# FIRST STEPS TOGETHER

FAMILIES IN RECOVERY SUPPORT

### **NEWSLETTER**



#### THIS ISSUE: GOAL SETTING

Goal setting is an effective strategy for mapping out a plan, taking action steps, and monitoring progress on the things we want to accomplish in any aspect of our lives.

FIRST Steps Together is unique in that a program participant is able to find support for setting and working on goals that are specific to their needs and wishes in regard to their own recovery, parenting and wellness. Setting goals is a highly individualized process. Effective and achievable goals are self-determined and tailored specifically to the circumstances and priorities of the parent, who is the best expert on what they want and need for themselves and their families. Program staff utilize reflective listening, knowledge of local resources, and a strengths-based approach to partner with a participant to identify and prioritize specific things to work on.

A-one-size-fits-all approach ignores that there are multiple paths to recovery and that a standard set of goals does not take into account the varying realities that may exist between participants we are serving. While one parent's main goal and priority may be finding stable housing, another may have a more pressing need for support to enroll in an education or job training program. Still another parent may be mostly focused on finding day-to-day supports for parenting in a pandemic, maintaining their recovery or preparing for a new baby.

Goal setting helps keep everyone focused on "progress not perfection" as initial achievements act as cornerstones for building up, strengthening and expanding recovery capital, parenting skills and community supports for each family.

## From SAMHSA: Person- and Family-centered Treatment Planning

Person- and family-centered treatment planning is a collaborative process where care recipients participate in the development of treatment goals and services provided, to the greatest extent possible. Person- and family-centered treatment planning is care planning that is strength-based and focuses on individual capacities, preferences, and goals. Individuals and families are core participants in the development of the plans and goals of treatment.



Maureen Whitman, LCSW, IBCLC Program Specialist Jewish Family & Children's Services

## WHAT ARE YOUR BEST TIPS FOR SETTING GOALS FOR YOURSELF OR CLIENTS?

#### Melanie Bilodeau Family Recovery Support Specialist (FRSS), Center for Human Development (CHD):



For me, working with my members, we talk about what their goals are and how we can accomplish them. For instance, if a member needs housing, we talk about if they are able to afford regular housing, or

do they need low-income housing? We then set goals based on their needs and establish a time frame of 3-6 months to work on them. We then talk about the different housing programs in the area and, if need be, I refer the member to additional supports.

I am helping them along the way, but the priority is for the member to do the work. I check in about their goals and I give them handy dandy notebooks to write things down. We do reviews about their goals and when they get off track, we revisit them and talk about what's going on. Goals come from a member determining their needs and working to prioritize those needs from most important to least important. After setting a goal into motion, we talk about what is attainable and within their reach and with some guidance, any goal is attainable! It just takes time and the effort to make it happen.



# Casey Schmidt Clinician, Bay State Community Services (BSCS)

Right now, I'm really appreciating the power in taking consistent small steps. I am acknowledging my efforts (even when I don't execute



perfectly 100% of the time), and looking back on my progress over longer chunks of time and giving myself kudos for that. I have also found it helpful to zoom out and assess the broader situation before setting my goals or making plans to see how things are connected. For instance, I wanted to work towards feeling more energized and stronger. I initially jumped right into adding cardio and fitness classes. I then realized that I wasn't providing some of the other basic things my body needed to feel good – like providing consistent nourishing and enjoyable meals for myself and aiming to maintain a sleep schedule that works for me. So I revised my goal, let go of the fitness part of the equation, and refocused on the building blocks.

This approach has been working and I feel good about how far I've come. I also keep in mind that if I hit a roadblock, that is normal and it doesn't diminish the work I've put in up until that point. This helps me avoid "throwing in the towel" because I'm not looking at things in an all or nothing way.

#### Barb Fenby Administrative Assistant, Bay State Community Services (BSCS)

I find SMART goals helpful for organizing, creating accountability, progress and follow-through when setting goals. The acronym

SMART stands for:

S = Specific

M = Measurable

A = Attainable

R = Relevant

T = Timed



## WHAT ARE YOUR BEST TIPS FOR SETTING GOALS FOR YOURSELF OR CLIENTS?



## Mori Boudreau Program Supervisor, Making Opportunity Count (MOC)

At MOC, goal planning is set right into our client notes. We review these at the beginning of each client session. If a goal was achieved, then we set a new one for the upcoming week. We spend time discussing the goals, and what the client thinks they need to do to achieve them.

