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Amy Morin: Welcome to *The Verywell Mind Podcast!* I'm Amy Morin, the editor-in-chief of Verywell Mind. I'm also a psychotherapist and a best-selling author of four books on mental strength. Every Monday, I introduce you to a mentally strong person whose story and mental strength tips can inspire you to think, feel, and do your best in life. And the fun part is we record the show from a sailboat in the Florida Keys!

Don't forget to subscribe to the show on your favorite platform so you can get mental strength tips delivered to you every single week. Now let's dive into today's episode!

If you've ever heard the song “I Love Rock 'n Roll,” you've heard today's guest. For more than a decade, Ricky Byrd was a member of Joan Jett & The Blackhearts. His life as a musician started out like a lot of other stories you've probably heard. As he rose to fame, his drinking and drug use also rose. He performed drunk and high on stages all around the world until he decided to get sober. And he credits AA with helping him in his path to healing and recovery. So whether you struggle with an addiction or you know someone who does, today's episode is for you.

Some of the things Ricky talks about are: what made him get help, why AA isn't for everyone but why it worked for him, and how people can find their own path to recovery. Make sure to stick around until the end of the episode for The Therapist’s Take. It's the part of the show where I'll break
down Ricky’s mental strength-building strategies and share how you can apply them to your own life. So here's Ricky Byrd on how to get help for an addiction.

Ricky Byrd, welcome to *The Verywell Mind Podcast*!

Ricky Byrd: Nice to meet you, Amy.

Amy Morin: Such a pleasure to talk to you, as I said before we-

Ricky Byrd: We should wait until this is finished before you say something like that.

Amy Morin: Well, even before we press the record button, you and I chatted for a minute. And I said, about, I don't know, two hours after we booked you on the podcast, I sit in the car and I hear I Love Rock & Roll on the radio and immediately think, "This is amazing. I get to talk to a Rock and Roll Hall of Famer." So thanks for being here.

Ricky Byrd: Thanks for asking me.

Amy Morin: So how did you get into music in the first place, and how'd you end up working with Joan Jett & The Blackhearts?

Ricky Byrd: Oh God, I have to give you the short version. I mean, I've been playing guitar since I'm nine, grew up in the Bronx. And I quite literally saw The Beatles and The Stones on The Ed Sullivan Show, which was a variety show that used to be on back in the sixties, also seventies, that your whole family would sit around and watch every Sunday. So The Beatles and Stones were on, I think it was '65, yeah, I was nine and I kind of related. I mean, I always, sort of pulling this together with recovery and addiction, even as a kid, I was very shy. I mean, I'm not anymore, but very shy, and always felt a little left of center, and I saw something in... I always loved music. There was always music in the house being played. And we lived with my grandparents for a while so it was like thirties and forties music.

But New York radio was amazing, AM radio before FM was invented. So there was all this cool rock and roll, but also they played Sinatra. It was all on one station so I'm quite wide in the kind of stuff I like. But the Sullivan show, The Beatles and The Stones came on. Loved the Beatles, of course. But when The Stones came on, I just saw Keith Richards and Jagger, and I was like, "Oh, I like that." Even at nine, I was like, "That
looks kind of reckless." And they kind of looked like I felt, if you could understand that. They looked left of center. And right after that, I asked my mom for a guitar. And I can't remember the timeline, but at some point her boss that she worked for, she was in the handbag business, and he gave her a guitar for my birthday, a little acoustic. Brought it home, my first guitar. That guitar is in the Rock Hall now, so that's pretty cool. I donated it.

Amy Morin: That's very cool.

Ricky Byrd: So that's when I started. Long story how I got to Joan. My wife Carol was working, she's a publicist. She was working at a big management company here in New York and they managed Aerosmith and Def Leppard and different bands. And Joan and Kenny, Kenny, Joan's manager, the Bad Reputation record was out, and they didn't really have an office, but they were friends with the owner of the management company. He gave them a space in the office. It was a big office on the 50s. So Carol got to be friends with Joan. I had a record out in '78. I did a whole tour across the country with this band. I came back. I was trying to figure out what to do next.

