



# Selected Papers of William L. White

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**Citation:** White, W. (2016). Focus on family recovery: An interview with *Sharon Wegscheider Cruse*. Posted at [www.williamwhitepapers.com](http://www.williamwhitepapers.com)

## Focus on Family Recovery: An Interview with *Sharon Wegscheider Cruse*

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Before the 1980s, family members interacting with addiction professionals were more likely to be viewed as contributors to addiction or hostile interlopers in the treatment process than people in need of recovery support services. (Click [HERE](#) for a detailed history of attitudes in family therapy.) That began to change when a vanguard of advocates challenged such attitudes and focused attention on the effects of addiction on families and the family recovery process. Those pioneers included people whose interviews have appeared earlier in this Pioneer Interview Series, including [Dr. Claudia Black](#), [Dr. Stephanie Brown](#), [Dr. Robert Meyers](#), [Jerry Moe](#), and [Sis Wenger](#). One of the most important of these pioneers is Sharon Wegscheider Cruse, whose landmark books in the 1980s exerted a profound influence on the addiction treatment field and the broader arena of recovery support services for families. I recently (June 2016) had the opportunity to

interview Sharon about her life's work and the lessons she hoped to pass on to a new generation of addiction professionals and family advocates. Please join us in this engaging conversation.

### Early Career

**Bill White:** Sharon, perhaps we could start by just tracing some of the influences that led to your entrance into the addictions field.

**Sharon Wegscheider Cruse:** I came into studying about addiction later in life. I postponed going to college until my children went to school and then I went for nine years. In that process, I was drawn to the first chemical dependency certification program in the nation, which was in Minnesota. I was drawn to that program because I believed that I had issues related to people drinking too much in my family even though at the time I would not have called that alcoholism. This counselor certification program opened me up, both in my personal and professional life. While in this training program, I got very depressed because the knowledge I was gaining was so spot on with what I had experienced in my family. I sought help for

the depression from psychologists, psychiatrists, counselors, and clergy. I was told the same story across the board: "You've got to grow up and forget about that."

I knew my parents were different from the other people in the family. They were wonderful, loving people but I knew they were different and the only thing I could figure out as a young child and even as an older woman was that they drank a lot and smoked cigarettes. Then someone told me there was a treatment center in North Dakota that would help people with alcohol problems, and I thought that perhaps they could help my depression. So, I entered a 28-day alcoholism treatment program. I was not alcoholic; I didn't drink, but I thought, "Maybe they know something that could help me." That experience opened my eyes to what happens to, not only addicts and alcoholics, but what happens to their families. When I came out of that program in the early 1970s, I said to myself, "I will not stop until there's some place for family members to go. They are the forgotten people."

**Bill White:** How would you describe the state of the field's response to families at that point?

**Sharon Wegscheider Cruse:** There was a feeling of hostility and underneath a feeling of fear. When I was looking for help and seeing all these helping professionals, I tried to go to Al-Anon in Minneapolis, Minnesota, but I was told I couldn't attend because I wasn't married to an alcoholic. So, I was not accepted there. In college, I had read a couple of papers by a woman who was not yet published. She talked about families in general, not alcoholic families, in a way that mirrored my experience. It was the most powerful thing I had ever read, and on the bottom was the name Virginia Satir. I tried to find her without success. You have to know this is before internet or cell phones and before she had published her book, *People-Making*. I tried to find her every way I could,

but there was no way to find her. And then one night, I had a flat tire and I went up to a house, which one would never do today probably. I went up to a house and the people inside invited me in to use their phone. They said, "You may use our phone. It's over there. We're getting ready to go to Canada to meet Virginia Satir." I thought I had died and gone to heaven. I began pursuing how to get into the Canadian workshop. I pestered them by phone for almost a month until they said, "If you don't tell anyone, you can come, and you can come free of charge. We don't even want you on our roster. Just don't call our office anymore." And that's how I met Virginia Satir in 1972.

