

Brilliantly Resilient®



Brilliantly Resilient in ADDICTION RECOVERY
with Kristin Smedley & Mary Fran Bontempo
Featuring Dave Bontempo & Eric Gremminger



WORK(ish) BOOK

Hey There! **WELCOME!**



Few things are more challenging--or devastating--than dealing with addiction. Whether you struggle with personal addiction issues or are trying to support a loved one who is suffering, substance abuse changes everything--about your life as well as the addict's. (Please note: While we refer to addicts and addiction, alcoholics and alcohol abuse are included in this category.)

Here at Brilliantly Resilient, we know the struggles of addiction first-hand, as Mary Fran's son suffered from heroin addiction and alcoholism for many years. Addiction is terrifying, both for the addict and those who love them. But there is hope and help. (Please note: We are not licensed therapists. If at all possible, please get professional help.)

In this Masterclass, you'll hear from guest experts Eric Gremminger and Dave Bontempo, both in recovery, as they share their expertise and experience in personal healing and how to support families trying to cope with a loved one's addiction. Our own Mary Fran Bontempo shares her experiences as the mother of an addict.

In this Masterclass, you will:

- Discover how the brain changes in addiction.
- Learn the importance of self-care when supporting a loved one.
- Explore strategies for dealing with a loved one's addiction and early recovery.
- Identify resources for help and support.

Watch the Brilliantly Resilient in Addiction Masterclass program and answer the questions in this "work-ish book" honestly and thoughtfully. As our experts share their experiences, you'll learn tools and strategies to help you through. (Remember that you should ALWAYS seek professional help in addiction.) Be sure to check out Eric and Dave's contact info and the additional resources at the end of this work-ish book for more help in coping with addiction.



The Reset

Insights from our experts:



Eric Gremminger:

“Addiction hijacks the brain’s reward pathways so nothing is enough; you’re constantly seeking more. I would come home and be reminded that I had this amazing family and set of values, but I couldn’t act in accordance with those values, which caused discontent and shame and made me want to use, which deepened the behavior, which made me go even further away, which made me want to use again. It’s a vicious cycle and I wouldn’t wish it on anyone. It also becomes the brain’s neurobiological response.”



Dave Bontempo:

“You want to be connected so badly, but you’re so hooked and so disconnected that you then get rude and angry and get a chip on your shoulder and can’t explain the void you feel. You try so hard to be a part of a family tradition but know everyone sees that you aren’t really ‘there,’ and that makes you want to get high because you can’t take the void. But the family can’t accommodate the addict’s values. The addict has to accommodate the family’s values.”



Mary Fran Bontempo:

“First you have to face it—the truth of what’s happening. You have to release distraction and denial; it’s the only way to begin to find your way back to the light. Only then can you address any steps forward and try to control the control-ables.”



Think About It:

1. In the Brilliantly Resilient program, we talk about the Reset as the sucker punch or train wreck. Addiction is both, for the addict and the family, who often can no longer communicate. Yet, even though living with addiction is a constantly evolving situation, it is essential to maintain a value system and boundaries both for the family and the addict. You must take the time to decide what you will not allow to be compromised when dealing with an addict. What's truly important to you? On the lines below, list at least five core values that are non-negotiable in your life. (Examples: integrity, honesty, kindness, compassion, etc.)

2. Every experience is colored by our perception of it, usually based on how that experience affects our lives. In addiction, the addict and those trying to support the addict have radically different perceptions of what is happening. Both parties engage in distraction and denial instead of facing the truth. Think about your perception of the addiction and the truth about the addiction. On the lines below, write down the truth of how addiction is affecting you and your family. Include a definitive statement about the addict in your life. (For example, my son is an addict and needs help, or My husband is an alcoholic and needs help.)

3. Addiction can make us feel powerless. But there are things we can control—things we can choose to accept or refuse to accept. Think about the greatest challenges addiction presents in your life. What upsets you most? What makes you afraid or sad? Now think about what you can actually control for each situation and write it on the lines below. (Note: In addiction, the thing you have most control over is your state of mind. How can you calm your mind to better cope with addiction?)



The Rise

Insights from our experts:



Eric Gremminger:

"The beginning of my rise was a huge moment of clarity after I was once again released from prison. My physical body and my psyche were done and couldn't take any more. The combo of both surrendering allowed a higher consciousness to step in and I just felt a shift inside of me where I could trust someone and ask for help. I started a 12-step program and a meditation program, a cognitive program where when you encounter a negative thought you replace it with a positive one. A Divine intervention that allowed me to ask for help and receive the help—that was my action step."