Recovery Goal for this Week: Parenting Goal for this Week: Personal Goal for this Week:

Last Visit's Recovery Goal: Last Visit's Parenting Goal: Last Visit's Personal Goal:

Update: Update: Update:

If a participant is still working on a previously set task or goal, we will work together to strategize additional ways to support working on that goal. Sometimes this means breaking things down into even smaller steps.

For example, recently a client wanted to get her driver's license. Her first week task/goal was to get the manual that explains what is needed to obtain the license. The next goal was to get all the required paperwork together. After that, the goal was to submit the paperwork to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) in order to set up an appointment. After following all of these smaller steps, our client was able to obtain her license!

When we support clients to self-direct and navigate the process of setting and working toward their goals it allows them to see the tangible, regular progress they are making. Keeping track of these small steps is also helpful for communicating and partnering with the

Department of Children and Families (DCF) as we can easily share details about the progress someone is making toward important goals or action items. This ongoing record of achievements, however large or small, also represents measurable progress to be considered when assessing when a parent may be ready to be discharged or graduate from our program.

#### Christina Russell Program Supervisor, Cape Cod Children's Place

We choose topic areas each month to center team training and focus goals around. For January the internal training goal topics were Boundaries, and Plan C (harm reduction strategies). In every supervision setting we touched on how we can address Boundaries and Plan C with both staff and clients in addition to their goals around parenting, recovery and wellness.



We are working to develop an assessment form for employees that would include questions such as "What are your individual goals for the year and what are your goals in relation to the goals of the team/program?" Team goals are tailored to the staff member's role on the project. Accountability and review is built in since they are writing the goals down and discussing them in supervision.

An overarching goal for our site is focusing on community engagement and outreach. We are setting goals at all levels: for families, for staff, for our team, and for the agency.

#### **MOTIVATION MONDAY**

Motivation Monday (MM) is a space for staff to come together for meaningful connection. Every Monday at 11 we jump on Zoom to start our week off on the right foot. Each session starts with a nugget of information, typically a video or article. FIRST Steps Together staff take turns sharing their thoughts and collaborating with others on ways to bring self-care to the forefront of our personal and professional lives.

Through this space many staff members have set and achieved goals, added meditation and mindfulness to their daily practices and team meetings, started exer

practices and team meetings, started exercising and eating healthier, quit smoking, created space in their week for moments of self-reflection and fun, and incorporated many of the ideas and practices into their work with the families they serve.

With our current virtual world and the isolation we are experiencing due to the pandemic, having MM to look forward to each week has been a light in this unprecedented, sometimes unsettling world we are living in. Sharing our gratitude and finding joy in the small things each week has helped us to keep moving forward and embrace whatever the week has to bring, together.

#### What people are saying about Motivation Monday:

Debra Bercuvitz: I was a late joiner to MM and can't believe what I was missing. It shifts my energy entering the week and reminds me to position myself front and center. Erica is so thoughtful about the space that she creates for all of us.

Betty Doherty: For me, I feel MM has put a whole new meaning to "Team Spirit". I (we) show up, no matter what is going on in our world, both personally and/or professionally and always get the validation, inspiration and support we need. MM has become my favorite part of the week.

Cathy Connell: Diane and I decided to do our Rise meeting on Monday because we thought it would be a positive way to start the week ahead. Our attendance continues to increase and I have to say it has been working well. Then I get to flow right into MM.

Amanda Kelly: Motivation Monday allows for a positive and supportive space to connect with our program across the state. I also find myself using videos and activities from Motivation Monday during the Moms in Recovery Support Group on Fridays. All around, it works out beautifully!



Erica Napolitan Program Specialist Jewish Family & Children's Service

## BEST OF MOTIVATION MONDAY



### An Experiment in Gratitude The Science of Happiness

What makes you happy? Have you ever wondered why? Join us as we take an experimental approach on what makes people happier.



#### Be a Mr. Jensen

When we help team members, students, and co-workers to become more of who they already are – your people win...Be a Mr. Jensen!



## <u>Kid President: 20 Things We Should Say More Often</u>

Kid President believes the things we say can help make the world more awesome. Here he shares a special list of 20 things we should say more often.

