



# STEP 12 MAGAZINE

Carrying A Message of Hope in Recovery™

## Bee-ing *S* of Service

**Revolution in  
Addiction Recovery  
and Stress Control**

**Dual Diagnosis**

*Breaking the Cycle  
of Emotional  
Abandonment*

### **INSIDE:**

- \* Horoscopes
- \* Puzzles
- \* Recovery Resources
- \* Humor Page
- \* Newcomer's Page



# Dr. Judi Hollis

**Experience, Strength, and Hope  
For People Struggling with Food Obsession**

**Dr.** Judi Hollis graciously agreed to meet with me and talk about her 40 years of personal and professional experience in recovery. She is not only a well-educated psychologist, articulate and thoughtful with her message of hope and encouragement, she is beautiful, down-to-earth, and visibly comfortable in her own skin.

### *From Surviving to Thriving - Cashing in on Resilience.*

I became a psychologist to figure out all the emotional stuff about why I was so fat and my family was so fat and the world was so fat. The truth is, there are some people with emotional reasons for the weight gain and there are others who have weight gain without the emotional baggage. There is evidence to support that overeaters and alcoholics have an enzyme imbalance that affects the way our bodies process sugar. How that imbalance got started is water under the bridge (or cocoa in the chocolate so to speak) – it can't be undone.

For the compulsive, emotional eater who has used food to hide from painful traumatic events of their past, walking through the doors of a 12 step program is often a last resort effort to find relief. Food has been an effective survival tool – keeping us safe and guarded, nurtured and protected. When the excess weight adversely affects our health and ability to thrive in life, we begin to seek help (and answers) for our discomfort.

As with any emotionally charged behavior, whether overeating, drinking, drugging, gambling, pornography, etc., negative outcomes are generally the catalyst for seeking recovery. Whether physical limitations of carrying excessive weight, habitually landing in jail or losing jobs, losing material things through financial hardship, or damaged relationships with loved ones or oneself, people entering recovery recognize the need for change.

Identifying the root trauma (or traumas) is important in the long-term process of recovery. For the overeater, stopping the excess eating, and sticking to a regimented food plan at the beginning, will quickly

uncover the emotional issues. If you want to find out why you're eating, don't!

For example, I had a patient who called me from another part of the country and he said, "Judi, I'm really working through my family of origin issues but I've regained 20 pounds!" I said, "STOP working on those issues. Get back to your food plan." Whenever something interferes with your food discipline, put it on the shelf for a while – there will be plenty of time to work on that.

This is where I like to use my outhouse analogy. Not many people make a special trip to the outhouse just to revisit what's been left behind. However, when there's a lot building up that remains unprocessed, we may have to go clean things up because it starts to stink. When you're looking down that hole and stirring things up, wouldn't you rather be standing on a solid platform? Or are you willing to go stir up your mess with poor supports? You'll run the risk of falling in and messing up your delicately crafted recovery. It's OK to take a look and see what you're up against, and it's OK to step away while your platform is being fortified.

We should applaud ourselves for what we've survived. Despite whatever was done to us, we can still make a fabulous life for ourselves. We are resilient and we have proven that by our untrained and instinctual ability to protect ourselves and survive. Through recovery, which includes working the 12 steps and possibly working with a competent psychotherapist, we thrive on a platform of support, confidence, hard work and success.

*(K. VanDenBerg excerpted from earlier interview)*



(c) 2014. Dr. Judi Hollis is a Licensed Family Therapist, author of several books and educational materials, motivational speaker, radio and television expert. Judi would love to hear from you! You can ask Judi questions and access her materials, at [www.judihollis.com](http://www.judihollis.com) or call 1-800-8-ENOUGH

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950 N. State St. #D  
Hemet, CA. 92543  
P.O. Box 921 San Jacinto, CA. 92581  
Jose D. Aragon III,  
BA, CADC II, ICADC, SAP

Phone (951) 310-3561  
Fax (951) 755-2522

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