

THE TURNINGPOINTCT.ORG COLLECTION

| MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS | SPRING 2022 ISSUE |

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AN ONLINE PEER SUPPORT MAGAZINE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN CT

| MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS | SPRING 2022 ISSUE |

"CELEBRATING MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH"

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR AND PROJECT COORDINATOR,
KAILEY MARCAURELE



May is an important month for those of us who struggle with our mental health as well as for those of us who are mental health advocates. May is Mental Health Awareness Month. This month, we work fight stigma, provide support, and educate the public about mental health and mental health issues. Mental health issues are real, and we are here to help end the stigma that surrounds them.

The TurningPointCT team of young people wanted to put together this Mental Health Awareness edition of our newsletter/e-publication to highlight various mental health issues for Mental Health Awareness Month.

TurningPointCT.org is a peer run organization funded by the Connecticut DMHAS to provide teens and young adults with peer support and mental health resources. This means that everything on and associated with our project is made by and for young people in Connecticut who get what it's like to struggle with their mental health and/or substance misuse. Using our personal experiences allows us to model one method of recovery and offer guidance and support to empower others to find the right path to recovery for themselves.

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MEET THE TURNINGPOINTCT.ORG TEAM



Kailey MarcAurele - Project Coordinator

Kailey joined TurningPointCT.org as the social media assistant in February of 2021. In September of 2021, she became TurningPointCT.org's Project Coordinator & Peer Leader.

Kailey is a young adult who is passionate about helping to end the stigma that surrounds mental health. She is a mental health advocate that is in recovery from several mental health conditions, including anxiety, depression, and complex post-traumatic stress disorder. She is also in recovery from various unhealthy coping mechanisms.

Kailey openly shares her struggles with her mental health. For her senior project in college, she started the blog *Combating My Anxiety: A Life Long Journey* to paint a true picture of what it's like living with mental illness through personal stories and art. Her hope was that others could relate to what she was sharing and to help end the stigma by speaking about her mental health.

Kailey is a very creative person and she uses art as well as music as ways to cope. She likes to play the guitar, the piano, and the ukulele as well as sing. She also loves to take portraits. Her favorite thing to capture when photographing people is their raw emotion. For this reason, candid photos are her favorite to take.

Spending time in nature is one of her favorite ways to decompress. She especially loves to be by the water. She is very big into nature and wildlife photography. Photographing waterfalls, birds, and seals are a favorite of hers. Kailey enjoys connecting with others who also love photography and the outdoors.

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Dominique Harris - Project Assistant

Dominique joined TurningPointCT.org as the project assistant in September 2021. She is a mental health advocate that is passionate about ending the stigma that surrounds mental health as well as helping those who may not have any advocates.

Dominique also works as a paraprofessional at her local middle school in Southeastern CT, she absolutely loves her students and wants nothing but the best for them. It's one of the main reasons why she is currently pursuing a BA in Psychology at Southern New Hampshire University. She hopes to become a school psychologist someday so that she can provide the best mental health care for her current and future students.

Dominique is a very bubbly, kind but old soul and she uses baking while listening to music as way to cope when things are hard. She absolutely loves Earth, Wind and Fire, they're her favorite music group and such a big part of who she is. All her friends will tell you how much that group means to her. Their music is just so uplifting and has been such a positive influence on her life. Her favorite thing to bake is bread and her favorite EWF song is September. She also absolutely loves giraffes, they're her favorite animal.

She hopes to make a difference in the world even if it's just a small one.

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NEXT PAGE**



MEET THE TURNINGPOINTCT.ORG TEAM



**Allison Kernan, AS, RSS, Recovery Coach
TurningPointCT - Peer Support Specialist**

Allison is a credentialed Recovery Support Specialist and Recovery Coach, serving CT youth and young adults. She specializes in providing peer support for recovery from trauma, mental health, and substance use disorders. She was drawn to this work due to witnessing and surviving trauma throughout her childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood.