#### **GOAL SETTING IN ACTION**

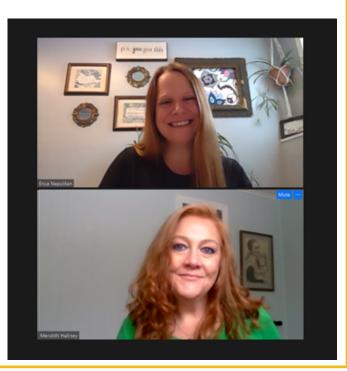
Over the summer during Motivation Monday we watched a video on setting <u>SMART goals</u>. Following the video, staff were asked to share one thing they could accomplish by the end of the summer. Many goals were set that day and it was agreed upon that we would check back in over the coming weeks to see how everyone was coming along. It was amazing to see the growth and hard work that went into achieving these goals as well as the connections that were made among the staff participating.

One of those staff members was FRSS Meridith Hallisey from Baystate Community Services in Quincy. She took a big risk and decided to share, in front of a group of recovery professionals, that her goal was to quit smoking. Everyone rallied around Meridith and continued to check in with her to see how she was doing. The process was long and challenging, but in the end, Meridith conquered her addiction to nicotine and is now officially a non-smoker.

Erica Napolitan sat down with Meridith to ask her about what steps she took to achieve her goal and what supports helped her along the way.

### Click here to hear our conversation where Meridith shares:

- How she knew it was the right time to quit smoking and where she found her motivation
- How sharing her goal with her peers gave her needed accountability
- How she used her existing skills and recovery tools to support her quest to be smoke free
- How she utilized her 'advocating voice' for herself with her medical provider
- How using mantras and positive self-talk helped during difficult moments



#### WEBINAR: SERVING NATIVE AMERICAN FAMILIES

## From Children and Family Futures: Serving Native Families Affected by Substance Use Disorder: Active Efforts and Plans of Safe Care

Substance use disorders among pregnant women and the number of infants born with prenatal substance exposure continues to rise. To address this, the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) requires that states develop Plans of Safe Care and have policies and procedures to address the needs of this population. Presenters from the Yurok Tribe engage participants in a discussion about how they worked across jurisdictions in a multi-disciplinary process to better serve families.



#### **ONE STEP AT A TIME**

In my early recovery, I had the yearning for wanting more out of my life in every aspect of it. I can't describe the hunger I had for succeeding – it is hard to put into words. The feeling of wanting more so badly—as soon as I thought about something I wanted to do, I immediately said to myself, "Yes, I am doing it. I am going to find out more about it." Sometimes I look back at the person I used to be and I don't even know that person.

When I think about some of my goals, early on in my recovery, fixing my credit was a big one. I was in cosmetology school, and I had the drive to create a new life for myself. I was on the path to that and the determination to achieve more for myself had set in. I needed to establish my credit and pay off some bills. I learned patience over the years and was fortunate that there were people in my life that supported me and eventually I was able to get my first car loan.

I then needed to fight for my record to be sealed because, otherwise, I couldn't get employment. All of this was difficult but necessary for me to get my cosmetology license. There were times when I would feel as if I was almost at my goal, and then the gloomy cloud of my past would come back. It was a struggle for years and my faith and prayer got me through it.

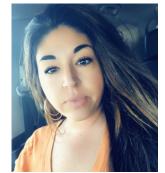
Everyone is different, and I have a different relationship with each of the members that I work with. I don't share the faith part of my story unless the door is open to that. I draw on each member's strengths. Maybe their child is their motivation to meet a goal. I try to find the strength in their story, what may have worked for them in the past that they have talked to me about – and I reflect that back to them. Especially if someone I am working with has experienced a relapse and is feeling like they don't have hope –I try to highlight a time when they were in recovery and what worked well. We come up with a plan that incorporates what worked before even if it is just one thing to give them hope.

Sometimes my approach is not to talk about goals, it is to just sit and listen. Many of the participants I work with do not have someone they can trust or someone they can call and vent to. I make it clear I am not a sponsor, but I am a safe space. Several members are now able to have their kids for overnight visits. It is rewarding to me when the members I am working with hit their goals.

I wanted to go back to school for a long time, but no one ever talked to me about college my whole life. I didn't know where to start. People said call admissions but that's not what I needed. Debra Bercuvitz, our FIRST Steps Together Project Director, was the first person to mention the idea to me at a training last year. Debra said, "Have you ever thought about going back to school to get your

Certified Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Counselor (CADC) or Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor (LADC)?" I did not know about these certifications so I looked them up. I found out there was a satellite program of Westfield State in Pittsfield. Class had started one week earlier, but I was able to enroll and jump in.