And it's a long story. I did a couple... I was working with John Wade for a little bit, and this and that, and trying to figure out what to do next. And Carol said, "Do you know who Joan Jett is?" I said, "Oh yeah, yeah," because I saw The Runaways at CBGBs. She said, "Do you want to go down and jam with them?" And I did and we got along great, and I joined the band. That was in '81 when we did the I Love Rock & Roll record.

Amy Morin: And then at what point did your substance abuse start?

Ricky Byrd: Oh gosh, I started smoking pot when I was 13. And listen, when I say I used, I use the term used for drugs and alcohol, for 18 years. It wasn't every day at the beginning. I mean, I smoked pot, I was only 13. And then we moved from the Bronx to Queens, and so I was in bands, garage bands. And with that came hanging out with other kids, other musicians. So we smoked pot and somebody would bring a six pack of beer, Heinekens and that, or whatever it was, and we started partaking. Now the difference between myself and the others, my dad died of alcoholism, so did his father. And I have somebody else on that side of the family that's been in recovery for 40 years. So obviously, I have that particular addiction gene, that part of it.
So basically when other people that we were hanging would say, "I got to go to home and do my homework," I'd be like, "Well, let's smoke some more." And that was basically the way it was. I never did one, I was always overdoing it, no matter what I was doing. And it progressed over the years. It wasn't all horrible. While we were teenagers, we were like running crazy as one would do when you're a teenager, especially in New York. And I was hanging out in clubs in the city. So when I started hanging out at rock clubs with phony proof, famous, turned out to be legendary rock and roll clubs where I paid my dues, I guess. I would hang out with older people. So they introduced me to pills.

So that's the progression. And throughout at all, I wasn't one to know when to stop. And I think when cocaine started for my group and my age bracket, somewhere around '79, somewhere in there, I took to it like a duck to water. So from there to '87, that combining with everything else, was a quick... Well, it wasn't that quick, but that was the circling the drain part. We did stuff before cocaine that you would wind up in strange places, and this and that. But cocaine for me was the thing that really threw me over the edge and took me down that path where you would mix that with some booze and some pills, and you wouldn't know where the night was going to lead once you started.

And once I started being somebody that had that gene and I have also the allergy they talk about in the 12 step groups. When you take the first one, all bets were off and you wouldn't have any power to stop. No matter what anybody said, no matter how you were physically, no matter what it did to your family, whatever behavior, you just couldn't stop. That went on until I was turning 30. My stuff is visible because there's videos on YouTube. I was 128 pounds, was the heroin involved. We snorted a little bit. I snorted a little bit at the end and it was mixed with cocaine, I later found out from a friend of mine who's been in recovery as long as I have now. And he was somebody I used to use with.

But I never got into shooting needles, or anything like that. The way I explain it is, there were people that did more than me. There were definitely people that did less than me, but I did enough where I thought that I was coming to the end of the rope, the end of the line. And when I was turning 30, I said I was going to stop. And from 30 to 31, almost 31, because my birthday's in October and I got clean September 25th, 1987, that was my first day. So from October of the previous year to September, I actually tried to stop. And that's where all hell broke loose. And I have a
diary. I save all my diaries, for what reason, I have no clue, but I save all my diaries. I guess one reason is, it has all the dates that I played with Joan, which I can't remember at this point, and everybody else I've played with.

Every day from that October, it was, "Okay, tonight we're just going to go out for a nice meal and I'll have a club soda." And then next day it was always the same, "Okay, we're going to start today," and this went on. And because I guess I was hating myself that I couldn't stop, you kind of punish yourself by doing more. That's a therapy thing probably. But August of '87, we went to a wedding and we were sitting next to, they put us at a table with friends. And there was a friend of ours that we used with on occasion, a girl named Jill. And I leaned into Jill, as I would do at that point and say, "Are you holding," probably whispered it. My three favorite words at the time, right? "Are you holding?"

