



## Breaking Down PAWS

Chemical dependency patients seek rehab because it is very uncomfortable and often dangerous to withdraw from substances at home without the proper medications. While in inpatient detoxification (detox), patients generally experience acute symptoms such as anxiety, irritability, agitation, muscle cramps and sometimes even seizures. This is, however, not the whole story. Post Acute Withdrawal Syndrome (PAWS) is a biopsychosocial syndrome that results from the combination of damage to the nervous system caused by alcohol or drugs and the psychosocial stress of coping with life without drugs or alcohol. PAWS is comprised of a variety of symptoms that can affect the addict or alcoholic in the months that follow detox and treatment.

While it can take from six months to two years for the nervous system to repair itself in a recovering individual, PAWS symptoms usually peak around three to six months after detox. Some of the most common symptoms include an inability to think clearly, inability to concentrate, memory problems, emotional

reactivity or numbness, sleep disturbances and difficulty managing stress. It is important for those in early recovery to understand PAWS and recognize its symptoms when they appear. Having a good support system, like the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous for example, can be an important tool for bringing PAWS symptoms under control as soon as possible. Terence Gorski, in his 1986 book *Staying Sober*, recommends talking about symptoms as they occur, expressing the feelings associated with the symptoms or thoughts and identifying any triggering incidents that may have led to an onset of symptoms. Gorski views these activities as self-defense against the stress that can be associated with early sobriety.

Other defenses include:

- Nutrition – Eating three well-balanced meals per day, as well as healthy snacks between meals, keeps our body fueled. Sugar and caffeine should be avoided as much as possible. Meal planning can help keep glucose under control, as swings

in blood sugar produce stress, and stress can aggravate PAWS. Those recovering from alcohol dependence are particularly susceptible to sugar cravings, as alcohol is very high in sugar.

- Exercise – Getting some physical exercise a few times per week (more if possible) can address many of the symptoms of PAWS. Being active can lead to clearer thinking, better sleep, and lower levels of stress. Add an after-dinner walk to your routine, or consider taking up a sport you used to like if the gym is not for you.

Adding the components of a good diet and regular exercise to your recovery regimen not only decreases the intensity of PAWS symptoms but improves your chances of success in recovery overall. Don't be discouraged if you are unable to achieve a healthy balance in all areas of your life overnight – we are all a work in progress!

Jennifer Fuchs, MS  
Source: Terence Gorski, *Staying Sober*



LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY  
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# Staying with Sobriety

SPRING 2014

## Fitness & Recovery

How do you define fitness? Does it make a difference for the person recovering from substance dependence/abuse? There is increasing evidence that engaging in physical activity on a regular basis not only improves fitness but increases your chances of staying sober.

In a review article and pilot study, Brown, et al<sup>(1)</sup> investigated the effect of physical activity on decreasing relapse in those with alcohol use disorders. They specifically looked at aerobic exercise as a way to prevent relapse.

Here's how exercise may benefit those in recovery from alcohol dependence (and other substances):

1. Provide a pleasurable state without alcohol. Exercise creates a positive mood, likely due to its effect on the body's endorphins and on the dopamine receptor pathway.
2. Reduce symptoms of depression and negative mood.
3. Increase self-efficacy (belief in one's ability to master particular skills).

4. Exercise offers positive alternatives to alcohol and drug use

5. Lower reactivity to stress and improved coping skills.

While the above points were specifically studied in relation to alcohol use disorders, it makes sense that engaging in regular physical activity will offer many benefits for any person.

You don't need to run marathons to benefit from exercise. Walking ten minutes two to three times a day, will start to build fitness. Research does support doing moderate intensity exercise in ten-minute bouts throughout the day. The American College of Sports Medicine and the American Heart Association updated physical activity guidelines in 2007:

Guidelines for Healthy Adults under 65

- Do moderately intense cardio 30 minutes a day, five days a week
- OR do vigorously intense cardio 20 minutes a day, 3 days a week
- AND Do eight to 10 strength-training exercises, eight to 12 repetitions of each exercise, twice a week

Other aerobic activities include, riding a bike, dancing, walking the dogs, jogging, swimming and hiking. Some people enjoy a team sport such as basketball, volleyball or soft ball. The point is to start moving. Lifting weights helps improve muscle strength, yet needs to be balanced with aerobic activity for overall fitness improvement.

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## We want to hear from you

To inspire our readers and recognize your accomplishments, we would like to feature your story in one of our upcoming newsletters. Please send us a personal article or poem depicting your experience with addiction and/or alcoholism to:

Attn: Elaine Coyazo  
LLUBMC  
1710 Barton Road  
Redlands, CA 92373



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# Staying with Sobriety

Chemical Dependency Services  
1710 Barton Road  
Redlands, CA 92373

Please write to the address below if you wish to have your name removed from the list to receive announcements or notices introducing new services, health educational programs and events or products of Loma Linda University Behavioral Medicine Center. All reasonable efforts will be taken to ensure that your request is honored.

Promotional Services  
c/o Customer Care Center  
245 East Redlands Blvd. Suite A  
San Bernardino, CA 92408

## Recovering Alumni Association – Dedicated to Sober Fun

The Recovering Alumni Association (RAA) gatherings held on Thursday nights in the Loma Linda University Behavioral Medicine Center (LLUBMC) gym are available to all who have been in treatment on the chemical dependency unit as well as their families and friends. The RAA is dedicated to being family-oriented with the goal of introducing recovering families to sober activities.

