

The Steam Podcast - Episode One – Transcript

Theme Song :

Gather around, Kettle's steaming, Come on in, it's warm inside, informing hearts and minds, inciting positivity, including us all.

Intro :

A cafe community of people on the journey of recovery, cultivating compassion and encouraging growth. Inviting listeners to embark on a voyage of discovery, as together we explore the many paths to recovery. All aboard ... full steam ahead.

Land Acknowledgement :

The Steam Team acknowledges that we are living, working, and recording on the unceded, ancestral Traditional Territory of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil Waututh Peoples, now commonly known as Vancouver. The Steam Team is committed to reframing our responsibilities to land and community and walking the road of reconciliation together.

Interview :

Today's date is October 24th, 2023, we're at the Recovery Cafe, my name is Nigel, and I'm joined by my fellow member and friend Mark. And today we're going to have a little chat about various things about recovery and the cafe itself, and how we're feeling, and Mark, how are you today?

Mark

I am well, I just had my recovery circle at the cafe, touching bases with all the other members, sharing that equal space, respecting each other, carrying each other, holding each other, so I feel really good.

Nigel

Nice. So can I ask you what brought you to this space initially?

Mark

Initially we were introduced to the cafe by our friend, Jas. He had heard about it through someone. I don't know where he heard about it from, but he brought us down to the pop-up that was on Hastings Street, and it was a welcoming space. It was a safe space, and you could tell it was a really warm, good place to be.

Nigel

I know, when I came in about, well, just a little over six months ago now, you were one of the first people I met, and I felt comfortable right away when I met you. So you've been here since... Over just over a year. Okay, right. And you've participated in what... What else happens here? Just for the listeners who may not know what we do.

Mark

Well, there are recovery circles every day, so the cafe kind of fits into your schedule. I come on Tuesdays, and my partner and I have been making salads in the morning for the cafe, and then we have lunch, and then I have my recovery circle at 1.30. And then I come back on Thursdays, we

come in the morning, and we make a salad again, and then Thursday afternoon is Creative Writing, followed by choir.

Nigel

What's your favorite?

Mark

Creative writing would be my favorite. I was kind of duped into choir. I was in a little Sunday afternoon jam band, and my friend, Jas, said, "come on down to the recovery cafe, we'll join the choir". So I said, "I don't know, I'm not much of a singer", and he said, "no, it'll be good for our voices". So I came down on Thursday for choir, and Jas stood me up. He was nowhere to be found. So it was literally a crossroads moment. I could have chickened out and just turned around on my heels, and went home, and abandoned choir. But it literally was a crossroads moment. I said, I can kind of overcome my fears and try something new, or I can chicken out, and I opted to try something new, and now I'm in the Kettle choir.

Nigel

One of the main basses in the choir, and we've sang together, we did a show together. Yeah, how is that for you?

Mark

Well, when I first started in the choir, I had two choir practices, and we sang at the library. For my third choir performance, we sang at the library downtown.

Nigel

Nice. So that was quite a hurdle. And then the performance that we were in together was at the Vancouver Opera's rehearsal space, and that was a beautiful night.

Mark

Yeah, it was. And I remember having performers high after the show, like the endorphins were pumping after the show, and I was like the round of applause, the happy people.

Nigel

Yeah. It was like quite a feeling. You know, as a performer, I've done a little bit of performing in the past, one of my past lives, but meeting that fear, you know, and preparing for it with like-minded people who you know are, you know, this is not what we usually do, and to make that step together, and then get through that show was just, for me, yeah, it was a pretty incredible, and a pretty incredible entree into who is here, and what kind of people are here, you know.

Mark

Yeah, that's one of the things, Jennifer and I really appreciate about the cafe, is that it's people from all walks of life, and people in different predicaments. Some people it's substance abuse, some people it's mental health, some people it's anxiety, but the cafe is such a welcoming space, it just, it welcomes everyone, and people know that we're all here to support each other, and that it's that warm, welcoming space.

