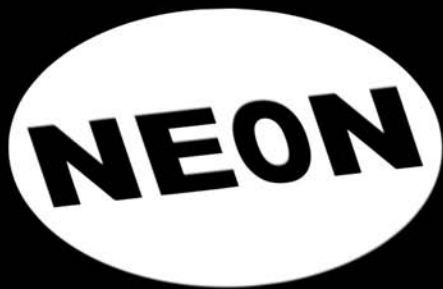


A RECOVERY-BASED JOURNAL  
FOR GAY, BI, AND TRANS MEN  
AFFECTED BY CRYSTAL METH.



# NEEDLE AND SEX EDUCATION OUTREACH NETWORK

A program of Seattle Counseling Service, NEON works with gay, bi, and trans guys affected by crystal methamphetamine. Services include peer education; one-on-one counseling; health education; referrals; advocacy; outreach and engagement; and social marketing interventions.

## NEON'S GOALS ARE TO

- Increase the use of sterile syringes among gay, bi, and trans men who inject crystal, and promote the consistent use of protection for anal sex.
- Provide accurate and truthful information about how crystal affects the body and mind, provide options for reducing sexual and drug using risks associated with crystal, and provide free help to better manage or stop crystal use.
- Change community norms regarding the use of crystal methamphetamine among gay, bi, and trans men who use crystal, and its relationship to HIV/AIDS.
- Decrease or discontinue crystal methamphetamine use among gay, bi, and trans men who use crystal.

**Visit us online @ [projectneon.org](http://projectneon.org)  
or call 206.323.1768 for more information**

**You DON'T have to quit using crystal meth to get services from Project NEON.  
All NEON services are FREE. We are not a 12-step program.**

Seattle Counseling Service provides comprehensive mental health and addiction services to the LGBT communities of Seattle, King County, and the surrounding region.



# Table of Contents

<b>Letter from NEON Staff</b>	4
<b>Prologue: Knowing is the First Step</b>	5
Why did you start using crystal?	7
Together	8
<b>Chapter 1: Uncertainty</b>	9
Who's in your neighborhood?	10
Stigma	11
Your experiences	12
<b>Chapter 2: Groundwork</b>	13
Your steps to personal recovery	14
<b>Chapter 3: Action</b>	15
How I Got Sober	17
<b>Chapter 4: Community</b>	19
What inspires/motivates you?	20
<b>Epilogue: It takes a Village</b>	21
Who makes you feel loved?	21
Let's talk about Sex	22
<b>Resources</b>	23
Untitled Journey	back cover

# Seattle Counseling Service

1216 Pine Street, 3rd Floor

Seattle WA 98101

[projectneon.org](http://projectneon.org)

[seattlecounseling.org](http://seattlecounseling.org)

(206) 323-1768





Dear friends and community members,

Thank you for taking a copy of Your METHOD. In the following pages is recovery information from individuals affected by crystal methamphetamine--everyday people who happen to have an addiction. You can use this journal as your own personal journal, as a reference guide, or as a way to feel connected to the recovery community when needed.

Recovery is different for everyone, and quitting crystal is so much more than simply having the willpower to stop. It can take a lifetime of trying and determination. We hope this journal creates fellowship and understanding in the community.

We'd like to thank the individuals who shared what recovery means for them. Thank you to those who told us their stories, and those who submitted their beautiful work to the journal. We'd also like to thank the amazing network of organizations in our communities, that provide supportive services to individuals affected by addiction.

Thank you for reading.

Sincerely,

Aleks  
Morgan and Don

## PROLOGUE **KNOWING IS THE FIRST STEP**

Knowledge is the key to identifying there is a problem with crystal meth addiction.

Maybe you just started using and love how you feel, or, you may have tried to quit in the past and have given up. Either way, cutting back is not an option for you right now. You feel like you don't need or want to change.

I'm going to so many parties right now...  
Having so much sex.  
I'm exploring all the things I want to explore...  
Staying up all night.  
Michael

### **YOU MAY THINK THIS:**

"I don't have a problem."

"I have an addictive personality.  
Stopping won't work so I'm not going to try."

"I'm just using on the weekends.  
My life is under control."