Dave Bontempo:

"When I was confronted with some things I'd done, I made the call for help, I got to treatment; I'd never done that before. I was tired and figured I'd give it a shot for a couple of weeks. I was willing to accept the ride to treatment, the meal I got when I got there. I thought, 'Okay, I'll go to group.' At that point, it was hour by hour making a decision. Don't stop and look around too much. I tried one single action at a time. And for the family, it's you having self-care, you having a therapist, you having someone to talk to. You can be supportive, and the kid can relapse. Try to be supportive but don't make it like it's your cross to bear because it's not. Enable wellness. Enable recovery."



Mary Fran Bontempo:

"For me, the Rise was all about taking life 15 minutes at a time. Sometimes that just meant survival, other times it meant taking a nap or some other form of self-care, sometimes it was making a call to ask someone for help—always asking for help. But it was always about short periods of time. I couldn't do more than that."



Think About It:

1. The Rise is all about action. While the Reset starts with the sucker punch, the Rise starts with a decision. Answer this: Are you just visiting addiction or are you going to live there? This doesn't mean you can simply walk away from addiction or its effects. However, you can make a conscious decision that addiction will not become the defining story of your life. A definitive statement is a powerful tool. On the lines below, write your answer as a decision, as in, "I am just visiting this place of fear...I will not live here or let addiction define the rest of my life." Commit this statement to memory and refer to it often.

2. In Brilliantly Resilient, the Rise considers your resources, skills and talents that can lead to an action step. Each element plays a role in creating that action step--one step to start! That action step may be designed to help you or your loved one. On the lines below, list your resources, skills, talents. What do you already have within you that has helped you with past "wins?" For example: curiosity, determination, problem solving, patience, etc. List at least three to five personal skills or resources and how each may help you navigate life through addiction and beyond.



Think About It:

3. Dealing with addiction causes feelings of fear, shame, and embarrassment for both the addict and the family. It's a time when support is crucial, yet sometimes hard to find. It is precisely when we need our tribe. Yet, it's not always those closest to us who are the best at guiding and supporting us in challenging times.

On the lines below, make a list of your tribe members. Start with those who are your "ride or die" supporters. Then think outside of your immediate circle and list at least five others who might help you navigate addiction with additional resources, strategies, or information. (Consider work associates, social contacts, acquaintances—but be sure of their integrity!)

4. Okay, it's time to decide on your action step. On the lines below, write down one action step you will take to begin your Rise in navigating the challenges of addiction. The action step may focus on self-care, gathering information, or setting boundaries with an addicted loved one. Commit to a date by which you will act. Recognize that addiction is an evolving disease and **DO NOT BE MARRIED TO OUTCOMES!**



Reveal Your Brilliance

Insights from our experts:



Eric Gremminger:

"I know life's a process of good and bad days, so I build good habits into my day for consistency. I call it a 'Bookend system': First thing in the morning, when your brain is susceptible to re-programming your mind, I listen to or read something inspirational, educational, motivational. At the end of the day, I create a gratitude list that I read aloud. Gratitude is proven to create a neurochemical response and release of serotonin, which satisfies the brain. Brilliance revolves around mindset, and it helps me with 'stinkin' thinkin'."



Dave Bontempo:

"I actively go to therapy, because it is about mindset. I do a feelings worksheet where I put down what I'm worried about and either support or debunk the fear. I also do positive affirmations in the morning and exercise every morning. Every night, gratitude, and prayer. Thank God for the things you've given me, the things you've left me and the things you've taken away from me."



Mary Fran Bontempo:

"I recognize that Brilliance can often be found in the most unlikely places, and both David and Eric are testaments to that. Their work in the recovery field has helped so many others. As we've said before, if you aren't sure how to activate your Brilliance, act in service to others."



Think About It:

1. Just like Resilience, your Brilliance is in you and can be found even in challenging circumstances. And while it's hard to imagine discovering your personal Brilliance during a painful experience, that's often when your Brilliance begins to show itself—through transferrable skills, new collaborations, and getting back to the basics of your values and talents.

On the lines below, write down the times when you felt most like yourself and were at your happiest. Recognizing the importance of self-care and nurturing, and despite the challenges of addiction, how can you incorporate that into your life now?

