

# prime NEWSLETTER

FALL/WINTER 2024

Prevention Research Institute™

## SHARE YOUR STORY

We want to hear from you! As we move toward Prime For Life Version 10, we are filming new stories and interviews for inclusion in the program.

If you, or someone you know, have a story to share, please let us know! Some will be filmed for “Treasures Lost” and others will be shorter form “White Chair” inter-

views and other testimonials.

To share, reach out to any PRI Team member or visit the [Share Your Story page at primeforlife.org!](#)



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## Pickleball with the President

### Falling Down, Learning, & Trying Again



Picture this. A 63-year-old, **former** athlete, half blind in his right eye and sporting 15—okay, maybe 20—extra pounds, playing pickleball for only the second time, with the prior time happening six months ago. For those who don't know pickleball, it is a game played with hard paddles and a baseball size wiffleball, on a tennis surface, though the court is smaller. Our protagonist charges towards the front sideline straining to reach a ball. Then he has the sudden realization that the tipping point just passed; he was going down. Had a phone been handy and the video rolling, a gif surely would have been born. The only saving grace was our hero, resigned to his fate, tucking his shoulder, and rolling into what can only be described as a graceless

tumble. The good news is my resulting back ache was only muscle spasms. And some sprained pride.

So, you might be wondering *why?* Why was I doing this, and why am I telling you? Well, there are a few reasons. Of course, it is a good laugh and that's good for all of us. We also find people who are flawed more relatable. We see ourselves in the foibles of others, which gives us permission to be less than perfect. It also encourages us to be willing to try something new. Sure, the falling down can hurt, even when we tuck and roll. The strength resides in getting up and trying again. It is the essence of the growth mindset – try something new, fall down, learn from it, get up, and try again.

Organizations, like people, mature. PRI is no exception. The risk is that we begin to play it safe. We don't take risks or try new things. Metaphorically, we don't play pickleball because we might fall and look ridiculous. Worse, we become afraid we might be hurt and so we stay safe.

Of course, there are good reasons why we do things certain ways at PRI. We've learned from previous experiences. We know the best parts are worth appreciating and protecting. There is evidence about what works. Yet, there are things that must change or become out of date. The challenge is discerning what needs to be retained and what must change. We need to be willing to stretch, maybe past our tipping point, and fall.

We were an in-person training and delivery organization. Yet, we decided to test virtual training with Prime Solutions in Webex. It was imperfect. Webex was clunky as a platform, and we were clunky as trainers to be honest. But there was enough good there to refine and begin extending the training out. Then, we decided to experiment with Prime For Life New Instructor Training in a virtual format. It was not perfect. We fell down, got up, and tried again.

As for PFL,  
it is our thing.

We decided it was a mistake contracting with Webex; the new Zoom platform was better. After some hard discussions, we decided to eat the expensive contract we were locked into with Webex and make the change to Zoom in late 2019. Of course, the rest of the world joined us on Zoom in March 2020. Then we all fell down, got up, learned, and moved on.

We discovered the other right way because we had to, and we were willing to fail.

Presently, Ray Daugherty is doing a series of three beautiful Continuing Education Sessions (CES) on Version 10 Processes. In the current CES he talks about persuasion research, scaffolding, and Prime For Life. In this session, Ray observes we, at PRI, have fallen down in a few places in how we built the curriculum and train it. How do we know? Because of what people don't do, are unable to do, or do not understand. As a result, we must try something new in V10, and risk falling down again. But by reviewing what we have done, observing and acknowledging we fell down, looking at why we did, and returning to our models,



David B. Rosengren, Ph.D.  
PRI President

we believe that we can improve in these areas. The outcome will be that we build more scaffolding in V10 and create clearer narratives and stories for instructors. Of course, we could be wrong again. It might be tempting to play it safe, and stick with what we have already. But that is a path that leads to stagnation and mediocrity, and as an organization we set our sights higher. We don't apologize for high expectations, and we are prepared to fall so we can become better.

So, pickleball might or might not be my thing. We will find out, because I am willing to try. As for PFL, it is our thing. We believe that we can get better at creating the curriculum, training and supporting you in using it, and helping our clients thrive.

May I add what a gift it is that Ray is available and willing to do this series? I learned several things last night as I listened to the session. Here is the beauty. It's available to all of us because he is doing it virtually from retirement, in his home, just west of Yellowstone National Park. Five years ago, this would not have been possible. But we played pickleball with virtual training. Yes, we fell down, learned from it, got up, and tried again.

## EASY ONLINE ORDERING

Did you know you can place a workbook order anytime, day or night, by emailing [onlineorders@primeforlife.org](mailto:onlineorders@primeforlife.org)?

So go ahead and check that off your to-do list, even if it's midnight!

