor, then the other 39 students combined.

So I felt like I had to have a [INAUDIBLE] story. So eventually I got to know my student. I learned that he practically went from death row, solitary confinement, to my class. And I asked him, what was solitary confinement like? I don't talk about it much, he said. But I can tell you that when you're in solitary confinement, minutes feel like hours. Hours feel like days. Days feel like weeks.

He says, Mark, I was on death row for the one crimes I didn't commit. He committed a lot of crimes. He was heroin addicted and gang affiliated on the west side of the city of Chicago. But the crime I was in prison for death row, I didn't commit that crime.

He said that he now knows that according to the United Nations, two weeks in solitary confinement is considered torture. He was there for a long time. He said, Mark, I was starting to lose my mind. And someone left a book in the cell. He said, I haven't read much, but I said I'm going to read this book so I'll keep my sanity. And I hope something is interesting in the book.

He said, I hadn't had much education. But I figured if there's something interesting in the book, it have to be in the middle. So he took the book, and he tossed it in the air. And he said, whatever page it lands on is where I begin my reading.

The book was called The Autobiography of Malcolm X. And the page that it landed on was the page in the book where Malcolm X himself was incarcerated, drug addicted, and could not read. He learned that Malcolm X learned to read in prison. He got sober in prison, reading the dictionary from cover to cover.

So my student, who's now one of my better friends, got a dictionary. And he started reading from cover to cover. And once he learned to read well, he told me his next request was for a law book. I said, why a law book? He said, because my public defender was falling asleep during the trial, and I was facing the death penalty. I wanted to learn through the law book how do you fire your lawyer.



The long and short of it is that about 10 years ago, he received an award as the best addictions counselor in the state of Illinois and all kind of national awards for his ability to help facilitate recovery. And as I mentioned, there are many African-Americans in prison walking around with dictionaries. But many African-Americans will tell you in their story, it was reading the great books and reading about culture and the classics of African-American culture that actually facilitated their recovery, more than just about anything else.

And then of course, there's harm reduction. Just like in other communities, harm reduction is-- you can find harm reduction in the African-American community. But he wrote a book on harm reduction. And what he said in the book is every community ought to figure out what harm reduction means to that community.

So he talked about a panel, in which there was a woman from Harlem that was a harm reduction specialist, sitting right next to on the panel a man who was doing harm reduction but with gay men in New York. And the man who was doing harm reduction with gay men in New York said that for his community, harm reduction was about having sober sex, condoms, et cetera. And the woman from Harlem said that in her community, harm reduction is about jobs because crack cocaine showed up right when job went away.

Its community determined. And it needs to exist more and more. In lots of our large cities, while we talk a lot about the opiate epidemic and overdose around suburban kids, in many African-American communities, opiate overdoses are increasing. And harm reduction is part of the solution.

There's other styles of recovery such as shifting allegiance. This is a style of recovery that's quite common among African-American women. The data said that if you follow African-American women, the first four years of their recovery, that many of them achieve recovery through 12-step groups but if you follow up in the fifth year, that many of them will shift from 12-step groups into the church. We call that style of recovery shifting allegiance.

Some report going-- clients report going from daily heroin or cocaine use to once or twice a year. And they say they're in recovery. And one of the things that we've learned while offering multiple styles of recovery is that it's not up to the counselor of the program to determine if clients are actually in recovery.

Another style of recovery is dual recovery. We have our fair share of African-Americans, like other communities, that have mental illness and substance use disorder. And more dual disorder specialties are needed.

There's a disengaged style, where she's been going to AA meetings or NA meetings or CA meetings or Women for Sobriety to maintain her recovery or Methadone Anonymous to maintain the recovery. And then all of a sudden,



they pull away from those mutual aid groups. They disengage, but they still maintain their recovery.

There's also a style of recovery that's called an unaffiliated/unlabeled style, where the person actually meets the DSM-5 criteria for substance use disorder but does not say, my name is Mike. I'm an alcoholic. Does not say I'm a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. They maintain their recovery without being affiliated and without giving addiction a name.

Philadelphia has a recovery basketball league. And in order to be in that league, you have to be in recovery for at least six months. And these individuals come together while playing basketball together, and they help support each other's recovery.

I have interviewed numbers of African-Americans who went through opiate addiction or crack cocaine addiction to wellness as a part of their recovery, meditation, yoga. I've interviewed African-Americans who went from heroin addiction to veganism and vegetarianism. And when you interview them they'll tell you, I did so much destruction of my body through drugs. Now in recovery, I'm healing my body through good nutrition. And they consider nutrition to be a part of their recovery pathway.

In African-American communities, there are recovery homes. In the height of the crack cocaine epidemic, many African-Americans in long-term recovery bought buildings and homes and started to providing recovery support for African-Americans within communities. Halfway houses-- more needed. Sober living facility in African-American communities-- more needed.

One of my favorite programs comes out of Gary, Indiana. It's a program called Miracle Village in public housing right there in Gary, Indiana. They receive, Miracle Village program, one of the first RCSP grants for providing recovery support. So in the Miracle Village program, there were four row houses adjacent to each other, with a door in between each row house.

