



An Apology, Some Soup, and a Lesson in Moving Forward.

December 2025



Dear friends;

I hurt Greg's feelings the other day. It happened in response to him doing something inconsiderate—and while I was already sad, hurt, and not feeling well, I lashed out in anger. Ugh.

Here's what happened. I missed our grandson's first birthday party because I was sick. It was a long, lonely day, and I waited for Greg to

return from New Jersey so we could have dinner together. I hoped he might make some soup and share the details of the day's celebrations. Instead, he made his own dinner and ate it in the kitchen while I was in the other room, unaware.

I reacted badly. I told him—nastily—that what he did was thoughtless (there may have been a few other choice words as well). It was not my finest moment. I apologized, but I could see the hurt I had caused, and I felt awful. Greg felt terrible too, recognizing the harm he had done.

This time of year offers us a natural pause: a chance to reflect on the year ending and look ahead to a fresh start, ideally carrying forward lessons that help us grow and evolve. There were many harms we witnessed in 2025—on both small and large scales. How we respond, individually and collectively, will shape how we move through 2026.

In her book *On Repentance and Repair: Making Amends in an Unapologetic World*, Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg offers a framework for accountability and healing rooted in the work of the 12th-century Jewish philosopher Maimonides. She pushes back against a “forgive and forget” culture, arguing that true repair requires concrete action and genuine transformation from the person who caused the harm. This stands in contrast to our cultural tendency to urge people to “just let it go,” often pressuring forgiveness without the thoughtful, uncomfortable work of meaningful repair. We are often tempted to hotwire the process—to skip over the painful emotions that are essential to real healing.

Ruttenberg writes that a true apology must honor the full humanity of the other person; it is not transactional. *“You don't apologize at a person, you apologize to them. A true apology is about trying*

to see the human being in front of you... to make it abundantly, absolutely, profoundly clear that you get it now, and that their feeling better matters to you.” A genuine apology demands vulnerability and grows out of the deeper work of repentance and transformation.

This kind of work is deeply important—and deeply uncomfortable. It requires humility and self-reflection to hold ourselves accountable and not become defensive when often our first reactions are to deflect, justify, defend, or blame. We have all caused harm, intentionally or unintentionally, and we know what that feels like because we have all been on the receiving end as well. Repair must be part of the journey. It leads to deeper, more meaningful relationships and contributes to the health and wellbeing of our broader communities. Imagine a world where our policies and systems centered accountability and reconciliation—what a beautiful possibility.

Greg and I were able to have a reconciling conversation. We each owned the hurt we caused, offered forgiveness, and shared hugs. The next step is to continue working so we don't repeat those patterns—we are, after all, works in progress. And for the record: last night, he made me soup, it was both comforting and healing.

Here's to a happy, healthy 2026!

All my very best to you always,

Maria

Maria Coutant Skinner, LCSW

President and CEO



The holidays can potentially be difficult to navigate when someone you love is in recovery. “We know that the whole support system of a client needs recovery services,” McCall Recovery Coach Farrah McCullough explains. “I work with family members of individuals in recovery to provide support to them. We know that only about 2% of family members get any type of supportive services. And we want to change that.”

The holidays can create difficult feelings.

The holiday season tends to be a very emotional time and issues within a family can be exacerbated, especially for families with a loved one struggling with mental health or substance use challenges. Farrah is working with families right now who are experiencing difficult feelings brought on by the holidays.

“I often suggest making a list,” Farrah says. “Acknowledge what is difficult and potentially uncomfortable for you as you navigate the holidays. When we name what matters to us, we can set boundaries to protect what makes us happy.”

If your loved one (who may be struggling) is uncomfortable with the limits that you've set, try to show compassion, Farrah recommends. "Don't over-explain," she advises. "Don't apologize."

To avoid issues that may have caused trauma during past holidays, you may want to brainstorm with your loved one and think about different ways that they can feel comfortable in holiday situations, exploring alternatives that are healthier than substance use.

Where to begin.

You may be wondering about how to take the first steps toward family recovery. To join the Family Recovery program, it's as simple as calling McCall at our main number (860.496.2100) or visiting our website (mccallbhn.org).

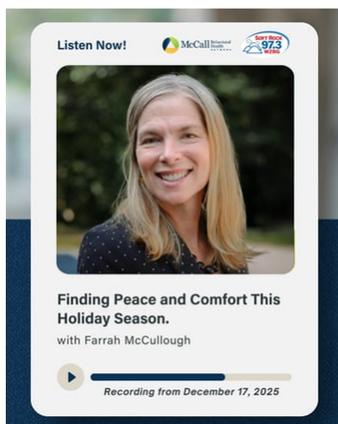
"I work with you," Farrah says. "I meet you where you're at, literally, whether that's in your home or at my office or at a coffee shop or a park, it's wherever you're comfortable. And I become your ally. Oftentimes, I'm there to listen. It's a lonely place when you have a loved one whom you're not sure how to move forward with, and you want to better your relationship."

What does the program offer?