To ensure a smooth ordering process, please include:

- Your full name
- Email address
- Agency/school name
- Telephone number
- Shipping address



# Do you REALLY read all those Surveys?

## A Note from the PRI Research Team



At PRI, we value growth, learning, creativity, and feedback. We strive to continually learn and grow so we can help those we serve do the same! Feedback opens doors to creativity and finding solutions to problems that will make the learning environment in PRI trainings even better.

That's why we ask you to complete surveys after training. And it's why we really do read and analyze every one of the results! While Michelle reads through them as they arrive, Rita takes a "big picture" approach. That big picture is discussed below.

Thank you for helping make it possible!

This year, we moved surveys over to SurveyMonkey, which allows for easier analysis of results.

From that transition time until August 1, 2024, we collected 780 survey responses regarding 36 different Continuing Education Sessions (Wow, our training team has been busy!). We were thrilled to see responses to all rating questions resulted in a mean rating of at least 3.5/4.0. These survey prompts included "This training met all of my expectations" (3.5/4.0), "Content of this training offered new insights and knowledge" (3.6/4.0), and "This presentation style was an appropriate

way to deliver the course content" (3.6/4.0), among others – some of which asked about ease of registration and accessing the Zoom session.

We found out most attendees prefer online CE opportunities, though we recognize and acknowledge the potential sample bias of surveying attendees who have already chosen to join Zoom CE sessions.

We learned a few things in the open response sections as well...with a little help from ChatGPT! While Michelle read all survey responses,

analyzing the open-ended responses remained a challenge. So we got creative.

Asking ChatGPT to provide

themes gathered from open-response questions gave us a lot of insight in a little bit of time – win-win!

CES attendees told us they appreciate the level of interaction and engagement in the Zoom sessions, and that they value trainers' knowledge, professionalism, and abilities to keep participants engaged. The ChatGPT summary read in part, "Overall, the responses reflect a positive and engaging

training experience, where participants not only learned new skills and knowledge but also appreciated the opportunity to interact with peers and experts in the field." These interactions are our favorite part of training as well!

Areas for some creative thinking and improvement were also shared. Some attendees expressed a desire for longer sessions, allowing them to earn more credit hours in a single scheduling block. This was part of why we implemented "PRI days" with four back-to-back sessions available. We also learned about some ongoing technical issues. Are there ways we can simplify registration, make handouts easier to find, and improve our use of breakout rooms? We look forward to finding out!

Additionally, surveys asked for ideas for future sessions. Areas of interest include THC, current substance use trends, Motivational Interviewing, ethics, and dealing with resistance. We can't wait to dive in and get planning for 2025.

Will we see YOU there?!



Rito Dykstra, Ph.D.  
PRI Director of Research & Evaluation



# Epigenetic Effects of Drug Use & High-Risk Drinking

New research influencing Prime For Life

It is well documented that genes affect our responses to substances and our risk for substance use disorders. Some decrease risk, like the genes which cause a strong negative (flushing) response soon after consuming a drink of alcohol, and other genes increase risk. In the last couple of decades there have also been studies of the potential epigenetic effects of drug use and high-risk drinking. Epigenetics is the study of changes in how genes function and does not involve changes to the DNA itself. These changes occur when environmental factors either turn a gene on or off, so to speak.

There are a couple of analogies that can be helpful in understanding this complex area of study. Our DNA is like the hard drive of a computer. The hard drive determines the limits of what a computer could do. Epigenetics is like computer software, and the software determines what the computer actually does. Similarly, DNA is like a blueprint for a building, and epigenetics is akin to how well the blueprint is followed by the construction workers.

Examples of environmental factors that can lead to epigenetic effects

include diet, exercise, substance use, and exposure to toxins, trauma, or long-term stress. Some of these changes in gene function appear to occur only in the individual, while others can impact future generations.

Below is a sampling of findings on inherited epigenetic effects of substance use. Three are from animal studies where conditions can be controlled, and one is from a human study where the alteration in gene function seems to have occurred naturally.

- Alcohol tolerance was greater in the offspring of female fruit flies that drank to intoxication for 15 minutes once a day for 15 days prior to conception (Coreas, 2023).
- High-risk drinking by fathers in the last three months before conception was associated with an increase in behavioral problems in children (Sun, et al., 2023).
- Daily inhaling of tobacco smoke by male mice seemed to cause changes in behavior in their offspring (Dai et al., 2017).



## A CLOSER LOOK

Processes believed to play an important role in addiction appear to be affected by changes in DNA methylation, and epigenetics changes seem to primarily occur via DNA methylation (adding a methyl group to the DNA), altering the function of histone proteins, and non-coding RNA attaching to the coding RNA and inhibiting its action (Shaik et al., 2023). Genes are usually turned off by DNA methylation and turned on by DNA demethylation.

- Consumption of THC by male rats prior to conception has been linked to autism-like symptoms in offspring. One study found that eleven weeks of THC abstinence prior to conception reduced DNA methylation (Mazzeo & Meccariello, 2023).