And the clients in Miracle Village were women seeking recovery, addicted to crack cocaine, heroin, alcohol, et cetera. They hired women who were in long-term recovery to walk through the public housing developments and recruit women to go through the Miracle Village program. So the bus driver was also a woman in long-term recovery, trained in motivation interviewing.

So the way the program works is that the bus driver would pick the women up and drive them to treatment, right there in public housing. I think that's probably the wave of the future, to bring recovery to the people. How many people live in urban America, African-Americans wind up going to a suburban community to receive inpatient treatment. And then they come back home and needed recovery support.



So they put the treatment program right there, within the public housing development. So the first of those four houses is a treatment center for the women. The first row house is a treatment facility for women. The second row house provides mental health services. The Miracle Village program contracts with the local mental health center to provide mental health services for the women, especially trauma-informed services.

The third warehouse was a medical clinic. They actually brought in nurses to provide medical care for the women because many of the women were unemployed, and they were supporting their habit without a job. And so there were no other medical care. So they had a medical clinic in the facility.

And then what do you think the fourth rowhouse was? It was a daycare center. One of the biggest the deterrents for women receiving substance use disorder treatment is who's going to take care of the kids? So the bus driver would pick up the women and their kids. Their kids would go to the daycare center while the women were receiving recovery services. And then they helped place them in permanent housing upon discharge, completion of the program.

However, because a government grant has a shelf life, the best program ever seen in my life was no longer in existence after five years of existence because they ran out of their funding. In East St. Louis, Illinois they have a prison called Southwestern Correctional Center. And they have been able to bring the state's recovery coaching program into the prison, where people who are incarcerated can become recovery coaches while they're incarcerated.

One of the largest treatment programs in Chicago has agreed to hire each one of these individuals to be recovery coaches when they leave the prison and come back home to Chicago. Gainful employment is unbelievably important to recovery. I was told by the former director of Addiction Studies for the Department of Corrections that this program, this recovery coaching program, has one of the lowest recidivism rates in the state.

Then there's Safer Foundation. Half of people who are incarcerated will wind up back in prison within the a three-year time span. Safer Foundation is a program that provides educational services and occupational services, jobs. And their rate of recidivism is 15%.

Then there's Delancey Street near San Francisco. Not an African-American program, but they do work with African-American clients. And what they do at Delancey Street is they provide lots of jobs. They have lots of businesses run by their clients. And it's one of the more successful programs.

In my town, Chicago, there's a community college. It's called Dawson Skills Center. And our program that works with African-American young men and



women, we have formed a linkage agreement with Dawson Skill Center, where upon graduation from high school, the GED or high school diploma, these individuals can enroll in Dawson Skill Center to pursue those occupations, those jobs that can't be outsourced abroad. Often in America, we're outsourcing lots of jobs. And when jobs go away, drugs increase.

So one client of mine who got into early recovery, and we placed him Dawson Skill Center. And we received a letter from Commonwealth Edison saying that everyone who completes this program, upon completion, we will hire you at \$50,000 to work as an electrician, as a troubleshooter, et cetera. The community college, Dawson Skill Center, did random tests for two years.

So he said, Mark, I haven't smoked in two years because I want that \$50,000 paycheck. He said, man, Mark, when I get that job of working for the company, I can't smoke until I'm 70 years old. They're going to do random draws. He said, Mark, when I'm 70 years old, I'm going to retire, move to California, and open a marijuana farm. We had a good laugh together.

There's an African-American man named Leonard Noble. And this really proves how one person can be an army. He helped 3,000 African-Americans seeking recovery start careers in the construction industry. When those seeking recovery services have something to do, it dramatically increases their recovery rates.

So there's Al-Anon, started about Lois Wilson, the wife of Bill Wilson. There's Nar-Anon that uses the same 12 steps as Al-Anon. There's Codependence Anonymous, Families Anonymous, Adult Children of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Yes, addiction, for years we have known, is a family illness. And one of the things that happened over and over the last 30 years, after the great majority of residential treatment facilities closed, we started seeing fewer mutual aid groups in African-American communities, like Al-Anon and Nar-Anon. So part of my job has been to travel to various communities and talk about the importance of making sure there's recovery support provided for the family. You see, when my dad died smoking crack cocaine May 29, 1986, my Uncle Isaac went in front of a judge. And he said, yeah, I don't want to go to drug treatment this time. I don't want to go to prison this time. I want to go to drug abuse treatment.

And the judge said, why should we put you in treatment? You've been committing crimes since you were 10 years old. My Uncle Isaac said, three reasons, your honor. He said, my father died of cirrhosis of the liver from drinking too much. That was my grandfather. My Uncle Isaac said, my brother-in-law died smoking crack cocaine a few months ago. That was my father.



He said the third reason, your honor, he said, you're right. I've been committing crimes since I was 10 years old. I know the law. He said, I've been in front of judges so many times. And I figure that based on what I was accused of, you'll put me in prison. You'll probably let me out in January. And it's really cold in Chicago in January, and I don't own a coat. So I probably still wouldn't see you in February.

