"Welcome to the winter edition of the Family Drug Help newsletter, the theme of which is "Recovery" that follows on from the focus on addiction in the autumn edition. As with addiction, recovery has many meanings and can be a loaded term. Families grappling with the impact of a loved one's addiction can find themselves lost in "their recovery", desperate to support and save them without seeing that they as a family or friend have their own needs, their own recovery to consider.

But what does Recovery look like? There are many personal stories of Recovery and useful resources listed in the newsletter. Carpe diem- seize the day. Recovery may be something as small as giving yourself a treat, to take that art class or make time for yourself. It may mean joining a group or calling the Helpline. It may mean giving back, and seeking meaning by volunteering or helping in some way. The impact of addiction is different for each person, family and friend. The focus on our recovery says we have needs to, and by taking that journey, we can indirectly benefit those whom we care about.

Family Drug Help is about providing support to families affected by a loved one's addiction based on lived experience. The trained volunteers on the Helpline have a lived experience who provide a listening ear, without judgement, while providing options for support and referral. The Action Recovery Course is a six week psycho-education program that focuses on the family, shifting the focus away from the loved one's addiction to their own needs and recovery. The family support groups provide further opportunities to connect with others dealing with similar issues, the impact of which can be enormous and life changing.

Just this week a family member who attends a Family Drug Help support group reflected on the changes she had experienced since first coming; she initially felt lost, withdrawn and hopeless, but as she connected with other family members, learnt about her own recovery needs, she was able to gain a sense of self-confidence, hope and vitality such that she was later employed by a community agency to work in peer support. Each day is a new beginning. Take a deep breath and start again.

From all of us at Family Drug Help.
It is often claimed that dependence on alcohol and drugs is a family disease. This refers to the fact that the addiction impacts more than just the individual addict. At Family Drug Help we know that family and friends suffer enormously. The strain of addiction on a family can be devastating, and it leads to a great deal of dysfunction as the members of this unit attempt to compensate. Spouses may work hard to hide the addiction, and will devote much of their time and energy to protecting the addict from the full consequences of their bad behavior. Children will be expected to act like grown ups and take on responsibilities that they should never be burdened with.

When an addict becomes willing to enter recovery it is a marvellous thing. If they follow through with this ambition they will be able to rebuild their life. Family members are likely to be overjoyed with the idea of a new start, but there can also be a great deal of fear about the future. These individuals will have adapted to the chaos, and this is what they are used to. If they are not supported in this change it can be a real struggle for them. The problem is that when users enter recovery they are usually offered plenty of support and guidance but such resources might not be available to family members who will also be struggling with the changes.

This lack of attention to these other people who have been impacted by the addiction can be problematic – it can mean that the family continues to behave in a dysfunctional manner even after their loved one has become sober.

Impact of Addiction on the Family
Addiction has a significant impact on the family and the damage can include the following:
* It is common for partners to be co-dependent so that their life revolves around the addict’s behavior. This type of unhealthy love can lead to a situation where the individual is addicted to the chaos and they end up enabling the addict.
* Children can develop the impression that substance abuse is normal. There is a great risk that they will experiment with alcohol or drugs at a young age and many will follow their parents into addiction.
* Children of addicts are far more likely to have mental health problems.
* There is a close association between domestic violence and substance abuse – although addiction should never be viewed as a means to excuse or rationalise such abuse.

Continued overpage
* Addiction will often lead to the breakup of relationships. This will often mean that the family will be missing a parent.
* Substance abuse can lead to financial hardship for the rest of the family.
* Family members may be too ashamed to bring friends back to the house. They will be worried about how the addict will behave around the visitor.
* The family members will usually suffer from a great deal of embarrassment and guilt because of the addict’s behaviour.
* They will usually devote a great deal of time to hiding the addict’s behaviour. This often means that family members feel isolated.
* Family members can live in fear of the addict’s moods. This individual may be capable of moving from affection to physical violence in a matter of seconds – the unpredictability can mean that family members are always on edge.

**Family Recovery Defined**

Family recovery refers to the process by which this unit returns to proper functioning following addiction. Although in most instances only one member of the family will have been a substance abuser it will have likely impacted everybody. Family recovery is said to pass through a number of key stages which are:

* In the first stage the family member will still be abusing alcohol or drugs.
* In the second stage there will be the transition from substance abuse to sobriety.
* Early recovery is the third stage – this can be a difficult time for the family as everyone adjusts to the new situation.
* The final stage is on-going recovery. By this time the family will usually have adapted to the new conditions.

**How Family Recovery in Rehab Works**

Family recovery can begin when the individual enters an inpatient (or outpatient) program. There are some rehabs that put a great deal of emphasis on family recovery, and they may even offer assistance to other members of the family including:

* Educational information about addiction and recovery. This will mean that they will have a better understanding of what has happened to their loved one and what they can expect in the future.
* They will learn new skills that will facilitate effective communication within the family. A huge problem for people when they become sober is that they struggle to communicate with their loved ones – and vice versa.
* They will be fully involved in the transition process when the individual moves from rehab to home.

