

Don Phelps

Speaker | Author | Certified Recovery Support Specialist (CRSS)

Identity, recovery, and the journey from performance to presence.

About Don

Don Phelps is a speaker, author, and Certified Recovery Support Specialist whose work explores recovery, identity, and learning to live more honestly.

A former pastor and corporate professional, Don draws from his journey through addiction, recovery, spiritual change, and personal reinvention to explore what happens when the roles and identities we depend on stop working, and what becomes possible when we begin living with less performance and more presence.



Speaking Topics

From Performance to Presence

Moving beyond roles, achievement, and the pressure to appear okay.

Who Am I Without the Role?

Finding our footing when identities, careers, and life roles change.

Recovery Is More Than Abstinence

Moving from simply stopping to learning how to live.

Learning How to Stay

Meeting discomfort without immediately escaping, fixing, or reacting.

Speaking Style

Honest, grounded, and relatable. Don combines personal storytelling with practical insight, creating space for audiences to recognize something of their own lives in his story.

Audiences

Recovery & Behavioral Health · Healthcare & Human Services · Higher Education · Professional Associations · Leadership & Workplace Well-Being

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THE CIRCLE IS NEVER CLOSED

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Speaking Programs

FROM PERFORMANCE TO PRESENCE

Flagship Keynote

What Happens When We Stop Trying to Be Who We Think We're Supposed to Be

For much of his life, Don Phelps became very good at being who he thought he was supposed to be. Successful professional. Pastor. Leader. The person who appeared to have everything under control. Behind those roles was a quieter struggle with insecurity, identity, addiction, and the exhausting work of managing how he was perceived.

Drawing from his journey through professional success, ministry, addiction, recovery, and personal reinvention, Don explores the difference between being admired and being known, and between having a role and mistaking that role for who we are.

Audience Takeaways

- Recognize patterns of performance, perfectionism, and image management.
- Separate personal identity from roles, achievements, and labels.
- Discover how greater honesty and presence can change the way we meet everyday life.

RECOVERY IS MORE THAN ABSTINENCE

Recovery Keynote

Moving Beyond Stopping to Learning How to Live

Stopping the substance can save a life, but it does not automatically answer the questions that remain. Who am I now? How do I handle discomfort without escaping it? What does recovery look like when the immediate crisis has passed?

Drawing from his own experience with long-term sobriety, relapse, and a deeper return to recovery, Don explores the difference between simply not using and building a life grounded in honesty, connection, purpose, and presence.

Audience Takeaways

- Explore recovery as more than abstinence or symptom reduction.
- Recognize the role identity, belonging, and purpose can play in sustained recovery.
- Consider how honesty, connection, and presence support a life in recovery.

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Speaking Programs, continued

WHO AM I WITHOUT THE ROLE?

Keynote / Presentation

Finding Our Footing When the Roles That Define Us Change

Careers end. Relationships change. Children grow up. Beliefs evolve. Recovery changes us. Sometimes the roles that once gave our lives structure no longer fit, leaving us with a surprisingly difficult question: Who am I now?

Drawing from his own transitions through ministry, career change, recovery, retirement, and personal reinvention, Don explores the difference between having meaningful roles and asking those roles to carry the full weight of our identity.

Audience Takeaways

- Recognize when a role has become intertwined with personal identity.
- Navigate transitions without treating change as a loss of worth.
- Explore a more flexible sense of identity grounded in who we are, not simply what we do.

LEARNING HOW TO STAY

Interactive Workshop

Meeting Discomfort Without Immediately Escaping, Fixing, or Reacting

When discomfort shows up, our instinct is often to make it go away. We distract ourselves, stay busy, try to fix the situation, reach for control, or react before we've had time to understand what is happening.

Drawing from his experience with recovery, mindfulness, and the ordinary practice of beginning again, Don explores what it means to stay present when life feels uncomfortable. Through personal stories, reflection, and practical exercises, participants learn to create a little more space between what they feel and what they do next.

Audience Takeaways

- Recognize common ways we avoid or react to discomfort.
- Practice creating space between an uncomfortable experience and the response that follows.
- Develop simple, practical ways to return to the present when thoughts, emotions, or circumstances pull us away.