



## dance party

*A poem about the kayaking trip  
by Beckah Cloutier*

i wanted to pause that moment, wrap it up tightly for each of us to carry back with us from our campsite. snug it in between our hairbrushes, sunscreen, bug spray and water bottles.

a strong techno beat rolled from the van's speakers as the twelve of us inside bounced the vehicle moving to the beat, energized by struggles, victories, the water and air and orange-pink-

red sunset. And then, as if it had somehow been planned, others appeared next to our van arms in the air feet moving bodies to the beat. we were conscious of energy and each other but

not self conscious of ourselves, our bodies, our demons. it was just a moment in the woods of pure abandon and joy as our group of strangers found a common love in the music and the feel of our bodies moving in the night air

## Kayaking Toward Recovery

By Joe Kelly

Can going days without a shower, getting wet in Lake Superior, and camping in the wilderness enhance the journey to recovery?

**From: M. B.**

**Subject: Great Emily Program Trip**

I just wanted to thank you again for making the Apostle Islands such a great trip for me. I made personal strides forward in so many ways and came away with so much more confidence in myself. Out on the rough waters I reconnected with my sense of adventure (which I thought I had lost) and am continuing that now as I return home. I am planning on participating in the water park when my family comes in a couple of weeks. I'm stepping off the sidelines back into my life. Your support helped me get here.

M.B. was one of 17 Emily Program clients to spend several days camping on Lake Superior's Apostle Islands, kayaking to prehistoric sea caves, and hiking to some spectacular Northwoods vistas. A joint project with the Twin Cities nonprofit Wilderness Inquiry—and their generous donors—this trip stretched the participants' sense of what they could accomplish and how the wonders of nature can help them challenge their eating disorders.

The challenges included spending hours together wearing bathing suits—an anxiety that



evolved into a bonding experience. Recreation Therapist Kristen Heider says the trip provided many opportunities for clients to step away from worrying about body image, carb consumption and the like—and to just appreciate their bodies, life, and nature.

An important rationale for the Apostle Island trip was to reinforce a core Emily Program concept: that encouraging awareness of body experience is a powerful way to overcome obsessions about body image.

Several participants say they went on the trip to challenge their fears, meet new people, and let their guard down. One said "It was good to 'escape,' strip down, and get real with my fears—like washing dishes. The challenge of those mundane activities was big—getting my hands in dirty water, not showering, and recognizing so clearly that food is fuel for activities, like hiking and kayaking."

Another client wrote, "I continually struggle with exercise and usually feel that it ONLY happens at the gym. It doesn't. I realized that it can happen other places, too. Like in nature."

Therapist Stephanie Burcusa was moved by clients challenging their perceived physical

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# Ensuring Insurance Coverage

by Joe Kelly and Kathleen MacDonald

Navigating health insurance can be tough. Some insurers seem more willing than others to cover eating disorders and other mental health treatment. Recovery is difficult enough, and we know it's hard to have additional hurdles, like learning insurance jargon so you can interpret your healthcare benefits.

The good news: you can take steps that will help you and/or your family get what you deserve from your health insurance provider. And since The Emily Program has good working relationships with most health insurance companies, we can lend a hand.

## Impact of "Parity"

You may have heard that "Mental Health Parity" is now in place across the U.S., but what does it mean? In 2008, Congress passed and President Bush signed into law the "Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008" (MHPAEA). It didn't go into effect until this year, however. MHPAEA does not require private plans

to offer coverage for mental health or substance use disorders. It does require that if these conditions are covered, coverage must be equitable with coverage for other health conditions (e.g., no differences in co-pays, deductibles and limits on hospital stays).

Here's how former Sen. Pete Domenici (R-NM) describes the idea:

"Parity of insurance is almost a civil-rights issue. We take care of people with heart trouble, we operate on them, we have great learning centers where we study all there is to know about the heart. And insurance companies have paid for all those surgeries. And yet, if you have schizophrenia, which is an illness of the brain instead of the heart, because we started off early on saying it wasn't an illness, we treated it differently."

Many insurance companies were already moving toward parity, but we hear stories of insurance company representatives claiming that MHPAEA doesn't apply to them. The law applies only to insurance



**President Bush signs MHPAEA in 2008; co-sponsor Rep. Jim Ramstad (R-MN) is on the far right.**

plans that cover more than 50 employees and provide mental health coverage. That leaves out many people and critics complain that MHPAEA isn't tough enough.