**Bill White:** What were some of the early career positions you held in the field?

**Sharon Wegscheider Cruse:** When I graduated from my certification program in addiction, Tom Zawadski and I were given a state car to travel the state of Minnesota to attend AA and Al-Anon meetings to engender their support for the expansion of formal treatment programs in their area. We traveled the state for a whole summer, attending Twelve-Step meetings and assuring people that treatment centers were on their side. There were no places for families to go at that time; there were barely places for addicts to go. I took on the task of creating something for families, and I also wanted to do something for children of alcoholics.

I had worked in a church setting for a long time doing retreats. I knew how to bring people together. I knew how to create a community, and I knew how to bring the best out in people. So what I did was put together the first children of alcoholics support group. I found someone to donate a church where we could meet. The groups grew and grew. I learned how to speak in schools and other places. By then, I was getting to be known in the AA and Al-Anon communities so they contacted me when they wanted help for their children. I think we had almost 300 kids

in treatment in '73. We called it the Friendship Club.

I didn't want to identify them as children of alcoholics back then because of the stigma at that time. As soon as people saw what was happening with young kids, there were a couple newspaper articles about what was happening about this strange center for children. Other people started wanting to know if I could I do something for their older kids. So by 1974, I just had countless young children's group and adult children groups.

I was keeping track of what I was seeing in these children and things were falling into patterns. I had studied family therapy. I'd studied addiction. I knew that in my mind this was a family illness and that everyone played a role, including the addict. And then there became that debate between "Is it a primary disease that causes family illness or is it a family illness that causes people to become addicts?" Well, I was trained, and still believe to this day that addiction is a primary illness. Addicts don't cause family illnesses and family illnesses don't cause addicts. Addiction is a primary disease. Taking that stand cost me a lot in the family therapy field. They did not want to hear that, including my dear, dear mentor, Virginia Satir. She did not want to believe it was a primary disease, but she taught me almost everything I knew about family systems so she remained an important force in my life, and I think I became that for her. Before she died at a young age, Joe [Cruse] and I were able to take her to the Betty Ford Center. We introduced her to Betty Ford, and she sat in workshops at the Annenberg Center, after which she said to me, "I think you have a point."

**Bill White:** I remember this being a time in family therapy when the family was viewed as the causative agent of addiction and that there was talk of curing addiction through family therapy.

**Sharon Wegscheider Cruse:** Yes, and that was the stand of the family therapy field. Virginia [Satir] used to tell me, "Sharon, you give me any alcoholic family that's out there and I'll take them into the woods and camp with them for a week and they'll come back and all addictions will be cured." She really believed that it was a family issue.

**Bill White:** The early experiences that you're mentioning led to your involvement with the Johnson Institute. Could you describe how your role at the Johnson Institute evolved over time?

**Sharon Wegscheider Cruse:** I sure can. For a time, I was very involved with the Johnson Institute and really believed in the intervention model. Now, how did I get there? I had a four-month internship in the college I went to and I chose the Johnson Institute as the place I wanted to do my internship and was accepted there. I learned all about intervention but I also learned a lot about family systems, not quite the way I viewed family systems later, but they were the only game in town doing interventions and involving the family as part of the treatment team. I did my internship there and then I left and formed the Family Factory to expand my children of alcoholics groups. Later on, I formed the The House, which added services for adult men and women.

The Minneapolis Star and Tribune did a major story on The House in their Variety section of the paper. When that happened, there were a couple of people at the Johnson Institute who really wanted to make family therapy a bigger part of the Institute. Vern Johnson, God bless his soul, did not want that. He thought it would be too threatening to the alcoholic and that services to the alcoholic should be the primary focus of Johnson Institute. So two people from the Board of the Directors came to me and said, "We want to bring you to the Johnson Institute to develop a family focus--a family school, a family program, a whole family emphasis. However, you will not come in favored by the President, Vern Johnson. So,

we're asking you to take on a dual role. One, we're asking you to be a voting member of the management team, which means Vern Johnson's a voting member, you're a voting member, and we want you to head up this department and you can bring the first clinical background to the Institute we've ever had."

