

Feeling Alive

In 2025

The Best Way to Set New Year's Resolutions

A NEW METHOD FOR MAKING RESOLUTIONS STICK.



SUSAN ALBERS PSY.D.

With the New year here, many people feel excited to set new goals and make positive changes in their lives. However, sticking to these resolutions can be tough and overwhelming. This year I have a unique strategy for you: It's what I call the "Mindful Micro-Momentum Method" (MMMM). This approach focuses on leveraging the power of tiny, consistent actions to create lasting change. The Mindful Micro-Momentum Method is based on psychological studies that have found that sustainable change comes from building a series of small, interconnected successes rather than attempting large-scale transformations all at once.

Here's how it works: Identify your goal and break it down into the smallest possible actions—actions so small they seem almost trivial. Commit to performing these micro-actions daily, without exception. As you consistently achieve these tiny goals, you build what I call "success momentum"—a psychological state in which each small win reinforces your belief in your ability to change. Gradually increase the complexity or duration of these actions as your momentum builds.

MMMM focuses on the cumulative psychological impact of consistent micro-successes. By creating a steady stream of small victories, you're not just changing a behavior; you're rewiring your brain to expect success and to associate your goal with positive emotions.

A key strategy in MMMM is the "5-Second Rule." When you think of your micro-action, you must begin it within 5 seconds. This prevents overthinking and leverages the initial spark of motivation. How many times have you talked yourself right out of an action you actually wanted to do? Diving in avoids the inner struggle.



Being mindful is also essential for the Mindful Micro-Momentum Method because it helps you stay present and truly notice each small action. Instead of going through the motions, you pay attention to how it feels to engage in the new habit. For example, if your goal is to hydrate more frequently, engage all your senses: As you take a sip, notice the temperature of the water, the taste, and how it feels as it goes into your stomach. This awareness not only enhances your enjoyment of the experience but also creates a positive association with drinking water, making it more likely that you'll continue this habit in the future.

The reason this approach is effective is that it capitalizes on the brain's reward system in a way that traditional goal-setting doesn't. Each micro-success triggers a small dopamine release, creating a positive feedback loop that reinforces the new behavior.

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Healthcare is a [property] right

Client Advisory Board

Luigi Mangione might have made different choices if he had considered the “Serenity Prayer” – “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference” before deciding to assassinate United Healthcare executive Brian Thompson.

That’s not to say that people aren’t rightfully frustrated with the healthcare system in the United States. We pay more for our healthcare in America than any other country on earth, and of the wealthy nations, we have the least positive results. Nearly all of us have had at least one negative experience obtaining healthcare or medications that we need.

This is especially true for those of us living with HIV/AIDS, who are reliant on our healthcare providers for treatment and medications that enable a better quality of life. Fortunately, we have both legal rights to healthcare and a strong history of healthcare advocacy within the AIDS movement in general, and Open Door Health Clinic in particular.

This article will focus on “the things we can change” through the rights and processes regarding healthcare available to persons living with AIDS/HIV, who receive services from Open Door Clinic. Although healthcare is not itself a right in the United States, entitlement to government benefits is.



This results from a long series of US Supreme Court cases, dating back to the 1960s that hold that “interest in a government benefit is a property right.” This includes government healthcare benefits such as Medicaid, and Medicare. The Fourth Amendment to the US Constitution ensures “[t]he right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures,” meaning that Medicaid or Medicare cannot take away, or deny anyone services without “due process of law.” That means proper notification of any proposed Medicaid or Medicare action affecting your healthcare, and the right to delay any such action until its legality has been decided by a fair hearing before an administrative law judge. This legal process also applies to the denial of requested treatments.

For those of us who have a Medicaid Managed HMO, there is under the Illinois Department of Public Health (“IDPH”) a department of Medicaid Managed Healthcare with whom we can file a grievance regarding any proposed action or denial of treatment by our Medicaid Managed HMO. “ Filing a grievance is usually all that is required to cause the Medicaid Managed HMO to reverse its decision to deny or limit benefits.

