



Rebellion Dogs Radio #15 with Erica Spiegelman June 2015

Erica's book, *Rewired* and Book America Expo 2015 are on deck this month

Erica Spiegelman has a new book out called, *Rewired: A Bold New Approach to Addiction and Recovery*. *Rewired* explores 12 principles of healthy recovery:

Authenticity
Honesty
Evolution
Solitude
Time Management
Self-Care
Healthy Relationships
Gratitude
Compassion
Love
Affirmations & Intentions and
Hope

Erica is a UCLA-trained California State Certified Drug and Alcohol Counselor (CADAC). Later in the show, I'll share with you the discussion Erica and I had about her book, why her experience suggested that a new approach was in order. Or is it a new approach? It may be a fresh look at age-old wisdom.

Why become the author of our own recovery? The Buddha would call recovery "peace" and answer that question with "Peace comes from within. Do not seek it without." *For those who think Jung*, as in Carl Jung, "Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes."

And now here's a quote from *Beyond Belief: Agnostic Musings for 12 Step Life* March 11th by J. Donald Walters (1926 – 2013), who died a few months after *Beyond Belief* was first published. Walters was known as Swami Kriyananda to his followers. He was a disciple of, and teacher of, Yogananda. Here's what he said about following our own inner guidance:

Solutions are difficult to come by rationally. The reasoning mind is like a rudderless ship: It describes interesting patterns on the water, but it lacks a sure sense of direction. The rudder of inner guidance comes from superconscious levels of awareness.

Not to leave Erica Spiegelman out of the discussion, about the first of her principles of healthy recovery, authenticity, she says the following:

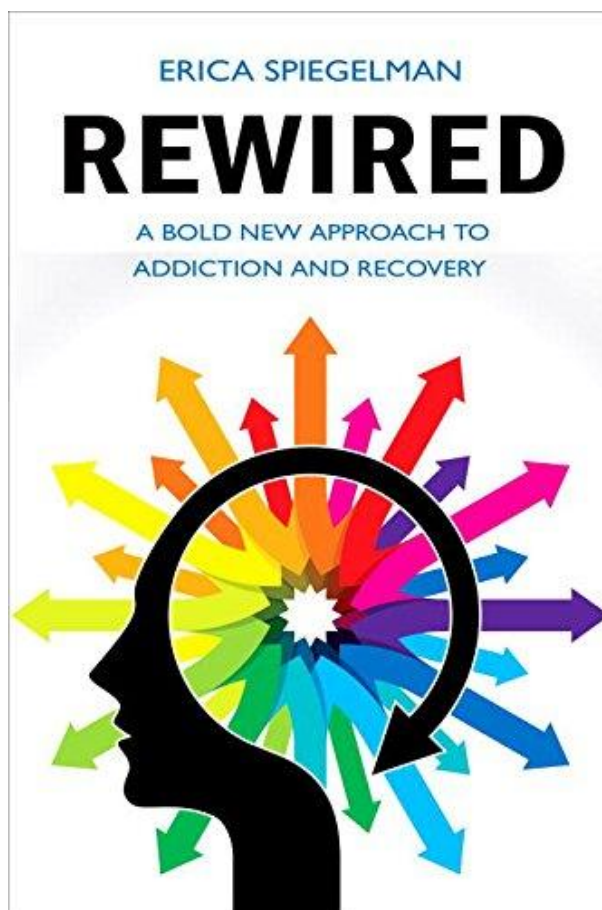
The word “authentic” is a combination of Latin and Greek words meaning “coming from the author” and “one who acts independently.” I interpret this as, “You are the author of your life.” It also means “of undisputed origin” and, “accurate; trustworthy; reliable.”

When your authentic voice can be trusted, there is no need to look elsewhere for guidance. No guru, therapist, teacher or best-selling writer can give you better answers than the ones you find within. There can be no permanent recovery without an awareness of oneself as unique in all the world. And because no two people will ever think, feel, or live exactly alike, the authentic voice will always be more accurate, more informed to your situation, than any cookie-cutter recovery program. In this way, you can begin to think of recovery as an adventure of deep self-exploration, a journey to your core.