The way it worked out was that I did go in as an Executive of Johnson Institute with a full vote, and I brought half of The House with me—a team that instantly became the first family care program of the Johnson Institute. The other half went on and continued at The House. It was a tough go for me all the while that I was there because Vern Johnson did have a different picture and a different view. I never say one negative thing about that because I think he goes down in history as the father of family intervention, but it was a tough row to hoe there as long as I stayed. One of the things that incited some of the people even more was a request for Johnson Institute to serve as consultants to the Air Force in Europe, but they would only sign the contract if I was part of the contract. They didn't want just interventions; they want interventions and family therapy. As my role there grew larger and the larger my role got, tension increased among the Board and the staff. So, one day, I heard myself in a school talking about people needing to make changes in their lives and I just simply quit. I believed the Johnson Institute could re-group and someone had offered me the possibility of a new start. I left the Johnson Institute and formed Onsite--a family focused treatment program.

### Seminal Work

**Bill White:** Let me take you to the early and mid-1980s, which was an extremely prolific period of your career, including such books as *Another Chance*, *Codependency*, *Family Trap*, and *Choice-Making*, that exerted a tremendous impact on the addiction treatment field. Is there a story behind how

you came to develop all of that work in such a short period of time?

**Sharon Wegscheider Cruse:** Well, it seems on the surface like an overnight explosion, but it was a long, long night given that I started this work in '71 and '72. I'd had ten years of being in the trenches and starting The House, starting the Family Factory, earning respect among the addiction field and among family therapists. When I took a stand, I took a stand in the direction of addiction therapy rather than family therapy. I mean, I'm a good family therapist. I created Onsite, which is family-focused, but I stand behind my belief that addiction needs to be addressed as a primary disorder. By the early 1980s, I had ten years of experience and I had the support of a lot of people. Minnesota had earlier passed what was called the Governors' Bill to help start programs in the area of addiction so Minnesota early on became known for its network of alcoholism treatment programs. Then there was the big Freedom Fest rally in 1976 that brought together 26,000 recovering alcoholics and their families at the Minneapolis baseball stadium. So the setting was perfect for starting Onsite.

Onsite was incorporated in 1977 and service began in 1978. It came to fruition because of all the work that had been done before. I started documenting key ideas and approaches we were using. My first book, *Another Chance, Hope and Health for Alcoholic Families*, was released in 1976 by Virginia Satir's publisher, was made into a movie in 1989, and subsequently sold more than 250,000 copies. I had travelled on the road with Virginia for almost five years and he became my friend through that process. He said, "You write the book and I'll see to it that it gets published." *Another Chance* was published in '81, but I'd started that book ten years before when I started this work because nothing was documented. I saw in all that work with children of alcoholics the four roles I eventually described in 1976 in my book *The Family Trap*. There were three

in the beginning: Hero, Scapegoat, and Mascot. And the reason there was only three roles is because we forgot about the other kids—those who filled the Lost Child role. Those four roles have now gone around the world. It doesn't matter what culture I'm in, it doesn't matter what language people are speaking, they speak the four roles.

Out of that came in bits and pieces my own story, which was shared in the book *Choice-Making*. *Choice-Making* and *Learning to Love Yourself* were part of my recovery. Meeting Joe Cruse and having such a relationship was the basis of *Couple-ship*, which was published in 1988. Then we began to understand codependency. Whenever there was a concept that I thought really, really worked, I tested it at Onsite. I was beginning to see that people who went to my programs got well and some of them got better than they'd ever been in their life. I have life-long relationships with people that I've had for 40 years. I have witnessed growth across three generations now and they're not dealing with addiction anymore. They're not dealing with codependency. They talk about evidence-based treatment; I have treatment-based evidence. Back in those days, people didn't document like they do now. I can write an article right now and if I use the internet and what I know, I can have endless references. There were no references back then.

## NACoA

**Bill White:** You played an important role in the founding of the National Association of Children of Alcoholics (NACoA). What memories do you have of this milestone?