**Importance of Family Involvement in Recovery**

The involvement of family members in the recovery attempts of the addict can make a difference because:

* It is often because of the urging of family members that the individual will finally
* Most addicts will hit low points where they become more receptive to the idea of sobriety. Family members can support this motivation by encouraging their loved one to seek help before they slip back into denial.

* Each member of the family is likely to have been negatively impacted by the addiction so they will benefit from participation in the recovery process. In fact their failure to participate could mean that the addict is getting better while the family continues to be dysfunctional.

* The individual is responsible for making a success of their recovery but having the support of family members can make a difference to them.

**How Families Can Recover from Addiction**

Even if the addict does not agree to end their addiction there are things that the family can do to recover from the destruction. In some instances this may involve disengaging from the substance abuser until they agree to get help. In order to recover the family can:

* It is vital that family members stop denying that there is a problem. So long as they refuse to admit that there is a problem it will be difficult for them to fix it.

* Family members need to put more focus on their own needs. It is up to the addict to take responsibility for their situation.

* Connect with other people who understand the problem. Groups can be particularly good for helping family members come to terms with the addiction and cope with it – they can also help family members adjust when the addict enters recovery.

* It is often suggested that family members stop protecting the addict from the consequences of their behaviour. This type of enabling might actually be prolonging the problem.

* The focus for grownups in a family should be to protect the children. Looking after them has to take priority over the addict’s needs, and it is unwise just to assume that they are coping.

* The correct information about addiction can be a help to family members because it will give them a better understanding of their situation and what they should do. It is important to stick to reputable sources when seeking out this information, and to understand that there are different approaches to addiction treatment.

* Communicating with an addict can be frustrating and even when this person gets sober it may seem like they are speaking a different language sometimes. Family members can learn new skills to improve communication, and this will be a great help going forward.

Article adapted from alcoholrehab.com
Most people think that Recovery is a journey that only those who are addicted to substances go through. There are discussions in the Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) world centered on a user’s recovery, and yes, their recovery is of primary importance, but just as significant is the recovery process that the family members, loved ones and significant others go through. As one of them, we too have to recover, and like the recovery of those fighting addiction, it is a lifetime undertaking.

It has been 9 years since my son left our house. He left behind a family that was bewildered, broken, anxious, exhausted and adrift. Even though he was no longer in the house, that didn’t mean that the pattern I was in, of tears, worry and hopelessness, ended too. These thoughts, feelings and behaviours were my new normal and I didn’t know how to be anything else. I felt as though I was still in a fragile bubble, waiting anxiously for the next terrible thing to come along and burst it. And as each day passed with my delicate bubble still intact, the more convinced I was that something was coming. I was getting more and more anxious as time passed and it was not only impacting on my physical and emotional health, but it had a negative impact on my family as well.

During the saga with my son, the police had given me a phone number of an organization and told me they might help. The number turned out to be the Family Drug Helpline. It took a while for me to build up the courage to call, but once I did, as you would expect, I had a great chat followed by information being sent out to me, including a pamphlet for the Action for Recovery Course (ARC) program run by Family Drug Help. The ARC Program looked helpful so I gave it a go. That was the start of my recovery.

Recovery for us loved ones can come in all sorts of ways, but the way that worked best for me was through knowledge. Most important of all, that I
was not alone, others were on a similar journey. Learning about all the ins and outs of addiction and what it entails was helpful. However it was learning about myself, learning my triggers, learning mindfulness, learning to see outside my bubble and to recognize the good again and learning to enjoy life’s pleasures without letting the doubts creep in. This helped me find the new me and to acknowledge and appreciate my new battle scars – similar to the grieving process.

In saying all this I have to admit, that like anyone going through recovery, I have had my lapses. If it looks the slightest bit like my son, who is in his own recovery, is going to relapse, I immediately go back into a panicked mode. The difference is that now it’s only for a short time, because I have learned strategies to bring myself back to a rational mindset and to not allow the memories of the past overwhelm me and dictate my actions. These occasions no longer have the same impact they once did.

My recovery is ongoing. It has its ups and downs, but I am now in a very happy, comfortable and peaceful place, that I have greater control over. My family, friends and my son love having ME back again! Perhaps the broader community should give greater support to those within the circles of impact caused by addictive behavior.

By Jan
When I was just seven years old, like many little girls, I danced with my father by stepping on his shoes as he glided me around the room. I remember viewing the world from atop his shoulders. I felt protected and even cherished; I was his first daughter.