I think it's the drive to always know that where I am is not the last stop of where I am supposed to be. I have a craving for more. Any time I hit a milestone it gives me the drive to keep wanting more. It helps to hit the small goals and those fuel me to keep on the path that I am on for the next goal.



Nicole Walden

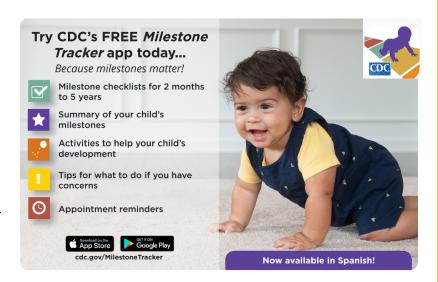
Family Recovery Support Specialist Center for Human Development, Pittsfield

#### **DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES RESOURCES FOR HOME VISITING PROGRAMS**

<u>The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)</u> has FREE resources to help you engage families in monitoring children's developmental milestones from 2 months to 5 years of age.

<u>CDC's Learn the Signs. Act Early</u> materials help you...

- Meet home visiting performance indicators because they
  - Complement and support developmental screening
  - Enhance individualized developmental support
  - Help with making referrals
- Help parents better understand their child's development
- Communicate with parents about their child's progress
- Guide parents when there is a concern about their child's development



1 in 6 children has a developmental delay or disability. You can help identify children with signs of developmental delay, strengthen family engagement, and better support children by...

Supplementing your curriculum with CDC's *Learn the Signs. Act Early* parent education and engagement materials:

- Enhance developmental screening by using <u>milestone checklists</u> and the <u>Milestone Moments booklet</u>
- Help parents understand age-appropriate milestones by showing pictures and videos from *Milestones in Action*
- Share children's books <u>Amazing Me</u> and <u>Where is Bear?</u> to help parents learn about developmental milestones while reading with their child.
- Increase your knowledge of signs of potential delay and what to do if there is a concern.

Encouraging parents to use the <u>Milestone Tracker app</u> and review the *My Child's Summary* page with you to facilitate communication about developmental progress.

#### **UPCOMMING MASSACUSETTS ACT EARLY WEBINARS**

<u>Massachusetts Act Early</u> aims to educate parents and professionals about healthy childhood development, early warning signs of autism and other developmental disorders, the importance of routine developmental screening, and timely early intervention whenever there is a concern.

March 25th & 26th Motor and Cognitive Milestones for Children

• April 29th & 30th Social & Speech Milestones for Children

• May 27th & 28th Attachment and Complex Trauma

To register please <u>click here.</u>

#### **CLAS CORNER - SMARTIE GOALS**

Members of the Massachusetts

Department of Public Health (DPH) Racial
Equity Strategic Pathway Implementation
Team (RESPIT), gave an overview of the
newly launched Racial Equity Data Road
Map at the PNQIN Fall Summit. During
their presentation, Antonia Blinn, Director,
Performance Management & Quality
Improvement, and Susan Manning, CDC
MCH Epidemiology Program Assignee
suggested adding two additional
components to organizational SMART aims
to achieve a SMARTIE aim.

From <u>The Management Center's Tips for Writing SMARTIE Goals:</u>

Goals are a concrete way to drive results, but how can you be sure to do it equitably? Introducing... SMARTIE goals! Adding an equity and inclusion component (that's the IE part!) to your SMART goals is like putting avocado on a sandwich—come for the health benefits, stay for the life-changing impact (and don't ever go without it again)!

SMARTIE Goals Worksheet: <u>SMARTIE Goals</u> <u>Worksheet - The Management Center</u> For a goal to be effective in driving an organization's performance, it needs to be:

**Strategic** – It reflects an important dimension of what your organization seeks to accomplish (programmatic or capacity-building priorities).

Measurable – It includes standards by which reasonable people can agree on whether the goal has been met (by numbers or defined qualities).

Ambitious – It's challenging enough that achievement would mean significant progress; a "stretch" for the organization.

Realistic – It's not so challenging as to indicate lack of thought about resources or execution; possible to track and worth the time and energy to do so.

Time-bound – It includes a clear deadline.

**Inclusive** – It brings traditionally marginalized people—particularly those most impacted—into processes, activities, and decision/policy-making in a way that shares power.

