

# ROADS TO RECOVERY NEWSLETTER

Created by Dual Recovery at Warren Washington Association for Mental Health to support individuals in recovery

## A NEWSLETTER FOR YOU AND ABOUT YOU

### SPECIAL TOPIC

BY GINGER MILLER

Did you know that May is Mental Health Awareness Month? It is a time to bring our voices together to advocate for mental health and access to care through personal stories, social media engagements, local and national events. Help us spread the word through awareness, support, and advocacy activities. Together we can work toward building our communities by breaking down stigmas and to work toward a time where anyone affected by mental illness can get the appropriate support and quality of care to live healthy, and fulfilling lives that they deserve. Family, friends, and community members please join us at our local event. Details are in the green box.



**Amh**  
Warren-Washington  
Association  
for Mental  
Health

**TREE OF HOPE:  
Celebrating Mental  
Health**

Our ribbons represent those living with mental illness in our community as well as words of hope.

Join us on Thursday, May 5th from  
12:00 – 1:00pm in Glens Falls City Park at  
our Tree of Hope to  
commemorate and kick off May as  
Mental Health Awareness Month, and to  
Celebrate Hope!

**THERE IS HELP..... THERE IS HOPE**

### SPOTLIGHT TOPIC

#### Pet Lessons

BY GINGER MILLER

Do you have a pet? Most people I know do. May is National Pet Month. It is a celebration of the benefits that pets bring to our lives - and vice versa.

According to the CDC (Center for Disease Control) there are many health benefits of owning a pet. Pets can help manage loneliness and depression by giving us companionship as well as decrease symptoms related to anxiety and PTSD. They can increase opportunities to exercise, get outside, and socialize. Regular walking or playing with pets can decrease blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and triglyceride levels. Studies have also shown that older adults with pets have better cognitive function. Most households in the United States have at least one pet.

Through the years I have had many pets: fish, cats, a mouse, an iguana, birds, guinea pigs, even sugar gliders. I have learned many lessons over the years about pet ownership.

Like many children I wanted a pet and was told I needed to wait until I could be responsible enough to care for it. In my early teens I was allowed to get some fish and was

Did you know  
that May is  
also National  
Pet Month?

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## Pet Lessons (Con't)

told I'd have to keep the tank clean, which of course I quickly agreed to. I really wanted a pet I could hold and pet but a pet is a pet and I was eager just the same. I really enjoyed breeding the guppies because they had such colorful fantails, and I was eager to see what colors each one would have. I also enjoyed listening to the gurgle of the filter as I went to sleep at night. I quickly learned my **first pet lesson** – having fish may have its enjoyable aspects but keeping a fish tank clean isn't my idea of fun. Perhaps I should have helped someone else clean their fish tank before getting my own. Do the research.

In my later teens my younger sister and I both wanted a cat and had for a few years. Because we were continuously told no – we came up with the brilliant idea of sneaking a feral cat in and trying to keep it in my bedroom. NOT a good idea if you want to keep home peaceful. We did, however, get to keep the cat. My father named him 'Ignoramus' (for reasons I'll let your imagination fill in), my sister and I just called him 'Iggy'. We were thrilled to have our first cuddly pet. Being young, my sister and I weren't familiar with the concept of feral cats; we figured all cats were pets. Thankfully my parents understood the responsibilities that come with having a cat. Iggy was taken to the vet and cared for which my sister and I learned to be grateful for. A few years later the cat bit my sister in the face and it got infected, it could have been a lot worse if Iggy hadn't had his vaccinations. **Pet lessons two and three** – some animals may not be ideal domestic pets, know some history about an animal before making it a pet. And, pets need to go to the vet, get shots, medications, check-ups, and such (for our safety as much as theirs) just like we humans do.

When I moved away from home and got my own place, I got a cute little white mouse to keep me company. She could be fun to play with on my days off from work. **Pet lesson four** – understand what it means to have a nocturnal pet. A side note, I also learned how sleep really is necessary even for an 18 year old.