And she said, "No, no. I'm going to these meetings, and I'm doing this, and I don't use anymore." And immediately my brain was like, "Good for you." And my head turned to look to see if there's anybody else that looked like a victim. But she planted a seed which is now what I try to do in recovery, plant seeds. You can't get anybody clean, but you could plant seeds and point them in the right direction and help them through it, the journey. But you can't make anybody straight, drinking and drugging. That was August. September 25th, two in the morning, standing in front of the mirror, had that moment. Everybody has a different moment. I just looked like Dracula and I was all kinds of high and drunk. And I picked up the phone and I called Jill, and she took me to my first meeting the next day in New York City. And I've been going ever since.

Amy Morin: Wow.

Ricky Byrd: And believe it or not, that's the short version.

Amy Morin: Well, a lot of people, I'm a therapist, a lot of people will come into my office and they'll say, "Well, I don't really have a problem because I only use on the weekends," or, "I only use...," or, "I know somebody who uses more than I do." We don't really define when substance abuse becomes a problem by how often you use or necessarily how much you use when you do, but by the problems it causes in your life.
Ricky Byrd: That's our answer when people ask us, when they say that to us in recovery. It's like, "It's not how often or how much you use, it's what happens when you use." If you use once a week and you get drunk and you drive your car into a family, that's probably a good sign you should stop.

Amy Morin: Right. It causes problems at work. It causes problems in your relationships. Your health is declining. In your case, what kind of problems made you realize, "Okay, I want to stop this."

Ricky Byrd: Well, the 128 pounds was probably a good sign for somebody that was like 30. I mean, I wasn't physically well. I collapsed my lung in '83 on the road with Joan, and that was from drug use. It was probably from a specific moment that I remember when I free based, as they called it back then. I'm so out of what the kids call things now. But I think I burnt a hole in my lung in any event. And I wound up, my lung collapsed, it was called tension pneumothorax. It happened in Opelika, Alabama, we were playing. And by the time I got to the hospital, they took me to the hospital because at first they thought... I think we were playing with maybe The Police. We were playing a big stadium in town. And if we didn't have a gig the next night, we'd stay in town and we would play a club on our own.

So we played a college. It happened onstage. It actually happened right before Crimson & Clover, I remember that. And I felt this incredible weight on my chest, which is what collapsed lung makes you feel like. They took me to the nurse's office. She said you probably pulled a muscle. She gave me muscle relaxants. Now, if I would've gone to the hotel and taken those, that would've been it. Later on, they told me that tension pneumothorax, my heart moved to the other side. It was moving to the other side. It was very serious and I had 10 minutes to go. And if I would've gone to the hotel, I remember our road manager took me back to my room after the gig.

Somehow I managed to play the last song because I'm a trooper and the show must go on, got me back. I laid down in my room and I shot back up. I couldn't breathe. And they took me to the hospital in Opelika, Alabama. And I was there for, I think, three weeks. I woke up, my wife was there. But that should have been it. Yeah, that should have been it, but it was not. And I went on from '83 to '87. I mean, I remember him telling me I couldn't smoke pot anymore. Remember I had no clue what recovery was at all. Couldn't smoke pot anymore. I've been smoking since I was 13. He
said you had the beginning of emphysema. And I sat across the table as I was being released to the head of the hospital. And I said to him, this is 1983, "What about cocaine?" And he actually looked at me and he said, "In moderation."

Amy Morin: Wow.

Ricky Byrd: Exactly, wow, because that's what they thought back then, right? Moderation. But that's not how cocaine... So yeah. So at the beginning, I got back to New York, I didn't smoke pot. I didn't do Coke. But now that I'm 34 and three quarters into recovery, I know that having one Heineken for a person that has a brain that's alcohol and drug ready, that triggers everything else. Well, so you have one Heineken, this is what happened. I'd have one Heineken, so that lets you guard down a little bit. So then you have two. After three, you're ordering Jack Daniels. After two of those, you're making phone calls to the drug dealers, right?