**Equitable** – It includes an element of fairness or justice that seeks to address systemic injustice, inequity, or oppression.

#### **MATERNAL HEALTH LEARNING & INNOVATION CENTER**

The National Maternal Health Resource
Center's Maternal Health Learning &
Innovation Center launched a national
resource center. This repository features
hundreds of resources related to maternal
health designed for public health
professionals, healthcare providers, educators,
policymakers, and more.



#### PRACTICAL TIPS FOR GOAL SETTING

With the new year here, many of us are more than happy to have 2020 in the rear-view mirror! Normally, this is a time for us to start fresh, get organized, and set our intentions or goals for the coming year. But given the challenges of 2020, entering 2021 may be a less (or more!) ambitious undertaking than previous years. Many people are just focused on keeping up with the day-to-day demands of balancing work and home life, finding time to tend to their recovery and self-care, and carving out moments of rest and relaxation in between.

Still, goal setting is a practice that can really lend itself to feeling accomplished, motivated, and competent, and there is skill in finding a unique system that works for motivating you. Here are some ideas to get started:

#### **Daily Practices:**

A really important piece of maintaining any change we seek to implement, is integrating it into our daily practices or routines, similar to how we maintain our recovery. Here are some useful ways to stay on top of tasks:

- Have a morning routine and follow it regardless of working from home.
- Similarly, have a way to transition between tasks, meetings, or clients throughout the day, and a way to wrap up at the end of the day.
- Do a "brain dump" of "To-Dos" before bed and keep a note pad nearby if you remember something you forgot to write down.
- Prioritize the "To-Days!" in a ranked list each morning, and plan out what needs to be completed that week/ month.
- Designate a day and time each week to process anything outstanding such as unread emails, paperwork, returning calls, or catching up on notes.
- Schedule in "me time" whether for a coffee, a walk on your lunch break, or to attend a meeting. Keep this time like you would any other appointment.

#### **Work-Specific Ideas:**

Staying on top of work-related responsibilities can be especially challenging when working from home, without the structure and support of your physical office and colleagues. Here are some ways to overcome disorganization or lack of motivation:

- Designate a workspace. If you don't have a
   permanent set up, try a folding lap desk, or
   keeping your work supplies in a work bag that
   you unpack to work and pack back up at the end
   of the day.
- Use drawer dividers or otherwise designate places for things, whether that be a more structured desk set up or folders within a binder.
- · Flag important or time sensitive emails.
- Use the folder function of your inbox and drag and drop upon receipt, to keep things organized.
- Use Outlook or another online calendar to sync your work meetings, client visits, and other responsibilities between computer and phone.
- Schedule in time to transition between work and home, between clients, and also to attend to your own self care throughout the week.

Sophia Terry, LICSW, Program Specialist Jewish Family & Children's Services



#### PRACTICAL TIPS FOR GOAL SETTING

#### **Materials for Organizing:**

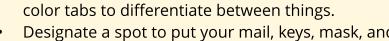
Depending on who you are and what you like, these are some materials that can be helpful and motivating when working to get organized:

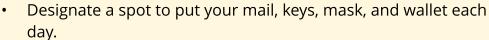
- Cork board
- Wire board
- Bulletin board
- Wall calendar
- Colored sticky notes
- Highlighters
- Accordion files
- Fresh, fun planner
- Notepad for follow-up tasks
- A vision board can be a creative way to organize your thoughts and energy around a plan.

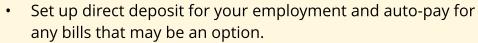
#### **Home Life:**

For many of us, juggling work and home life brings a whole new set of challenges, particularly for those caring for children or providing support with remote schooling. It can be super overwhelming, but these tricks can help:

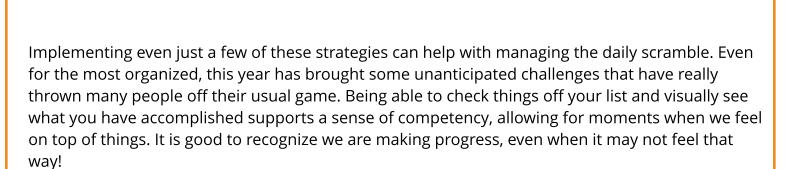
- Maintain a family calendar that designates each person's appointments, class/work Zoom calls, or other weekly needs.
- Make sure your phone calendar reflects the family calendar, and use







- Use a rolling cart to keep kids' school supplies (tablets, workbooks, crayons, tape, scissors, and anything else) so they are readily available and live in one place.
- Set up a "charging station" where phones, computers and other devices can connect, and where the chargers stay put so they don't get misplaced.