When I got an iguana, I learned **pet lesson five** – exotic pets usually require extra care, special diets, and sometimes special housing or equipment to care for them. Another thing to be aware of: some exotic pets are illegal to own in NY. Be sure to look into that too. I got two birds while I was married and kept them hidden for about six weeks (guess I forgot the idea that hiding pets isn't conducive to family peace). Keeping them hidden was a trick since it drove my two cats, Whiskey and Scotch, nuts trying to get into the room I was hiding them in. When my then husband figured out I was hiding something I had to fess up and he made me find a new home for my feathered friends, Captain and Morgan. **Pet lesson six** – having pets affects everyone in the home, including other pets.

A friend of mine had guinea pigs that I loved playing with. Again, I was told I couldn't have any more pets; two cats were enough. My friend knew how much I enjoyed hers so she bought me two – he couldn't say no to a gift right? So began my adventure with guinea pigs because I bred them as well. I wanted to have children, and this was one more way for me to try to experience some aspects of that. I would hold the mommas while they were pregnant so I could feel the babies moving around and experience the joy of seeing each one born unique in color, hair length, and features in relation to its parents, not to leave out the excitement of seeing if each was a boy or girl. Watching them grow and their personalities develop was another thing I really enjoyed. Naming them was a lot of fun too; they were born in litters, so I had to come up with lots of names which was fun. My original pair were Vodka and Kalua. Some of the babies were Brandy, Cream, Jim B, Schnapps, Gin, Tequila, Jack D, Margarita, Daiquiri, Martini, Mojito, well I think you get the idea. (Was this perhaps a foreshadow of my need for AA??) **Pet lesson seven** – If they have babies I can't keep them all; I'll have to find homes for them.

It was love at first sight when I saw a sugar glider! I knew I had to have one. So, as a responsible adult I looked back at some of my previous lessons. Check list: No fish tank to clean, did research on them being domestic pets, found a couple of vets that can care for sugar gliders (most vet's don't take many exotic pets, if any.). Lessons 4 and 5 weighed on my mind as sugar gliders are nocturnal and are considered an exotic pet. I did extended research into their diets, housing, activities and their general nature as well as how they and my two cats may affect each other (check for lesson 6). One of the things I found out was that I should get two as they are communal and very social creatures that can actually die from loneliness and depression. I also found out that most sugar glider



## Pet Lessons (Con't)

breeders make sure the joeys (babies) are neutered or spayed before rehomed. Check for lesson seven! I adored my sugar gliders! Their personalities were so distinct. My little boy, Scrat (named like the flying squirrel from the movie Ice Age) was a lovable, smart and funny little guy to watch. My little girl, Babbs (because she babbled so much) was very independent, feisty and funny to listen to.

They filled my heart with such joy and were wonderful companions. **Pet lesson eight** – most pets do not live longer than we do. When they pass away it is like losing a family member and is very heart breaking.

There are so many other things that I've learned. Pets personalities are all unique. Some are lovable, some not so much. They can be good companions and good listeners (that don't talk back, interrupt and aren't judgmental). They certainly have been a blessing in my life. Pets can also be expensive, and it isn't always something that can be planned for. If you like to travel or take vacations, plans need to be made for our pets too. What if circumstances change... like you become allergic to them over time, what would you do? Or if you don't own your home? What about if or when you have to move, will you be able to find housing that will let you bring your pet? What if your pet develops diabetes or some other disease that requires extra care and expense? We don't need to have all the answers but it's important to keep in mind that there are always things that come up that we either didn't think of, didn't plan for, didn't expect, or all of the above.

So, having a pet can have many benefits for us physically and mentally, but we need to be there for them too. So, if you are considering getting a pet or have one already, maybe some of my pet lessons will be helpful to you. One of this month's challenges is to send us a picture of your pet and tell us in a few sentences what makes your pet so special. Even if you can't send a picture go ahead and send us a little paragraph about your pet...don't forget to tell us what kind of pet it is if you can't send a picture!

# UNDERSTANDING THE DIAGNOSIS

## Schizophrenia



BY GINGER MILLER

According to the American Psychiatric Association, Schizophrenia is a chronic brain disorder that affects less than one percent of the U.S. population. When schizophrenia is active, symptoms can include delusions, hallucinations, disorganized speech, trouble with thinking and lack of motivation. However, with treatment, most symptoms of schizophrenia will greatly improve, and the likelihood of a recurrence can be diminished.