Nigel

Yeah, you referenced that in the circles, and I agree that the multi-duplicity, or the multi-dimensionality of that, is one of its strengths. Would you agree, like, when you're in circle, and, you know, you have people dealing with different types of challenges, I'll call them?

Mark

Yeah, yeah, for sure. And the circle is one of the things that really keeps me coming back. The cafe itself is wonderful, but the allegiance that you feel with the people in your circle really grounds you, and one of the little sayings I have about the recovery cafe is that no one struggles alone, and we hold each other up, and that's my little recovery cafe slogan.

Nigel

That's beautiful. When you're in circle, well, can we talk about that a little bit about your own challenges and how it might relate to someone who, okay, well, we can talk about this. I'm an ex-drinker. That's been my DOC drug of choice, new linguistics, and you've shared a similar type of challenge. Yes. I can say that, right?

Mark

Yeah, for sure.

Nigel

But for me, when I'm trying to support someone who has a different DOC, for instance, could be, you know, opiates, opiates, you know, it could be food, could be...

Mark

Yeah, it's every single thing. It's across the board. It's mental health. It's anxiety, depression, substance abuse. It doesn't matter what anyone is bringing to the table. It's the fact that you know that other people are struggling. It doesn't matter what they're struggling with, but you're all equals in the circle, and you share your heart with each other, and you support each other.

Nigel

Yeah, that's just magical, I think, you know. Because there's not one particular fix, I think there's many. And if we can agree to borrow and share our strategies and our, what works for us, right? Then we're all going to be healthier in the end, right?

Mark

Yeah. Damian, the coordinator, the main person at the Recovery Cafe, does a survey at three months, six months, nine months a year. And I was having a conversation with Damian, and I said, as beautiful, as everything in the cafe is, that's all bells and whistles compared to the sanctity of the circle. Like, the closeness that I feel with the people in my circle really helps to keep me sober and keep me grounded and know that I'm supported.

Nigel

Right. And there's a condition therein that it's like a loyalty program, isn't it? You know what I mean? Like, I become loyal to people who are in my circle now. I'm going to come every week. And the way for listeners who are not knowledgeable of this model, this is a volunteer, you know, you don't have to, well, to be in the cafe, you have to be a member and belong to a system. Yeah, a member in good standing, and to be involved to the best of your ability, the circle. However, that it can change, you know, things come up. Some of us might have to do some work, whatever, or other appointments. It's not written in blood, so to speak. So there's some flexibility there. Let me ask you, Mark. What would you say would be the major change in your personal life? And I'm talking about your personal relations, how you feel about yourself, and how it's coming to the cafe.

Mark

What I tell my members in the circle, like the other people in my circle, is that being a part of the circle teaches me to take good care of myself, and teaches me to have grace with myself. You

know, I'm not a saint. I have substance abuse issues. I slip up every now and then. But it's just such a grounding reminder that, you know, I don't have to drink. I'm not to succumb to my... Like trying to... I'm trying to word it. Succumb to my demons, as it were. And it does give me tools for my toolbox.

Nigel

We were talking the other day, and you were saying that little voice on your shoulder was saying, maybe try this. We were talking about relapsing you and I, and I found that very... Just so, so true. What you're saying is this program, this process. It almost gives you a sense of... I'm hearing, or maybe I want to hear this, but you're not as hard on yourself, or as judgment, self-critical that you may have been before. Is that kind of...

Mark

Yeah, in a sense, like I don't beat myself up, you know. And I'm mostly sober. 99% sober right now. Like I will have a glass of wine, or my... My boss will tempt me with a beer or a bourbon before we play snooker on Saturday. And there are times when the angel and devil have a conversation. I try to have the angel win, but other times the devil just pounds the angel and I have the beer and the bourbon with my boss before we go to play snooker. So, you know, I'm not beating myself up over it, but I know that I can be stronger and that being in circle gives me tools to say no and to listen to the angel on my shoulders.