Throughout each month, various activities are held during the Thursday night meetings at 6:00-7:00, such as Wheel of Recovery, guest speakers, bingo or board games, crafts and celebration of sobriety birthdays.

The RAA also sponsors other events throughout the year, including monthly “pizza and a movie” discount tickets,

holiday events, men’s and women’s retreats, trips to the beach, etc. The RAA board and members would like to encourage all recovering families and friends to come and join in the fun!



## Point of Entry Tour

Is there anyone in your life who needs to know that there is hope for recovery?

Invite them to learn of the life-changing services provided at LLUBMC by bringing them to one of the monthly, one-hour introductory Point of Entry tours. Information during the tours is meant to educate and inspire people about the LLUBMC, as well as mental health and

chemical dependency issues. During the tour, your guest will receive information and insight to the various programs and services offered at LLUBMC, while breaking down stigma related to behavioral health issues.

If you are interested in attending a Point of Entry tour, please contact Lynn Neuenswander at 909-558-3154.

## At a Glance

### RAA sponsors “Pizza and a Movie”

Third Sunday of each month

\$10 per person. Meet at Giovanni’s Pizza for lunch, then head to Krikorian Theatre for your choice of movie. For further information, call Tami at 909-277-0533.

### Easter Egg Hunt

Thursday, April 17, 2014 | 6:00 pm

BMC Gymnasium

Join in with RAA for a family Easter Egg Hunt. Prizes and loads of fun! For further information, call Tami at 909-277-0533.

### CD Graduation

Thursday, May 15, 2014 | 6:00 pm

BMC Gymnasium

This is a celebration of recovery to honor all those who completed CD treatment at the BMC from December 1, 2013 through March 31, 2014. Families are welcome. Light refreshments will be served. For further information call Elaine Coyazo at 909-558-9200, ext. 34126

### 48th Annual AA Gratitude Picnic

Sunday, June 1st, 2014 | 10:00 am - 4 :00 pm

601 University St. (Sylvan Park), Redlands, CA

Adults – \$7, children under 10 – \$4, 2 & under – Free. Volleyball and horseshoe tournaments, children’s games, raffle prizes, music, food and fun! For further information, call AA central office 909-825-4700.

### “On Fire for Recovery”- NA Convention

June 27 – 29, 2014

Renaissance Hotel  
Palm Springs, CA

Come join in the fun with NA meetings, bingo, comedy show, banquet and more. For further information, see [circna.com](http://circna.com)

### 66’ers Baseball game and fireworks

4th of July

RAA sponsors the annual 66’ers Baseball game and fireworks. All alumni and families are invited. For further information, call Tami 909-277-0533

## My Story of Sobriety

“Hello, my name is Shelby, and my mom is the patient.” Those were the first words I ever said when I arrived here at the BMC. To be honest, the first time I came here, I wanted nothing to do with this place. But I think everyone felt that way when they first arrived at the BMC.

My mom was the patient, and my family was struggling to cope with an alcoholic loved one, so we came here for help. I was the skeptical one in my family. I had watched attempts at getting my mom help fail before, and I figured this one would too. But after some coaxing and a lot of prompting from my father, I agreed to go to the family programs. My first day was very uncomfortable. There were a lot of people I didn’t know, and I knew all of them were in the same boat as my mother. So obviously I trusted no one.

Then I met Mark, basically the children’s counselor. He was a total stranger who wanted me to talk about the hardships of my life. I probably owe Mark an apology for the death glare I gave him when he made me talk in front of the family group. Needless to say, my first day wasn’t the best. But I kept going to the group, doing my assignments, and talking.

I eventually became more comfortable, and willing to learn the lessons that they taught us. I learned about my mother’s struggle and how to avoid going down the same path she did. But the best thing I gained from this was being fired from my job of mothering my own mother. The relief that came from not having to take on so much responsibility was amazing. Though I will admit the transition was rough at first, because I had to get over all the

pent up fear, rage and depression. But as time went on I began to find ways of coping, and eventually making a better life for myself. I’m so much happier than I ever was.

But don’t get me wrong, the journey wasn’t easy. There were fights, tears, and a lot of pain that my family had to go through. The result was a peace of mind and the ability to build a better relationship with my mother and my family. Though my home is still chaotic at times, I don’t mind. My mom’s battle is long from over, and I’m proud that she went through this program. I’m very thankful that my mother was finally able to find closure as well.

*Shelby H. (age 17)*

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### Fitness & Recovery

If you have not done any physical exercise in several months, be sure to check with your primary care physician before starting an exercise routine.

Here are some additional views on what being fit means. These are adapted from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, public relations team, January 10, 2007.

Fitness Includes:

- Energy to be more productive and do things that are important to you.
- A positive outlook to handle the mental challenges and emotional ups and downs to deal with stress.
- Reduced risk for many health problems, including heart disease, cancer and diabetes



- The opportunity to look and feel at your best.
- Physical strength and endurance to protect yourself in case of emergency
- A better chance for a higher quality of life and perhaps a longer one too.

A quote (anonymous) that sums up ‘fitness’: “Fitness is the ability to meet the demands and vicissitudes of daily life, with relative ease, and with some energy available for emergencies or unexpected situations.”

<sup>(1)</sup>Aerobic Exercise for Alcohol Recovery: Rationale, Program Description, and Preliminary Findings, Richard Brown, Ph.D., et al. Behavior Modif. 2009 March; 33(2): 220-249.