As I grew older, alcohol took my place in my father’s life. My dad had a tough time holding onto a job; he spent most evenings at the corner bar. My mother became quieter and quieter.

As time went on, my mother and father began a large family. Within the next ten years my mom had five more children. We moved to the city and my dad found work at a hospital in the supply department. He made little money that was consumed by the size of his growing family. I don’t know how he managed to afford to keep drinking, but he did. The violence and moral decay started when I was around ten years old. He and Mum started fighting physically. Then he started on us children—beatings, humiliations, servitude, and finally sexual abuse. My sisters and my mentally retarded brother suffered the most. As the eldest at home (my older brother had joined the Air Force), I tried hard to protect my siblings and myself.

I was terrified of my dad just as my mother was. With terror came hatred and all-consuming fear. I forgot about the man whose shoes I danced on, whose shoulders I rode on, the gentle teacher whom I had loved. That fear and hatred lasted until I stumbled into Al-Anon.
I fell into mental illness. I was hospitalised and treated for depression and post traumatic stress disorder. In therapy, I spoke of my feelings about my father for the first time. The therapist gave me a list of Al-Anon meetings and asked me to attend one. At first I was dead-set against going. Then as I began to feel worse, I decided to take her advice. On my way to my first Al-Anon meeting, I dug my nails into my legs; I was so very frightened.

The more I went, the more I listened, but I just could not let go of the hatred I carried for so long. It had become a part of my everyday thoughts. The person whom I had asked to become my Sponsor suggested I go to an open A.A. meeting. The thought made me ill, but I decided to go.

I met men and women struggling to recover. Shaking their hands was the first time since I had left home that I had allowed myself to be around anyone who had a drinking problem. I touched real people who were trying hard to overcome alcoholism. The last year of his life I was able to once again see him as a human being.

Unfortunately, my dad never found help before he died. But Al-Anon has saved my sanity, helped me reconnect with my Higher Power, and released me from the hatred that I carried for too long. I’ve made my peace with my Dad, even though it came after his death.

By Diana B., Illinois

Taken from the Al-anon website. www.al-anon.org.au
Want to talk to someone who understands what it’s like to have a family member with problematic alcohol and other drug use?

Sometimes you may feel you need to talk to someone who knows what it’s like to love someone who’s misusing drugs/alcohol. Family Drug Help offers a confidential telephone service which provides support to family members in need. We are staffed by trained volunteers, ordinary people who are just like you: mothers, fathers, grandparents, siblings, partners, sons, daughters and friends. (Monday - Friday 9-5pm)

Having a bad day?
Ring the Family Drug Helpline and they can talk you through it.

“The Helpline and the volunteers who have lived through similar circumstances were a Godsend during those early months of not knowing where to turn or what to do.”

You can ring the Helpline on 1300 660 068 for support, information, referrals and above all, to be heard.

Disclaimer: Family Drug Help is a Victorian service providing information and support to the families and friends of people who use drugs. The ideas and views of personal contributions to the Family Drug Help Newsletter are not necessarily those of Family Drug Help, its auspicing agencies or the editorial committee. Any comments should be made via letters to the Editor that can be published or directed to the authors/artists themselves. All articles and artwork in the Family Drug Help Newsletter remain the copyright of the original artist/author and may be reproduced with permission.
Helpful Links for Family and Friends of users

Al-Anon.org (al-anon.org.au) For family members of alcoholics.
Nar-anon (www.naranon.com.au) For family members of addicts.
Gam-anon (www.gaaustralia.org.au/gam-anon) For family members of gamblers.
Coda.org (www.freewebs.com/ozcoda/) For co-dependent individuals.
Adultchildren.org (adultchildren.org) For adult children of alcoholics and addicts

To 12 step or not to 12 step?

The above groups follow the 12 step philosophy that AA uses. They are very effective for many people but let’s not forget Family Drug Help’s very own support groups. Whilst we don’t follow the 12 step model our groups are structured with an educational component followed by an hour of sharing. We recommend that families try different groups to see which one fits.

News from our groups:

Balwyn/Ashburton After many years based in Balwyn our support group is making a move to Ashburton. We are sure the group will continue to service families in the Boroondara catchment.

Sunbury: We regret the closing of our Sunbury group. Lack of numbers made the group unsustainable.