That's how addiction works for me. I guess it's different for everybody. So that was it. So it got worse as time went on, and physically, that was the main thing, because it was a very serious business. I remember towards '87, eventually obviously, I started doing Coke again. And I would hold my chest because I would get these spasms from it. Yeah, I was just a mess like that. And all kinds of stuff would happen. It was behavioral stuff. It was how you treated people. It was all the stuff that goes along with addiction.

Amy Morin: And there's this belief out there that you have to hit rock bottom, which I'm like, "Okay, you had a collapsed lung. Okay, this is this awful thing." And that would make you get help. But it's often not the case. You just looked at yourself in the mirror one day and decided that it was time to get help. It wasn't in the midst of a crisis is that what you'd say?

Ricky Byrd: Yeah. And everybody has a different bottom. I mean, there were people... I never went to prison. There were people that had been in prison four times for drug related stuff and they come out and they just start using again. Everybody's got that moment. See, here's the way I feel. Recovery is always there. It's like this big planet and we're these little spaceships, like this addiction thing, or it's a satellite recovery and we're just floating here. And hopefully, at some point they go... It's got to be, the message and the person has to be... The message is always there. The person has to be ready, hopefully, you don't miss the message or the person that's bringing you the message. And that's what I found all these years in
recovery, talking to people. Everybody has different, if you do 12 step stuff in AA, which is where I started, actually it was Drugs Anonymous, and then I went into AA.

The way Bill W, Bill Wilson, he had that, time and time again, he kept winding up in the same hospital. He was a big shot, Wall Street guy, he lost everything. He just kept doing it. He kept saying, "I'm done. I'm done." And then he'd find a justification to drink. And finally, they told his wife, Lois, the doctor at this hospital here in New York said, "Pretty soon he is going to have a wet brain and that's going to be it." But he had this white light thing that some psychologists and psychiatrists from centuries back wrote about, that some people have this white light thing where they see higher power or whatever, or they just have this thing which is their clarity, their moment of clarity, and their direction changes. I was standing in front of the mirror and I just said, "This is not going to end well," because I'm like a sarcastic, I said, "Dude, you always wanted to look like Keith Richards. Yeah, yeah. Think you did it."

Amy Morin: And for you, were 12 steps meetings, is that what helped you to get sober? Did you do anything else?

Ricky Byrd: Nope. I didn't go to rehab. I remember it was '87. So there was a Betty Ford and there were others, but not like today. I had a family member, my uncle, would send me before this spike came into the rooms, he sent me in the mail every once in a while, and we laugh about this now, pamphlets. And I was like, "Why is he sending me this stuff? What is this?" And he was planting seeds. Unfortunately, I used it to put my drinks on the table so I wouldn't ruin the table. We plant seeds. And I started off there and I just fell in love with it. And why did I fall in love with meetings, because like we talked about before, I was certified as a counselor and I didn't get to do a lot of it.

I did it like three or four months before the pandemic, at a place. And I'd have kids in their early twenties telling me, "I don't like those meetings. I hate those meetings. I can't stand those meetings." We were out in Staten island, that's where this place was. And they said, "Too many people know me here." "Well, go in the city." "Ah, it's too much trouble." I'm like, "Dude, did you cop in the city?" I mean, did you get on the Staten Island Ferry to go into the city at one in the morning?" "Yeah, yeah, yeah." But I was lucky. I walked into my first meeting here in New York and I just fell in love because even though I looked different, so it was 87.
It was about the I Hate Myself for Loving You period with The Blackhearts, sorry. And my hair was really long. I was probably all rocked out and stuff. I went to this meeting. No, I didn't look like anybody in the meeting. But when they started talking, I could identify with everything everybody said. And everybody's so friendly and, let's face it, we all want to be part of something when we're kids, right? People go into cliques, they join gangs. They join bands. Everybody wants to be part of something. I just felt very welcome and I just started going. And at the beginning it was like, there was the meeting after the meeting where people... You'd go to a luncheonette or a diner here in New York. And you would sit, there'd be like 30 people from the meeting talking. So that's been my go-to all these years, still is.

Amy Morin: You still go?