**Sharon Wegscheider Cruse:** Oh my goodness! I have lots, and Joe Cruse has even more that he recently shared with Bob Ackerman. Three weeks ago, I was in Nashville and I had a marvelous experience with some of the founders of NACoA. That was a very pleasant experience for me. What do I remember? Well, I have to go to the beginning if I'm going to remember my

portion of it. Some people will have different beginnings because everybody came in at a different time. For my portion, I had heard about a woman in California who was worried about children of alcoholics and I'd always wanted to meet her, but never had. Her name was Claudia Black. Claudia and I both laugh about this today—we're good friends—but they always put Claudia and I on at the same time to speak at conferences. We'd fly in and do our workshop and leave and we never had an opportunity to meet.

Then Joe Cruse invited Claudia Black, Kathleen Brooks, who at that time was Cilla Brown, Stephanie Brown, and I to speak at the Annenberg Center in California for a Betty Ford Center conference. We didn't know what each other did. We first met as Joe was trying to teach us this very sophisticated podium. He turned around as we were getting ready to start this conference for several hundred doctors, and we were all crying. We had finally met like-minded people. It was fantastic. Joan Kroc attended that meeting and came up to the four of us afterwards and said, "People in the world need to hear what you guys know and I'm inviting you all to the Kroc Ranch. I will cover all your expenses to come to the Kroc Ranch and spend a weekend together." Well, obviously, we all jumped at that chance and so we went to the Kroc Ranch. Joan said, "All I ask for is that you give me at the end of that meeting a report about what you would say to the nation if you had a forum?" And so we gathered for that weekend and it was just an absolute golden time, but we didn't come up with anything. We got so involved with each other that we just didn't come up with anything for the report. Joan was very kind about it and said, "Well, I'll tell you what, I'm going to invite you back one more time and each of you get to bring one more like-minded person with you."

We all went home, chose our people, and came back for that second meeting. That group became the original founding board of the National Association of Children of Alcoholics, and I was fortunate enough to become the first Chairman of the NACoA

Board. We were really go-getter people, but we were all untreated children of alcoholics. So, we started out very dysfunctionally, in terms of our board meetings. We carried on and couldn't agree on things, but we loved each other. We knew we would have a life-long bond and we have. We've kept that bond, and I think that we made significant changes in the world. Getting Sis Wenger in as our Executive Director was one of the most powerful things that could have ever happened to NACoA. She has dedicated her life to this organization. I had met Sis back when I had my Family Factory and The House. I couldn't afford to hire staff. I couldn't afford to go out and get counselors. So I trained and accepted any helping professional that had a mission and a big heart and understood addiction. Some of my group leaders were from the Junior League. Some of my group leaders were intern at schools. Some of them were clergy. Sis Wenger had a very respectful job in Detroit, Michigan, and I went and spoke to her. She represented the Junior League and when we thought of a Director for NACoA, I thought this woman can get it done. So, I invited her to become the first Executive Director of NACoA and she's handled it with charm and skill ever since. I think NACoA has made a difference in more lives than people will ever know. I'm so proud to have been a part of its beginning.

## Codependency

**Bill White:** What started out as a family-focused treatment movement morphed into a focus on codependency, which became something of a cultural phenomenon in the '80s. What are your perspectives on the codependency movement and the cultural backlash that it elicited?

**Sharon Wegscheider Cruse:** I don't know for sure is my biggest answer to that. It came about as people began to understand the full dynamics of what was happening in the family. The early name for that was "para-alcoholic" or "co-alcoholic" and it first

referred to the partner, the enabler, the wife, the girlfriend, the parent of an addict, and it didn't go beyond that into the rest of the family system. There were a lot of people exploring this at that time. Janet Woititz had her adult child focus, J. L. Greenleaf had the para-alcoholic, and Melody Beattie came out with her book on codependency, which was an important contribution. The word, "co," I think, came out of being the partner too or the enabler of the alcoholic.

When Joe and I started working at Onsite, we began to see that we could identify actual symptoms of a particular kind of syndrome that everyone in the family carries. There were three symptoms and three complications of what we came to see as codependency. There was denial, repression, and obsession that resulted in social, spiritual, and physical complications. We found that we could describe and treat it and that people started getting well—really well. Based on that experience, we wrote a book called, *Understanding Codependency* that got a lot of attention. Before long, the concept took off. It was mentioned in a movie, it was on *Saturday Night Live*, it was mentioned on the *Johnny Carson Show*. Codependency became an entity.

