



9 Paths to Recovery

Renée Siegel

All are journeys toward wholeness

Recovery is a journey where we each seek to return to a greater state of wholeness.

I am a family member in recovery and a therapist and a recovery coach. I have loved ones that I have lost to addictions, my father and an ex-husband. I lost my father to a substance use disorder and my ex-husband to a gambling addiction.

Through divine intervention, not knowing I was the child of an addict, I was placed in an addiction recovery center over 42 years ago to complete my internship after my master's program. My job was to learn as much as I could about the impact of addictions on the family. Ultimately they offered me a paying job and the focus of my work was to set up a family program in the treatment center.

Still not knowing about my father's prescription addiction, and thinking he was a rage-aholic, I was pleased to have a job and loved the work I was able to do. Working in the inner-city of Detroit was a big learning curve. I was curious and innocent and willing to learn what might be helpful to family members of my patients. The family members were mostly people of color. Sometimes the spouse would come in alone, but mostly several family members would show up for family day and they might be distant relatives of the client. The focus of the family program at that time was teaching family members how they might help the person seeking recovery. The focus was not "What do I need to do to better understand myself and take full responsibility for my behavior?"

Finding so many similarities with the family members I served caused me to wonder if there was something I was missing in my own life; I began to be curious. I soon discovered that a close relative was filling a monthly prescription with over 6 times more than the monthly allotment of benzodiazepines for my father's anxiety. Digging a little further, I found my father's rage related to how and where he was in the cycle of increased tolerance, rebound anxiety, and terror. OMG, my father was addicted to benzodiazepines and was drinking with them daily, too.

Years later in a marriage with a compulsive gambler, it took me some time to realize that the patterns of behavior in my family of origin were similar to those of me and my husband. I had grown comfortable as an adult child of an addict with my choice of my husband. He was preoccupied, irritable-to-angry most of the time, emotionally unavailable, and accused me of not caring enough. I felt responsible for his behavior.

Shortly after our divorce and while attending Gam-anon, I was introduced by a man I was dating to the Enneagram.



As I studied the Enneagram of personality, I found that there were 9 types that each had distinct patterns of processing thoughts, emotion and behavior. I resonated with one of the types quickly. Interestingly, the type 2 (my type) -- the giver or helper -- was one of the most likely types to be codependent. Furthermore, I began to shift my understanding of how family therapy needs to address how I can own my own stuff, anger, resentment, and set appropriate boundaries and focus on true self care.

Almost twenty years later, integrating 12 step work and my Enneagram study has offered me and countless others a meaningful path to journeying toward my healing and wholeness!