Nigel

Man, I have to say, I mean, that's obviously a big topic in the alcohol recovery world is abstinence, whether you're totally abstinence or not. And I struggle with that myself, but I would love to get to that point where I can have one drink. I would, I really would. That to me would be full healing. I'm serious, because that's what I used to be like. And I think in a sense what I'm hearing is it's almost like you've come full circle. Like that's... I don't, you know, not put words in your mouth. Yeah. But I mean to be able to negotiate that... that it's become normalized now. It's not an obsessive compulsion that you have to do.

Mark

Yeah, like there was a time in my life where shortly after I quit drinking, I was driving home from work and there was a guy coming out of a cold beer and wine store with a six pack and a bottle of wine. And a part of me said to myself, I used to have to do that every day. That was a part of my schedule, like stopping to get beer. And the difference in my health, my quality of life, my balance was substantial. And I did realize that I was really dependent on alcohol. And when I was in the throes of that dependency, I didn't even realize it was just the part of my life. And now that I've been sober for 11 years, mostly sober, I kind of realized what a hold alcohol had on me for 30 years.

Nigel

Similar story. Been sober about eight in for 20. And blinders on. No, but isn't that part of the definition of a dependency?

Mark

Yeah, well when I was drinking, I didn't really realize how dependent I was. I knew I was an alcoholic because when I went to see my doctor, when I decided to quit drinking, I told him I said, Dr. I'm an alcoholic. And he told me that half the battle was won because so many people sat across from him and couldn't say the word. So he said that I was addressing it and I could say the word, that's half the battle right there.

Nigel

And then once you, I had the same process, I knew I was. But what, so once that internal dialogue started happening, how long did it take for you to act or actively pursue a life of sobriety?

Mark

Well, my story is that my 10 year old son started me on this journey of sobriety. It was a couple days before Halloween and my 10 year old son said, "Daddy always gets drunk on Halloween" and it cut me. That little phrase was like a marble bouncing around in my head. So Halloween came by. I got drunk, was free pouring rye and coke at my neighbors at the end of the night. And November the first, I was too hung over to drink. So it's physically too hung over to drink. November the second, I went to get some beer, cracked a beer, and it was like a light bulb went on in my head. My son's little phrase bouncing around in my head like a marble. I said, Mark, you're an alcoholic. So I said, it's time to hang it up. I said, it's time. So I went to see my doctor and I told him the whole story. And I said, I don't drink a 26-er a day. My MO was three high boys while I was cooking every night. Just get off work, have those couple beers automatically. That's what started my journey of sobriety. And then interestingly enough, I was kind of slipping back into old ways. Like, oh, I'm okay. I can have a couple. I can do this. And then Jas introduced me to the Recovery Cafe. So there I was again going, it's time. I need this in my life.

Nigel

Thank you for sharing that. And from the mouth of babes, so to speak, I mean, and your son today, he's in his early 20s.

Mark

Yes, he's 21 now.

Nigel

So he's spent a good portion of his upbringing with a sober dad. I mean, what a gift. You won't have to live into your 90s and regretting that. You made that step for him.

Mark

But I mean, I tell my oldest son too that it took me 30 years to quit drinking. Like I started drinking when I was 18 and I didn't stop drinking until I was 48. Interestingly enough, I quit drinking the year I was 24 to see if I could do it. And I did it.

Nigel

And you did?

Mark

I did it. Yeah. But as soon as I turned 25, I was right back in like a dirty shirt.

Nigel

Wow. Was there, can I ask you if you had, excuse me, were there anyone in your primary caregivers, were they, did they have those challenges? Or was it a generational thing? I know some families have that.

Mark

That's a can of worms because our families are part indigenous. And I grew up in an environment that had a lot of alcohol in it. So this was one of the factors that kind of normalized this alcohol consumption to me. I remember coming home when I was a teenager and there would be a big party at full swing. And it was just not a normal part of life. But you know, I just spent some time

with my sisters in Ontario. And I said to them, remember when we were teenagers and you went to a normal person's house? And they looked at me and said, yeah, like they could relate when I said that. Right. You know, whereas our house was like a party.