The complexity of schizophrenia may help explain why there are misconceptions about the disease. Schizophrenia does not mean split personality or multiple personalities. Most people with schizophrenia are not any more dangerous or violent than people in the general population. While limited mental health resources in the community may lead to homelessness and frequent hospitalizations, it is a misconception that people with schizophrenia end up homeless or living in hospitals. Most people with schizophrenia live with their family, in group homes or on their own.

Here is a list of words often used or associated with schizophrenia and their definitions:

- Psychosis refers to a set of symptoms characterized by a loss of touch with reality due to a disruption in the way that the brain processes information. When someone experiences a psychotic episode, the person's thoughts and perceptions are disturbed, and the individual may have difficulty understanding what is real and what is not.
- Delusions are fixed false beliefs held despite clear or reasonable evidence that they are not true. Persecutory (or paranoid) delusions, when a person believes they are being harmed or harassed by another person or group, are the most common.
- Hallucinations are the experience of hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, or feeling things that are not there. They are vivid and clear with an impression similar to normal perceptions. Auditory hallucinations, "hearing voices," are the most common in schizophrenia and related disorders.

## Schizophrenia (Con't)

- Disorganized thinking and speech refer to thoughts and speech that are jumbled and/or do not make sense. For example, the person may switch from one topic to another or respond with an unrelated topic in conversation. The symptoms are severe enough to cause substantial problems with normal communication.
- Disorganized or abnormal motor behavior are movements that can range from childlike silliness to unpredictable agitation or can manifest as repeated movements without purpose. When the behavior is severe, it can cause problems in the performance of activities of daily life. It includes catatonia, when a person appears as if in a daze with little movement or response to the surrounding environment.
- Negative symptoms refer to what is abnormally lacking or absent in the person with a psychotic disorder. Examples include impaired emotional expression, decreased speech output, reduced desire to have social contact or to engage in daily activities, and decreased experience of pleasure.

When the disease is active, it can be characterized by episodes in which the person is unable to distinguish between real and unreal experiences. The severity, duration, and frequency of symptoms can vary; however, in persons with schizophrenia, the incidence of severe psychotic symptoms often decreases as the person becomes older. Not taking medications as prescribed, the use of alcohol or illicit drugs, and stressful situations tend to increase symptoms. Cognition is another area of functioning that is affected in schizophrenia, leading to problems with attention, concentration, and memory, and to declining educational performance.

Symptoms of schizophrenia usually first appear in early adulthood and must persist for at least six months for a diagnosis to be made. Research has shown that schizophrenia affects men and women fairly equally. Men often experience initial symptoms in their late teens or early 20's while women tend to show first signs of the illness in their 20s and early 30's.

Though there is no cure for schizophrenia, many patients do well with minimal symptoms. A variety of antipsychotic medications are effective in reducing the psychotic symptoms present in the acute phase of the illness, and they also help reduce the potential for future acute episodes and their severity. Psychological treatments such as cognitive behavioral therapy or supportive psychotherapy may reduce symptoms and enhance function, and other treatments are aimed at reducing stress, supporting employment or improving social skills.

Diagnosis and treatment can be complicated by substance misuse. People with schizophrenia are at greater risk of misusing drugs than the general population. If a person shows signs of addiction, treatment for the addiction should occur along with treatment for schizophrenia.

Treatment can help many people with schizophrenia lead highly productive and rewarding lives. As with other chronic illnesses, some patients find long term relief of symptoms while others continue to experience symptoms more frequently and need more support and assistance depending on the spectrum of severity and how well they respond to treatment. After the symptoms of schizophrenia are controlled, various types of therapy can continue to help people manage the illness and improve their lives. Therapy and psychosocial supports can help people learn social skills, cope with stress, identify early warning signs of reoccurrence and prolong periods of remission. Because schizophrenia typically strikes in early adulthood, individuals with the disorder often benefit from rehabilitation to help develop life-management skills, complete vocational or educational training, and hold a job. For example, supported-employment programs have been found to help people with schizophrenia obtain self-sufficiency. These programs provide people with severe mental illness competitive jobs in the community.

For many people living with schizophrenia, family support is particularly important to their health and well-being. It is also essential for families to be informed and supported themselves. Organizations such as the Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America (SARDAA), Mental Health America (MHA) and the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) offer resources and support to individuals with schizophrenia and other mental illnesses and their families.