Ricky Byrd: Oh, for sure. I mean, I just started going back live. I found a meeting that... I take the pandemic very seriously and I know quite a few people that did not make it, including Alan Merrill, who co-wrote I Love Rock & Roll. He died right at the beginning of this, from COVID, couple people from meetings. Every time I go to a meeting, they tell me that more people passed in the last two years. So yeah, I started going live, but it's a big church room. It's huge. Everything's split, seats are spread out, and stuff like that. And during the pandemic, early on, very early on, I am not anonymous, right? I'm anonymous, I mean, I'm talking to you here. But I'm anonymous with my means of how I stay sober. I don't say, I go to AA meeting, I say, I go to community support group meetings.

But on my social media pages, I talk about recovery, which means people come to me. And during the pandemic, the first two years, I got a lot of people talking to me about stuff, about that they're struggling, and this and that. And I try to help by chatting, if you want to chat, DM me. And somebody came on and asked me to speak at a meeting out of Florida, a men's meeting. I said, "Yeah, cool," and I did. And I fell in love with this meeting, out of Boca. And I was on there the first year and a half every day at noon, it's a seven day a week meeting, and I just had the best... I've like got four or five really close friends now from this meeting, I haven't been on in ages because I started going back live.

And that was, like if you want to ask me, how did you do this through the pandemic? Well, I've got 34 years plus of recovery tricks in my trick bag that I learned all this time. And one of them is to keep doing the work, the
recovery work, see? You got to not isolate. Isolation is just the worst thing for addicts and alcoholics. If you're alone long enough, your brain will tell you that you're not that bad and maybe I could just have one. So isolation, top of the list. Okay, so what do you do? Dude, Zoom. Wow. I mean, I kept picturing Bill W and Dr. Bob, the co-founders of AA looking down, going, "Well done. Nice." So technology did help us with this because I went to meetings all over the world, even before this happened, touring, but here on Zoom. "Oh, there's a meeting in Belfast," so that was really cool.

The other thing is helping other people because isolation will take you out quick. Helping other people is huge. So whatever your thing is, if you're in recovery, reach out to other people that's struggling. Talk to your friends that are in recovery. Keep that dialogue going always. Everybody's so traumatized, even though they might not admit it right now, what we just went through. First of all, we all thought we were going to die. I mean, not everybody, but here in New York, it was insane that first year. Ambulances, people, I mean more trucks outside the [inaudible]. It was just insane. So we didn't know, it was like a bad movie. You're a therapist. I think the human brain is built to suppress things almost and sort of protect us, which is why a lot of people have childhood trauma and they grow up and it comes sprouting out all over the place.

They don't even know why, but it's a bully beating them up behind the school or your father telling you you're going to be nothing when you grow up, whatever it is. We have this ability to suppress it and forget about it. We have built in forgetters and that's a 12 step thing too, which is why you got to keep your eye on the ball. So I think a lot of people now... I mean, the behavior outside, in this country right now, you have to put some of that on the trauma from being inside for two years. And there's all things attached to gun violence, this, that, but the people acting out because they were suppressed for the last two years and scared, even if they didn't want to admit they were scared. I don't know how you couldn't be, but especially if you know people that passed away from it.

So I think there's a lot of that going on. And so what do we do? What does a person in recovery do? Dude, you just lean into recovery, man, that's the best way to fix it. I mean, life will happen, whether you're in recovery or you're not in recovery, and bad things happen when you get into recovery. But there's no reason to drink or drug over anything, I've learned over all this time. I mean, I just had a friend of mine who had about five years call me last week and say, "I can't believe I drank last night. I just couldn't take
the pain of what's going on in this country. The news, the constant news, the bad news." And I said, "Okay." I mean, this is what I learned and how I feel. No judgment.

It's like, "I totally understand. I mean, it's hard for me also." But you don't have to drink over anything and be sure, make no mistake, drinking and drugging will only make it worse. "Oh, well, what do I do?" "Well, go back to a 12 step meeting tomorrow," because that's what she was doing. "And then help somebody that's struggling. Grab somebody that's struggling." That's the incredible cure for life in general, be of service somehow, whatever it is, whatever your thing is, whatever charity, volunteer. That's incredible, that's the best drug in the world is helping somebody else.

