THE MANY DIMENSIONS OF CLUBHOUSE LEADERSHIP
Urgency, Leadership and the Tipping Point in Clubhouse Evolution!

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Sometimes a single conversation can change your whole way of thinking.

I recently spoke with Phil Emory, the director of Gateway House.

He told me about the big trouble he was having with funding.

Phil is a great director and Gateway House is a great clubhouse and training base.

I thought if Phil is having money problems, that’s really bad news, because Gateway House is a very well established program.

I knew this is a terrible time for clubhouses because governments are desperate to cut debt and spending.

But my talk with Phil truly alarmed me!

There’s an old saying that each crisis holds the seeds of a great opportunity.

I started to think about how could we use this crisis to change the way the world sees us!

How we could take the enormous progress we have already made, in building a network of over 300 clubhouses and reach a whole new stage in our evolution.

How we can meet our funding challenges and help grow many more clubhouses, better, faster and stronger than before

One thing is clear, we must not let this economic crisis slow us down.

Too much is at stake!

Too many people need what clubhouses offer.

They are in places like Latin America, Africa and Asia.

They are all over the world, where there are no clubhouses within reach.
Some are in terrible hospitals, some have no treatment at all, some are mistreated in cruel ways, some are in prisons, some in the streets and some are at home just laying around, isolated, with nothing to do.

So how do we move forward, ambitiously, despite the harsh funding headwinds?

Whenever I think about any clubhouse challenge I go back to my roots as a member of Fountain House in New York City.

I was first a member there in 1973. Probably well before some of you were born.

Then, Fountain House was the world’s only clubhouse.

I came to Fountain House a very disabled young man, smashed by my mental illness and unable to do anything.

It took me a long time to get better.

And the lessons of my recovery form the heart of my talk today.

First I learned I got better because the clubhouse had opportunity.

Not just any opportunity, but an entire opportunity ecosystem, that stretched from everything in the clubhouse, back out the door and far and deep into the community.

> *It extends from the first napkin you fold, through the first meal you take charge of making, through the first article you write, through the first speech you give.*

It a process that starts with responsibility and grows into leadership.

Our focus today is about taking that leadership at all levels in the clubhouse, among members, staff, directors and boards to a new and greater level.

The new level we must reach for to meet the challenges of our times, can be seen as a TIPPING POINT. The term tipping point was popularized in a book by Thomas Gladwell called “The Tipping Point”.

Gladwell defines a tipping point as "the moment of critical mass, the threshold, the boiling point." The book seeks to explain and describe a fascinating pattern in changes that mark
everyday life. Gladwell states, "Ideas and products and messages and behaviors spread like viruses do."

As a metaphor for the very moment of change, imagine a pot on a stove with the gas turned high. One moment the water in the pot is still. As the heat rises, suddenly critical mass is reached and the water begins to boil.

To meet the enormous challenges posed by today's world, we must push toward the tipping point on all Clubhouse fronts: members must push toward the tipping points in their individual recoveries; staff and directors have to create the opportunities that will support members in this effort, as well as push their Clubhouses to the tipping point of full embrace by their local communities; and Clubhouse boards and the ICCD Board have to work fiercely to tip the balance so that the Clubhouse model will be seen as the gold Standard of psychiatric rehabilitation.

Our clubhouses are fertile ground for tipping points in our members lives

The tipping point for me came in two stages.

First I found my niche giving tours of the clubhouse.

Touring people around Fountain House was a HUGE confidence booster.

This started my virtuous circle of going from one placement to another, living independently, going back to school and working full time.

This was not an all upward process!

I had a second breakdown which included a return to the hospital and a suicide attempt.

But I got right back on track after the second hospitalization.

It was then I had a moment of enlightenment. I realized, all the work, the relationships, everything I did in the club, was making me stronger.

I had reached a tipping point in my recovery!

My realization led me to take on much more, responsibility, which grew into a sense of leadership.

That sense of leadership came when I finally, deeply understood how the clubhouse worked.
I realized that the clubhouse was like a gymnasium for function!

By that I mean the opportunities were like the exercise equipment and the people who encouraged me were like invisible prosthetic devices.

I began to see that clubhouse was to psychiatric rehabilitation and recovery what physical rehabilitation was to physical disability.

This equation has profound implications.

We are NOT just another psychiatric rehabilitation and recovery program, we ARE psychiatric rehabilitation and recovery. Other programs can supplement what we do, but recovery from a serious mental illness requires a sophisticated clubhouse opportunity ecosystem.

So Clubhouse is to psychiatric disability what physical therapy is to physical disability – and we need to get the rest of the world to understand us in this way. Clubhouse IS the ESSENTIAL bridge between treatment and a better life.

To meet our great challenges we need much greater recognition. To get there, we must mobilize Clubhouse leadership from every corner of our movement – members, staff, directors, boards. – and together, we need to push our movement right up to -and over-that tipping point!

We ALL have a part to play!

And our leadership is unique.

Unlike the usual leadership of command and control, our leadership is fluid and easily shared.

And Clubhouses, by their very nature, build leadership among members, boards, directors and staff! We are experts in developing leaders in our Clubhouse community.

It is time to capitalize on our strength in building leadership and leverage that leadership to a new and more powerful level.

WE understand how essential clubhouse is in the process of recovery.