I think the reason that it lost its momentum was that there were so many approaches to it. It lost its specificity and could no longer stand alone. I think codependency is a describable process that can be treated successfully, but this is different from the loose way the term came to be used. I attended a forty-person meeting a few years ago to come up with a definition of codependency and it was never defined because it was too broad. People jumped on the codependency wagon without being specific as to what it was. It became easy to both see it and dismiss it at the same time.

**Bill White:** Was the work that you did around codependency serve as a jumping off point for your subsequent work on women, couples, healing after divorce, self-development, and grand-parenting?

**Sharon Wegscheider Cruse:** I recall coming from three basic beliefs and all of my work branches off these three beliefs. First, I really do believe in family systems theory. Secondly, I believe in addiction as a primary illness, and third, for me, the Twelve-Step way of life and a Higher Power is the third leg of the stool I stand on. My own life, my own recovery, I see as an actual miracle. If I can do it, so can anyone, and that has led to my latest book, *Becoming a Sage*. I think everybody's got a story, and mine's just one.

### The Story of Onsite

**Bill White:** Sharon, let me take you back to Onsite. We talked about the birth of Onsite but we haven't talked much about how it's evolved over time. Could you talk about some of the various programs at Onsite and how they've changed over the years?

**Sharon Wegscheider Cruse:** Well, it's interesting. I spent a day at Onsite ten days ago, and it was such a marvelous experience for me. I don't know if you know Miles Adcox, who is the current owner of Onsite, but many of the programs are exactly the same way they were when it started. A big part of the program was developed with the support and help of Joe. We co-developed the Living Center Program (LCP), which is the heart of Onsite and its primary treatment program. Many of the programs have stayed the same since the early '80s. Virginia Satir, through teaching me the basic "reconstruction" process, had a huge influence on the programs. From 1977 to 1982, most of the programs were my version of the newly developed reconstructions adding the impact of addiction and codependency, and then, when Joe joined me at Onsite in '82 or '83, he added programs that are still there. Together, we wrote the Couple-ship program. Miles has added some marvelous programs, including one called Milestone that is relatively new. But the core program is still the LCP program. I think there have been 46,000 people through the program. I think that is

absolutely remarkable, and it includes all the people treated or trained in that program. Those thousands of people treated at Onsite used to come in groups of ten. So, going back there is like a spiritual homecoming for me. It's absolutely wonderful.

### Mentoring

**Bill White:** You have played such an important role as a teacher, trainer, and mentor for so many years, are there any lessons you've learned in these roles that you could pass on to other people who are just now beginning to mentor the next generation coming forward?

**Sharon Wegscheider Cruse:** Yes, there are lessons. Honor your past, take the best from it, learn from it, and look toward the future, but live in the present. That's true for professionals, but it's also true for all people. We all stand on the shoulders of somebody. I certainly stood on a lot of shoulders. We have to, in the present, still continue every single day to live one day at a time and make ourselves the best person we can for that day because people are watching and people are listening. I think it's the gift we give our families and I think it's the gift we give professionally.

Another lesson is to know when to quit. Know when your life is taking you in a new direction. Know what enough means in your life. Know when you have had enough education. Know when have had you had enough seeking. Know when you have enough money to live and be responsible. Know when you have enough satisfaction in your life in one direction and need another direction. Be willing to change, but know when to quit. I retired 20 years ago, but I kept writing, and I switched into mentoring women.

I'm alive, awake, and aware every day with what I want to share with women, listen to from women, and so forth. But I needed to retire because I was prolific in the '80s and I worked really hard, in the '70s, '80s, '90s, and early 2000s. I needed to take

time to be with my family. My family's always been a big focus for me. If it had not been for wanting my children to have experiences that I had had, I probably never would have helped found NACoA. And then when my first grandchild was born, it changed my life. I wanted the time to do the things I'd done professionally but not with my family. And I've had that time now. A major lesson learned is to not forget your family and friends. Know when it's enough. Give it all your best and make those shoulders that people stand on strong. Don't succumb and choose to succumb to workaholism, to any one focus that feeds your ego. Don't do that—get out and live your life.

