



Author and Teacher... Ester Nicholson

A challenged life...

Ester Nicholson, a celebrated vocalist formerly with Bette Midler and Rod Stewart, is a gifted speaker, teacher, therapist and former addict who has developed a unique and powerful 12-Step-informed, complimentary program for healing addiction and dependence.

The work is the result of more than a decade of development, refining a unique combination of the Anonymous 12 Step recovery program and widely-accepted spiritual practices. Ester has shared her work in keynotes, workshops, retreats and presentations as illustrated in Ms. Nicholson's new book, *"Soul Recovery - 12 Keys to Healing Dependence."* Most recently, Ester was featured in a special on the Oprah Winfrey Network.

Ester's life story sketches a path from humble beginnings: as the youngest child born to a Baptist minister father, growing up on Long Island (NY) then moving to Los Angeles - where she honed her addiction to crack cocaine and later found her redemption from it.

Showing unusual talent in music as a child, she began her love of singing in school and church

performances, and standing in her backyard with faux microphone in hand. It would seem unbelievable to her at the time, that one day she would stand on the stage at Madison Square Garden in front of screaming fans as she sang with Rod Stewart, Bette Midler, Faith Hill, Beyoncé, Barbra Streisand and so many more.

But this life of extremes also had a dark side.

Introduced to snorting cocaine and having a baby while still in her middle teens, Ester was setting herself up for a life denied. Out on her own, surviving by whatever means, she descended into the hell of addiction, nurturing her anger and resentment and bouncing between relationships both temporary and frightening.

By the early 1980's, Ester was a "functional" addict, doing office work part time, freebasing when the money was there, and finding any means to feed her various addictions. Music was long forgotten. Finally, her child was removed from her custody when it was clear she could no longer care for her - functional or not.

For more information, please visit: www.soulrecovery.org

...and a path to healing

As so often happens, tragedy created the perfect incentive.

Slowly climbing out of desperation, Ester found her way to 12 Step meetings. At first only seeing them as a continuing venue for her disease, she later was inspired to do the hard work of declaring her powerlessness in the face of the addiction. From these tentative beginnings, she worked her way forward. One, two, five, ten days; then two weeks, then 90 days clean, this was progress that counts.

But relapses happened. It wasn't clear why.

What was the underpinning that drove the addiction in the first place? It couldn't be purely medical. And it couldn't be purely psychological. As Ester later discovered - addiction, dependence, obsession and compulsion are related, yet entangled challenges. They require unraveling because the dysfunction becomes a part of the identity.

In point of fact, they are identity diseases.

But for Ester to discover that, she needed a state-change in her awareness - a non-linear jump. For her, that came in the form of a spiritual teaching that redefined what her personal identity was. She had to "find God" - but a God redefined beyond the 2 dimensional view of an angry, withholding and anthropomorphic God. And very likely, a God that would be unrecognizable to her Baptist roots.

She had hit a wall with the 12 Steps.

In the early 1990's, two years sober - Ester attended an unusual church service with a gifted "spiritual director" named Michael Bernard Beckwith. Beckwith later was recognized as a "teacher" featured in the pop, spiritual-light movie, "*The Secret*." But the essential teaching that Beckwith expounded was one of re-identification of the self in terms of spiritual unity - essentially a "one-ness" with a redefined Divine Presence. This was a key moment for Ester, because it addressed the root identity issues that had caused so much difficulty in her life.

Studying under Beckwith - who also penned the Foreword for *Soul Recovery* - familiarized Ester with the principles she would later turn

into the *Soul Recovery* teaching. But it was the inspiration of joining and uniting these teachings with the 12 Step process itself, that revealed the answer and finally turned the tables on the addictions she had suffered from for so long.

Sometimes, an internal realignment changes the conditions outside.

Ester had just started singing at church after nearly 10 years of "not even singing in the shower," when she got a call from Bette Midler's manager asking if she would be interested in background singing on Bette's next tour. Appearances on *Oprah*, *Ellen* and other shows followed. Then toward the end of the tour, Ester got a phone call from Rod Stewart asking if she wanted to do his next world tour. One thing led to another, and soon Ester was to be seen on *Good Morning America*, back on *Oprah* and *Ellen*, and widely considered a top, background vocalist call in the most competitive music market in the world.

But Ester had an even higher calling: to be of service to the communities of people who could use what she had learned the hard way. "We don't have to do this the hard way anymore," Ester declared to a workshop she gave several years ago. "What we have to do is engage both the heart and mind to address this serious personal issue that spills over into our families and communities. And it's deeper than just substance dependence. It permeates lives in the form of a lack of purpose and the lack of a sense of our own worthiness."

She recognized the disease for what it was, an affliction of the identity.

Ester Nicholson has spent the last decade traveling the nation, giving keynote speeches, facilitating workshops and teaching a curriculum for the healing of dependence and dependence-related conditions. During that time, her work has been to optimize the best practices to heal the underlying causes of these conditions.

"My life demonstrates that it's possible to permanently heal addiction. I know that's a controversial stand, but it is possible. I know it is possible, and I'm committed to helping others find their healing in this. It's just too important to do otherwise."