Ally previously worked as the Project Coordinator of TurningPointCT and wrote the blog, "The Monkey on My Back." She has now returned after working as a Recovery Coach and Recovery Support Specialist. Through the TurningPointCT project, Ally works to improve peer support services in the state as a policy advisor and liaison to young adult treatment programs. She also offers direct peer support to youth and young adults on a limited basis.

She graduated Gateway Community College and received an Associates degree in Drug and Alcohol Recovery Counseling. She gained experience counseling through interning at CT Counseling Centers and working at Recovery Network of Programs. Ally continues to further her personal recovery through therapy, peer support, and meditation. She is a SMART Recovery Facilitator, Narcan Trainer, and is also a Recovery Coach Academy Trainer.

In her free time she enjoys spending time with her loved ones, her pets, and publishing her first book.

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Therell Mayes - Social Media Assistant

Therell joined TurningPointCT as their Social Media Assistant in September 2021. He is a young adult who wants to help other young adults who are struggling with mental health like he has. Therell graduated from Norwalk Community College with an associate's degree in Liberal Arts & Sciences.

His experience with social media began as a hobby in middle school. Since then, he has learned how to use various social media platforms to promote his photography, music, and YouTube videos. Therell loves to write screenplays, poetry, and lyrics as well as record music, photograph nature, and exercise.

As mentioned above, Therell likes to write lyrics and record music. It all stems from his creative writing class back in his senior year of high school where the class would write poems. He continued writing poetry for a couple more years before the poems turned into writing lyrics. After scheduling time with a professional recording studio, he made his first song in the summer of 2020 and has made more since. He hopes to continue doing music and grow as an artist as music is what he wants to do with his life long term.

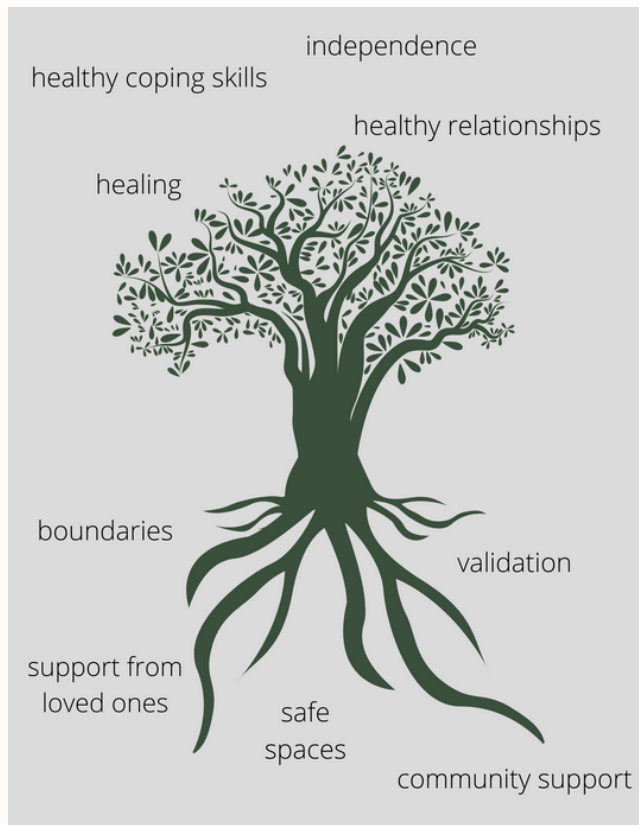
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ROOTS OF RECOVERY

BY ALLY KERNAN



Trauma Roots Tree



Recovery Roots Tree

As I'm halfway through my 6th year of recovery from opiates, I find myself on a continuous healing journey. I crave opiates in a different way now, if I have a craving. Being able to say 'if I have a craving' is a powerful statement because for the first year or two of my recovery, cravings happened frequently. It was challenging for me to believe that the frequency would change and the length of time it would last would become much shorter.

I've learned that my addiction and any current cravings are directly related to trauma. The reasons why I crave substances to begin with are what I've been working on throughout the past 6 years. All of the reasons ended up being tied to trauma. So for me, trauma and my mental health are the roots of my addiction. The more I work on processing trauma, the less amount of cravings I have.