So, if it’s valid that enlightenment—what we call “recovery from addiction”—comes from within, then, there is something very critical in how AA or any 12-Step peer-to-peer fellowship is structured. Our inverted pyramid structure that 12-Step fellowships are based on, with the members and our groups as the ultimate authority and leaders as servants below us, is critical to personal autonomy and responsibility.

AA didn’t invent this inverted pyramid paradigm and 12-Step communities aren’t the only ones to use it. UPS and other businesses view customers and customer service staff as the ultimate authority and the power of decision has to come from their own version of an inverted triangle—front line workers at the base along the top and the management acting in a support role below them.

If peer-to-peer Twelve Step, Twelve Tradition fellowships were a regular pyramid style, then there would be a hierarchy of General Service leaders and sponsor’s sponsor’s sponsors at the tip of the pyramid and groups and newcomers at the base along the flat bottom. But that’s not how it’s structured. Every member decides her or his membership status and takes responsibility for (self-authors) her or his recovery. Every group finds its unique path in carrying the message to the alcoholic/addict who still suffers.



Our experience is our only currency; there is no expertise to peddle. Recovery is our responsibility, not a sponsor's nor a group's. There is no authority, no master, no student and no holy writ. We are peers, sharing a common malady; we are equals who paid our dues before we got here. Our addiction took unique turns and our recovery will, too. We each find our own way.

John K, is someone I've quoted before on this show. I had lunch with John while in New York to visit GSO's archives. As a director of A.A. World Services at the turn of the century, John is on record for saying:

Our co-founders were pragmatists—try something, test it, change it, review it, test it, then change it and test it again. As a result our knowledge as a Fellowship is based not on logic, or revelation, or authority—it is based on experience, on what works and, as such, it is always subject to change.ⁱ

It was my great fortune that John invited George D to join us for lunch. A former GSO General Manager, George has been both a delegate and a trustee and has been sober since the 1950s. Remember Phyllis and Ward who came from GSO to speak at We Agnostics & Freethinkers International AA Conference in November of 2014? Well George is one of the resources that these two would go to, be it about AA's history or even what might be best for AA's future.

The three of us had lunch in May and right now, at the time of recording, both John and George are getting ready for panels at AA's 80th Anniversary in Atlanta. The panels cover ideas from "A Vision for You," and might be entitled, "We realize we know only a little" or "More will be revealed."

George had just got back from Maui. Some of you who are listening know Rich H from Hawaii and I'm sure he can tell you more about George. He's a character, a treasure of AA experience and on this day he was very enthusiastic about the ideas held within a pamphlet he was carrying, "A Member's Eye view of A.A."

This pamphlet is unique in that it not created by the General Service Literature Committee. It is a copy of a speech given by a member, Allen M, who was giving a talk at UCLA in the late 1960s. It was a treat to re-read this essay. It reinforces today's theme.

Almost without exception, every AA member has been given advice, instruction or urging from partners, loved-ones, health-care professionals, co-workers, law-enforcement, spiritual healers and even our bartenders. What rings true in "A Member's Eye View" is what's different in a 12-Step meeting between two addicts or alcoholics. The pamphlet says:

...an alcoholic suddenly heard a different drummer. Instead of the constant and menacing rat-a-tat-tat of 'This is what you should do,' he (she) heard an instantly recognizable voice saying, 'This is what I did.'

I am personally convinced that the basic search of every human being, from the cradle to the grave, is to find at least one other human being before whom s/he can stand

completely naked, stripped of all pretense or defense, and trust that person not to hurt him, because that other person has stripped himself naked, too. This lifelong search can begin to end with the first A.A. encounter...

S/he realizes s/he has been invited to *share* in the experience of recovery. And the key word in that sentence is the word 'share.' Whether s/he responds to it immediately or ever is not at that moment important. What is important is that the invitation has been extended and remains, and that s/he has been invited to share as an equal...even the sickest alcoholic is hard put to deny...that s/he has been offered understanding, equality, and an already-proven way out. And s/he is made to feel that s/he is, in fact, *entitled* to all this; indeed, s/he has already earned it, simply because s/he is an alcoholic... The intuitive understanding the alcoholic receives, while compassionate, is not indulgent. ”ii

So the healing comes as much from expressing ourselves as from listening to others. Ultimately, the answers come from within. So the power, the decision making capacity is left with the members and our groups and the purpose of any service structure below us is to support these efforts.

