



Families for Addiction Recovery

NEWSLETTER
FALL 2017 ISSUE

Addiction is a Family and Societal Disease

One of the first things that families learn when one of their members is struggling with addiction is that addiction is a family disease. One person may have it, but the whole family suffers. In fact, watching a loved one self-harm can be nothing short of tortuous. As a result, the health and wellbeing of the entire family is at risk. All family members need help. Outcomes are best when families recover together.

But addiction is not just a family disease. Addiction is also a societal disease. Persons in active addiction are difficult to be around. They may be engaged in criminal activity to satisfy their craving. These symptoms of their illness do not inspire empathy and compassion in others. It is this lack of understanding, empathy and compassion that has resulted in decades of underfunding for the treatment of addiction. People struggling with addiction are not dying from drugs or addiction. They are dying because they cannot get what they should be entitled to: publicly-funded, timely, compassionate, evidence-based treatment. People with addiction are not failing society. Society is failing them.

It is the work of our families and those in recovery to raise society's understanding, empathy and compassion so that those who are in active addiction receive the treatment and support they need and deserve in order to recover.

“Saving the lives of those affected by this disease will only happen when the general public gets angry enough to demand that the people who suffer from these disorders deserve the same medical treatment and compassion as anyone suffering from a chronic illness.” From *Living in the Wake of Addiction; Lessons for Courageous Caregiving* by Gloria Englund

Parent to Parent (“P2P”) Support

Are you the parent of a child (of any age) who is struggling with addiction? Are you feeling alone, stressed or hopeless? We want to support you. FAR will match you to one of our trained parent volunteers who knows what you are going through. Talk to your supporter over the phone from the convenience of your home. No judgement; just understanding. You can sign up on our website: <https://www.farcanada.org/services/peer-support/>

Risk Factors for Addiction

**ADDICTION:
THE RISK FACTORS**

FACTORS THAT INCREASE THE LIKELIHOOD OF ONSET OR THE SPEED OF DEVELOPMENT OF A SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER.

GENETICS
Genetic predisposition can account for 40-60% of the risk of developing an addiction.

GENDER
Males are more likely than females to develop an addiction.

AGE AT FIRST USE
Starting substance use at an early age.

PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS
The prevalence of other mental health disorders, such as major depressive disorder, ADHD, or post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as personality traits such as high impulsivity & sensation seeking.

ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES
Peer substance use, substance availability or access, exposure to traumatic events particularly physical, emotional or sexual abuse, media influences, etc.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT
Lack of family involvement, support, or parental supervision, parent substance use.

HAVING 1 OR MORE OF THE ABOVE RISK FACTORS DOES NOT MEAN THAT SOMEONE WILL DEVELOP A SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER. THE PRESENCE OF RISK FACTORS INCREASES THE ODDS THAT ONE WILL DEVELOP SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER, & THE MORE RISK FACTORS PRESENT, THE GREATER THE LIKELIHOOD.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:
www.recoveryanswers.org
(NIDA, MAYO CLINIC)

RECOVERY RESEARCH INSTITUTE
RECOVERYANSWERS.ORG

A Voice for Families

FAR is pleased to have received an invitation to join the Community Dialogue Steering Committee established by Toronto Public Health. The mandate of the committee is to develop a community dialogue process in Toronto on what a public health approach to drug policy should look like for Canada. This work is being done as part of the Toronto Overdose Action Plan approved by the Toronto Board of Health in March, 2017.

During the summer FAR met with the Ontario Legalization of Cannabis Secretariat of the Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG) and participated in a forum held by MAG to discuss the regulation of cannabis in Ontario. We support a government monopoly on the sales of cannabis as this public health approach has been shown to reduce harms. We advocated for a minimum purchase age of 21 rather than 19 as research has shown that age 21 reduces initiation in use for those 15-17 years of age. The US has a minimum age of purchase for alcohol and cannabis (where legal) of 21 years and many States and municipalities have raised the age of purchase for tobacco to 21 because of the research. Our discussion notes can be accessed here:

<https://www.farcanada.org/news-articles/ontario-cannabis-secretariat-meeting-notes/>

Meet Betty-Lou Kristy

Betty-Lou Kristy is the newest member of FAR's Advisory Board. She is a bereaved mother in recovery from co-occurring alcohol and drug addictions, trauma and mental health issues. She lost Pete, her 25-year-old son who also struggled with concurrent disorders, to an accidental Oxycontin & psychiatric drug overdose on Dec. 23, 2001.

As a result of Pete's death, Betty-Lou has dedicated her life as a person with lived experience to be a tireless family advisor and advocate, helping to frame policy, governance, programming and funding. She also is an experienced speaker, trainer and facilitator.

Betty-Lou is currently the Peer Support Substance Use & Provincial Systems Lead for the Enhancing & Sustaining Peer Support Initiative in the region of Mississauga Halton. Peer support provides a humanizing connection of hope and empowerment by modeling recovery and fostering mutual relationships that nurture safe space, familiarity and equitable common ground. This initiative introduces social change into a complex health care system which allows a shift to person-directed care and the empowerment of family.

YouTube Videos featuring Betty-Lou and her late son, Pete can be found here:

- [CAMH Transforming Lives Award](#) 4 min
- [Eyes Wide Open \(Canada, 2013\)](#) 7 min
- [Stigmatized & Irrevocably Harmed](#) 4 min



Recovery Days 2017

FAR is a proud partner of Recovery Day Ottawa on Sept. 23rd and a proud sponsor of Recovery Day Toronto on Sept. 30th. Come join us in celebrating those who are living in recovery!