When my mental health symptoms are becoming difficult to manage, that's when the thoughts of wanting to use come. They are mostly manageable, because I'm able to recognize that the desire I have is not to use, but really, to numb whatever I'm feeling and experiencing.

I'm now able to practice and utilize healing coping skills, supportive loved ones, and immerse myself in the recovery community.

One thing that has been a huge growth of mine is that the current stressors and traumatic experiences I have, I'm able to advocate for myself in ways I couldn't before. Going back to childhood, I always struggled to find my voice. Now, I can advocate and take care of myself in loving, non-judgmental, and compassionate ways.





GRADUATION ANXIETY

BY THERELL MAYES

I have been attending a community college for the past four years. It would normally take two years if I had gone full time, but I had to repeat some classes and I also changed my major.

My time at college has been a decent experience. I met some cool people, but I unfortunately don't talk to any of them anymore as COVID and life have separated me from them. My favorite class was Public Speaking, which was surprising to me because I am generally a shy person. I also liked my Psychology classes because I liked learning about human behavior.

As my time at college comes to an end, I find myself experiencing graduation anxiety. School is all I've known my entire life. It's been part of my routine for almost two decades and now it's coming to an end. It will feel so weird to no longer have school as part of what I do in my life. It is definitely going to take some getting used to.

Part of me doesn't want school to end because it's familiar to me and it's what I'm used to. Another part of me is glad it is ending because most of the time school was not a pleasant experience for me. It was hard for me to fit in and I got bullied sometimes.

I will now have to enter what many would consider "the real world" (getting a full time job and working for the rest of my life). I have a sense of what I want to do with my life once school is over. I write lyrics and go to a professional recording studio to turn them into actual songs. I would like this to become a full time gig, but I know that probably won't happen for a while unless I get really lucky. So until I make it big in the music world, I will have to work more. That will be pretty anxiety inducing for me.



TIME TO SPRING CLEAN YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

BY DOMINIQUE HARRIS

Most people hear "spring cleaning" and think about having to clean their homes and get rid of things but that's not what I'm talking about. Just like your home, your mental health needs a little spring cleaning. It's time to pair your yearly spring cleaning with some emotional cleaning too!

Many of us are toting around emotional baggage and it is weighing us down but we don't even know it sometimes. We tend to put our physical needs before our emotional needs and it simply cannot be that way. Learn to take care of your mental space just as you do your physical space.

Take the time to listen to what your mind and body is trying to tell you. Take a moment to ask yourself what you need and how you're feeling emotionally. Become better aware of your emotions and you'll be in control. Learn to practice mindfulness and gratitude as often as you can.

Take the time to spring clean your mental and emotional space. I promise it's just as important as spring cleaning your home.

**CHECK OUT
DOMINIQUE'S TIPS FOR
SPRING SELF-CARE ON
THE NEXT PAGE!**



Dominique's Tips for Spring Self-Care



getting out in nature



spring cleaning



picking flowers



having a picnic



baking something

WANT TO SHARE YOUR STORY AND HEAR FROM OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE STRUGGLING WITH THEIR MENTAL HEALTH? CHECK OUT "OUR STORIES" ON:

WWW.TURNINGPOINTCT.ORG/OUR-STORIES

TURNING POINT CT.ORG

Login | Map | Forum | About Us | Select Language | NEED HELP NOW? 1-800-273-8255 | TXT "CTL" TO 741741

Guiding the search for mental wellness

Q&A Guide | Our Stories | Media | The Facts | Resources | Map

Our Stories

Check out stories from young people across the state. We've been there—and look how far we've come!

SHARE YOUR STORY

- TP's Story of Learning the Importance of Self Care (Age: 21)
- Nina's Story of Learning Self Love and Confidence
- Jenna's Story of Self Acceptance and Overcoming Anxiety
- Serena's Journey to Self Love



I'M SO EXCITED, I WET MY PLANTS! - HORTICULTURAL THERAPY

BY DOMINIQUE HARRIS

Happy Spring! One of my favorite things about Spring is all the beautiful plants and flowers that are starting to bloom again. Another great thing about Spring is that it's great for horticultural therapy. Now, I know you're looking at that word and thinking, what the heck is that? Well, listen up because I'm going to tell you!