# TIPS FROM GUYS WHO HAVE BEEN THERE

For some people, being clean and sober is not an option. NEON respects and values your individual choice and self determination. If you choose to keep using, we encourage above all else: self care. You CAN minimize the negative consequences of your crystal use with these harm reduction tips:

## ● Make your sexual health a priority:

- Use condoms and lots of lube.
- Get tested every 2-3 months for HIV, hep C, chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis, if you're having sex.
- If you test positive, connect with a medical provider right away.

## ● PrEP & PEP

- HIV-negative guys who are at high risk for getting HIV can take PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis). PrEP involves taking a pill once a day, every day, to help prevent getting HIV. Guys who take PrEP should also use condoms, & get tested often for HIV and other STDs. Talk to your medical provider if you are interested in PrEP.
- PEP (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis) can also lower your risk of getting HIV. PEP is the use of an HIV drug after a possible exposure to HIV. If you feel you might have been exposed to HIV, visit your medical provider ASAP. PEP needs to be started within a couple days of being exposed to HIV.

For more info on PrEP and PEP, see the resources section on page 24.

## ● Party safe! Keep clean works on hand, and don't share.

## ● Educate yourself about your method of use.

(proper vein care, safer booty-bumping etc.)

## ● Get vaccinated for hepatitis A and B.

## ● Eat nutritious foods.

## ● Drink water. You can get dehydrated quickly when using.

## ● Rest and sleep when needed.

Your brain and your body will thank you.

## ● Exercise.

# Why did you start using crystal?

It becomes a little crowd, you feel like you're a part of something good or different. -F

I think there's a weird mystique or taboo around it. The taboo around it, I think in some perverse way is something that attracts people. attracted me.

I was using other drugs, and thinking that crystal would be no different, that I could use crystal like I used coke or E, or smoked weed, or drank. I didn't think it was going to be any different, or treat me any different.

Phoenix

Crystal was a way to lose weight. It was easy not to have to eat for like three days after you were high. It was a good place.

There's a camaraderie that comes along with it. There was an instant peer group... a kind of fraternal thing... That's the sense I had.

-Evan

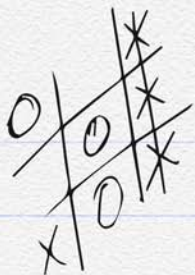
-Jesse

## Why did you start?





I started using because  
I'm kind of quiet, shy,  
so it was really hard for  
me to meet anyone and  
the first time I got  
introduced to crystal,  
it changed all that.



- T



Together  
by Francis B.



# CHAPTER ONE UNCERTAINTY

Eventually something gives, people grow & change... and there just comes a place where you finally realize "Hey you need to get your life in order, some things have to change. You can't party all the time."

-Danny

At some point you might start to worry about your use or question your habit, but the thought of cutting back or quitting may leave you feeling unsure or even scared. In other words, you feel **ambivalent** about the possibility of making changes.

## YOU MAY THINK THIS:

"I feel like people are starting to look at me differently when I'm tweaking... but everyone uses something."

"I think my boss notices I've been high on the job, but using has helped me get a lot of work done lately."

"I agree with my partner that I'm spending a lot of money on my shit, but we would just be using the money to buy other drugs."

"Maybe one of these days I'll start cutting back."

## TIPS FROM GUYS WHO HAVE BEEN THERE

- Find someone who will be a good listener when you need to talk.
- Think about your life. What do you want out of it? Start writing some notes and set some goals for yourself, however small or big.
  - Talk with a friend, family member, or counselor if it helps get your thoughts moving.
- Think about your social network. What are you getting from your social network? Are you surrounded by people who can be positive influences in your life?
- Keep up the harm reduction. Safer sex and safer crystal use are key. Visit NEON'S resource library at [projectneon.org/library/](http://projectneon.org/library/) for more harm reduction tips.



EVERYTHING IN MY LIFE BECAME UNMANAGEABLE.  
WHEN I WAS USING I COULDN'T HOLD DOWN A  
JOB, COULDN'T TAKE CARE OF MY OBLIGATIONS  
THAT I NEEDED TO TAKE CARE OF.

-PAX

I wish I could say I was intrinsically motivated  
to stop, but in my experience, it always has to  
be extrinsically motivated... it could be  
again another interaction with the law,  
with legal issues, or just coming to the  
realization that... no job, no money,  
all those things... there has to be some  
external factor..

AK



it becomes difficult to  
sustain a relationship  
when your using.