Nigel

Party Central.

Mark

Yeah. Well, see you're exposed to that from ... not all the time, but on the weekends. And when people visited from up north, it was a party house.

Nigel

Yeah, and you have older people falling and swaggering and shouting out and doing stuff that. Yeah, I wasn't exposed that myself. I have friends who were. But that, that, so wow. So yeah, okay. And obviously you didn't want to expose your children to that kind of environment either. So was that part of the, you know, decision to go sober?

Mark

No, it was out of the mouth of babes. It was really the wake up call. Gosh. It was a wake up call.

Nigel

Yeah. Man. I know I have a gift card for my son. He was about eight. And he drew a picture of me holding a bottle of beer. And I was like, oh, geez. This is what I looked like to him. You know, oh gosh. What are we doing? But, um, so yeah, Mark, I said, I mean, when I first met you here, I just got a really good sense about who you were that you're grounded. You're stable. You have a clear eye. Very intelligent. Your wife is amazing. You know, Jen, I'm going to mention her name. And the two of you, just how you support and create a supportive and giving and loving environment. You know, you cook for us. You make salads for us. You make sure people in the circle are accountable and accounted for. And so there's an incredible amount of gratitude that I feel for you.

Mark

Well, I appreciate that. Thank you, not yet.

Nigel

Yeah, man. And you're a great writer, too. I wish maybe next time you can share some of your writing with us because when I'm in the circle with you and you're writing, I'm always, you know, what's Mark got today, you know. Well, I'm blessed to be among many good writers in creative writing. And it always amazes us what we can pull off. Our moderator, Leslie Sutherland, does a fantastic job and gives us all these beautiful prompts. And sometimes it's about nature, sometimes it's about relationships. And it's amazing what the people do with it on short notice. On that note, because earlier, Paul and I were talking about the people here, could you talk a little bit about the staff and the support staff who are here?

Mark

Yeah, that wouldn't be hard to do. All the staff is amazing, welcoming, gracious, kind, and really good people. When I first was exposed to the Recovery Cafe, Damian Ruth Chad, just fantastic people. And I knew it was a warm, welcoming place and very supportive.

Nigel

Do you think that this model is worthy of replication? As I know, I think we're all, you know, benefactors of the people and the process here. But could you see this cafe model being replicated in other jurisdictions, districts?

Mark

Well, this Recovery Cafe is the first one in Canada. So we kind of have, like the privilege to be in the first one in Canada. The model in the States has grown tremendously. It went from 10 to 20 to 30 to 70, I believe. It's in 70 cities. I'm not quite sure on the number, but it's a really growing model. As to the model itself, I can't say enough about the Recovery Cafe. It's just such a fantastic space.

Nigel

Because, you know, members like yourself. I mean, now you're starting to run some circles, right? Is that right?

Mark

Yeah, I'm running a circle on Tuesdays now.

Nigel

You're guiding the circles. So I guess part of the membership model is to engage the members who can now give back some from their experience, from their passion. If you had to say what's your favorite part of the cafe, what would you say?

Mark

I'm going to have to say circle because it's such a grounding factor in my life. And it teaches me so many skills about how to take care of myself. Everything else is fantastic. The food, the coffee, the creative writing, the choir. It's all fantastic, but the circle is the core to me. The seminal grounding.

Nigel

No, I agree with you, absolutely. That is to me, which is definitely the most engaging and healthiest aspect. Well, I think I'm going to wrap this up soon. Is there anything you'd like to add to anything I'm missing?

Mark

The podcast has been amazing too in itself to see a group of people coming together on a mission. We have our backs supporting us. And we have the coordinators, the writers. It's just an amazing process and it's been our real privilege to be a part of it.