Horticultural therapy is the use of plants as well as plant-based activities for rehabilitation and healing purposes. It's basically plant therapy! There are so many benefits to this type of therapy especially when it comes to emotional and mental health. One of the best things about plants is that they're non-threatening and won't discriminate, they respond to anyone providing them love and care.

This type of therapy is great for your mental and emotional health. It can be incredibly helpful with reducing stress and stabilizing moods. Horticultural therapy allows individuals to participate in activities that are purposeful. These activities allow you to develop a better sense of productivity. It may also help provide a better sense of confidence! I absolutely believe in plant therapy, my plants are some of the best things I've ever invested in. Honestly, I love taking care of all of my plants, they truly do give me purpose. I feel so much happier having my plants.



VANESSA'S STORY OF LEARNING TO PEACEFULLY CO-EXIST WITH ANXIETY, ADHD AND DEPRESSION

WHAT HAVE YOU STRUGGLED WITH? WHEN DID IT BECOME TOO MUCH?

I have struggled my entire life with anxiety, and just recently with depression. I grew up in the Midwest, and I had never even heard about mental illness as a concept until I moved to Connecticut in 2015. We didn't talk about it at home. I didn't know what was wrong with me, I didn't know why I couldn't make simple decisions without having trouble breathing, and crying (I found out later that is what happens when you have a panic attack) I didn't know why it took me forever to fall asleep, I didn't know why I couldn't make friends as easily as other people. When I moved to Connecticut in January of 2015, I went into a new school in a higher grade than I had been in. All of the other kids were older than I was, and I didn't have any friends that first year. My mental health was really bad at that time but I didn't know anything about mental health, I didn't even know that that was what I was struggling with, so I didn't get help.

WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT DID YOU GET AT FIRST? DID IT WORK?

In 2017 I went to the doctor for a checkup and they had me take a mental health screening test. They told me I tested higher than average for kids my age and that they were going to refer me to a therapist. I was surprised because of my very limited knowledge about mental health, and I didn't even know I had anxiety until I started psychotherapy (talk therapy).

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For the first year I was in psychotherapy I didn't really tell anyone about my anxiety, and I didn't reach out for help besides from my therapist. This wasn't working for me, because I only saw my therapist once a week and I needed support more often than that.

WERE THERE ANY TURNING POINTS WHERE THINGS REALLY STARTED TO CHANGE FOR THE BETTER?

About two years ago, I found out my mom had depression, and my aunt, cousins, and grandma also struggle with depression, anxiety, and ADHD. I realized that it wasn't just me in the world, it wasn't just my therapist who I could reach out to. I started to talk with my family more about my mental health, and that conversation is really important and has helped me through some really tough times. I also found the mental health community on social media, and in my school with my friends, which helped me to realize that I am not alone. I have a support system, and I can and should reach out when I am struggling.

WHAT'S YOUR LIFE LIKE NOW? WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH, AND WHAT ARE YOU WORKING TOWARDS?

I struggle with depression and anxiety on a daily basis. My therapist has helped me realize that mental illness isn't a one-and-done, do this and you're cured type of health problem. It is always going to be a part of your life, and recovery isn't about "curing" it (because a lot of times these things can't be cured) but it's about learning to peacefully coexist, take charge of your own life, and not letting it control who you are. My life is a lot better since I have realized this, I am able to interact with people with more confidence, I do public speaking for my school, which would have been impossible for me two years ago. I am still working towards asking for help. This past year was tough for me and I have a hard time admitting when I can't handle something, but I am working towards being mindful of my mental health when making decisions, not letting it control me but keeping in mind what I need to do to stay mentally healthy. I had a period last winter where I was so stressed I didn't have my period for two months. I was feeling so burnt out that my body wasn't functioning normally, and part of therapy is noticing unhealthy behavior patterns. I was trying to do too much and it was negatively affecting my health. But I noticed it and was able to make changes to prevent that from happening again.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE HAVING A TOUGH TIME? WHAT'S HELPED YOU THAT YOU WISH YOU HAD KNOWN EARLIER

You are never as alone as you feel. Tons of people struggle with mental illness, and there are resources all around you if you need them. There is the option of medication, and therapy, but even talking to your family members, to a counselor at school, and going online to websites like Turning Point, or the National Alliance on Mental Illness. There are so many resources for people like us, and hopefully that helps you if you are struggling.



MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

CT SPECIFIC RESOURCES:

- **Young Adult Warmline**
 - (Mon-Sun 12-9pm)
 - 1-855-6HOPENOW
- **Peer Support with Ally**
 - In-person or virtual with flexible scheduling
 - Call : 203-227-7644 x842
- **Chat with us on DISCORD**
 - DM us on IG [@turningpointct_org](https://www.instagram.com/turningpointct_org) for the link

CRISIS LINES

- **National Suicide Lifeline (24/7)**
 - 800-273-TALK (8255)
- **Crisis Text Line (24/7)**
 - Send text to 741741
- *** CT ONLY ***
 - **Mobile Psychiatric Crisis (24/7)**
 - DIAL 2-1-1, OPTION 1
 - **Kids in Crisis (24/7)**
 - (203) 661-1911

You can find more mental health resources on turningpointct.org/resources



WHY I SHARE MY MENTAL HEALTH STORY AND MY CONTINUED RECOVERY JOURNEY

BY KAILEY MARCAURELE

One thing I'm passionate about is advocating for mental health. I do this in so many different ways, but one of the biggest ways I do this by sharing my story. I am someone who has suffered a lot. While some people might think I share these struggles for attention, the truth is I share my story so people who have gone through similar things can see that they are not alone.

Sharing my story can come with a lot of backlash. As I mentioned, some people think it's for attention, some people think I'm exaggerating, and there is still a large group of people who honestly believe that mental illness isn't real and that people fake it to get out of things. The things I deal with in my daily life that stem from trauma and my anxiety are very real to me and if I could just magically heal my brain...I would.

There is still so much stigma that surrounds mental health. This stigma is so damaging to people who live with mental illness every day. This stigma is the reason why so many people are afraid to reach out for help or to talk about what they're going through. While things have gotten better in the last couple of years, we still have a long way to go.

Sharing my story isn't easy. I have really good days, but I also still have really bad days. Sitting down to write about past traumas isn't easy and it isn't fun. But, I think it's important for me to share my story to try and paint a picture of what people like me go through for those who still can't seem to wrap their heads around the fact that mental health can be a very serious issue.

I also share my story so other people like me have some visibility in a world where perfection and unrealistic standards of how we should be are shoved down our throats. I want others who struggle with their mental health to feel seen. I also want them to know that they are not alone. I want them to understand that there is nothing wrong with them and they're not a bad person if they're struggling with their mental health. And lastly, I want them to know that while it might not seem like it, things can and DO get better.

In sharing my story, I try to be really transparent. I am not about the toxic positivity where I try to portray that I am happy all the time. My truth is there are still a lot of things that I struggle with that stem from my years of poor mental health. I don't want people to feel like they have to heal their mental health overnight. Recovery from any mental health issue is hard. It isn't linear. There's not right or wrong way to deal with your mental health. It's also a life long journey of healing.

At the end of the day, we are people who are just trying our best to make it through the day. Sometimes we have to take it week by week, day by day, or minute by minute. Healing is HARD.

I will continue to share the ups and the downs of my journey in an attempt to raise awareness about what we go through and to help others feel not alone. I try to be the advocate and voice I needed when I was growing up. We shouldn't have to hide our struggles from others. The stigma needs to end.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BEING
FEATURED IN OUR NEXT NEWSLETTER /
GETTING INVOLVED IN THE
TURNINGPOINTCT.ORG PEER PROJECT?

EMAIL KAILEY FOR MORE INFO:

KMARCAURELE@POSITIVEDIRECTIONS.ORG

&

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