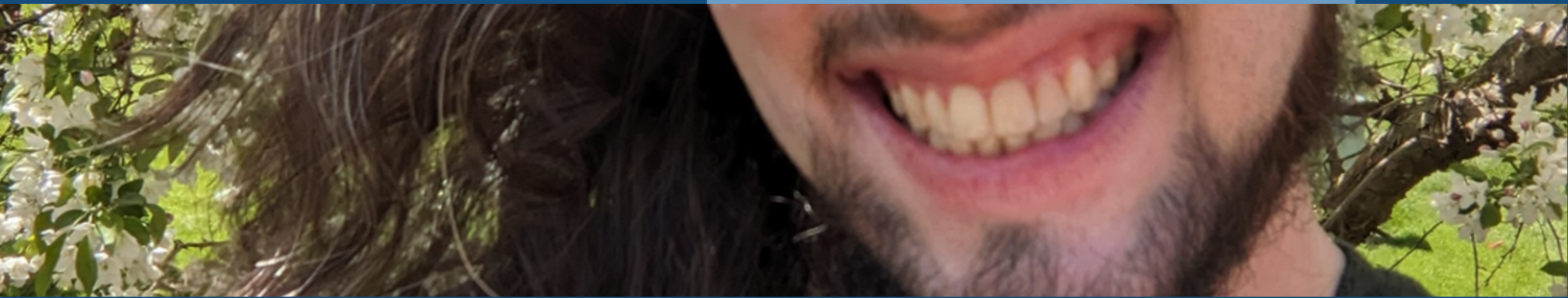
To access these procedures, contact your Open Door Case Manager, Peer Advocate, or Client Advisory Board using the information at the end of this article. Open Door also has a memorandum of understanding, whereby Open Door clients may be provided legal assistance and representation in these types of hearings by Prairie State Legal Services.

Board Elections: Outcomes & Changes

Open Door Health Center of Illinois held its Board of Directors’ Elections on December 18, 2024. We’re excited to welcome James Allen into his role as Board President. In addition, Dr. Liddy Hope was elected to the position of Board Vice President. Rounding out the roster of Board Officers are Terry Ruggio Ross and Dr. Joel Fillmore who were elected as Board Secretary and Board Treasurer. Each officer will take their position at the January 2025 meeting of the Board of Directors. Open Door extends our sincere thanks to outgoing Board Officers: Reynaldo Rodriguez (President), Peter Pinott (Vice President) and Mary Love (Secretary) for their commitment and service.



ARTS & LETTERS



Bloom Celebrating Elgin's 2nd Pride Parade by Aron Ryan

Rainbows don't fall down from heaven; no, we rise from earth to sky. We bridge the gap between human and divine with kites, balloons, rainbow flags raised high - not one color, we're infinite flowers blooming in our Eden: garden made sublime by variety. Pink, white, and blue like cherry blossoms kissing a cloudless sky. Blue, white, and gold like forget-me-nots as tiny as raindrops. Brown like our earth cocooning seeds yet to sprout. Black like our sky cradling stars yet to shine. Every stripe holds a story, a voice, a light guiding us home.

We rehome rainbows - tie-dye shirts and pride wristbands, colorful capes and rainbow hijabs. Even our skin tells a story; whether henna or ink, our tattoos bloom into who we are, who we were, who we become. We are becoming ourselves when we fight for more than ourselves, more than our own patch of land, our lone picket-fenced garden. We take a knee, we take a stand for every child's future to be bright as stained glass windows. We are wholeness from pieces. We are beauty from brokenness. We are kaleidoscopic, letting light shine through our stories.