### Conclusions, Recommendations, and PFL V10

Whether meaningful epigenetic changes due to drug use or high-risk drinking are transmitted to offspring (and potentially to grandchildren) seems to depend on not only the quantity and frequency of the high-risk choices, but the timing of the high-risk choices in relation to conception, and possibly the gender of the parent and of the offspring. Since controlled studies with humans are not ethical, it is very difficult to determine the specific doses, frequency, and timing that increase risk for undesired outcomes with human offspring. Thus, definitive statements about specific risks are not currently feasible. Nevertheless, if made aware of potential risks, some future parents might choose to make low-risk choices, particularly in the weeks and months prior to their attempts at conceiving.

We considered adding a little about epigenetics in V9, but the evidence for inheritance of significant epigenetic effects was limited and inconclusive. Based on newer studies, the pilot-testing of V10 will include a short discussion of the potential for epigenetic effects on offspring of parents who make high-risk choices. Given the limited nature of the current evidence, we will need to be very careful about how we present this information. Hence, the need for pilot testing. We certainly do not want to create undue anxiety or guilt for parents who made high-risk choices prior to the conception

of their children. Yet, we do want future parents to be aware of the possibility that if they make high-risk choices, there might be undesired outcomes for their children.

In the meantime, and in event that a PFL participant brings up epigenetics, we want you to have enough information to respond. We suggest responding with something like the following:

“

*Research on epigenetic changes to DNA function caused by alcohol or drug use by parents prior to conception is still in its infancy. So far, the findings suggest there could be undesired outcomes for children. These outcomes might be reduced or prevented by a significant period of abstinence prior to conception.*



Mark Nason  
PFL Research Analyst

### References

Coreas, J. J. (2023). *Inheritance of Ethanol Tolerance in Progeny of Repeatedly Intoxicated Parents in Drosophila Melanogaster* (Doctoral dissertation, California State University, Northridge).

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Mazzeo, F., & Meccariello, R. (2023). Cannabis and paternal epigenetic inheritance. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(9), 5663.

Shaik, Z., Fatima, S. M., Suffah Naaz, F. M., & Sreevani, B. (2023). The epigenetics of drug addiction. *International Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences Review and Research*, DOI: 10.47583/ijpsrr.2023.v82i01.001.

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### GET COZY

This winter, cozy up with a Prime For Life sweatshirt!

Visit: [pfl-store.printify.me](https://pfl-store.printify.me)

Shop the PFL Printify Store for a variety of products. Most are available in multiple sizes and colors.

# The HOW of delivery Matters

A Conversation with Theresa Moyers, Ph.D.

Successful outcomes with Prime Solutions require both evidence based content and deliberate delivery processes. We often refer to these elements as “the what” and “the how.” The “how” is what we bring to the delivery of the content and it’s probably more important than the content.

Both areas are measurable with our fidelity measurement tool “Moving ForWard.” Ray Daugherty and I partnered with Theresa Moyers, Ph.D., to develop and test Moving ForWard in 2007.

This tool is the backbone of coaching and feedback at PRI, and can be used as a personal development tool to “coach ourselves” as we share Prime programs with clients.

I thought it would be fun to check in with Terri to discuss what she and William R. Miller, Ph.D., are learning and writing about: The qualities that

## THE HOW OF DELIVERY MATTERS

with Theresa B. Moyers, Ph.D. and Michelle Stephen Seigel

CLICK TO PLAY THE INTERVIEW

make effective therapists, and how we bring these qualities to life when facilitating Prime For Life or Prime Solutions. View our chat at the link above or visit: [https://instructor.primeforlife.org/Recordings/the\\_how\\_of\\_delivery\\_matters](https://instructor.primeforlife.org/Recordings/the_how_of_delivery_matters)



Michelle Stephen Seigel  
PRI Director of Training & Programs

## Effective Psychotherapists: Clinical Skills That Improve Client Outcomes

William R. Miller & Theresa B. Moyers

What is it that makes some therapists so much more effective than others, even when they are delivering the same evidence-based treatment? This instructive book identifies specific interpersonal skills and attitudes—often overlooked in clinical training—that facilitate better client outcomes across a broad range of treatment methods and contexts. Reviewing 70 years of psychotherapy research, the preeminent authors show that empathy, acceptance, warmth, focus, and other characteristics of effective therapists are both measurable and teachable. Richly illustrated with sample dialogues, the book gives practitioners and students a blueprint for learning, practicing, and self-monitoring these crucial clinical skills.

From [Guilford Press](#)

## INSTRUCTOR TIP

Label workbooks with class, instructor, and contact information!

We recently heard from an instructor using this method to make sure Prime For Life participants knew where to be (and when!), and who to contact if they had any problems. And we love the idea!

If you have Canva, here’s a template to use to create the labels. Otherwise, something similar created in Word or other label design templates will do the trick! [Access Canva template HERE.](#)

[Insert Agency/School Name]

Class Date(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Time(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Info: \_\_\_\_\_