McCall provides education about the stages of substance use and recovery. We work to improve communication and to set boundaries. "Family members spend a lot of time trying to change and control their loved one's behavior," Farrah notes. "Often, family members suffer from self-neglect because they want to devote all of their time and energy on their loved one."

"We also have a Wednesday night support group for family members," adds Farrah. "It's a beautiful space for family members to come and share and be supported."

The goal is to diminish the dread that people may be feeling this holiday season, especially if there's grief if you've lost a loved one. We hope you'll try to be intentional about finding joy. And, please, don't hesitate to reach out to us.



Did you miss the interview?

Don't worry, we've got you covered! Visit our pressroom to hear McCall Recovery Coach Farrah McCullough's thoughtful insights that can help families with a loved one in recovery find joy throughout the holiday season.

[Listen to the full FM 97.3 WZBG interview.](#)



In The News



Building Stronger Families Together.

Parenting can be overwhelming—but you don't have to navigate it alone. McCall's Director of Prevention Services, Andrew Lyon, MPH, CPS, shares how McCall's Parenting Support Services help families build confidence, strengthen connections, and create calmer, healthier homes

[Read the full article.](#)



Thank you for a Great Giving Tuesday!

A huge THANK YOU to our incredible staff, board members, and donors who helped make Giving Tuesday a big success! Thanks to your generosity, we raised \$4,995 in just one day, bringing our 2025 Contribute to Compassion Annual Appeal total to \$27,196—and we're still going strong!

This year's Annual Appeal runs through December 31, so there's still time to make a difference:

- [Click here](#) to donate now
- Share the campaign with your friends, family, and social network to help us reach even more people

Your enthusiasm, generosity, and compassion are fueling the success of this campaign. We couldn't be more grateful. Let's keep the momentum going and make this our most impactful Annual Appeal yet!

[Learn more and give now!](#)



Free Overdose Prevention Speaker Series!

McCall invites the community to join our upcoming Overdose Prevention Speaker Series, presented as part of the Recovering Together Support Group. These FREE educational sessions are designed to provide practical tools, resources, and peer-informed perspectives to support individuals, families, and the broader community.

Wednesdays | 5:30–7:00 p.m.

Attend in-person (883 Main St. in Torrington) or via Zoom

RSVP required

Upcoming Sessions:

- **January 14** – Narcan Administration
- **January 28** – Overdose Prevention Strategies
- **February 11** – Safe Spot Hotline
- **February 25** – Peer Perspective

To RSVP or for more information, contact Ewa Szura, LMSW at ewa.szura@mccallbhn.org or call 860.496.2100 ext. 1143.



The McCall Funding Committee is excited to announce recent financial support extended to our organization. We're extremely grateful for the generous gifts that will help further our mission.

Thank you to: The Bates Foundation

Award amount: \$50,000

Funding will be used to help sustain McCall's Prevention Facilitator, a role that gives children the tools to manage stress and become more resilient.

Thank you to: The Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation

Award amount: \$3,500

Funding will be used for: Purchasing new CPR Training Manikins and American Heart Association (AHA) training booklets to equip McCall staff members with vital life-saving skills.

Thank you to: The Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation

Award amount: \$2,500

Funding will be used by our Torrington Holiday Angels (coordinated through McCall's Parenting Support Services), who provide toys for children and holiday assistance gift cards for families.

Thank you to: Thomaston Savings Bank Foundation

Award amount: \$2,500

Funding will be used by our Waterbury Holiday Angels, who provide toys for children and holiday assistance gift cards for families who are clients at McCall's Renato Outpatient Services in Waterbury.



Seasoned with Gratitude.



Staff and clients came together for a warm and festive celebration at the Wisdom Lunch Support Group Holiday Feast on December 18, where gratitude—an essential ingredient in lasting recovery—was on full display.

The gathering featured a delicious holiday meal prepared by James Carpenter and our incredible kitchen staff, whose care and generosity helped make the day truly special. Held at the Wellness Center, the celebration brought our community together for an afternoon filled with connection, appreciation, and holiday cheer.



Sounds Like a Sensational Session!

This just in from McCall newsletter correspondent Conrad Sienkiewicz: “Richard Ruiz of McCall House recently presented a Sound Healing session at Carnes Weeks Center, which was enjoyed by 18 clients and this reporter! Richard is hoping to get a gong for Christmas, and an anonymous source from the North Pole confirmed that Richard is on Santa’s Nice List.”



McCall Answers the Call.

During the holidays, when the soup kitchen is closed and resources are limited, McCall steps in to help fill the gap. Thanks to Michele Smedick’s coordination and the continued generosity of volunteers—including Farrah McCullough and her family—warm meals have been shared at Coe Park, offering comfort, connection, and care to neighbors in need.

Spit and Paint Event Promotes Positivity.



More boots on the ground reporting from Conrad: "On December 4 at Dempsey House, DJ Kiss Me I'm Famous (www.djkissme.com) led most of the Dempsey residents (almost 30 guys!) in a "Spit and Paint," a fun and creative 90-minute event where the participants listened to great music and created positive personal paintings to build their recovery, improve their mental health, and develop their creativity."



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