-LL

AT SOME POINT  
I DECIDED I  
HAD TO SLOW  
DOWN, SIMPLY  
BY NEEDING  
SLEEP. MY BODY  
TOLD ME...  
MY BRAIN WAS  
GONE, AND  
I WAS STRAINING  
UP SO LONG.

FRANZ



**Who's in your neighborhood?**  
(identifying your social support system)

**Who do you want to be? What do you want to become?**



# Stigma

THEY THINK Because you're on it (meth)...  
you have no feelings for another.  
-mj

THE MINUTE THAT SOMEBODY FINDS OUT THAT YOU DO  
CRYSTAL... THEY NO LONGER SEE YOU AS A GAY  
MAN, OR AS AN INDIVIDUAL, AS A MINORITY.  
THEY SEE YOU AS A DRUG USER.

THERE'S A HUGE PART OF GAY  
CULTURE THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO  
WITH CRYSTAL.  
(DH)



DANNY  
I'M STILL A LOVING PERSON,  
I JUST HAVE AN ADDICTION. IT'S  
LIKE I HAVE TO WEAR A  
MARK OF SHAME ALL THE TIME.  
-TITO

there's a myth that  
you're slutty, a prostitute,  
a loser, a party animal,  
or the criminal type.  
-f

THERE'S A STIGMA THAT PEOPLE WHO  
USE METH ARE BROKEN, AND TO AN  
EXTENT THAT CAN ALSO GO WITH  
BEING A GAY OR BI MAN.

WE GET THE SAME STIGMAS AS NEW

You let other  
people down  
that love you,  
cause of your  
drug use.  
-N

Seems like they think if you're  
gay, you have this.  
-EF

There's a myth that  
specifically risky sex is  
only engaged in,  
in the meth community  
and everyone else  
is being safe.

- Out n' proud

There's a lot of rumor, a lot of things they say  
about that drug that really isn't true...  
[even if you get away from the drug] they don't  
look at you like you've changed.

They keep bringing up the same thing over and  
over and that makes me relapse because... they  
have no faith in you. You lose trust from  
some people.

Q





What do people say about meth users/tweakers?

What do YOU want to say about it?

# CHAPTER TWO **GROUNDWORK**

"Make a plan. It'd be so hard for somebody to get clean & to go directly back into the environment they just left.

It'd be impossible for them to maintain their level of sobriety, if they don't have anything set up afterwards, if they don't have any kind of plan."

-Stephen

**Ok. You've decided to try making some changes within the next few days, weeks, or even years. Start by making a solid plan to help guide you through the changes. Be realistic about what you can achieve. Think in small, meaningful steps.**

## **YOU MAY THINK THIS:**

"I want to be clean by my next birthday."

"I have to try quitting. I can't focus in school, I don't have a job..."

"I'm going to start cutting back next week."

# **TIPS FROM GUYS WHO HAVE BEEN THERE**

- **Make a plan for change (also called a "change plan")**
  - Visit a chemical dependency counselor to help with this process.
- **Create a list of things you can do when you have shitty days. You might want to:**
  - Call your sober support system.
  - Get out and take a walk, visit a coffee shop or a free museum, go to a thrift store, or hit the gym.
  - Grab a blanket and sleep it off.
  - Sign up for a support group.

THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO WILL TRY AND TAMP PEOPLE WHO ARE IN RECOVERY, JUST BECAUSE THEY'RE IN FRONT OF YOUR FACE...  
• SALLY



I FELT LIKE I COULDN'T HANDLE THIS PART ON MY OWN. IT WAS JUST TOO MUCH. I WAS LUCKY TO SEE A COUNSELOR WHO HELPED ME THROUGH THE PROCESS. HE HELPED MAKE A PLAN THAT MADE SENSE FOR ME... HE ALSO HELPED ME CONNECT ME WITH RESOURCES TO AID IN MY RECOVERY

-SAMI



It helps to have my friend on speed dial if I think about using. She always helps put things in perspective, and helps me realize that I don't really want to use, I'm just triggered. The feeling usually passes.

-Curt

A lot of people don't really know, or just don't understand what recovery is. It's different for each person. I think if you're trying to cut back or quit, you have to set boundaries up and really be bold and tell your friends, "hey, I'm not using."

-unicorn



"People who really care about you won't make you feel bad for cutting back. Don't let people take your power away. It doesn't help you at all in your recovery."