Again, this inverted triangle idea isn't unique to the recovery community. Here's how the inverted triangle or pyramid is described in the business community. Especially in the fast-paced 21st century business environment, right of decision has to empower those on the front lines.

In an article called, “What Is the Importance of the Inverted Pyramid in an Organization?” by *W D Adkins we see,*

Traditional management models are hierarchies. Authority and decision-making power are concentrated at the top of an organizational pyramid. Orders are issued and carried out by subordinates. The inverted pyramid in an organization challenges the traditional model. Advocates argue that the 21st-century business environment is characterized by rapid change and requires greater flexibility than traditional organizational approaches provide.

Concept

The inverted pyramid is a metaphor for a reversal of traditional management practices. Employees who are closest to clients or production processes are placed at the top and managers at the bottom. The employee is empowered with greater decision-making authority and freedom of action. The manager becomes a facilitator spearheading a team effort. In theory, overall organizational performance becomes faster, more adaptable and more effective.



Philosophy

Organizational structure may promote empowerment... By inverting the pyramid and putting the base at the top, a leader adopts a more effective mind-set. Management is focused on asking employees what they need to accomplish a task and making sure those resources are available. The effective leader learns to trust subordinates and rely on their ability to achieve organizational goals.ⁱⁱⁱ

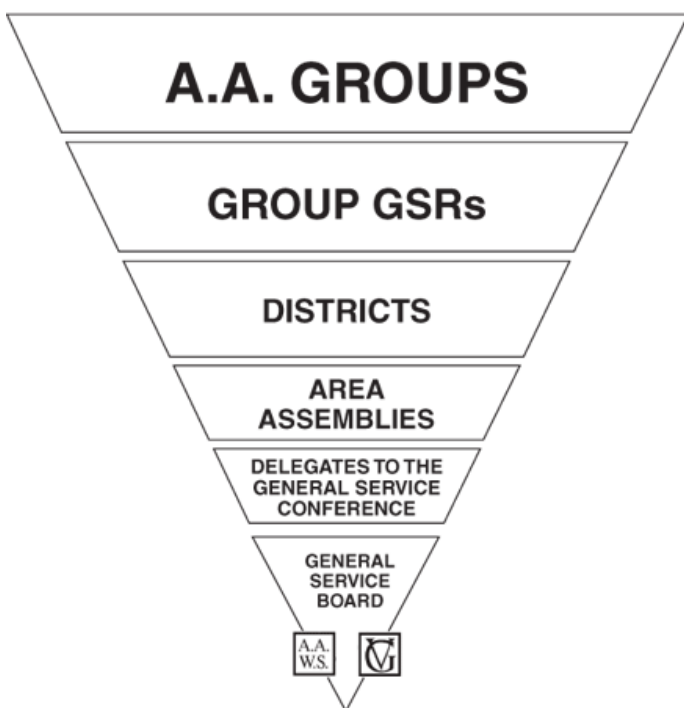
Avoiding The Perverted Inverted Pyramid

The truth is that many organizations begin the inverted pyramid journey, but few actually succeed in reaping the benefits of the effort. It seems that far too many organizations are developing flat tires, or simply running out of gas far from the envisioned destination. We look at ways that organizations and managers end up perverting the inverted pyramid, so that if you are on the journey, you will be less likely to fail in your efforts.

(One way) the inverted pyramid can be perverted (is if). The new way of doing things is quickly perceived as window-dressing. ... Some people think that empowering staff will be immediately welcomed by staff, and that given an opportunity, staff will take the

opportunity like a duck takes to water. Experience tells us otherwise. Staff will show some degree of cynicism and even resistance. And they will flounder at the start, particularly if they are not used to using effective decision-making, problem-solving and consensus building techniques. ...when pyramid inversions fail, they don't do so randomly but share a common pattern. Generally, there are multiple causes for the failure.^{iv}

**STRUCTURE OF THE CONFERENCE
(U.S. and Canada)**



In AA, we find the same thing that modern-run businesses like UPS find when it comes to delegating autonomy to the front-line. Sometimes in AA, members and groups reaction to autonomy is mixed—some will be enthusiastic, some neutral, and some cynical or resistant.