He put my uncle in treatment. My uncle was the first one of the family to go to treatment. And we count 30 people in our family who've gotten sober since. Our uncle transformed our family life. And it began with us, the nieces and nephews, my uncle's siblings, participating in the program's family programming.

And then there's a combined style. And I believe that lots of people are combining styles of recovery and pathways. Some go to church, and they go to AA, and they eat nutritious food.

Years ago, I worked with a young man. And he was 18 years old, a freshman in college. And he was on a college scholarship to play basketball, young African-American man who had dreams of becoming a professional basketball player. He had gotten really good at junior and senior year in high school.

But he told me he had a problem. He had always been a bad student. So he wondered what if I was good enough to play in the NBA? And then what if I wasn't good enough to play? What would I do, since I'm such a poor student?

So I received a phone call from a university that told me-- asked me, would I do an assessment of this young man? He was a freshman in college. All of his grades were failing. And they smelled alcohol on his breath at the beginning of his first practices.

So I did my assessment. And I concluded that he could benefit from intensive outpatient therapy. The problem was he was a division-one athlete. And they said his athletic and academic schedule was too busy in order for him to go through intensive outpatient.

So for the first time in my career, I had to be really, really creative. So I combined some things while working with him, and he was in agreement with these things. So I asked the young man as part of his treatment plan, would he be willing to meet with me once every other week, twice a month, for six sessions? And he agreed.

Then I asked them, in the weeks that he would meet with me, would he be willing to go to an open 12-step group meeting? And the way I chose an open meeting was because he never said he had an addiction. And so if you do the math on that, he met with me once every other week for six weeks. And then he went to 12-step group meeting when he wasn't meeting with me. We were



able to provide recovery support for 90 days for him, which is not what NIDA's research says that people need to get launched on a pathway of recovery is 90 days of continued recovery support.

Because he did not go to an intensive outpatient program, I recommended that he watch some YouTube videos about basketball players whose drug use led to destruction. So he watched the story of Len Bias, whose drug use ended his life. He watched the story of Chris Herren, a basketball player, NBA basketball player from Massachusetts whose drug use led to him being kicked out of the NBA at an early age.

And then I found out that he had a father who he didn't have much of a relationship with, who was actually a better athlete than my client. My client was an All-State basketball player. His father was an All-American basketball/football player, who failed out of college first semester of freshman year in college.

So I said, can I speak to your father, who lived in another state. So we had a virtual session, me and his father. I saw the resemblance with him and his son. And I said to the father that sometimes one could be so aligned with their father so bad, that they're willing to follow their father in success and failure. I said, would you give your son permission to succeed?

So the father called his son and said, son, I expect you to be better than me. That was on a Saturday. That Monday I met with the son, and he requested a tutor, brought his grades up. And then we had a problem of state-dependent learning.

The client had played basketball for three years under the influence. He needed to learn how to replay basketball sober. So we were able to find for him a former NBA basketball player in long-term recovery who coached him how to play basketball again sober.

We were able to be creative and combine all of that. And the end of the story was that he was the first member of his family to get a college degree. I wrote a story called Out of the Shadows. He was no longer in the shadow of his father.

I want to tell you a story as we start to close about my barber. If my barber were alive, he'd be 90 years old. And I love the fact that my barber was in long-term recovery from heroin addiction.

My barber didn't go to treatment in order to get into recovery. He went to prison and learned how to be a barber when he was incarcerated. And he stopped using heroin, like, 50 years ago.



So my barber has told me a lot of stories. And I noticed that he tells sometime-- we tell the same stories over and over. And what I learned was that the stories that he would tell over and over were the ones he thought were most important for me to know.

So I'm going to share with you a story that he's told me since I was 13 years old about a minister that lived in a small town. And seven days a week at 6:00 PM, he would ring the bell with one of the congregation members. And why 6:00 PM? My barber said because it was dinnertime.

And they would invite the minister to the table. And because the congregation members believed that it was a local call to God to the minister and a long distance call for them, whatever the family was eating, they'd give the minister the largest portion. So if a family of five were eating a meatloaf, they would cut half of the meatloaf for the pastor. And if they were eating chicken, they would give the minister the breast and the thigh, the largest pieces.

And why did he tell me that story so many times? I think that story's about you, because I believe that the work that you do to help motivate recovery is a ministry, too, as important as any ministry out there. So I like to believe that you could be offered the breast and the thigh as well of the chicken. But given who you are, many of you would say, no, I'll take the wing instead. And some of you would decide [INAUDIBLE].

Thank you so very much for listening to me. I bring your attention to a resource. We have here the Online Museum of African-American Addictions Treatment and Recovery, a way for you to continue to learn about how to effectively serve African-Americans with substance use disorder. There's so much there.

We have free scholarly articles. There's lots of books. There's a podcast. We interviewed prominent African-American leaders in the field and posted those. There's a hall of fame for African-Americans who've done great work, lots of educational videos and webinars and DVDs and music, et cetera. Again, thank you so very much for listening to me. Enjoy the rest of your day.