Amy Morin: So I hear a lot of people who are hesitant to go to a 12 step meeting. I'll hear people say things like, "Well, it's too much about religion," or, "The only people that go to those meetings are just mandated by somebody else, they don't actually believe in it," or, "It's boring." What do you say to somebody who's hesitant to try a 12 step meeting?

Ricky Byrd: I say, "Dude, if your life's on the line, try anything that somebody suggests." You don't like it, there's a lot of other recovery methods these days. I mean, when I do my recovery music groups that I've been doing around the country for the last maybe 10 years or something, the first thing I open with is, "I'm not here to sell you on 12 step groups. That's just the way I did it. There's other recovery out there. Whatever keeps you on the right side of the grass, baby, that's what you should do." But I love 12 step groups because of the camaraderie. I mean, this is really hard to do alone. I'm not saying, I mean, everybody's different. Some people recover alone. Okay, fabulous. Good for you. But it's very difficult to do alone because you have that inner voice that's telling you, you weren't that bad.

Or the three words that you'll never hear me say is, "I've got this." So that's what I would tell somebody. It's like, "Dude, just try it." I mean, that's what I was telling those kids as a counselor saying, "Hey man, just try it." If you go into a meeting and you hate it immediately, it could be because of a couple of things. You're not ready. Your brain is looking for outs, so you go, "I hate this. This is awful." If you're desperate, the gift of desperation is very powerful, which is why I have to keep doing recovery now because I don't have the gift of desperation anymore. You know what I mean? After all this time, I don't have that. As bad as things get, it's never going to be as bad as it was back then, right?
People pass away, people get sick. You can't pay your bills. This happens. You don't get what you want. It's never going to be as bad. And I learned tools to deal with all that. But when you're first struggling, and especially these days with fentanyl, or all the stuff that's going on, that you've got desperation. That's why you reach out. So I just say, "Look, man, you've run out of dance tickets, man. Go try a meeting. If you don't like AA, try a CA meeting, maybe that's more your style. If the people are too old, find a younger meeting. There's thousands and thousands of meetings. And in the end, if you think you've given it enough of a try, then try one of the other methods, whatever keeps you alive."

Amy Morin: That's the joy of the world we live in now. I'm sure you've seen a huge shift in recovery since you first entered it, but there's medication, there's therapy. You can do online therapy. You can attend groups online. We have plenty of rehabs, outpatients, intensive outpatients. The list goes on and on. So there's usually something. If one thing doesn't work, try the next thing on the list.

Ricky Byrd: And the goal, I'm sure you would agree, is to not die.

Amy Morin: Yes.

Ricky Byrd: That's the goal. There's no other goal, that's the goal. And if you do that and if you find recovery, your life will change. Now whether it's for the better, that's up to you how much you put into it, but your life will change, probably for the better. I mean, it's definitely going to change for the better, as far as behavioral. If you want to get further along, that's up to you and what you're good at and what you want to follow. And there's no promises about it in 12 steps, about cash and prizes. But the only thing that I know is that thing of, I got to watch my words here, I know that total abstinence works for me. I can't understand how you could, and I can understand doing certain stuff at the beginning to get you to square two.

But I couldn't say to you, "I've been clean like 35 years, I could smoke pot now." I don't think I could, but maybe I could. I don't know the answer to the question because I never did. The big question is, do I want to take the chance. It's all about, life's about odds, right? So the odds are, if I don't drink or drug a day at a time, I'm not going to get high or I'm not going to screw up the world, my world, all the world. So saying that, "I don't want to shoot heroin anymore, but I still want to do cocaine." Okay, I don't know what to say, fabulous.
Amy Morin: Last question for you. To somebody who’s listening to this and they think, “Yeah, but life in recovery is not going to be as good. It's either going to be boring or I won't be as successful because I won't be as creative.” What would you say to somebody who has those fears about getting into recovery?