In 12 Step rooms, resistant groups look to central offices to resolve their

internal quarrels with lists of what can and cannot be read or rules about meeting conduct. Members will ask more experienced members what to say to a newcomer when it's generally sufficient to share our own experience with the newcomer without offering any instruction. In

other cases all we need do is to just listen. People don't need to be told, we need to feel that we are being heard.

So in our 12-Step circles, the result—personal breakthroughs—can't be facilitated by a holy writ, a chain of command, a hierarchy of authority as we would imagine an army or religion to be organized.

Personal breakthroughs or recovery, or peace, or enlightenment—call it what you will—happens when the individual has freedom. And the group and/or sponsor can only help if we have *autonomy* because we all do things according to our style and personality; there is no “how to” for overcoming alcoholism, no matter how much we wish there was one.

From Wikipedia *where everything is true* we read,

The English term **enlightenment** is the western translation of the term *bodhi*, ‘awakening’, which has entered the Western world via the 19th century translations of Max Müller. It has the western connotation of a sudden insight into a transcendental truth.

The term is also being used to translate several other Buddhist terms and concepts used to denote insight, knowledge; the ‘blowing out’ of disturbing emotions and desires and the subsequent freedom or release. (Does that sound like recovery? Wikipedia defines this as) the attainment of Buddhahood ... In the western world the concept of (*spiritual*) *enlightenment* has taken on a romantic meaning. It has become synonymous with self-realization and the true self.”^v

If your worldview includes a supernatural force with an order to the universe, I hope we can agree that faith isn't a cure for addiction, that self-sufficiency, even for the most intellectually or spiritually gifted, is inadequate for recovery—at least for 12-Step candidates—and it is the eye-ball to eye-ball, human to human interaction that manifests the winning environment for recovery. It is the blind leading the blind, a brethren of equals that one might assume would lead to both falling into a pot hole. But no; the blind leading the blind leads both to enlightenment.

That's why Erica Spiegelman is so into one-on-one connection, be it a professional or peer-to-peer relationships. Yes, we need the experience and power of example of the group, but we also need or crave, as Allen M referred to in “A Member's Eye View of A.A.”

... to find at least one other human being before whom he can stand completely naked, stripped of all pretense or defense, and trust that person not to hurt him, because that other person has stripped himself naked, too.

The link to Erica's book is www.rewired.us. You can get the book directly from Rebellion Dogs Publishing.com bookstore. Let's go to our interview with Erica now. Erica Spiegelman was planning on being at Book Expo America in NYC, too. We planned on talking there. She couldn't make it and we caught up by phone, Erica in LA and I am in Toronto.

ERICA: Hi Joe, it's so good to finally connect.

Joe C: I know, I love your book, by the way—just to get you off the hook in case you're wondering if he's skeptical or an admirer.

ERICA: I'm glad you read it, I'm glad you bought it. It's funny because this is the time now where I'm getting feedback. People have had time to buy it and read it.

Joe C: Yeah, there's that in-between isn't there? When you're writing it, you just can't tell, "Does what I'm writing make any sense?"

ERICA: We all go through that, I think. That's why we all need to have a good team behind us for parts of this process. So, how was New York?

Joe C: New York was fantastic. Book Expo America was overwhelming. There were exhibitors and both a digital-book and bloggers conference. There was a mixture of the old-guard and the Next wave. We've already seen this in the new music—the digitalization of the industry and how it impacts the music business. This is happening to the publishing industry, too; they're just a decade or so behind the music biz. A month earlier, I was at Canadian Music Week and there was a panel called, "The Future of Radio" hosted by a 55-year-old white guy with five more 50-, 60- or 70-something radio executives discussing this topic. The audience didn't attract a single music fan under the age of 25 and we're at a music festival; what's going on?

ERICA: That's crazy, it's all changing.

Joe C: That's happening in the publishing industry too. I heard a book executive say from the podium, "The problem is that there are too many titles." Now if a reader told us that "There are too many titles," that would be useful information. But www.GoodReads.com members for instance, they consume three titles every month. And they know where to go to for recommendation. They already have a network of taste-makers that they trust. But the old guard isn't quite ready for this new paradigm yet.

ERICA: Oh, I know. It's so amazing learning about all this.