Optimism is important and patients, family members and mental health professionals need to be mindful that many patients have a favorable course of illness, that challenges can often be addressed, and that patients have many personal strengths that must be recognized and supported.



# THE FUN SPOT

## BOGGLE



### How to play Boggle

You get 16 letters to make as many words as you can. Words must be made from connected letter cubes (basically, letters that form a chain). The letters may connect in any direction: horizontally, vertically, diagonally, up, down, forwards, or backwards. Each letter cube may only be used once per word. You can use any word found in a regular dictionary. Singular and plural words are separate and can each be scored. For example, if you found the word "hear" and "hears" you earn points for both (1 point and 2 points). Spelling variations can all be counted. For example, "theatre" and "theater" are both in the dictionary so even though they mean the same thing they're considered two separate words. Each word is worth a set number of points based on how long it is.

# of letters	Points per word
3 & 4	1
5	2
6	3
7	5
8+	11

## THE MAY CHALLENGES



### Challenge 1

May 1 - 7 is National Pet Week.



### Challenge 2

Exercise Your Brain



### Challenge 3

Free Lessons



### Challenge 4

Father's Day

Send us a picture of your pet and tell us in a few sentences what makes your pet so special. Even if you can't send a picture go ahead and send us a little paragraph about your pet...don't forget to tell us what kind of pet it is if you can't send a picture!

Do the Boggle game and send us the list of words you came up with; the person with the most points will get an EXTRA gift!

After reading the article "Free Lessons" on page 6, tell us which of the lessons you most related to and why. Or if one was helpful tell us which one and why.

Father's Day is approaching quickly. Send us a little note telling us something special your father has done for you at any point in your life.

**Everyone who chooses to participate in any (or all!) of May's challenges and writes to us before May 25th will win a mystery gift! You will also see your response next month in our "Your Voice" section! If you want it to be printed anonymously, just let us know when you send it in that you don't want your name on it. Email us at: [gmliller@wwamh.org](mailto:gmliller@wwamh.org) or mail it in to WWAMH Dual Recovery Dept., 230 Maple Street, Glens Falls, NY 12801 to participate.**





# HEALTH & WELLNESS

## Free Lessons

BY GINGER MILLER

“Everyone you meet knows something that you don’t know, but need to know, learn from them”

~C.J.Jung

We can learn directly and indirectly from others. Indirect learning is when you observe or read about what someone did. In fact, one of the fastest ways to learn is to learn from someone else's mistakes and experiences. This can cut out a lot of unnecessary trial and error and can save significant time, maybe even pain. However, it is very common for a person to think that they are smarter or luckier and will get different results. Stepping outside of feelings and looking at the facts might help overcome that downfall.

The lessons might be what not to do, what to do more of, what to change, what to try, etc. We all have different backgrounds and experiences that could benefit others. Life lessons we can share. A simple example might be learning that a person who cheated on a test had consequences to pay for cheating. The lesson, cheating isn't worth the consequences.

This topic came to mind while visiting a friend recently who is also in recovery. We were discussing some of the things our counselors have helped us with while getting sober. Words of wisdom that stuck. Situations we had been in and could relate to, and the lessons learned. My friend shared something she had written recently. I thought, “I'll bet there are lots of people out there who can relate to this” and more importantly, “maybe there are a few people who can learn life lessons through others and not have to experience them firsthand.” I asked her if I could share what she had written in this newsletter.

She wrote about what she has learned in the process of getting sober and what she would share with her younger self if she could.