Ricky Byrd: That's nonsense. I've been asked that a million times. I've only gotten better in everything I do. But I want to talk about All Sober, okay? That's the key to this whole thing. One of the things that I know for sure, I'm very excited that I'm going to start working for them now, or I am working for them now. That's why I'm here today. What I found is a lot of confusion out there. I've been getting, all these years, because I'm not anonymous, people's parents, kids talking about their parents, parents talking about their kids. "My kid's in really big trouble, can you help me? Can you find me a place?" And I would never recommend a place because I don't vet places. So I turned them onto people that I know do vet places. So what I'm saying is, there's a lot of information out there, but it's not all in one place, see?

And once you start recovery, it's a big journey. You start getting your life back. Then what do I do with my life? How do I stay in the community? Where's the recovery community? Where do I find meetings? Yeah, it's all there, but it's all separate. If I want to know of a meeting at noon, I just go on Google. But for somebody that's starting out, it's very confusing, both for parents that have kids like that, or they want to help themselves. All Sober, this platform, whether it's the free app, by the way, or allsober.com is insanely great because it's going to put everything in one place that you could find. They have different... Can I read something?

Amy Morin: Sure.

Ricky Byrd: Because I don't want to say the wrong stuff. Okay. What is All Sober, that's your question. The platform features seven key sections that cover the entire journey from addiction to recovery. Help & Information. So where do I get help? What insurance does this place take? I'm telling you, these are questions that I always get asked from people.

Amy Morin: Me too.

Ricky Byrd: Yeah. Okay. What did I say? Help & Information: Group support, that would be some sort of 12 step or SMART recovery, or this or that, the
other. Treatment and recovery, that's tells you what it is right there. Community, it's like, where do I find other people like myself that are in recovery that I could hang with. Relaunch, is like, okay, now what do I do? I haven't worked in six years. I don't even know what I do anymore. My 24/7 job for the last 10 years has been drinking and drugging. By the way, that's got lousy benefits, let me just mention that. Sober lifestyle, style and inspiration, which is hopefully where I fit in. So it's amazing that it's going to be all in one place.

Now it's to get the message out to everybody that you could get All Sober going. If you've got an iPhone go on the app store, download the app, and go to check out allsober.com. And we're going to be doing, from what I've been told, we're going to be doing shows on the expiration side, recovery shows. I'll be going out on behalf of All Sober to do my recovery music groups at treatment facilities, hopefully out New York and tri-state area, but hopefully all over the place because I haven't seen the country in a while. And I'm just proud and excited. I can't wait to see what's coming up next with this. But I mean, they told me what this was and I was like, "Yes, that's exactly what's missing, one stop shopping." Now the thing is to get the message out to people, let the treatment facilities know, "Yeah, you got to sign up for this. This is great," on that side of it, and therapists and this and that.

Maybe I could do recovery coaching through All Sober too. That'd be cool. And then also on the side of people, it's getting the message out to people. It's like, "Dude, you need this. Just go on here. Put your state in, put your zip code in, and it'll tell you what places they are. They've all been properly vetted." Because I kept asking them before I started doing this, I said, "This is vetted, right?" These places... "Yes, vetted. They've vetted. How many times you going to ask? They're vetted." But I'm very sensitive to that because there's a lot of tomfoolery out there. And it's killing people too, you go into the wrong place. So I'm very secure in the fact that they do that. And I think that as this progresses and the word gets out there and we start spreading the message, I think it's going to be a huge help to the recovery community, whether you're struggling or already in recovery.

Amy Morin: I'm sure it will be. We'll link to it in our show notes because so many people struggle and I get those same questions of where do I get help? What should I do first? How can I help somebody else? So we'll make sure that we link to it.
And thank you so much, Ricky Byrd, for sharing your story with us and the tools that have worked for you and the resources. And the message that you keep spreading because you're practicing what you preach by putting yourself in service to others.