MHPAEA went into effect on July 1, 2010. However, the July 1, 2010 start is for plans that begin on or after July 1, 2010. So-called calendar year plans, which start their cycles on January 1 (which most people have through their employers) begin following the MHPAEA rules next year, on Jan. 1, 2011.

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# Insurance Lawsuit Gets Results

In February, The Emily Program Foundation underwrote a lawsuit (filed in Federal court in Minneapolis) against UnitedHealthcare (UHC)—the largest single health carrier in the United States—alleging that UHC repeatedly denied critically needed residential eating disorder treatment for a Wisconsin college student covered by a UHC health insurance plan. UHC denied the lawsuit's allegations, but quickly agreed to an out-of-court settlement.

For more than a year, Amanda Conrad, her psychiatrist and her physician tried to obtain authorization from UHC for treatment at The Emily Program's Anna Westin House, but their requests were repeatedly delayed, ignored and denied. Conrad had life-threatening health issues (including cardiac complications) as a result of an eating disorder she battled for over half of her life, and needed residential care due to deteriorating mental and physical health. UHC's delays eventually forced Conrad to take on more than \$50,000 in personal debt to pay for her treatment.

The law requires insurers such as UHC to provide a full and fair review when an insured person requests preauthorization for residential

care. But UnitedHealthcare's preauthorization process was unworkable. Conrad's requests for medically necessary treatment were marked by:

- Repeated delays
- Rescheduling of reviews on short notice
- Telephone reviews lasting no more than 5 to 10 minutes
- Reviewers refusing to accept medical records or refusing to review records they did accept
- Reviewers interrupting, talking over, and even hanging up on Conrad's doctors when they attempted to provide essential medical information
- Refusal to provide the guidelines UHC followed in their decision to deny coverage
- Claims that acute symptoms, such as significant heart trouble, were—"not nearly as severe as many of the patients UnitedHealthcare turns down for residential care."

The settlement allowed Conrad to pay off her debt for the treatment she was entitled to under her policy. Continuing the journey of recovery, she has completed college and started a career.

Dr. Dirk Miller, executive director of The Emily Program, said: "Of course we are happy for the settlement. Amanda demonstrated incredible courage and determination to achieve this outcome. But it's unfortunate—even unconscionable—that so many people seeking mental health treatment are forced to resort to lawsuits and other extraordinary measures to get insurance companies to pay for the services they are entitled to under their policies."

The Emily Program Foundation is a Twin Cities nonprofit that promotes eating disorder awareness, community support, advocacy, research and education.

Watch video from a February rally supporting the lawsuit at <http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/5023785>.



For sample letters you can write to insurance companies and state insurance regulators, go to: <http://theemilyprogram.blogspot.com/2010/03/speak-up-for-insurance-coverage.html>.

# Insurance Coverage Client & Family Survey Results Are In!

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For simple explanations of how MHPAEA works, visit:

Partnership for Workplace Mental Health: [www.workplacementalhealth.org/mhparity.aspx#parity](http://www.workplacementalhealth.org/mhparity.aspx#parity)  
US Department of Labor: <http://www.dol.gov/ebsa/newsroom/fsmhpaea.html>

For more detail on the law and its background, visit The Emily Program blog at <http://theemilyprogram.blogspot.com/2010/07/mental-health-parity-you-your-insurance.html>.

To see the proposed rules for implementing parity, see <http://www.workplacementalhealth.org/pdf/EBSA-2009-0010-0409.pdf>. This is very long and written in legalese, but it may be useful in advocating with your insurance company. It may be a struggle to get their benefits, but parity is the law.

Lynette and Beth work on these issues every day, act diligently to help you navigate the insurance system and secure the highest coverage possible. If you do not have insurance, they can help you identify community resources which might be available. Call 651.645.5323 to reach Lynette (ext. 1115) or Beth (ext. 1166).

## Recovery Night

Recovery Night recently celebrated its one year anniversary since its inception. Since July 2009, The Emily Program Foundation has been sponsoring this monthly community event. We are proud to bring the community together to support and learn with each other. Each person's story of recovery brings hope, self-discovery and inspiration.