Another important piece of learning to get organized, is building our own capacity to plan and execute tasks and to follow through on responsibilities. This not only benefits us as professionals and as parents, but also has a ripple effect. **Getting organized also allows us to model the importance of having and using these skills for our participants, so that we can support them in developing these practices for themselves.** 



### WHAT I LEARNED FROM PAT

Patrick Tuohy, Family Recovery Support Specialist (FRSS) from the FIRST Steps Together site at Center for Human Development (CHD) in Pittsfield, passed away in early January. The following tribute was written by Claudia L. Gold, MD, Parent-Infant Specialist at CHD, who worked closely alongside Pat over the past few years.

My first memory of Patrick Tuohy takes me to the McKay Street parking garage in Pittsfield in the Spring of 2019. We were on our way to do a home visit with a mom and her young infant. Having worked with babies and caregivers for decades as a pediatrician and infant mental health specialist, I felt totally at ease in the world of parent-infant relationships. But the opioid crisis and the depths to which it has decimated communities already vulnerable from poverty and intergenerational trauma was more of an abstraction.

Pat, a family recovery support specialist with FIRST Steps Together, a program designed to address the needs of families with young children in the grips of substance use, would over the next year and a half--until his sudden tragic death--be my valued guide.

When our close-knit team met recently on Zoom to process the shock of his loss, I remarked that what stood out for me was the ease with which Pat could inhabit his professional role with such thoughtfulness and insight, while also bringing in his personal experience in a way that felt genuine and meaningful.

That morning as we walked to his car was my first experience with this magical combination. As we discussed the situation of our member who struggled with caring for her infant in the midst of

ongoing family conflict, Pat opened up to me about his own life story. In the first of what would prove to be many such conversations, he taught me more about the moment-to-moment struggles of recovery from opioid use than I could ever learn either from the academic setting or as a clinician.

Pat and I collaborated closely to support families through tremendous pain and loss. He brought his full self to the work, always willing to thoughtfully discuss and problem solve around extremely difficult situations.

I also had the privilege to work with Pat in my role as teacher and director of the Hello It's Me Project. Pat joined the first semi-annual course in Community-Based Parent-Infant Relationship Support developed in the Spring of 2020 when the pandemic called for movement to the online setting. I feel grateful to have preserved video recordings of those sessions.

In group discussions with a wide range of practitioners including home visitors, physicians, early intervention specialist and clinicians and administrators from the Department of Children and Families, Pat generously brought his wisdom as a recovery coach, father, and grandfather to our understanding of the common struggles of parents with young infants.



### WHAT I LEARNED FROM PAT

Over the past nine months in Zoom calls for staff meetings, parenting groups, and clinical discussions, Pat's 6-year-old daughter often made a cameo appearance. Draping her arms around her dad, she smiled at first shyly but with increasing comfort and familiarity into the camera. I want her to know that of all the years of training I've had from a wide variety of sources, her father was among my greatest teachers. He was an extraordinary human being. I feel privileged to have known him.

Patrick was a strong advocate for those in recovery and always had something to contribute whether working with parents or by promoting the project within the community. One of Patrick's most impactful projects was a weekly wellness group. The following quote from Patrick highlights his perspective on wellness in recovery.

"Wellness isn't just a state that you reach after finishing rehab. It's a continually evolving process of self-discovery and growth that will continue long after you finish the first phases of treatment. Wellness is a process of making positive choices that contribute to your overall health:

Choosing foods that nourish your body and give you energy.

Getting exercise that strengthens and fulfills you.

Participating in social activities that give your life meaning. Practicing mindfulness in everyday living.

While addiction is a path of self-destruction, recovery is a process of self-realization and transformation."



## FIRST STEPS TOGETHER

FAMILIES IN RECOVERY SUPPORT

mass.gov/first-steps-together

For more information: Maureen Whitman at MWhitman@JFCSBoston.org

#### JANUARY/FEBRUARY

2021

FIRST STEPS TOGETHER IS FUNDED BY A GRANT FROM THE SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATION TO THE MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH. THE PROGRAM IS ADMINISTERED BY THE BUREAU OF FAMILY HEALTH AND NUTRITION.



Caring for Generations

JEGS

Jewish Family & Children's Service