Joe C: Well, Erica, thanks for being with us. By the way, you know those are strong words, "A *bold new* approach to addiction and recovery." It's almost like marketing language, not therapeutic language. But I read it and you know, it's true, it is bold and, also true, it is new.

You neither parrot nor criticize the existing modalities in addiction/recovery. But you have your own way of doing things and your own way of explaining things.

ERICA: That is correct.

Joe C: We'll talk about some of them. I love "authenticity." That's something I'm big on. I just want to know how this came about for you. You do share some of your own personal experience with addiction and recovery; you're a counselor so you use some case studies. Was this a trial

and error approach or learning from sages? How did these twelve principles come to you as being the basics for transitioning from addiction to recovery?

ERICA: Great question—multilayered—it started with frustration I had with getting sober and changing my life and running into a wall when it came to finding my own path. There is pretty much one clear path that most people take and that's the Twelve Step program. It's amazing; it changes millions of lives and I learned that way, too. I learned what addiction was, that I wasn't alone, that there was a way to rewire your brain, but I wanted more.

I wanted to add mindfulness to my life; I wanted to educate myself on how to take care of my body with nutrition and adequate sleep and that wasn't being talked about. For me, I love to learn things and then put them into action because that's how things stick. There was nothing quite like that out there that said, "Hey, here's some tools; put them into action. Then see how you feel and then do the next best thing."

I was a writer my whole life, before any of this happened. So I went back to school to UCLA and got my degree in addiction therapy; I studied the body and studied the brain, emotions and intellect. Then I began to write this book for people who may not have access to these alternative ways of thinking.

Authenticity was the first thing—in fact my first title was something like *Ultimate Freedom Through Authenticity*—but I've come such a long way in my own journey. Really what that was about was tapping into my own authentic self. That being said, authenticity means, "Coming from 'the author.'" So, if we were all the author of our own lives, what would that look like? And then I thought we all need an *individualized* recovery plan. We all have different backgrounds, different families, traumas, we're wired differently with different emotional capabilities; so with all that, we need our own individualized plans. We can't just put everybody on one boat and tell them all to get better, you know.

Joe C: Now, what is "bold" about that is it does fly in the face of some conventional addiction/recovery bumper-stickers like, "Fake it 'til you make it," or "Your best thinking got you here."

ERICA: Right, "Stinking thinking!" Yeah.

Joe C: Do you find resistance to this idea of honoring authenticity, first and foremost.

ERICA: Clients do ask me about this all the time. In my practice, people will say, "Well, my thinking is what got me here," or "I'm scared about following my instincts." And I say, "Well that's why you're in therapy. Part of my rewired plan is seeking outside help, obviously. But part of it, too, is to honor those feelings. Once you put the substance(s) down and you're abstinent from ingesting poison, then you start building that muscle of instinct again. So sure, you may be a little shaky, you may feel a little off or you're in a relationship where you feel like something is wrong, I would go with those feelings. It doesn't matter that you were an alcoholic before. You're getting help now, you're on your way to a better way of living and I think it's good to start honoring those instincts.

Everyone comes to me and they're so doubtful. They have to get up every day and they hear themselves saying, "I'm a *this*" or I'm a *that*," "I'm awful." There are so many negative mantras that I hear and I don't think that's effective.

Joe C: In AA folklore of course there is a passage in (the Big Book's) "Spiritual Experience" Appendix, "We found we had tapped an unsuspected inner resource..." And I suppose that authenticity leads to tapping into that or reconnecting with the self that you can trust.

ERICA: Absolutely.

Joe C: Another of your chapters is "Solitude," which isn't "isolation". Of course from addiction, we know about isolation. We put walls up; there are barriers between us and healthy living and good relations. But while you talk about solitude, people hear, "Meetings, meetings, meetings—when you're in your own company, you're in bad company." So how did you discover this within all the noise of the counter intuitive?

ERICA: It really happened from my own experience. For many years I distracted myself with substances, with abusive and unhealthy people, with technology, food—whatever it was—it was anything I could use for distraction. So when I actually stopped distracting myself with those external stimuli, I sat with myself and I was thinking, "I have to relearn how to be in silence with myself, how to take a hike without listening to music, let's say—eventually, that's nice to do, too—but just to hear my thoughts, or to take a bath, or go out. You don't have to be gone for a whole day; you're not disconnecting and isolating. But take those 15 to 30 minutes to ask "How am I feeling?" For me, I reflected on, "What am I grateful for?" I would get up in the morning, take a run, stretch, take those 15 minutes to go over in my head, what I am grateful for. I would sit down and meditate a little bit.