Aron Ryan

Aron (he/they) is Elgin's third Poet Laureate and an avid reader.. As a Teen Services Associate at [Gail Borden Public Library](#), he enjoys helping kids find their favorite books, welcoming families to the library, and leading programs for kids. One of their favorite library programs is their Writing Club program, a monthly workshop for elementary and middle school writers. As a graduate student working toward his Master's in Library Science degree, Aron hopes to someday serve their community as a librarian. In addition to cultivating community through his library role, he enjoys leading LGBTQ+ community events as aboard member at [Elgin Pride](#). Whether it's a hike at a local forest preserve, a meet-and-greet at a downtown café, or his monthly LGBTQ+ Rainbow Writers workshop, Aron loves welcoming Elgin's growing LGBTQ+ community.

We shelter our colors in ourselves, like the rainbows held in a hummingbird's wings, only seen when sunlight shines through our feathers. Our wings, our hearts, beating so fast it's almost impossible to capture in photographs. We seek something sweet to fill our hungry bellies. We nest these hummingbirds in our chests and yet, we are taught to keep them caught in our ribcage. Ought to starve ourselves of nectar, this sweet love blooming for another and ourselves. Sometimes, starvation's our only option, lest we're kicked out of our nests before we can even fly. Elgin Pride welcomed me home after I lost mine. Sanctuary for every bird singing in my chest, for the boy and girl and every hue in between, for blooming and wilting, love and grief, for the years I could've lost if I hadn't believed in the almost impossible - how my hummingbird wings hold rainbows, how this tiny heart beats over a thousand times each minute, how it gets better in time. Life isn't one nest, one family dinner. It's every flavor yet to taste, every meal yet to savor with good company, with queer community, with friends to fly, alongside, we soar. I am not alone, not anymore, and I will keep my heart open for yours



PRIDE

Board Talk

Featured board member



Dr. Liddy Hope-Board Vice President

Liddy joined the Board of Director's at Open Door in January 2023. Prompted by her work as an Associate Professor of Human Services at Elgin Community College and recognizing that Open Door and the college have had a long relationship with one another that includes free testing for students, education and internship opportunities, Liddy was eager to be part of Open Door and give back in some way. She is proud of Open Door's work, and, as a queer woman and sexuality educator, she is thankful for what Open Door brings to her communities. Her vision for Open Door is to see Open Door continue to provide great resources and care for folks in Fox Valley, and to grow the access in terms of online resources. As an educator, she is especially driven to increase the partnerships with area colleges in many ways, including internships. Ms. Hope will be an advocate and champion for Open Door in all that the organization offers and will help increase those educational opportunities. Liddy Hope resides in Manhattan, IL.

Karina Maksimova Human Resources Manager

Karina began working with Open Door in 2021. Karina manages the recruitment and hiring of employees, their learning, development and career progression, employee education and workplace policies. The best part about her job is using her creativity while planning staff events and meeting new people in and out of the office. Karina describes herself as responsible, professional and honest. On a personal note, Karina's hobbies include playing with her daughter, shopping, going to the movies, home decoration and sipping green tea while reading.



Interning at Open Door Clinic



Did you know that Open Door accepts interns?

Many years ago, I, too, was an intern. My school and I relied on organizations that were willing to open their doors and allow students to come in and learn. I was grateful that two different organizations were willing to take a chance on me so I could continue my education. I said to myself that if I were ever in the position to allow interns to come in, I would make that happen. Fast forward to Open Door in 2025. There are multiple opportunities to come in and complete intern hours. Open Door has collaborative agreements with state and private universities, as well as community colleges. Open Door can accommodate both Bachelors and Master's level Social Work interns.

We've partnered with the Business Administration Program at Aurora University where students look to enhance their skills in managing fiscal, compliance, strategic initiatives, in the hopes of becoming future CEOs. We have had three students complete their business internship at Open Door and we are looking to bring in three more students at the beginning of this year.

