

RECOVERY TODAY ONLINE

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February 2008 - The Third Leg of the Stool - Part II

[back to recovery today](#)

by Stan Stokes

I struggled for over 20 years with the disease of addiction. Though traditional treatment gave me two legs of the treatment stool – psychology and spirituality – it was not until I finally found the Third Leg – physiology – that I was able to achieve sustained recovery.

I knew that I was not alone in needing the Third Leg. Despite the best intentions and efforts of the medical and mental health communities, the recovery rate for addicts has historically been well below 50%. Clearly, conventional talk therapy, when used alone, has not met the needs of many of the clients it is meant to serve.

My hope was to lower these alarming relapse rates. With that goal in mind I established Bridging The Gaps, an integrative addictions treatment program in the Shenandoah Valley, Winchester, Virginia. We “bridge the gaps” between the traditional psychosocial treatment model and alternative approaches that treat the physiological component of the disease. We believe that addiction is truly a “whole person” disease requiring a three-pronged approach: treatment of the mind, the spirit – and the body.

- Mind – Bridging The Gaps (BTG) recognizes the important role that the mind and emotions play in the addiction process. Our clients attend education sessions each day in which they are taught to understand the various aspects of the disease of addiction. They are also taught stress management techniques and relationship and communication skills, so that they can better cope with life on life’s terms without the use of substances as a crutch. In their group and individual therapy sessions, clients come to terms with the chronic nature of their illness, and they develop an awareness of the wide-ranging effects their illness has had on their lives and the lives of those around them.
- Spirit - Underlying all that we do at BTG is the teaching embodied in the 12-Step program of AA/NA. This invaluable program provides our clients with a spiritual model of recovery, which each of them can use in his or her own unique way. Each of our clients attends at least one 12-Step meeting a day, and they are required to have a temporary sponsor by the end of their second week in treatment. We recognize that recovery is a lifelong journey and the 12-Step program supplies our clients with the tools they will need to stay on that path.
- Body – What sets Bridging The Gaps apart from many other substance abuse treatment centers is our emphasis on the physiological aspects of the disease of addiction. Research has shown that faulty brain chemistry – whether as the result of addiction or as the cause of it – when left untreated, as in traditional treatment programs, leads to significant relapse rates. More than 70 percent of addicts receiving traditional treatment only relapse within six to twelve months. Whereas, treatment programs offering both psychological and physiological approaches have shown sobriety rates between 65 and 80 percent.

At BTG we focus on rebalancing our clients’ brain chemistry with oral and IV administered nutritional supplements. Each of our clients begins the treatment stay with a thorough history and physical, including a series of blood tests to assess liver and kidney function and nutritional status. They also fill out a symptom survey to determine if they are lacking certain brain chemicals. Based on the results of these tests, a customized regimen of IV amino acids and nutrients is developed for each client to meet his/her specific and unique needs. This is administered to the client over the course of their first six to ten days of treatment. The resulting rebalancing of brain chemistry radically reduces the “abstinence symptoms,” such as cravings,

anxiety, and fuzzy thinking, making it much easier for clients to absorb the psychosocial aspects of the treatment program.

Once the body is better able to absorb nutrients, the client is placed on a daily regimen of oral nutrients to continue and expand the gains achieved by the IV treatment. We also ensure that our clients eat healthful meals and snacks, free of caffeine and sugar, and we teach them about nutrition so that they can carry this healthy lifestyle with them when they leave treatment.

In addition, our clients begin each treatment day with acu-detox, an extension of Chinese acupuncture, which is documented to help with the recovery process. To further enhance our client's physical well being, we provide them with the opportunity to exercise every day and to work with a yoga instructor and reiki master on a regular basis.

All of the components of our program, working as an integrative whole, help our clients to recover their physical health as well as provide them with the psychological and spiritual tools they will need for sustained recovery. We hope that they leave us with a sturdy Three-Legged stool that will finally offer them a life free from the ravages of addiction.

Stan Stokes, MS, CCDC is the CEO and President of Bridging the Gaps, Inc – an integrated treatment facility for adults in Winchester, VA. His professional background is over 30 years experience in the addictions field both in the military and private sectors. Stan received his Master's degree at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond. He is past president of the Central Regional VADAAC and vice-president of the Central Region VADAP. Stan brings an innovative approach to the treatment field by integrating traditional and alternative approaches to addictions recovery. Bridging The Gaps' highly successful approach to treatment provides a 12 Step based psychosocial program while focusing on rebalancing brain chemistry & building up the body through the use of oral & intravenous therapy. Stan has a lifelong commitment to community outreach and the development of innovative approaches to treatment that increase successful outcomes for clients.

[back to recovery today](#)