-Janice



**What are your personal steps to recovery?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_



# CHAPTER THREE ACTION

## It's good to have a Buddy.

It's good to have a buddy who's doing the same thing as well. That way you can keep each other in check. It's kind of hard to do it by yourself. It's easy to fall back on using again. If you have someone you can trust and you make a promise, it's easier to not break that promise to somebody you care about.

-Tim

**So you put your change plan into effect when you were ready. Be proud of yourself, even if you feel like you haven't made much progress. However small or big your first step was-- it's critical. It means that you are moving forward. It's important now to have a lot of things put into place to help make the process easier.**

### YOU MAY THINK THIS:

"I haven't used in a couple weeks. Already I feel a little more confident in myself."

"Sometimes I would do anything to use. But I know now that I can do this."

"I haven't used in a couple months, but of course I still get the urge. I'm human."

"Good things are starting to happen. It's hard, but I don't want to go back to using."

NOW THAT I'M SOBER, I SOMETIMES HAVE A HARD TIME FACING THE THINGS I DID WHEN I WAS HIGH. MY COUNSELOR TOLD ME THAT I HAVE TO FORGIVE MYSELF. THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO ABOUT THE PAST. I CAN ONLY STAY SOBER AND KEEP BECOMING THE PERSON I WANT TO BE.



# TIPS FROM GUYS WHO HAVE BEEN THERE

- Talk often with a friend or family member who will hold you to your change plan.
- Make your environment "recovery friendly" to avoid triggers.
  - Get rid of your works and paraphernalia.
  - Turn off your phone at night or when you go to bed so you won't be tempted to take any calls.
  - Throw out phone numbers of your dealer or those you like to use with.
  - Surround yourself with people who won't tempt you.
  - Take a different route home.
- Plan your days out. Don't let yourself get bored. Write down a schedule for your day if it helps.
- Check out classes and events you can attend.
- Get out of the house!
  - Exercise
  - Go shopping
  - Buy ingredients to cook a meal
  - etc.
- Calm your mind. Try a yoga or mindfulness class.
- Eat something good for you. Your body will thank you.
- Get a check-up. Your health may have been on the back burner while you were using.
- Relapses are normal. They are a sign of progress. Forgive yourself if you relapse, then get back up and keep on your recovery path.





# How I got sober

by DZF

In 1982 AT AGE 17 I WAS IN A SITUATION WHERE I WAS INTRODUCED TO METH AND HEROIN. FROM THIS TIME TO 2012 I'VE CONTINUED MY USE. IN SEPT 2012 I REALLY WAS JUST GETTING SO SICK OF MISERY. I DECIDED TO GET 3 JACK RUSSELL TERRIERS. I NEEDED A REASON TO BE SOBER. I WAS A NEON PEAK EDUCATOR. I STOPPED USING AND AGAIN USING. THEN I FAKED IT. NONE OF THAT WORKED. LOST A GREAT BOYFRIEND BECAUSE OF MY USE. MY DOGS GAVE ME WHAT IT TOOK. AND BEING A PART OF NEON FOR 5 YEARS GAVE ME THE EXTRA PUSH TO FINELY PUT IT ALL DOWN AND LIVE A REAL SOBER LIFE.