This changed my life. I could finally work through my thoughts and process the big changes that are going on and you can't really process when you have constant noise and distraction.

Joe C: Yeah, it's a balance, isn't it?

ERICA: It is; of course I'm not saying to be in solitude all of the time. We need to have love and community in our lives—that's super important. I think it's really important to be your own #1 champion, to love yourself, to know yourself, to feel safe within yourself, more than anything.

Joe C: And why is time-management so important to you? I know that if we don't value our own time that's a sign or symptom of a lack of self-love.

ERICA: I found that my old identity when I was living in an unhealthy way, I associated myself with being lazy, being a procrastinator, busy being unorganized and inefficient. Well, of course I was because I was miserable and high-jacked by substances. I assumed that was my identity, I assumed that I was always late, that I had no time-management skills and I didn't value my own boundaries and my time. I had no boundaries.

That being said, when I changed my life I started seeing, “Hey, I like getting up early, I like being on time or early, being effective, being organized.” That really served me well. I became really proud of myself. And I think having boundaries makes us feel proud of ourselves, too. It’s a form of positive reinforcement. I learned to say, “No, I can’t pick so-and-so up at the airport; I have to take a run.” Or don’t even tell them why; the point is to put yourself—your health and your time first. That’s where time-management skills come in. But when we’re procrastinating going to a doctor, getting our car fixed, paying our bills, all of these things hang over us and then we feel disappointed in ourselves, sometimes on a subconscious level if we aren’t actually conscious of it. That leads to stress and that leads to doing substances.

Joe C: It also is a maturing in a way as we get in touch with or a sense of our own limits. Only so much can be done in a day. You had a tweet recently; it said: “Hold yourself to a standard of grace and not perfection. There are no mistakes in life, just experiences.” I know that sometimes I get overwhelmed in life; I put too much on my plate and say, “I have to get this done and this done and this done. Even two people couldn’t do all those things. But I shit or I should all over myself for not accomplishing it.

ERICA: Exactly, you’re not alone; there are so many people out there like that. It’s important to identify these should in our life. It’s not so important who we should be doing them for, it’s not for anyone else but ourselves. What I say to myself now is, “Okay Erica, would you want your laundry done tomorrow morning, would that make your day easier tomorrow morning or should we procrastinate again for another week?” Then I say to myself, “I would be a happier version of myself if I have done my laundry tomorrow, so you know what? I’m going to do? I’m going to do it.”

Or, I put my shoes and my running outfit by the bed so they are right there in the morning and I don’t procrastinate. There are little tricks that I have come up with through the years and I share. It’s very helpful because if you think about your future self and ask, “What would make me feel more content, less stressed, less anxious at the end of the week if I do this one task?” And you’ll probably say, “I would be,” and so we honor ourselves and we do it.

Joe C: You wrote this week about self-care.

On the surface, self care sounds like something that should be a *no brainer*. Of course we want to take care of ourselves and do what’s necessary to survive.

However, true self care isn’t just about providing ourselves with what we need to survive; self care is about giving ourselves what we need to thrive. Today I’m looking at three popular myths that get in the way of self care and exploring how we can conquer them.

Myth #1: I already know how to take care of myself

Myth #2: Self care is selfish and means I’m neglecting other people in my life

Myth #3: Self care means doing anything that feels good

ERICA: I get this question all the time, “You know, so-and-so says it’s selfish, that I am just thinking about me and my wellbeing right now.” Well for me, self-care is non-negotiable. If somebody else has a problem with you taking care of your life, whether that’s a projection of their own abandonment issues or a projection of you not loving them, I doubt what you’re doing is pure selfishness. People have to get used to the fact that you are teaching them that you are changing your own life. You’re teaching them that you care about yourself. You’re teaching them that you are assuming a new identity. People will fear that, especially if you’ve been in the same pattern and cycle for years; you’ve been the *sick* person. Now all of a sudden, “You can’t do this for me; you’re going to take care of your needs?”