I'm glad you said that because I'm going to pick up on that. It is a conduit for people to get, like we have Kay here doing, you know, Paul. All these Sonya, Jen, Rocky, all these people now having a, and developing a voice, right? And we can all feed into that and hopefully make a change, you know, Mark. I mean, we've had chats about our environment, what's around here, and how to make things better, you know, for people who maybe are not as fortunate as we are right now to be in a better place, you know. And I really sense that. I think that we can make that kind of change, you know.

Mark

Well, hopefully one of the benefits of the podcast will just be to inspire people to start a journey of recovery. I mean, anybody who's listening out there and struggling to know that there are supportive people who are supportive environments that you can adopt or go to start your journey of recovery is a good thing.

Nigel

And that's something we want to build into this as we've been developing it for the last couple of months, is how to, you know, find the resources and find the places where we can make those communications available and accessible, right? Because we're passionate about it. I mean, it's obvious. We're in this for the long haul, and we want to make a noticeable change and make it better.

Mark

Yeah, and one of the things that Jennifer reminds me of is that recovery can be fun. Yeah. Like just plain and simple. It can be fun. Yeah. And this is a fun place. This has a lot of just fun to it.

Nigel

Yeah. So incredibly important that, you know, as we go through it as we're taking it seriously, but sometimes we can just, you know, blow off a bit of steam as it were. And on that note. Okay. Well, hopefully we'll talk again. Okay, Mark. And thank you very much for your pleasure sharing your words and your wisdom. And be safe with your family. Thank you.

Mark

Thanks, Nigel. Okay.

Holiday Tips :

Welcome to the steam team special holiday segment where we embark on enjoying the festival season with a focus on strength, resilience, and joy in recovery. The holidays are adorned with twinkling lights and festive cheer for most of us as a time of celebration, but can also present unique challenges for those on the path of recovery. But fear not for in this segment, we look into staying healthy during the holidays. We compiled a treasure trove of tips to help you navigate this season with a touch of merriment and a whole lot of festive sobriety spirit. So let's get started. **Tip number one.** And we've all heard this one before. Plan ahead. Plan your holiday events in advance and have strategies to protect your recovery. Know where you're going, who will be there and what to expect. This can help you formulate an escape or exit plan and mentally prepare for any potential challenges. If you're feeling overwhelmed or tempted, it's perfectly okay to make a graceful exit. Arrange your own transportation or have a friend or sponsor on speed dial for support. Know your triggers and have your strategies ready to outmaneuver addiction and avoid any potential temptations. And if you already know that certain Christmas or New Year's party is really all about drinking or other drug use, make a brief appearance or don't attend at all. If needed, limit your time around these kinds of stressful situations and difficult people, which family especially sometimes can be. This leads us into **tip number two.** Be mindful of triggers, including time spent around your relatives. Yep, know your limits. Of all triggers, the most significant can be these kinds of emotional ones. No matter if you are in recovery or not, the holiday season is one of the most stressful times of the year. With so many activities squeezed into just one month, our normal routines get disrupted and people get frustrated and anxious. And of course, at family gatherings, we all have our own version of that crazy aunt- we dread who just can't help criticizing your career choice or your dress, making you feel less than. And then there's the loud bawdy uncle type who will insist you on having his famous holiday drink. Even worse, there's the usual increased demands from family, which can lead to feelings of guilt, shame, anger and depression. Let's face it, our own families can sometimes be the biggest and most challenging triggers and traps. This type of stress can lead us to rationalize and convince ourselves we are in need to drink or to use. Instead, surround yourself with supportive loved ones that will help you follow the steps to staying clean and sober while embracing the warmth of the holiday spirit. **Tip number three** is exactly that. Call on your buddy system and amp up your support this time of year. We can all get overwhelmed with the erratic nature of the season, so as you plan each day, make checking in with your supports, your first priority. This could mean attending a meeting before an event, lining up a sober friend or sponsor to call while you're there, or inviting a friend to tag along. Having a wing person who

