



PATIENT & FAMILY VOICE

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FRANCES KENNY — DISCLOSURES

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- No Disclosures

OBJECTIVES



- The importance of asking family members how *they* are coping “*in their own right*”
- What the Family “Recovery Toolkit” consists of and how it builds strength and resiliency for the long term
- Referring family members to mutual support groups that may exist in the community or helping them to start one. Helping family members learn new coping skills and strategies allows them to support and advocate for their loved ones and at the same time, maintain a reasonable quality of life for themselves.

FRANCES KENNY

- Mother with lived experience since 1993
- Founded “Parents Forever” Support Group in Vancouver in 2000
- Parents Forever: Professionally-supported mutual support group for parents and family members of **adult** addicted children (18 years and up)
- Acknowledging that this is my personal experience as a biological parent, but the definition of “family” is defined by the person in active addiction



PARENTS FOREVER



•PARENTS FOREVER, a mutual support group for parents and family members, has been providing support for family and friends impacted by substance use for the past nineteen (19 years) in Vancouver. The group is administered and facilitated by Frances Kenny. The group is supported by Vancouver Coastal Health and managed by the Boys and Girls Clubs of South Coast BC (BGCBC). www.parentsforever.ca

•In addition to the PARENTS FOREVER group, the Boys and Girls Clubs manage **PARENTS TOGETHER**: a province-wide, mutual support program for parents experiencing difficulties with their *teens*. *Email:* parentstogether@bgcbc.ca

HOPE FOR FAMILIES AFFECTED BY SUBSTANCE USE



How ARE families affected?

Emotionally: Parents and family members go through stages very similar to the stages of grief : shock, denial, anger, guilt, grief/loss and acceptance.

Physically: The continuous stress and anxiety parents and family members are under inevitably leads to health problems – both mental and physical.

Spiritually: Connections with family and friends are severely compromised. Feelings of blame, guilt and shame contribute to parents and family members becoming increasingly isolated and feeling hopeless.

Financially: Families typically use whatever finances they have to access help for their loved ones whether it is treatment, counselling, shelter, food....often depleting whatever savings they have and putting their own financial future at risk (retirement, health concerns, others in the family).

HOPE FOR FAMILIES AFFECTED BY SUBSTANCE USE



Parents and family members have stated they feel:

- Overwhelmed and unsure of how to proceed – how to access the help their family member needs
- Guilty – looking for things they could have done differently or reasons why their family member has become ill
- They are on a roller coaster constantly dealing with the good and bad times i.e. stability and then setbacks and so on and so on...
- Helpless especially when the loved one does not have insight into their substance use and aren't ready to seek help
- Alone and not receiving support for themselves as caregivers
- Worried about the future and how their loved one will manage when they are not around

HOPE FOR FAMILIES AFFECTED BY SUBSTANCE USE



So, what can parents and family members do in order to cope?

To get control back of their own lives?

**To stay connected with their loved ones, offer love and support
without allowing the substance use to control them?**

To stay strong, resilient and ever hopeful?

HOPE FOR FAMILIES AFFECTED BY SUBSTANCE USE

We believe families need a brand new toolbox filled with tools to help them begin their own journey of recovery

A FAMILY RECOVERY TOOLKIT

**EDUCATION
INFORMATION
SUPPORT
COPING SKILLS/STRATEGIES
HOPE
ACTION**



HOPE FOR FAMILIES AFFECTED BY SUBSTANCE USE



EDUCATION

- Parents and family members need to educate themselves as quickly as possible about substance use/mental health. It is the most empowering and practical step parents can take.
- Education series are offered by various agencies and a wide variety of websites offering information. Connections to these resources are provided at group.
- A small lending library with books on substance use and mental illness. Family members can borrow books at no cost for two or three months.
- From time-to-time speakers are invited to present on various topics.
- Education on new coping skills, strategies and communication are an integral part of each meeting.

HOPE FOR FAMILIES AFFECTED BY SUBSTANCE USE



SUPPORT

- Regular, ongoing mutual support groups provide a safe and confidential place for parents and family members to come together to share their experiences, their wisdom and their courage.
- Parents and family members learn new ways of coping including how to remain EVER HOPEFUL, WITH NO EXPECTATIONS.
- Veteran parents continue to attend group meetings to offer support and encouragement as well as sharing their stories of success, whether it be a child making a decision to change or a parent regaining their strength and feelings of self-worth.

PARENTS FOREVER

One Model of Mutual Support

PARENTS FOREVER AGENDA

- 1. Welcome (*new members receive agenda and membership card*)**
- 2. Opening Statement (4 C's)**
- 3. Confidentiality**
- 4. Self-Introductions (*brief – more time provided in 2nd part of meeting*)**
- 5. Resources/Library**
- 6. Successes**

COFFEE BREAK

- 7. Problem-solving (*issues identified in 1st part of meeting*)**
- 8. Closing statement**



SETTING UP SUPPORT GROUPS FOR FAMILIES AFFECTED BY SUBSTANCE USE



*In order for mutual support groups to remain sustainable & stable over
an extended period of time, they need to:*

- .Hold regularly scheduled, ongoing meetings
- Focus on support...not advocacy (swallows up too much time)
 - Be led by a trained facilitator
 - Be supported by:
 - a) ongoing funding for operational expenses, phone, computer, etc. b) professional MH&A counsellor/and or agency/or both
- Do an intake with each person before attending first meeting
- Provide emotional *and* practical support which includes education, tools and strategies for communication, setting boundaries, self-care

SETTING UP SUPPORT GROUPS FOR FAMILIES AFFECTED BY SUBSTANCE USE



- Provide up-to-date resources, if possible a lending library (available at each meeting)
- Arrange for presentations by speakers on a variety of issues i.e. Co-occurring *mental health* challenges, recovery, relapse, legal matters, suicide prevention, etc.
- Regularly invite “Veteran” parents to attend meetings to share their experience and hope
- From time-to-time, provide support provided in between meetings usually by a facilitator and sometimes a veteran member.