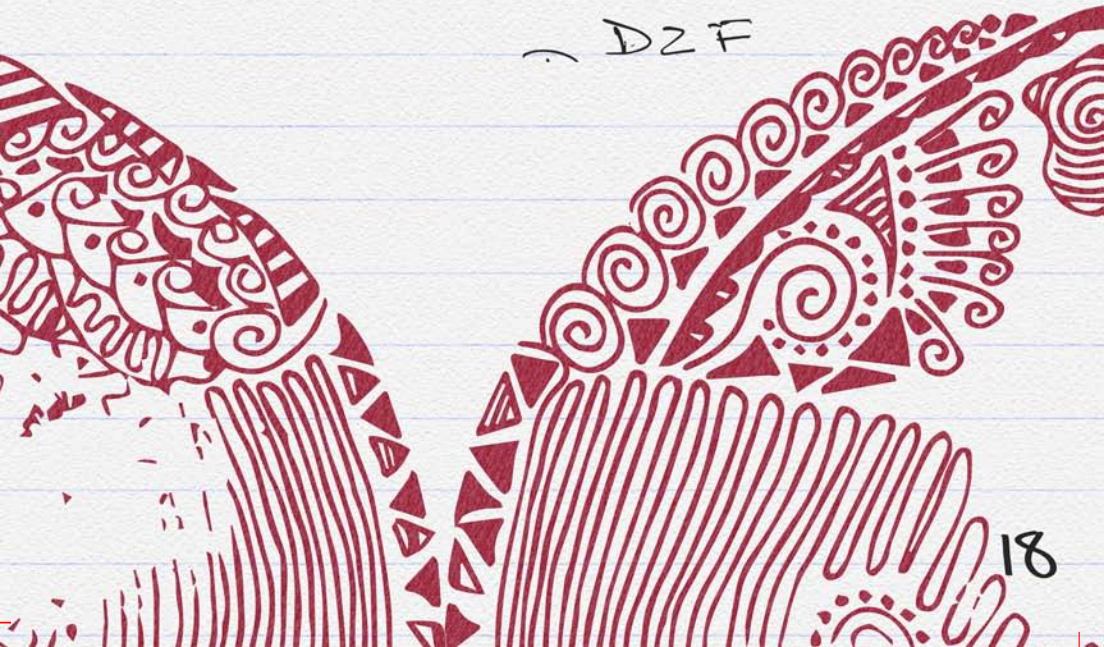


THE GOOD THINGS I GOT FROM MY USE WAS GREAT MEANING LESS SEX, ENERGY TO GET ORGANIZED.

THE NOT SO GOOD THINGS I GOT FROM CRYSTAL WAS CRIMINAL CHARGES, JAIL, PRISON, UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS. NO RESPECT TO OTHERS. NO HOUSING. LOOSE EVERYTHING REGULARLY. HEALTH PROBLEMS. ECT, ECT.

NOW I'M SOBER AND THANKS TO THE NEON PROJECT HERE AT S.C.S. AND MY GREAT 3 DOGS THAT NEVER GAVE UP ON ME.

~ DZF





# CHAPTER FOUR COMMUNITY

I miss using of course, but I feel so good about my life, and I like having a clear mind. I do all the same things I used to, like take my dogs on long walks — but now I can really devote myself to them. —Diego

You've been clean & sober for quite some time now. Keep working hard. You CAN do what you put your mind to. Being meth free can be a challenge, but it doesn't have to be that hard. The ride can be easier when you choose to have supportive, loving, & caring family and friends in your life to help you (dogs & cats included).

## YOU MAY THINK THIS:

"I'm proud of myself for not using in almost a year. I feel like I can accomplish things again, even though I still get triggered to use sometimes."

"My body can't take another high. I have to stay sober, for myself and for my partner."

# TIPS FROM GUYS WHO HAVE BEEN THERE

- Attend a weekly relapse prevention group.
- Go to sober social events like game nights, outdoor adventure groups, or book clubs. You'll meet other people who want to stay clean too. Lots of events & groups are FREE.
  - Are Friday nights triggering? Join a sober Friday night group.
- Practice positive self talk.
- Exercise.
- Eat nutritious foods.
- Drink lots of water.
- Keep your mind active. Read, go to a movie, take a class you've wanted to take.
- Avoid situations or events that might trigger you.



# What inspires and motivates you?

BEING A ROLE MODEL  
AS SOMEONE WHO  
OVERCAME METH  
ADDICTION

going to the  
OCEAN

Movies

Taking care of pets



Family

Rock & Roll



learning

painting

Knowing that I  
got out of  
a dark place

helping people

the  
city  
of  
Seattle

Writing  
poetry



GOING  
TO  
SHOWS

EATING

HEALTHY  
FOODS

Couples who have  
been together for  
a long time.  
(and are happy)

# EPILOGUE IT TAKES A VILLAGE

What are the qualities of a person who is helpful in your recovery?

- No judgments.
- Someone who understands that addiction is a disease. No one starts with the notion "I'm going to become an addict."
- Someone who understands that substance use is often a symptom of something else that needs to be worked out.
- Someone who listens.
- Someone who'll ask "how can I help?"
- Someone who will help you with important things like just file paperwork, or drive somewhere, because it's something you can't do because you're so full of anxiety, depression, panic attacks, and all that other stuff.
- Someone who's been through addiction.