understands your journey and supports your recovery can be an invaluable source of strength during the festive whirlwind. And when you are at these festive gatherings, don't forget to pack your yummy, delicious, non-boozie beverages, **our next tip**, exploring the world of mocktails. There are so many delicious options out there that can make your taste buds dance without compromising your recovery. Many holiday events are more commonly offering an array of delicious non-alcoholic options, embrace them and let your host know you appreciate their effort in providing alternatives. Or get creative with your own concoctions. Try sparkling water with cranberries, a bit of ginger, splash of cider vinegar, and a cinnamon stick for a festive drink. Have fun experimenting with your favorite flavors from this time of year, like eggnog, pumpkin spice, peppermint, gingerbread, cranberry, and oh, so many more. Grab one of these yummy drinks too **tip number five**, practicing self-care and relishing in the power of staying present. Celebrate the holiday season and the fullness of your sober life by remembering to take time for yourself, mind, body, and soul. Proper nutrition, exercise, and restorative sleep is ever more important this time of year. The better you feel physically, the stronger you will be emotionally and mentally, and the more centered you will be on your recovery path. Give yourself the gift of time for yourself, an acupuncture treatment, yoga class, or make time for meditation and relaxation. Grab a good friend and schedule a mini in-home or near-order treat after the hustle and bustle of a holiday shopping day or event. Even if you're at a party and things are feeling overwhelming, finding a quiet space to take a moment to breathe, or stepping outside for a few minutes for fresh air, does wonders to re-center and get grounded. One of the best and most rewarding acts in addition to self-care is service to others, **our tip number six**. Want to stay sober? Stay helpful. When we help others through charitable, feel-good acts, we find more joy and gratitude. So look for ways to think about and serve others. Make a special, family, cookie recipe, and deliver to friends who are alone this time of year. Donate your time at a shelter, food pantry, or soup kitchen, or reach out to an elderly loved one, lonely neighbor, or newcomer at a meeting. These opportunities allow us to spread happiness and cheer to others. Treat it as if one of the benefits of staying clean and sober, being able to have a clear mind and body to help others. There are a million different ways to get give back, and it doesn't get more human or more recovery than that. Your charitable offerings can be part of tip seven, embracing change. The holidays may look a bit different in recovery, and that's perfectly okay. It's your opportunity to start a new sober outlook during the holidays, memorable moments to look back on with grace and joy. Create new tradition, attend events aligning with your recovery goals, and celebrate the holidays in a way that resonates with the beautiful journey you're on. Hosting a sober festive gathering with friends in recovery can be super fun, or organize an outing to explore Christmas lights. We all have that house in our neighborhood that goes all out on inflatable reindeers and snowmen, or blinds the street like Mr. Griswald. Fill up a thermos with hot chocolate and gather friends from the cafe or a meeting. To be writing the holiday story in your head grants you the power to transform all narratives into tales of strength and resilience and joy. By embracing a new perspective, you can cultivate a holiday season filled with genuine connections, self-care, and the empowering choice of sobriety.

Holiday Events :

To make planning for recovery-friendly events, we've also comprised a list of fun sober activities and events around town that are just as fun if not more than drinking or using. And you'll actually remember them. If you like the glow and bright lights of Christmas, there's many experiences around town, like the ever popular festival lights at VanDusen Gardens, or the P&E Winterfair. For free and inexpensive events, check it out live live and up. Coal Harbor with tons of music and performers. Don't miss their Christmas, the 15-foot tall-moose lights sculpture. Granville Island also invites you to stroll its warm and elegant holiday lights display. Bright nights in Stanley Park is back with the Christmas train, but there is also their great lights display put on by the firefighters to support Burn Fund. And it's by donation. Get your photo taken with Santa, too. Lights of Hope, St. Paul, St. Paul's Hospital once again, Brighton's Burrard Street. In East Van, the Trinity Street Light Festival has been a tradition for more than 20 years, making spirits bright along six blocks, or head to Coquitllum for lights at LaFarge. Also free, as is Heritage Christmas at Burnaby Village Museum. Surrey's Winterfest and Christmas Train at Bear Creek Park is back for a low admission.