There’s an adjustment period for people too. I would say that everyone in their first year of sobriety really needs to be extra selfish with their time when it comes to their health.

Joe C: And other people will resist, won’t they? We all have roles to play; there are family dynamics and that’s true in all of our relationships, right.



ERICA: Right. I was on a news show the other morning and she was asking me about recovery when there’s a family and how important is it to have the family involved? Well, it’s a family issue—it absolutely effects the family when you have one person struggling. With that being said, it’s also true that we’ve been put in certain roles. Within the family dynamic or history some of us are the victim, the clown, whatever it is; there are a couple of popular theories around this.

Joe C: Yeah, there’s the perpetrator, the rescuer, the “runt of the litter.”

ERICA: Exactly; there are so many different names. What it comes down to is

that we have to teach other people how we want to be treated. Unfortunately, it does fall on us. Clients will come to me and say, “I don’t even want to tell my mom ...; it’s so much effort.” Or it’s getting back on the bicycle when you haven’t been on it for so long; it’s hard at first. Being assertive, we now say, “I’m sorry but I value my health now. I have to get up and meditate (or take a walk). These are the things I need to do to take care of myself now. These are non-negotiable.”

For people who have never had that or have not taken this stance for a long time, it’s going to be uncomfortable or awkward the first time(s) you say it. But then you feel courageous and you find yourself saying to yourself, “I feel such courage and strength.”

Joe C: When you say that, I wonder is there a gender-difference or gap in recovery modalities resulting from the different roles that others try to put men in or try to put women in?

ERICA: Of course; that's a whole other group that I teach. I get men coming to me wondering why they became addicted to drugs or alcohol and they were told for years as a boy, "Don't be a sissy, don't cry, be a man, stop complaining, who do you think you are?" So they are getting turned down when they become emotional. They process this as, "Emotions are bad; I can't show feelings; I can't show weakness," but of course we all are human, we all need to show emotion. So that's how these cycles begin. Woman who come to me who found themselves addicted to amphetamines found at first that they got skinny on them, that at 14 or 16 they got started to regulate their weight and years later it turned into an addiction. Women have a lot of pressure too, to be a certain way.

Joe C: Now that your book is written are you still in private practice, or are you on a whirlwind tour and thinking about your next book?

ERICA: Well, both actually. I have a private practice where I see people in Los Angeles and I have phone sessions all over the country which I consider private practice, too. I have packages at www.EricaSpiegelman.com like "Get Rewired in 20 days—I send videos and they can have one-on-one calls with me once a week for a set price. I have those kinds of online packages plus one-on-ones here in LA. Also, I'll be at the Celebrations in Recovery Conference in Atlanta at the end of June. So, yeah, touring around, trying to get the word out and, as always, helping my people.

Joe C: Well, you are very present to your readers. Online, you invite anyone to book an appointment over the internet to have a short chat with you, right?

ERICA: I do a free 15-minute consultation to get to know my readers, get to know people who need help, I can assess quickly what maybe the best path for them and get them started on a healthy pattern, a healthy life, whatever it is that they might be looking for.

Joe C: Good for you; that's really cool. I would call that millennial thinking. Kicking it old-school is the Baby Boomer or Silent Generation relationship of author and audience, never the trains shall meet other than exchanging handshakes and an autograph at a book-signing or something like that.

ERICA: This line of work, for me, is so personal and I think that the exchange of energy has to be even. I want them to feel like I am there for them. Even if they never meet me and then never have a conversation with me, I want them to have access to me through social media because I think when you relate to someone on a personal level it makes the rest more sustainable.

Joe C: And how would you rate the current treatment industry infrastructure? With Obama-care there changes going on, in the USA at least. What is going on and what are the biggest challenges facing the treatment industry?

ERICA: I talk about this a lot, the business of treatment. I work at an out-patient facility addiction treatment center two days a week in the mornings called [Rebos](#)^{vi} We have eight individualized sessions a week, which is a lot, with four different types of therapists—spiritual counselor, chemical dependency, etc. For them, we’re heading in the right direction. But there others who don’t have access to treatment, either rural areas or cities that don’t have good treatment. So there’s a long way to go, from what I’ve seen, and luckily the people I’ve been associated with see the importance of one-on-one therapy as opposed to just group therapy. For many and even say a very high-end treatment center in the 1980s—I won’t mention names—the bigger ones, you had maybe one individual session per week; that is nothing. That’s why with my clients, I insist on at least one once-a-week phone call even when they’re out of treatment because I do a lot of aftercare with people—they need to stay connected to somebody.