Ricky Byrd: It's important to lean into life and to do good things. And especially in a world that's a little sideways right now. Keep your side of the street clean and try to help the other side. And you do that by doing some sort of service. They may not be recovery. It might be another part of mental health struggle or different illnesses, like help, volunteer. It doesn't take much time. And I swear to you as I'm sitting here, it makes you feel better. And when you feel better, you don't want to hurt yourself. How's that?

Amy Morin: That makes sense.

Ricky Byrd: To a therapy, to the therapist.

Amy Morin: That's right. That's right. Thank you, Ricky.

Ricky Byrd: All right. Thank you, Amy. Have a great day.

Amy Morin: Thanks. You too.

Ricky Byrd: Bye.

Amy Morin: Welcome to The Therapist's Take! This is a part of the show where I'll break down Ricky's mental strength-building strategies and share how you can apply them to your own life. Here are three of my favorite strategies that Ricky shared.

**Number one: plant seeds.** If you know someone who's struggling with an unhealthy habit, a long lecture about why they should change isn't going to change their behavior. So I like that Ricky talked about planting seeds. You never know how something you said might stick with someone and grow later. We often talk about this idea as therapists. Sometimes people come to therapy because they're exploring ideas and they're thinking about changing, but they aren't quite ready to take any action. But hearing information from other people when they're receptive to hearing it can plant some seeds. At a later date down the road, they might remember something they heard, and they might decide to take action. But you just never know when that moment might be.
Most people I know who changed their lives didn't have a rock bottom moment that made them change. At least not the rock bottom moment that you might expect. They might not change when they lose their jobs or have a serious health issue. But they might just wake up one day and decide they're ready to change. Of course, there are times when a major event, like a near-death experience does motivate people to change their lives. But even with those experiences, it's often little seeds that were planted over time that really inspire change. So if you see someone who engages in self-destructive behavior, don't take it upon yourself to try and change them. Know that you might be able to inspire them with your healthy habits and by occasionally expressing genuine concern. But if they don't change, just remind yourself that you're planting seeds and you can't control what happens to the seeds once they're planted.

**Number two: don't isolate yourself.** So often when we're struggling with something, we keep our struggles a secret, and the isolation makes things worse. Ricky says this is true with addiction. And that's why he's encouraging people who are struggling with substance abuse to connect with others. There's a popular TED Talk called “Everything you think you know about addiction is wrong.” The speaker's name is Johan Hari, and he shares how the opposite of addiction is connection. When we feel connected to other people, we're less likely to engage in unhealthy behavior. We all need a sense of community and to feel like we belong and that we matter. For Ricky, AA meetings prevent him from isolating himself. For other people though, a spiritual group, a volunteer group, or just a group of supportive friends might be helpful. But the important thing to remember is that isolating yourself makes everything worse. And if you don't know where to start or how to connect with other people, a 12-step meeting could be a good place.

**Number three: find your own path to healing.** Ricky made it clear that AA works for him, but that it's not for everyone. There are many paths to healing. We've had several different people on this show who talk about recovery and how they finally got help. Jared Watson said he turned to self-help. Bryan Abrams went to rehab. Some people find medication that helps them manage an addiction. Other people say outpatient therapy works well. In today's world, there are tons of options from apps to online sober coaches. There are plenty of opportunities to explore what might work for you. So if someone insists that you have to do one specific thing to get better, remember that there are many different paths to healing. You might have to experiment for a bit until you figure out what works for you.
So if you’re struggling with an addiction yourself, or you love someone who is, visit sober.com for more information. The website offers information and resources about how to get help.

If you know someone who could benefit from hearing this message, share it with them. Simply sharing a link to this episode could help someone feel better and grow stronger. Do you want free access to my online course? It's called “10 Mental Strength Exercises That Will Help You Reach Your Greatest Potential.” To get your free pass, all you have to do is leave us a review on Apple Podcasts. Then, send us a screenshot of your review. Our email address is podcast@verywell.com. We'll reply with your all-access pass to the course!

Thank you for hanging out with me today and for listening to The Verywell Mind Podcast! And as always, a big thank you to my show's producer (who is a fan of Joan Jett & the Blackhearts), Nick Valentin.