### Working with the Media

**Bill White:** You've had extensive contact with the national media. Do you have any insights or suggestions for people about working with media?

**Sharon Wegscheider Cruse:** I have one insight that's not a big one but it was important to me and my family. When I wrote my latest book, I chose not to write about my family, even though they're such a big part of my life. They want me as parent, not as a star. They just want me to be their parent. I cast a shadow sometimes when I go somewhere. When they were younger, people would come up to them and say, "Oh, aren't you proud of your mother? Your mother's doing this, or your mother was in the newspaper last week." That casts a shadow and I've learned not to bring your children up in a shadow. My children aren't in my shadow. They've all grown into beautiful individuals with interests of their own and families of their own and that took a concentrated effort. I think one of the biggest joys for me recently is that two of my children, one couldn't make it because she's so far away, came to my keynotes at a national conference and sat in the second row. And you know what? Those are the two people along with Joe I really noticed in that audience. So, help them walk their path, but

keep your personal path to yourself. And I've done that. They've given me the space to have an incredible career and they've supported me all the way through. And some of my grandchildren, to be honest, don't even know I have another life. They just know me as Grandma. The media can entice with its sensationalism and be very ego-filling, just as it can be very controlling. So my advice is to keep your life to yourself and give the people that you care about space away from that world.

### International Work

**Bill White:** Are there insights you developed about families that you drew from your international work as you stepped outside of our culture and began to look at families around the world?

**Sharon Wegscheider Cruse:** I did and some of those might jump out at me. Hawaii and the Polynesian areas are very big on family and they have this tradition of talk story. I noticed that in native countries or people with tribal ancestry, they come to some of this healing naturally, but the more they become like us, they begin to have more issues within their families. Traditionally, they do talk story, and I've gone to Hawaii to do talk stories with families. There's a natural family union that could and should be recognized and built upon. They would have my family roles hanging up in their houses. They didn't follow a book or anything but they know those roles and they would get together and have talk stories two and three nights a week.

In my international travel, I also noticed that I met with lots of mothers and children. One thing I learned is that mothers love their children--everywhere I went, no matter what language it was. There is something special about giving birth; I think fathers love their children too, but in a different way. But there is an instinct in the way birthing mothers love their children. I think adoptive mothers also love their



children. There is an instinct of love that I think can be nurtured. If we stay away from diagnosing, people can heal themselves if they have the right setting and the right support. I'm into letting people heal within an understanding of their own system. Now, that brings me to Virginia Satir. I traveled a lot in Mexico with her and Virginia never spoke Spanish, but she could do a three-hour workshop by the looks on people's faces. She would put them into postures. She had the style of working that taught me so much. I hope I've taught it to the addiction field at Onsite. But you can read people's body languages and how they connect. Virginia never spoke Spanish, but I saw her do masterful work in family therapy in Mexico.

**Bill White:** That's remarkable.

**Sharon Wegscheider Cruse:** It was absolutely remarkable. As the world shrinks, I hold out for hope for communities of many different types of people. The family system model is one of the reasons Onsite took off with a flourish and a flash. I knew a lot of powerful people in Minneapolis, and so they would ask me, first of all, "Can you work with my family?", and, of course, I would, and things would change and then they'd say, "Can you work with my company?" So Onsite actually, as it came together, became a corporate-based helping company because we would bring our programs to your corporation. I would go in and work with boards of directors like they were a family system and the board cleaned up and cleared up. That had a huge impact in the City of Minneapolis.

### ***Becoming a Sage***

**Bill White:** If there are central threads that permeate your work, I would have to say one would be the value of story-telling. In your latest book, *Becoming a Sage*, was your first effort to focus on your own story. Was the experience of writing this book different than all the other publications that you've done?