1. Volunteer: If I help others, I will feel useful, valid, just, a good person. If I am feeling this, I tend to treat myself better. If I treat myself better, I am less likely to drink.
2. Social life, friends: If I had only realized at a younger age that people who seem to ‘have it all’ probably don't. I misplaced trust in order to fit in, was led into some situations I wish now I had never been involved with.
3. Self: I would wish for myself I had healthy self-esteem. I never felt worthy which played a large part in being impressionable.
4. Positivity: Yes, at the time my life was hard, but I wish I knew then I would find a way to handle it. At the time everything seemed like life or death with no hope. I wish I knew that somehow it would out.
5. Influences: I wish I knew there were positive influences out there. I would have found the right friends to be around. I am truly grateful to know those people now and I wish so much I'd have known them then, when I was younger and more impressionable.
6. Questions I have now like, “How did I get like this and where did all the years go?”, “Why do I have so many regrets?” Wishing I could do it all over.
7. Strength: I wish I knew the strength I had. I had the ability to be sober, but I didn't know I knew that.
8. I would tell myself that because of my dependency I will lose things I can never get back including my friends, possessions, most importantly my health. It really did catch up with me.
9. Other people are going through it. I wish I knew then that there were people who didn't know exactly how I felt but could relate to it. People who sincerely want to help.
10. I wish most of all I realized I had had options. I really didn't “know it all” like I thought I did at the time. Sometimes I felt like there was no hope at all. Now, I would tell myself that there always is. It's better to confront things, hard as they are, rather than watch myself disappear later.

~ by Lori Garland



# INSPIRATION & MOTIVATION

Peace comes from within.  
Do not seek it without.  
Buddha

**Argue for your limitations, and sure enough they are yours.**  
~ Richard Bach

I am not a product of my circumstances  
I am a product of my decisions.  
That is empowerment!

## GARDEN CLUB MEETINGS

Treat yourself to space and time to reconnect, build confidence, and cement change.... through gardening.

**May 10th 12:00 PM**  
**May 31st 12:00 PM**  
**At East Side Center**

Self-Respect, Self-worth,  
Self-Love.....  
There is a reason they all start with self.  
You cannot find them in anyone else.

## YOUR VOICE

“ Alternative Health Care - I have tried guided meditations, they really help me with reducing my anxiety. ~ Lynn C. ”

The Best April Fool's Joke

Alternative health care to me is trying and or doing different things to help me get well other than just medications prescribed by my doctors. I have tried herbs in foods I eat and teas I drink. Also, I take vitamins regularly on a daily basis.  
~ Marsha R.

I am a woman in recovery at ACCA. One of the other ladies and I pulled the best April Fools joke on our director and one of the aides here. No one has ever pulled a prank on either of them. So, here I am just about to turn 8 months pregnant, we were going over a safety plan in case I pop. Such great ladies and staff here. Well one of the ladies here asked me how I was feeling, I said crampy. She went behind me and started rubbing my back and spilled water out of a bottle under me, the timing was perfect as the director had just happened to still be here. I couldn't stop laughing, the timing was impeccable. They were great about it and said it was one to go down in the books!  
~ Heather H.



My mom is a good mom, she is a good listener. My mom is an excellent cook and excellent at making quilts.  
~ Lynn C.

# RECOVERY

## Resources

### WEBSITES

- Al-Anon and Ala-teen Groups** – Hope and help for families and friends of alcoholics: [al-anon.org](http://al-anon.org)
- Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)** - Local group schedule and information: [district13.aahmbny.org](http://district13.aahmbny.org)
- Celebrate Recovery (CR)** – Celebrate Recovery is a Christ-centered, 12-Step recovery program for anyone struggling with hurt, pain or addiction of any kind: [celebraterecovery.com](http://celebraterecovery.com)
- Debtors Anonymous** - Debtors Anonymous offers hope for people whose use of unsecured debt causes problems and suffering in their lives and the lives of others: [debtorsanonymous.org](http://debtorsanonymous.org)
- Digital Recovery Support** -Online recovery support groups are available daily. They are open to anyone who is dealing with substance use, mental health conditions, and any other quality of life concerns. Meetings are led by peer recovery support specialists who have firsthand experience and understand what you're going through: [www.recoveryanswers.org](http://www.recoveryanswers.org)
- Gamblers Anonymous (GA)** – Online services for anyone struggling with a gambling addiction: [gasteps.org](http://gasteps.org)
- Grief Recovery After a Substance Passing (GRASP)** – For those who have lost someone to substance use or addiction: [grasp-help.org](http://grasp-help.org)
- In the rooms** - A global online recovery community who share their strength and experience with one another daily through live meetings, discussion groups, and other tools in the rooms: [intherooms.com](http://intherooms.com)
- My Recovery** – Online 12-step meetings: [myrecovery.com](http://myrecovery.com)
- Narcotics Anonymous (NA)** - local group schedule and information: [narcotics.com](http://narcotics.com)
- Overeaters Anonymous (OA)** – Online support groups for anyone who wants to stop eating compulsively: [oarecovery.com](http://oarecovery.com)
- The Phoenix** – Recovery community organization offering daily live stream cross-fit, yoga and meditation every two hours through the COVID Crisis: [thephoenix.org](http://thephoenix.org)