Also with affordable tickets, the Secret Lantern Society celebrates the 30th Winter Solstice Light Festival. Taking place in a few Vancouver neighborhoods and includes Lantern Making Workshops and a self-guided ceremony. And don't forget that most groups and meetings hold events and activities in December from holiday dinners to crafting. So check those out, too, and it's a great way to make more friends in recovery.

Member Stories :

Hi, everyone. This is Ricky Shetty. I'm here live on location at the Recovery Cafe. And today I'm going to be talking about my creative writing journey. So the good news is, at the Recovery Cafe every Thursday afternoon, there's amazing creative writing class run by Leslie, a great facilitator who gives these prompts. And these prompts really bring out stuff from inside us. Maybe something from a past, or a hurts, a habits, a hangups, or wounds. And we're able to bring them out, put them to paper if we're writing it out by hand, or type it out if we have a laptop with us. And it's very cathartic and very healing. And I wanted to share that on the podcast here today. So I'll be sharing one piece I wrote. It's actually the story of my mom's journey here to Canada. Hopefully, it inspires you. And at the end of this reading, I'll share with you how this healing, this writing has actually helped me in my own healing and recovery journey. So the piece is called, **Why did you come here?** And that was a prompt, and this is what I wrote.

Why did you come here, mom? This is a question I asked my mom. Why did you leave India and come here to Canada? India is beautiful. India is hot. It has sunny weather. Day after day of sun. No cloudy, gloomy winters. Vitamin D, 365 days a year. No need for happy lambs or vitamin D drops. The sun shines directly onto everyone in all its blaze of glory. And the rest of India, beautiful, that glorious white marble, elegantly designed Taj Mahal. One of the most beautiful monuments and an ode to love. Love that has stood the test of time and for the whole world to ponder. Those beautiful Bengal tigers, the stunning beach of Goa, the blue city, the pink city, the incredible ancient cities of Rajasthan, the winding waters of Kerala, the towering mountains in the Himalayas, the list goes on and on and on. India cannot be described in words. It has to be experienced in person. So as I looked into my mom's eyes, I asked her that one question that was deep in my heart. Why? Why did you leave your family, your parents, your brothers and sisters, your home, your sense of safety and security? Why? My mom looked me straight into eyes with love in her heart and said, I did it for you, Ricky. I did it for you, for your future, for your kids' future, for your kids' future. This is my legacy, I did it for you. This is the common story of all immigrants leaving everything behind with one singular purpose, one unwavering hope, one destination, a new home. It can be summarized in one singular word. That word is better, a better future, a better job, a better money, better opportunities, a better lifestyle. So why do I stay here in Canada for the same reason that my mom stays here? I stay here for my own kids. They are my future and my grandkids, while I'm not that old yet. My kids' kids will have that same word that my mother gave to me. That word is better.

So that's the end of my writing piece and I want to share with you how that helped me in my own healing journey. Firstly, the actual process of writing that I never really deeply reflected about my mom's own journey to come here to Canada, her struggles. And when I wrote this, I really understood it from her point of view. So that experience of writing it down, very cathartic and very healing of the relationship between me and my mom. Secondly, actually expressing it vocally in the class where we do it, we actually share our stories with everyone and everyone's listening and nodding and giving encouragement and support. And of course, here I am reading on this podcast for all of the listeners from around Vancouver, around BC, around Canada, around the world to listen. So that's very cathartic. And lastly, it's the sense of people who are listening without judgment and just with love and maybe it will actually help them in their own healing when they hear my story. So those are some of the reasons why I've gotten this journey of writing and putting down my thoughts into paper and onto keyboard and now vocalizing it, follow you. So I highly recommend joining the creative writing class here at the Recovery Cafe. Thank you everyone.