**Sharon Wegscheider Cruse:** It was very different. When I was writing other books, I always had a content that I wanted to share—concepts, teaching, and information. Sometimes, I had to coin new words to convey this information for the first time. I invented the word *choice-making*, and I invented the word *couple-ship* to put a framework around some things that are naturally a part of our lives but which need to be understood in a new way. But when it came to *Becoming a Sage*, the content was less important to me than the style. I wanted to write a book that wasn't necessarily about me, although that's what I used as a platform for the book. I wanted to write it in a way that people would read a short story and then think about their own life. I wanted to be a source of inspiration for everyone to believe that their story matters. Somehow when I started to write my experiences, it turned out to be a story, and I think that's true for everybody. I started out in the beginning wanting to leave a legacy for my family. *Becoming a Sage* shares some of my life experiences, but it turned into a larger story about how you can go through really rough times but still make it to the other side. What I came out of the book with was more acceptance, courage, and wisdom. I know a prayer like that. My story turned out to be that lived prayer. I thought if I can do that, then people can write their own stories through that prayer.

### **Career-to-Date Reflections**

**Bill White:** What are some of the rewards you've experienced working in the addictions field over these many years?

**Sharon Wegscheider Cruse:** Oh, untold. There's so many. I think I have a sense of authenticity with myself. I'm pretty clear with myself and that has come only from going into the depths and using that to go forward to understand life's lessons and then using that to hear other people's life lessons and to

become involved with them as a professional and learn from their life lessons. I learn every day from others, but I have a framework to put it in because I'm at home with myself. In this field, you meet the nicest people. You meet the most courageous people. I wrote in the book about how I stepped outside of my field for a while and became very active. I realized that there's a big world out there beyond addiction, but that it includes addiction. For seven years, I donated my time and facilitated a group for mothers who had lost children. Without this profession, I would never have met what I think are some of the bravest people in the world. And I learned how to tap dance and became a tap dancer for 15 years. And physically, I'm in very good shape, compared with many other people I know that are my age. I think you meet the brightest, most caring, most courageous people which is a big part of why this is such an incredible field to go into. This is also an evolving, ever-changing field to work in. It's rewarding, it's exciting, and it's hard work.

**Bill White:** Pushing the field toward more family-oriented care has been quite a challenge. Do you have any final advice for people who want to carry forward the legacy of your work?

**Sharon Wegscheider Cruse:** That's a really important question, and it is hard to push family oriented care just as it is hard to push addiction treatment to the larger culture. It's very hard to get these programs out in front of the public eye. I think your question raises a bigger question that we do not yet have answers for. There are some wonderful programs out there such as the work Jerry Moe is doing in California, and he is just doing miracle-making work. But there aren't enough Jerrys to go around. People would like to do that work, but finding a way to pay for it is difficult as it is for so many wonderful things at this current time. Sometimes you have to find another way to support yourself and sometimes you simply have to do a lot of volunteer work. Right now,

there's not a clear path of how to fund programs focused on families and children. That's just reality. The children, to this day, get left out. We have to keep advocating on their behalf. I want to assure people that whether you're the person trying to find funding or whether you're the person who has to come up with something creative, if everybody worked locally, we wouldn't have a national problem. So, do what you can where you can and have faith that such efforts will get tied together somehow. With commitment, loyalty, and faith, something should and can happen. In the meantime, stay connected to what exists now, such as NACoA. Volunteer, make noise, and join with others to create coalitions to bring people together for common cause. We don't need stars; we need people who will work together as a team until we meet this challenge.

**Bill White:** Sharon, this has been fabulous. Thank you for taking this time to reflect on your life and your prolific career.

**Sharon Wegscheider Cruse:** Thank you, Bill.

**Acknowledgement:** Support for this interview series is provided by the Great Lakes Addiction Technology Transfer Center (ATTC) through a cooperative agreement from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT). The opinions expressed herein are the view of the authors and do not reflect the official position of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), SAMHSA, or CSAT.

**Books, publications, videos, and related resources of Sharon Wegscheider Cruse can be reviewed at <http://www.sharonwcruse.com/books-by-sharon/>**