2. Let's go back to your action step. Take a moment and think about how you will feel if your action step doesn't bring the result you want—often the case in addiction. How can you reframe the situation, stop negative thoughts, and change direction, using your Brilliance, to move forward in another way, perhaps by tweaking your action step or changing direction?



Think About It:

3. Living with addiction can feel all-consuming. But if you've made the decision to not let addiction be the defining story of your life, it's essential to make plans to personally move forward, even if it's only in small ways.

Think about something you've always wanted to do. What action step can you initiate to begin a journey towards that goal? Who can you ask for help, or add to your tribe to move you forward?

4. Finally, think about everything you've learned so far. Knowing that coping with a loved one's addiction is an on-going process, remember that hope, healing and growth are possible. On the lines below, create a personal mantra you can repeat in times of stress to keep your focus positive as you continue your journey to be Brilliantly Resilient in addiction and recovery. (For example: I will enable wellness and recovery for myself and my loved one.) Make this mantra the basis for decisions moving forward in addiction and recovery and repeat it often.

Thank you for joining our Brilliantly Resilient in Addiction Masterclass.

We're so grateful to Eric Gremminger, Dave Bontempo and our own Mary Fran Bontempo for sharing their time and wisdom. Addiction is a crushing sucker punch. But it doesn't have to be the defining story of your life. With consistent effort, support, and self-care, you can Reset, Rise and Reveal your Brilliance through addiction and beyond.

And remember, you're not alone! Read on for brief bios of our Brilliantly Resilient experts and check out their info for additional resources. These folks are happy to share their tools, tips, and strategies with you.

Congrats on being Brilliantly Resilient!

XO,

Kristin & Mary Fran

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EVEN MORE RESOURCES TO UNCOVER THE FACT THAT YOU ARE



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For general information and support, contact Al-Anon. (Recommended for all types of substance abuse.) Check their website to find a support group near you.

<https://al-anon.org/>

Meet Our Presenters



Eric Gremminger is an author, motivational speaker, and certified drug and alcohol counselor. Eric's book *Reclaiming the Brain: Activating Sustained Recovery from Addiction* has been used to train substance abuse counselors and government officials on the neurobiology of recovery, and to inform best practices in the treatment of substance use disorders. Eric received his Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Drexel University with a focus on behavioral neuroscience. His post-graduate achievements include formal mindfulness-based stress management training from Penn Medicine, becoming a certified personal trainer through the American Council on Exercise, and graduating Villanova University's counseling program. Find his best-selling book, *Reclaiming the Brain* [here](#).



Dave Bontempo is a lifelong resident of Bucks County, PA and is a 2007 graduate of Gwynedd Mercy University. Mr. Bontempo found sobriety in 2011, and recognizes the value of this daily gift. He began his career in the behavioral health arena as an alumni and aftercare coordinator. With a desire to use both personal and professional experience, he pursued a career in outreach. Helping patients navigate the journey, from active addiction to active recovery, is Dave's favorite thing about this job. He has worked his way up the ranks of nationally recognized programs as a National Community Outreach Director and most recently, CMO. Mr. Bontempo looks forward to continuing to give back and help patients and families escape the vicious cycle he once lived. He thanks his family for never giving up on him. He resides in Warrington with his wife Kelly and their children Emma, Luca, and Kaia.



Kristin Smedley is a 2x Best Selling Author, TEDx Speaker, CEO and Creator of the Thriving Blind Movement. With two of her three children born blind, Kristin was thrown into a mother's nightmare with her dreams for her sons' futures torn apart. Determined that her boys would become productive, vital individuals, Kristin dove headfirst into uncharted waters to equip her sons with the skills and tools they needed to build successful, happy lives. Kristin partnered with Comcast to encourage and promote equipment for the visually impaired, testified before the FDA, achieved legislation for better services for the blind, founded a non-profit for genetic disease research, delivered a TEDx talk and wrote the best selling book, *Thriving Blind*. Find her at: www.kristinsmedley.com.



Mary Fran Bontempo is an award-winning 2-time TEDx speaker, author, humorist, and podcast host who teaches audiences to uncover their brilliance and resilience 15 minutes at a time. A sought-after presenter, Mary Fran is author of *The 15 Minute Master* and *The Woman's Book of Dirty Words* and co-founder of the Brilliantly Resilient program, show and podcast. A Huffington Post, Entrepreneur.com, and Thrive Global contributor and columnist for numerous websites, Mary Fran created a life-affirming brand of wisdom and wit after meeting the challenge of her son's heroin addiction. Find her at www.maryfranbontempo.com.