Who lifts you up when you are down?

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Who makes you feel loved and cared for?

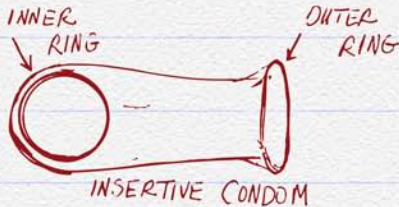
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# by the way... let's talk about SEX!



Finding some way to have an orgasm... that helps, it does, cause I've experienced that. days, & weeks without getting off because I'm too strung out and tweaked out to actually get off. Having an orgasm has helped me alot. I would recommend that. 'Cause that makes you kind of hungry so you'll eat something after that. And it helps you sleep.

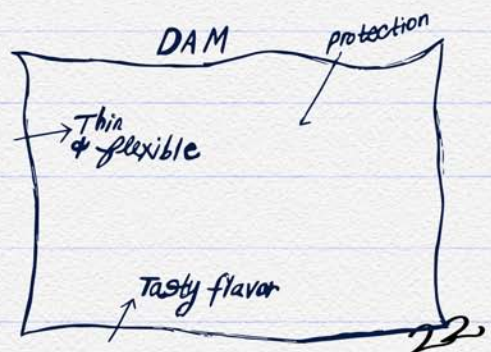
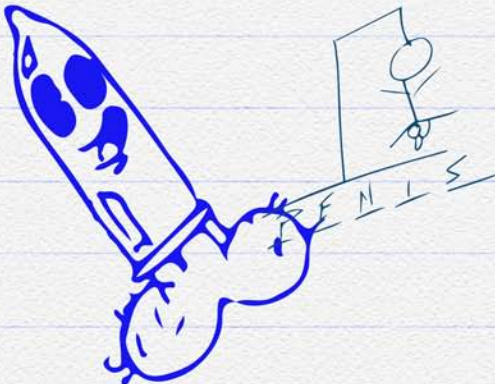
-Franz

For some guys, sex is a huge (pun intended) part of crystal use - and it can be very hard (pun intended again) to re-engage in intimacy. It's like foreplay. It may feel slow at first, but you will regain sexual stamina soon. Remember, sober sex can be sexy!

In the meantime, focus on the **value of relationships**-- not just with sex partners, fuck buddies, or lovers, but with family and friends--at home and at work. This is a great time to identify your network--your community. Who are you connected to?

When you do start to have sex again, remember that safety comes first & YOU come first. Keep the following sexual safety tips in mind:

- 1) Use protection like condoms, insertive condoms, & dams.
- 2) Use lots of lube (too much is almost enough).
- 3) Get tested regularly for HIV, hepatitis C, chlamydia, gonorrhea, & syphilis.
- 4) Remember that PrEP and PEP are options for guys who want to stay HIV-negative.
- 5) Respect yourself, love yourself.





# RESOURCES SUPPORT GROUPS & COUNSELING

**Alcohol/Drug Help Line.....206.722.3700**  
Adhl.org  
24-hour support, crisis intervention, & substance use resource referral.

**Capitol Hill Alano Club .....chacseattle.org/meetings**  
Meetings for members of the Seattle LGBT community in recovery.

**Community Info Line.....206.461.3200**  
Crisisclinic.org  
Database of social services in King County.

**Crisis Clinic.....866.4CRISIS (866.427.4747)**  
Crisisclinic.org  
Crisis intervention, information, and referrals (over the phone).

**Lifelong AIDS Alliance.....206.328.8979**  
Llaa.org  
Support and services for people living with or at risk for HIV/AIDS.

**NEON.....206.323.1768**  
projectneon.org  
One-on-one counseling, & peer support for individuals affected by crystal meth.

**NW Network.....206.568.7777**  
Nwnetwork.org  
Support for LGBT survivors of abuse.

**Seattle Area Support Groups (SASG).....206.322.2437**  
Sasgcc.org/home  
Support groups for recovery, health & wellness, support, and socializing.

**SASG support groups include:**  
Narcotics Anonymous  
Alcoholics Anonymous  
Crystal Meth Anonymous  
Strength Over Speed (SOS)

**Seattle Counseling Service.....206.323.1768**  
Seattlecounseling.org  
One-on-one and group sessions for mental health and chemical dependency.