Join us to hear stories of recovery, from real people who have made the journey. It's free and sponsored by The Emily Program Foundation; second Tuesday of every month from 6:30-8:00 PM at our St. Paul office (2265 Como Ave.). Sept. 14, Oct. 12, Nov. 9, Dec. 14, etc.

The Emily Program conducted a client satisfaction and feedback survey through the month of March, 2010. We received responses from 121 clients, their friends, and family members. Feedback on general aspects of The Emily Program was gathered such as locations and atmosphere of our offices, customer service and communications as well as specific suggestions for our various programs (residential, intensive day program, intensive outpatient program, friends and family services, and outpatient programming).

Thank you to everyone who took the client and family survey.

We are proud to announce that an overwhelming number of people are very satisfied with their experiences at The Emily Program. In fact, 93.6% of respondents said that they would or already have recommended The Emily Program to a friend or family member dealing with an eating disorder or related issue.

As with any situation in life, positives and improvements were discovered from this survey. There were consistencies in feedback that indicate the staff is knowledgeable and skilled in eating disorders treatment practices; people like that our treatment model is holistic and offers a variety of therapies, delivery methods and services to address client needs. Additionally, feedback suggested that the

“non-clinical” atmosphere and friendly, personal staff add to the positive experience.

The feedback also suggested areas that need improvement including, building the resources and staff needed to serve the growing number of clients seeking treatment; improving the scheduling process; work toward smoother transitions between levels of care; and preserving the non-clinical feel and personalized customer service as the agency continues to grow.

Over the next year our staff will discuss how to ensure that each and every person that calls or walks through the door feels the compassion, energy, hope and knowledge that The Emily Program has to offer.

We welcome additional feedback. If you have ideas, suggestions, or concerns please e-mail us at [communications@emilyprogram.com](mailto:communications@emilyprogram.com).

## Testimonial Project

Whether you're a client, family member, friend, or support—we want to hear about your experience with The Emily Program. We're gathering testimonials, so we can share the hope and healing with those who need it most. Send your thoughts to [blog@emilyprogram.com](mailto:blog@emilyprogram.com).

## Eating in the Light of the Moon Group

Do you wonder if there are “alternative” ways for women to transform their relationship with food? In her popular book *Eating in the Light of the Moon*, Dr. Anita Johnston shows how to use stories and metaphors as powerful tools in that transformation.

On September 15, The Emily Program launches its “Eating in the Light of the Moon” group. Open to Emily Program clients with any eating disorder diagnosis, it will meet Wednesday afternoons from 2:00pm - 3:30pm in our St. Louis Park office.

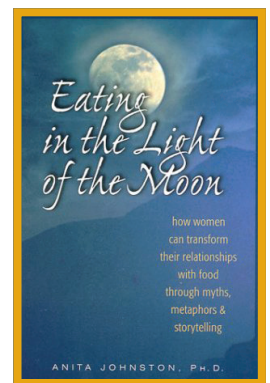
According to therapist Stephanie Burcusa, “For 20 weeks, we'll discuss & process the 20 chapters of the book—one chapter a week. *Eating in the Light of the Moon* is an amazing book that has helped thousands of women with eating disorders.

“It weaves multicultural myths, legends, and simple folktales to free women from disordered eating by discovering metaphors hidden in their own life stories.”

Burcusa says participants will develop skills like:

- Intuition: The Inner Seeing, Hearing, Knowing
- Symbolism: Hunger as a Metaphor
- Feelings: Gifts from the Heart
- Assertiveness: Speaking the Truth
- Recovery: Out of the Labyrinth

For information or to join, contact Amanda Mulfinger at 651.645.5323 ext. 1456 or Stephanie Burcusa at ext. 1413.