Recovery Superheros :

Welcome to our first installment of Recovery Superheroes, where we invite those with amazing powers to help with our recovery journeys. I'm your host, Drug Free D, and here's today's extraordinary guest.

Hello, and thank you, Drug Free D.

For our listeners, please identify yourself dear Recovery Superhero.

Certainly. I am the empathizer. I am a true empathy enthusiast. Thanks for having me on on this warm comedic compassionate show.

The empathizer? That's intriguing. So tell us, what is your superpower?

As the empathizer, I possess the power of extreme empathy. I tune into the emotions of those who need me. I can step into someone else's shoes and truly understand their feelings and struggles. It's all about connecting with people on a deep and emotional level. But as the empathizer, I also have the power to make you feel better through comedy and laughter.

Wow, that's a superpower we get all used in our lives. How does the empathizer help someone in recovery?

Recovery is all about understanding and supporting individuals on their journey to healing. I have the strength and calmness to provide emotional support while making people feel seen and heard during their darkest times. I comfort and remind people that they're not alone and their pain is valid. Okay, that sounds amazing and very much needed as the road can be bumpy at times.

So how does this look if I were to envision a situation that the empathizer could help? How do you use your power of laughter that you mentioned?

So imagine someone in recovery is having a tough day. The empathizer, me, would swoop in after picking up their frustration and pain. I comfort them with warmth and compassion. Then with a wink, I'd say, hey, I get it. Recovery can be as confusing as trying to find a lost sock in the dryer. Laughter is the universal language of recovery and the empathizer is fluent in it.

That sounds fantastic. The empathizer can make even the darkest moments better with humor. After all, we could all use more empathy and comedy. So as this amazing, much needed superhero, you must have to wear a cape or something for us to identify you.

Oh, yes. My superhero costume is bright and a riot of colors with a mismatch of polka dots, stripes, checks, even flowers to speak to all the different people on their unique individual recovery journeys. I also have a pair of funky, oversized pair of glasses so I can see the world from various perspectives and encourage others to do the same.

And you must have other accessories if you're a superhero, like, I don't know, utility belt?

Oh, absolutely. I wouldn't be the empathizer without my utility belt containing gags, confetti. I even have a mini trampoline for impromptu physical comedy. Plus, I have a logo too, which everyone, so everyone knows who I am, is a heart-shaped patchwork cushion to symbolize the fusion of empathy and humor in the name of healing and recovery. The empathizer is all about making people lighten up while feeling understood, no matter how different they may be.

Well, thank you so much for joining us today, the empathizer, and for all you do. That's it for today's episode. Join us next time for more fun-filled adventures of recovery superheroes, until then, keep laughing and supporting each other on your recovery journeys.

Credits :

This pilot episode of the Steam Team podcast was brought to you by the Steam Team at the Recovery Cafe, with original creative content by Nigel, Mark, Sonja, Ricky, Damian, and Maggie, original theme song created by James, Audio and Technical Support, Paul, Kay, and Patrick, and the rest of the support team Chad, Jen, Duncan, Rocky, and Melissa, with a big shout out to the Kettle Society for providing the space and support to produce this show.

Kettle Statement :

The Recovery Cafe is the newest program under the Community Services Department of the Kettle Society in Vancouver. We provide support, resources, and a community of care along the entire continuum of a person's need for recovery assistance. The Cafe community allows our members to feel grounded and secure in a warm, welcoming environment that builds stability, strong relationships, and a sense of belonging. The Recovery Cafe supports people in managing their mental health and substance use along the many pathways of recovery. We help each individual reclaim life as a person worthy of giving and receiving love. Everyone is in recovery from something at the Recovery Cafe. Whether you're recovering from addiction, a mental health transition, or homelessness, the Cafe is a place of refuge and support, care, and community. The Recovery Cafe is located at 620 Clark Drive and we are open Monday through Friday 930-430. The Recovery Cafe is not religiously affiliated and is inclusive to all seeking recovery and a healing community."