### PHONE NUMBERS

- The Trevor Project** - Support for youth in crisis: [thetrevorproject.org](http://thetrevorproject.org)/hotline: 866-488-7386
- International Bipolar Association Crisis Line**: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders Helpline**: 630-577-1330
- National Center for PTSD Helpline**: 1-800-273-8255
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)**: Hotline staff are prepared to answer any mental health questions you may have. You can also text NAMI to 741741 for free support. (800) 950-NAMI (6264)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)**: Available 24/7, 365 days a year: (800) 662-HELP (4357). The professionals on the phone can provide treatment information and referrals in English and Spanish.
- MentalHealth.gov**: Available 8am to 8pm EST to provide mental health information and treatment referrals: (877) 726-4727
- National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)**: Available 8:30am to 5pm EST: (866) 615-6464 or (866) 415-8051 (TTY). Professionals can answer any mental health related questions in English or Spanish.
- Boys Town**: Specially trained counselors are available 24/7, 365 days a year to provide crisis support specifically for children and their families: (800) 448-3000

### PODCASTS

- This Naked Mind** - Some of the episodes discuss alcohol withdrawals, the link between drinking and binge eating, how to deal with loneliness, and more.
- Recovery Rocks** - Our varied paths show listeners that there are a myriad paths to recovery and countless songs to rock out to along the way.
- Mental Health - Hope and Recovery** - They share inspirational true stories and a host of recovery skills. You'll learn about treatment options, coping skills, goal setting, relationships, and mindfulness.
- Mental Illness Happy Hour** - Weekly interviews with comedians, artists, friends, and the occasional doctor.; exploring mental illness, trauma, addiction and negative thinking.

### APPS

- Addiction Apps**: Twenty-Four Hours A Day (Free), Quit That! Habit Tracker (Free), NoMo (Free)
- Counseling Apps**: TalkSpace (\$\$) BetterHelp (\$\$) Larkr (\$\$) ReGain (\$\$) TeenCounseling (\$\$)
- Suicide Prevention Apps**: MY3 (Free) notOK (Free)
- General Mental Health Apps**: What's Up (CBT; Free) Mood Kit (CBT; \$)
- Anxiety Apps**: MindShift (Free), Self-Help Anxiety Management – SAM (Free), CBT Thought Record Diary (Free)
- Bipolar Disorder Apps**: IMoodJournal (\$), EMoods (Free)
- Depression Apps**: Talk Space Online Therapy (\$\$), Happify (Free), MoodTools (CBT; Free)
- Eating Disorder Apps**: Recovery Record (Free), Rise Up & Recovery (Free), LifeSum (Free)
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder Apps**: nOCD (Free), Worry Watch (\$), GG OCD (Free)
- PTSD Apps**: PTSD Coach (Free), Breathe2Relax (Free)
- Schizophrenia Apps**: UCSF Prime (Free), Schizophrenia Health Story Lines (Free)
- Mindfulness & Meditation Apps**: Headspace (\$), Calm (\$), Serenity: Guided Meditation & Mindfulness (Free)
- Wellness**: Wellness Recovery Action Plan (Goal Setting; Free)

THANKS FOR READING! :)

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SUBSCRIBE TO  
OUR NEWSLETTERS, PLEASE EMAIL US  
AT [GMILLER@WWAMH.ORG](mailto:GMILLER@WWAMH.ORG)  
OR CALL 518-401-5991



### WWAMH DUAL RECOVERY SUPPORT GROUPS

EVERY TUESDAY FROM  
4:00-5:00 PM AT THE  
HOPE & HEALING  
RECOVERY CENTER:  
2 MAPLE STREET, HUDSON FALLS  
ATTEND IN PERSON OR  
VIRTUALLY - ZOOM MEETING ID:  
844-2214-0148

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