I think this one-on-one is a big missing piece but the treatment centers around LA, at least the ones that I’ve been fortunate to deal with kind of understand that. So, it’s changing and there is still a long way to go.

Joe: One more thing I want to ask you about. We all have our biases. And for me, when I see the title, “Affirmations & Intentions” I think of books that prey on people’s magical thinking—that kind of what you can conceive, you can achieve type of consumerism. Can you tell me what you mean by affirmations or intention?

ERICA: Yes, affirmations and intentions are like the law of attraction. It’s not magic. If I wake up in the morning and I look at myself in the mirror and I say, “You’re such a failure; you haven’t done anything with your life, you’re already 35 and you haven’t got sober yet (whatever it is),” if I’m not mindful of saying affirmations, which are positive words for yourself or intentions, which is what you want for your life, your desire, or what lights you up from the inside, if I don’t get into a habit of positive self-talk instead of negative self-talk, it won’t change the energy I bring to a room, the energy with which you meet new people. Obviously (self-talk) adds to your self-esteem and your quality of life and how you assert yourself. So when I say “affirmation,” I just mean to get comfortable with some saying, some mantra, some word(s) that help you—and I have a bunch of them in my book—starting with trying to treat yourself more kindly. And that’s through words; that’s one way we can do it.

So it’s more getting away from negative self-talk which I find 95% of people have when they first get into treatment, or changing their lives or coming out of a substance-abuse pattern. Most are ashamed or very upset with what’s gone in their life, to the extent that they aren’t in a place in their life where they could say to themselves, “Oh, you’re so wonderful.”

But after you start to put the substance abuse down and changing your life and actually do good things for yourself, that’s the time to start sending your brain positive messages. I would do that. When I first got sober I would run. It would start with a block and by next week, a mile and I just kept getting better and better. I would say to myself, “Good job; you’re powerful; you’re strong; you did it and I’m so proud of you.” It sounds silly but this is one of the most important parts of me getting sober and staying sober. To this day, I still say a little prayer or encouraging word every time I do something I’m proud of. I do, really, I have to be my own champion.

Joe C: Well, you're speaking from experience; who can fight that? To me, your book is an absolute recommend: It's logical, rational and holistic. One more question—do you see addiction as a disease, an allergy or a behavioral disorder? Do you get into that debate, one way or another?

ERICA: I don't get into the debate. Words are just words, but again, sometimes I'll reference addiction as a disease but I don't love it, to be honest. I had a client come to me. He'd been through a lot of treatment centers. He tried many times and he's finally sober now. He told me, "You know what changed for me is when I called it my *experience* with addiction. For him, it didn't work when he called himself, "I'm an addict," "I'm this or that." For him, that wasn't changing his life. "So now I'm calling it my experience with addiction. It was something that happened. I experienced it and now I've moved on." That worked for him.

Joe C: When you were describing his relapses, I remember feeling when I was reading what you had to say about authenticity that this is so important for people with chronic recidivism. They say all the right things and know all the right words. They walk out the door and it sounds like they'll never pick up again and then you don't see them for two months. They come back and say that they learned their lesson. They know what to say but they haven't made it true for them; they haven't found their own authentic truth about addiction or recovery, I think anyway.

ERICA: That's true. That's why I believe in working with each person, one-on-one and every week. We learn from them and from each other.

Joe C: Well, you've been super-generous with your time. You know, I rolled my eyes when I read, "bold and new," but *Rewired* is both of those things. Thank you, Can you tell people where to reach you or get your book.

ERICA: Thanks for having me. Contact me at www.EricaSpiegelman.com www.Rewired.us or my book can be found at Barnes & Noble, at independent bookstores across Canada and the USA or from Amazon. Penguin/Random House is my distributor.

Erica recently tweeted: "Hold yourself to a standard of Grace and not Perfection. There are no mistakes in life, just experiences." If you read this book, I'd like to hear what you experience of it is. It seems to be based on lived, actual experience and not authority. I think it's one for the ages.

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