Another area in which interns are needed is in our Outreach and Prevention Services Department, a favorite of Public Health Students, who can go out in the community and help with education opportunities and additional group level work. We are always hopeful that students can work nontraditional hours to help us out

We can accept nurse practitioner students, nursing, medical assistants, and back-office support (referrals) interns in our Medical Department. Finally, an emerging internship may be found in our Social Service Department. Open Door is proud to be able to offer multiple opportunities and experiences. If you should have any questions about our internal process, please visit odhcil.org for additional contact information.

- **Operant conditioning.** This theory aligns with B.F. Skinner's work on reinforcement, in which positive outcomes (micro-successes) strengthen behaviors.

- **Neuroplasticity.** Consistent small actions can potentially rewire neural pathways, supporting lasting behavior change.

- **Habit formation.** Research shows that consistent repetition of small actions can lead to automatic behaviors over time.

- **Self-efficacy.** Achieving small, consistent successes can boost one's belief in their ability to change, as proposed by Albert Bandura's self-efficacy theory.



- **Goal-setting theory.** Breaking larger goals into smaller, achievable tasks is supported by Locke and Latham's research on effective goal-setting.

MMMM also grounded in a number of psychological theories:

By focusing on building momentum through micro-actions, the Mindful Micro-Momentum Method offers a fresh perspective on behavior change that can lead to more sustainable and enjoyable transformations.

The key is to:

1. Make your goal ridiculously small.
2. Do it consistently every single day.
3. Start within 5 seconds of thinking about it, then begin immediately. Say the mantra, "Breathe and Begin."
4. Gradually increase the action's complexity.

think of it like planting a seed. Each tiny action is a drop of water that helps your goal grow. Your brain loves these small wins, releasing feel-good chemicals that make you want to keep going. It's not about massive changes, but creating steady, gentle momentum. The magic is in the consistency and the mindfulness—being fully present and aware during each tiny action. You're not just doing something; you're consciously rewiring how you think about change.

Directors Remarks



Happy New Year!

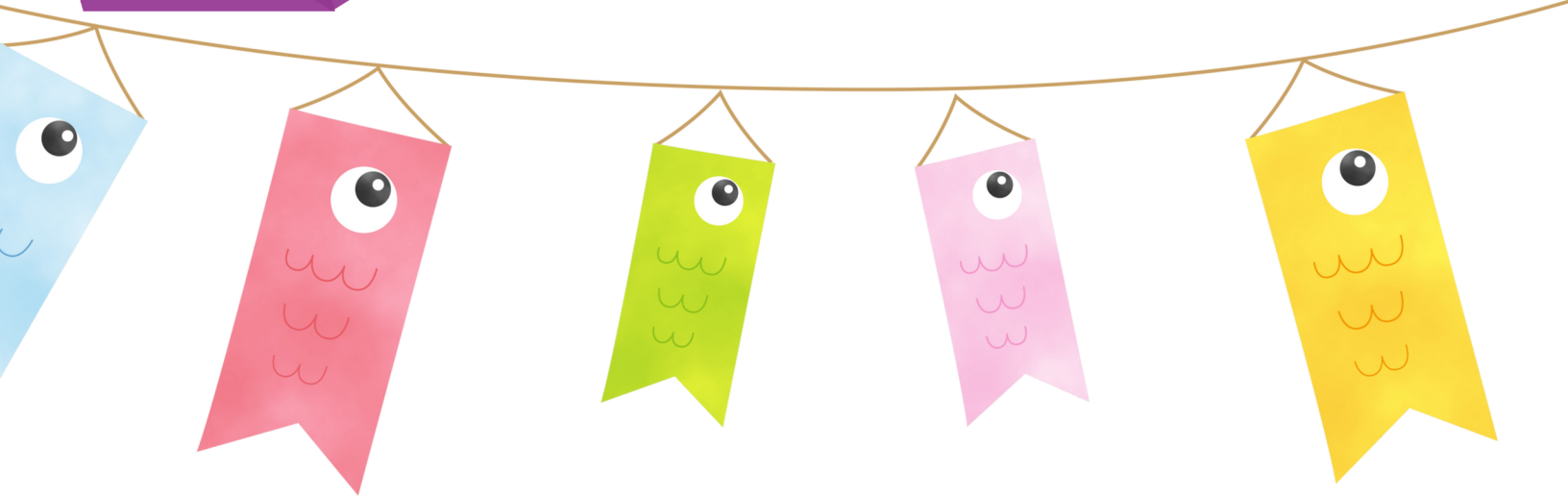
Here's to looking at 2025! Here are some of our accomplishments in 2024. We were able to increase our medical department staff to increase access to care. We continue to meet the needs of the new arrivals and get them into care no more than 48 hours after first contact. Our viral suppression rates continue to be higher than the national norms. We increased access to providing PrEP services to those at greatest risk for HIV at low cost. Our outreach team was out there getting people tested and linking them to care ; Open Door was awarded additional funds to reach the vulnerable populations. We are grateful for our working relationships with the Public Health Institute of Metro Chicago and the Illinois Public Health Association.