**Strength Over Speed (SOS).....strengthoverspeed.org**  
Peer-led crystal meth recovery for gay men in Seattle.



# TESTING

**Gay City Health Project.....206.860.6969**

gaycity.org

Free HIV and STI testing & additional health & wellness resources.

**Harborview STD Clinic.....206.744.3590**

Screening, testing, treatment, and counseling on a sliding fee scale.

**TGIF by NEON and Gay City.....206.323.1768**

Fridays, 3-5 p.m. Free, confidential testing for HIV, STIs, and Hepatitis.

**Public Health Seattle & King County**

[Kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/communicable/hiv/resources/testing.aspx](http://kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/communicable/hiv/resources/testing.aspx)

List of community agencies that provide testing services.

# ADDITIONAL READING

**PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis)**

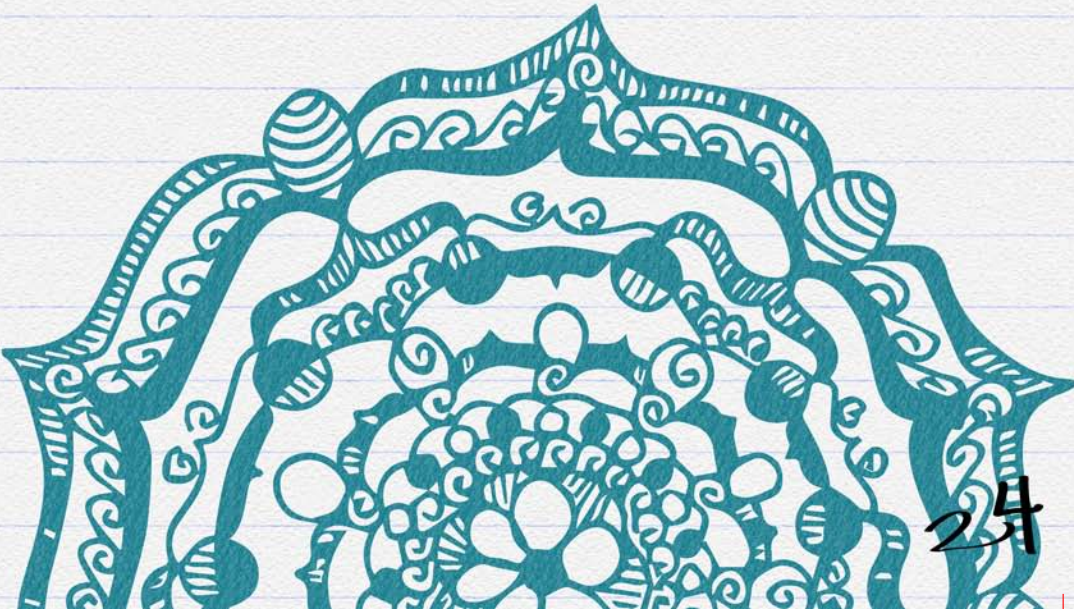
Go to: <http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/communicable/hiv.aspx>

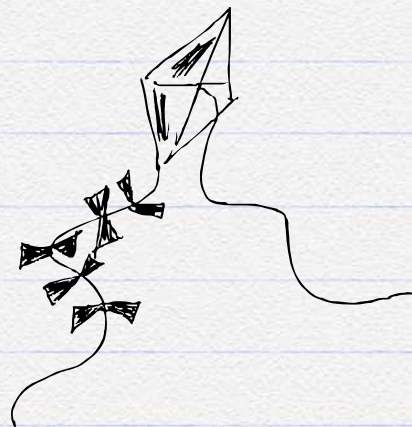
& click on PrEP Q&A: Using HIV Drugs to Prevent HIV Infection.

