

Health and Wellness

Best Bets: REEL Recovery Film Festival

Denver's inaugural version of this multi-day festival explores the issue of addiction through film.

By Mary Clare Fischer
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Everyone has an addiction, whether it's drinking coffee, scrolling through social media feeds, running ultramarathons—or in some cases, something much stronger. Although the effects of substance abuse are arguably more dangerous than your daily caffeine intake, the recovery process doesn't have to be terrifying for patients or their loved ones. In that light, the [Center for Dependency, Addiction and Rehabilitation](#) (CeDAR) on the [University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus](#) is presenting the first [Colorado Recovery Festival](#), which celebrates healing instead of shying away from it.

"Our whole mission in doing [this] is to change the conversation from the sadness of addiction to a message of hope and the gifts of recovery," says Tracy Reinhard, a member of the festival's marketing and development team. "It's a great coming together of different vehicles that enable us to look at that joy."

While speakers such as actor Ed Begley Jr., TV show host Pat O'Brien, and musician Jeff Brinkman will tell their stories this week, the highlight of the festivities is the weekend's [REEL Recovery Film Festival](#), featuring 11 films with several panels or Q&A sessions that delve deeper into the movies' subjects. Get a glimpse of the full schedule and purchase tickets at [denverfilm.org](#) (\$9 to \$10 per screening or \$30 to \$35 for an all-access pass). Here are a few standout sessions to check out:

Friday

2 p.m.: *When Love is Not Enough: The Lois Wilson Story* (90 minutes)—Winona Ryder stars as Lois Wilson, the co-founder of Al-Anon (a program for friends and relatives of alcoholics) and wife of Bill Wilson (the founder of Alcoholics Anonymous), in the backstory of these worldwide movements.

4:30 p.m.: *Perseverance: The Story of Dr. Billy Taylor* (52 minutes)—This documentary tells the tale of Billy Taylor, one of the best runningbacks in the University of Michigan's history who became addicted to drugs and alcohol. Taylor and other experts from CeDar will answer questions after the film.

9:30 p.m.: *Successful Alcoholics* and *Russell Brand: From Addiction to Recovery* (85 minutes)—This double feature includes a short that examines if alcoholics can have successful relationships and careers, as well as Russell Brand's story of recovery from heroin addiction. Advocacy organization [Young People in Recovery](#) will conduct a panel about the language used to describe the recovery process post-screenings.

Saturday

2 p.m.: *No Kidding, Me Too!* (75 minutes)—This documentary chronicles seven stories of mental illness, including director Joe Pantoliano's own struggles with depression. [Acadia Healthcare](#) will run a panel and Q&A session in response to the film.

4:30 p.m.: *Radical Resistance Tour: Pine Ridge, South Dakota* (26 minutes)—Set in (you guessed it) Pine Ridge, South Dakota, this short examines the prevalence of and problems created by alcohol on a Native American reservation. The post-screening panel will feature the advocacy director and CEO of Alcohol Justice, which advocates for better regulation in the alcohol industry, the founder of American Indians in Film & Television, and a journalist who covers impoverished communities.

7 p.m.: *Behind the Orange Curtain* (90 minutes)—There's an epidemic of kids becoming addicted to prescription drugs, particularly in Orange County, California, as this documentary reveals.

9:30 p.m.: *Bob and the Monster* (90 minutes)—Bob Forrest, vocalist for Thelonious Monster and former heroin addict, has turned his rocky past into a career in counseling (remember *Celebrity Rehab with Dr. Drew* on VH1?), a story he tells in this documentary film.

Sunday

2 p.m.: *The Weight is Over* (90 minutes)—Actor Eric Edwards examines his spiral into obesity by viewing his weight gain from his friends and family's perspective in this documentary.

4:30 p.m.: *Grace* (93 minutes)—This drama asks a woman whether she would rather spend six months in jail or attend 90 meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous in 90 days. A panel discussion on healing from trauma will follow.

7 p.m.: *Girl on the Edge* (105 minutes)—Penned by Blue Valentine co-writer Joey Curtis, this drama based on a true story follows a drug-addicted teenager and her path to recovery at a rehabilitation center.

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