Open Door was more visible in the community through multiple awareness events for Latinx, African American, Female, and Trans individuals. We are thankful for the support of our community partners to make these events happen. Because of these events, many of these people were reached and engaged into care. We held two PrEP forums in Aurora and Elgin. These programs were held in both English and Spanish. Individuals were given information about how to access low or free medications. We worked with our lab to get the best possible price. If you missed Open Doors Drag Brunch hosted by Moana Lotte, you really missed an excellent event that featured great food, a signature chocolate drink, and spectacular performances. We raised money and awareness of Open Door. I am truly humbled by the love that was shared that day. It was great to see old friends and make new ones. Our last event was our World AIDS Day program. Because of this event, I was able to see someone who I absolutely adore. I feel humbled by her great work. Joanne is truly someone you should meet. I have known her for about 20 years and every time I hear her message, I am energized to continue to fight the fight.

This is our first quarter newsletter for 2025. Our theme is "Feeling Alive in 2025" A new year is a time for resolutions. Most of us make them so big that we fail. My suggestion is to make resolutions small and manageable, so you can reap the benefits of something different. Take time for yourself. Do something fun. Go for a walk. Just take time to breathe. We've added several staff. Please take a moment to meet them and see how they enhance services at Open Door. Finally, several staff and our Client Advisory Board will be attending Advocacy Days in Springfield, an annual event presented by The AIDS Foundation of Chicago. AFC has excellent tools on engaging with your local and state elected officials. It's vital to work with and educate our elected officials on the potential impact of financial cuts to vital programs and services. Across the State of IL, we're working on our talking points to better our advocacy efforts. You may believe your voice doesn't matter, but it does. So, please check out www.afcchicago.org and get the information you need to be informed. Members of our Client Advisory Board will be attending Aids Watch in Washington DC. This is an excellent opportunity for people with lived experience to engage with their federal officials. Remember we are all in this together and we will thrive in 2025. We look forward to continuing to provide vital services to the most vulnerable populations in our community! Happy New Year!



Upcoming Events



Dr. King Prayer Breakfast - January 18th

Look for us at the City of Elgin's 40th Annual Dr. King Prayer Breakfast at ECC on Saturday, January 18th.

Elgin Human Relations Commission Health & Healing Workshop

Look for us at the upcoming Health & Healing Workshop hosted by the Elgin Human Relations Commission. Stay tuned for more details!

NATIONAL BLACK HIV/AIDS AWARENESS DAY - FEBRUARY 7TH

Join us for a special Black History Month Mixer this February! Show your interest and drop us a line to be part of this exciting event. Stay tuned for more details and don't miss the chance to connect and celebrate together

National Women/Girls HIV Awareness Day - March 10th

Stay tuned for more information as we observe National Women/Girls HIV Awareness Day, raising awareness about HIV prevention and care.

Trans Day of Visibility - March 31st

Stay tuned for more information as we celebrate and honor the trans community on Trans Day of Visibility.