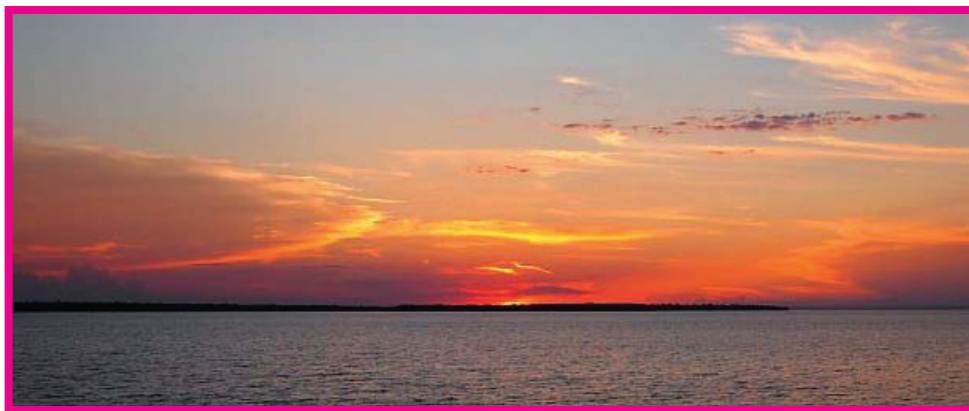
# Kayaking Toward Recovery

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limitations, and nourishing and honoring their bodies. “I heard several people comment that the unique nature of this trip helped them to challenge their eating disorders in many unexpected ways, and in ways that wouldn’t have been possible in any other setting.” The trip was an intentional contrast with

mous value in that, but it was good for the participants to see another side of life and recovery—just being, doing, and getting through the experience of the trip.

Burcusa says the trip was much more profound than she expected. “It was really amazing to see the transformative effects that the wilderness challenges had for the participants.



the intensity of the “everyday” treatment experience, Heider says. “In treatment, we’re constantly talking about things, wrestling with demons, and doing process process process. Of course, there’s enor-

## Free Foundation Friends and Family Support Groups

The Free Foundation Friends and Family Support Groups are sponsored by The Emily Program Foundation which works to eliminate eating disorders through community support, advocacy, research and education. These groups are free and open to anyone who provides support to a person with an eating disorder. Individuals do not need to register in order to participate in the group.

The group meets in St. Paul every other Wednesday (5:45 – 7:15 PM) and is facilitated by Diane Rubright & Lisa Rogers, and it meets in St. Louis Park every other Thursday (5:45 – 7:15 PM) and is facilitated by Kitty Westin. Call 651.645.5323 ext. 1100 (St. Paul) or ext. 1400 (St. Louis Park) for more information.

In particular I was really impressed with how people were willing to challenge their eating disorder rules and to allow themselves to experience a whole host of difficult emotions and difficult situations for four days. There were so many opportunities for each participant to challenge herself - and participants seized those opportunities!”

“In the conversations I overheard and the things I witnessed,” Heider says, “we all had a strong sense of being part of something bigger than oneself. We were able to connect with nature and the universe—appreciating all that is around us that we get to enjoy.

“We witnessed parts of God’s creation that we can’t touch in cars. We paddled through sea caves--little holes on emerald green water. It was powerful to stop and witness something that has been there forever, soaking up the beauty around us; a beauty that we’re often too busy to discover or appreciate.”

That appreciation even extended to the participants’ own bodies, Heider adds.

“I was really struck by comments like ‘It’s so amazing what my body can do!’ So often, we hear so much self loathing toward bodies. On the trip, we actually heard clients express compassion and gratitude toward themselves and their bodies.”

## Wilderness Inquiry Trip Expectation & Insight

by Heather

The trip was much different than I expected it to be. I was terrified and expected the worst. I worried about whether the other women would like me. A “metro” girl who never really camped, I was anxious about not having access to showers, running water and flushing toilets. I was so scared not to wear my makeup.

At the same time, I wanted to have an experience out of the ordinary and wanted to challenge myself. I expected to feel a lot of great things while on the trip.

The most surprising part of the experience was that I could get used to being dirty and grimy. Beyond that, more importantly, I realized that my body had the ability and enough strength to kayak. It’s been a year since I was in the Anna Westin House, and it was awesome to celebrate the strength of my body (almost the antithesis of where I was last year).

I gained insights about others as well. I felt like I would have very little in common with someone who is a compulsive over eater. But other women’s stories showed me that there are some things about eating disorders that are remarkably similar despite the diagnosis.

I also learned that eating disorders deeply affect those around you. It was very difficult to be around women using eating disorder behaviors during the trip. I felt empowered when I decided to get up and leave an area where someone was restricting so I could feel more comfortable about eating. It was a tough choice because I want to be there for others - regardless of their eating disorder symptoms. I couldn’t. I had to preserve my recovery.

In the van on the way home, I realized that I’d forgotten about the stress that I left behind in the Twin Cities. I realized that I was able to be present and in the moment during the trip. I wasn’t preoccupied by my stress. I was able to focus on the people around me, nature, and the experience.