Yet we must ask ourselves WHY as the most effective, cost efficient and accessible model for recovery we have not been seen by the WIDER community as essential

The answer, I think can be summed up in a line from the film “Cool Hand Luke”. “What we have here, is a failure to communicate”!
This is an understandable failure because explaining what a clubhouse IS and HOW it works is very hard. People tend to have a lot of associations with the word clubhouse. It is also hard, because we are so different from the traditional idea of what treatment, therapy and rehabilitation should be. Therefore a crucial part of reaching the tipping point is clarifying and sharpening our message.

Armed with a simpler, clearer and more sharply edged message we can make the enormous breakthrough we seek.

So with a stronger, clearer message we must push our international Clubhouse community to that tipping point where we will be known and understood and valued.

There is one more ingredient which is among the most important in reaching our goal.

It is URGENCY!

Webster’s Dictionary defines urgency as; pressing, compelling or requiring immediate action or attention.

I remember a vivid example of how urgency works when I was a television reporter in the mid 1980’s. In the morning way before the evening deadline, fellow reporters would move slowly, looking through newspapers or making phone calls.

As the day went along the pace would pick up, as they went on assignments.

As the deadline approached, the pace became faster and faster!

By a half hour before deadline, the action went into hyper drive. Video tapes would be slammed into machines. All movements were super efficient.

Not a SECOND was wasted!

This showed functioning improved and speeded up in direct proportion to the urgency and nearness of a deadline.

So important work, pressure and the urgency created, changes behavior!

The same is true in clubhouses!

A greater work load, deadlines, the arrival of important visitors for example, drives everyone in the clubhouse to mobilize every ounce of skill and energy.. This is the core of recovery in the clubhouse.

Urgency makes things happen!!!

Urgency drives the development and growth of clubhouse leadership!
Urgency is the locomotive that pulls us forward!

The clubhouse director, like the conductor of that locomotive, plays a crucial role in deciding how much urgency is to be added and how and when. Too fast and you risk going off the tracks on a curve. Too slow and you will miss the opportunities that are waiting at the next stop.

*The urgency of the director should be powerful enough to spread to all members, staff and board. And the director must guide his sense of urgency, through the filter of the standards to stay on track.*

Members will then begin to have urgency about the importance of their own progress and the well-being of their Clubhouse.

Staff must convey and share this urgency with the greatest enthusiasm. They must insure there is a vision for every member.

I remember the profound effect urgency can have on staff. When I worked on the staff after having been a member, I vividly recall that when there was the most pressure to get something done, members who looked most visibly disabled, suddenly began to look much healthier. This showed the more desperately you need help, the healthier other people seem.

The board has the bottom line responsibility for insuring that the clubhouse is in compliance with the standards. This implies the board should know how well the clubhouse is working. If there is not enough urgency about growing and evolving, the board must help remedy this with the director.

The board also must have a sense of urgency about recruiting those who can be most helpful to the clubhouse. They must seek people who are among the most influential from the worlds of business, government, mental health and advocacy.

For members, the urgency is, to find the niche in the clubhouse with the most fertile ground for growth. Having found that niche, the urgency for a vision for their growth is most important.

Member leadership must be seen as a focus of urgency. It is the essence of the recovery process! Every member who goes on a TEP is a leader by virtue of the example they set.

Member leadership must be cultivated and facilitated at all levels. It is a matter of great urgency that members share in all clubhouse decision making.

*To meet the challenges of our times, and to push us to the tipping point of long-term growth and sustainability as a movement, we must urgently mobilize our unique fabric of clubhouse leadership.*
We ALL have a part to play!

We can be seen as the most crucial, singular and essential source of psychiatric rehabilitation and recovery for people with serious mental illness!

We have come so very far, from one great clubhouse, to a worldwide movement. NOW, we must take the leap in clubhouse evolution, towards the tipping point of universal recognition, as the gold standard in psychiatric rehabilitation and recovery.

Ultimately, it is our hope, that this plenary will be just the start of a discussion about how our collective vision as members, staff, directors and board members can help us not only meet the challenges we face over the next few years, but help us breakthrough to much greater recognition and success as the global leader in psychiatric recovery.

I want to introduce our panel of Clubhouse leaders, who will continue our discussion of the clubhouse leadership through there own unique perspectives.

Jon, a member from Geysir Clubhouse in Iceland, will talk about the importance of taking leadership over small as well as big responsibilities in the Clubhouse – and how that process drives personal recovery – while at the same time strengthening the whole Clubhouse community. Jon will focus on the importance of including members without exception in all the work of the clubhouse, to build both confidence and leadership.

Annlaug, the Director of Fontenehuset Honefoss in Norway, will talk about the need for urgency and strong leadership in order to create a Clubhouse culture that nurtures leadership and recovery among the members; and firmly establishes the Clubhouse as well-known and respected community center within its local community. Annalug will talk about the critical role of trust and belief in the talent and skill of membership in developing leadership, and use the standards to highlight how leadership in the clubhouse should work.

Anette, on the Board of Directors of Fountain House Oslo as well as on the Board of the ICCD, will talk about how clubhouse boards are crucial in providing the leadership that helps insure that the clubhouse is able to succeed in developing opportunities in the community and receives the support from the business, government and advocacy groups it needs to thrive. Anette will also talk about how boards must work closely with the clubhouse to develop a strategic vision of sustainable growth and evolution.