**PEP (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis)**

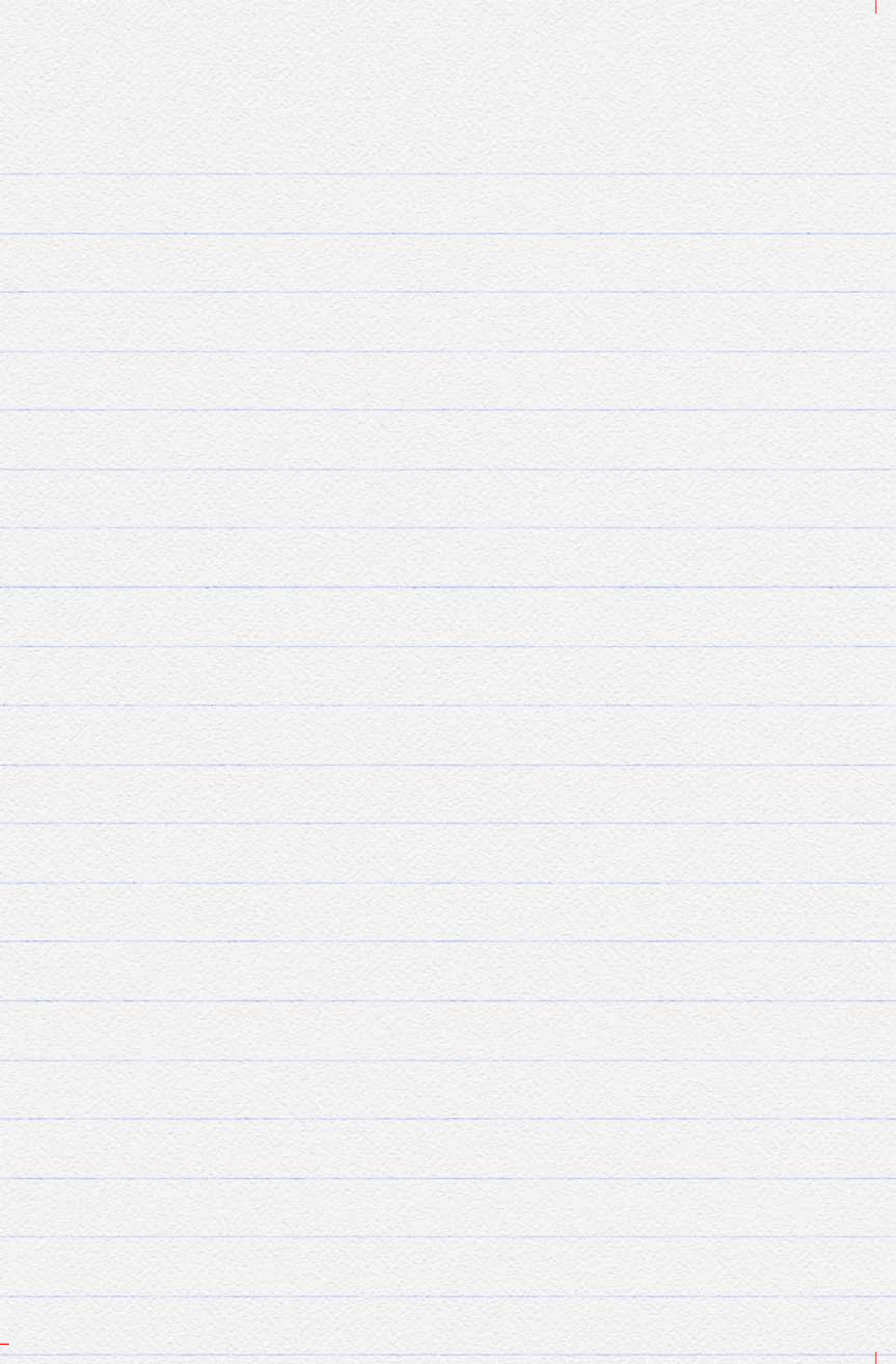
<http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/communicable/hiv/links/pep.aspx>

& <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/treatment/post-exposure-prophylaxis.htm>









# Untitled Journey

I hate those days, thoroughly dislike them with a passion.  
Of lack, of hopelessness, of unfulfilled desires.  
No end to the journey, no light in the future,  
the tunnel is dark with despair.

I avoid those days  
when all seems lost, nothing new to be found.  
All questions have no answers, all answers have no meaning.  
Withdrawn, within and without.

I yearn for those days  
of change, of growth, of happiness and prosperity, of destiny fulfilled.  
One foot in front of the other, step by arduous step.  
Progress is imminent. The horizon is in sight.

I welcome those days, embracing them with an open heart and mind.  
When life is lived to the fullest, when gratitude is expressed,  
when thankfulness is abundant,  
the journey has delivered me to recognize  
the greatest good within me,  
to feel the highest vibration around me,  
to truly be in the now.

---

by Sonya S