Lilydale/Rowville/Colac/Shepparton and Geelong: These five groups have recently commenced and there is great excitement within these communities. We look forward to these groups supporting families in their area.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listen to that one song. Repeat.</th>
<th>Talk to a friend. Or pet. (Wait, those are synonyms.)</th>
<th>Comfort food.</th>
<th>Fold laundry. (Repetition + productivity = calm.)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Record" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Dog and Cat" /></td>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Bowl" /></td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Clothes" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Write. Or draw.</td>
<td>Play like a kid. Silly putty, bubbles, Legos, cartoons, coloring...</td>
<td>Make your bed. Fresh sheets!</td>
<td>Drink cocoa by the fireplace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image5" alt="Pen and Paper" /></td>
<td><img src="image6" alt="Dog" /></td>
<td><img src="image7" alt="Bed" /></td>
<td>Don't forget the marshmallows!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look up funny memes.</td>
<td>Compliment someone and watch their face light up.</td>
<td>Take a shower. Better yet, soak in the tub with a magazine.</td>
<td>Read a book. Bonus points if it has pictures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image8" alt="Frog" /></td>
<td>Nice hat!</td>
<td><img src="image9" alt="Hat" /></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Make something without caring whether it's “good.”</td>
<td>Have a good cry, but keep it short. Use the expensive tissues.</td>
<td>Buy yourself a smallish gift, just because.</td>
<td>Forgive yourself for what you couldn’t do today, and resolve to try again tomorrow.</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image10" alt="Yarn and Needles" /></td>
<td></td>
<td><img src="image11" alt="Tissues" /></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

@introvertdoodles
ICE
GET THE FACTS, DEVELOP STRATEGIES & FIND OUT WHERE TO ACCESS HELP & SUPPORT

Register for a free session in your area at:
www.turningpoint.org.au/education/breakthrough

1800 ICE ADVICE: 1800 423 238 | Family Drug Helpline: 1300 660 068
LITERATURE ON FAMILY RECOVERY

The Language of Letting Go (Melody Beattie)

What Recovering Parents Should Tell Their Kids about Drugs and Alcohol (Claudia Black)

Setting Boundaries with Your Adult Children: Six Steps to Hope and Healing for Struggling Parents (Allison Bottke)

The Alcoholic Family in Recovery: A Developmental Model (Stephanie Brown and Virginia Lewis)

A Gentle Path Through the Twelve Steps (Patrick Carnes)

Codependence and the Power of Detachment: How to Set Boundaries and Make Your Life Your Own (Karen Casey)

Boundaries: When to Say Yes, How to Say No to Take Control of Your Life (Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend)

Boundaries in Marriage (Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend)

Addict in the Family (Beverly Conyers)

Don’t Let Your Kids Kill You (Charles Rubin)

Everything Changes: Help for Families of Newly Recovering Addicts (Beverly Conyers)

Facing Shame: Families in Recovery (Merle A. Fossum and Marilyn J. Mason)

Recovery: A Guide for Adult Children of Alcoholics (Herbert L. Gravitz and Julie D. Bowden)

Addiction & Grace: Love and Spirituality in the Healing of Addictions (Gerald G. May, M.D.)

Facing Codependence: What It Is, Where It Comes From, How It Sabotages Our Lives (Pia Mellody)

Facing Love Addiction: Giving Yourself the Power to Change the Way You Love (Pia Mellody, Andrea Wells Miller and J. Keith Miller)

The Enabler: When Helping Hurts the One You Love (Angelyn Miller)

Family Recovery: Growing Beyond Addiction (Merlene Miller and Terence T. Gorski)

The Addictive Personality: Understanding the Addictive Process and Compulsive Behavior (Craig Nakken)

Reclaim Your Family from Addiction: How Couples and Families Recover Love and Meaning (Craig Nakken)
What if I relapse?

Families are broken by drug use and they need to be repaired too. I learned this when I realised if your loved one is in recovery, this doesn’t mean you are there in the same place. As a family member with an adult son in recovery, this was a difficult transition. While he suddenly had meaning and purpose in his life with meetings and new friends made through his programs. I was still stuck in the “flight or flight or freeze” situation. I was still in the “what if” and “worry” state. In fact I found it very hard if I hadn’t heard from him for a few days. I had slipped back into these states of mind that I had actually let go of years ago. My anxiety was sky high all the time. After all, I knew how to manage chaos really well as this had been the pattern or the dance of addiction for many years.

My recovery:

I kept reminding myself of what I could control and what I couldn’t control and what was my business and what was his business. Practice my breathing whenever I was feeling anxious. This helps me a great deal. I tell myself that I don’t have to say yes to his requests and I don’t have to give a reason why.

I spent time doing things that had nothing to do with drugs or alcohol. I learnt that I needed to find a new identity. I was no longer the mother of a drug addict. As a family, we sought family therapy to work on these things. I am happy to say my relationship has changed from adult to child to adult to adult. He is happy with that and so am I.

Anonymous
One size fits all?

AA (and later, Narcotics Anonymous) has been a key component of addiction treatment and recovery for over 80 years. Founded in the late 1930s by Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob Smith, AA is a peer support system based on the idea that a recovering alcoholic can help others stay sober.

The concept of alcoholism as a disease was a revolutionary idea in the 1930s, but soon the pair had gathered over 100 men that they had helped achieve sobriety. The Big Book forms the basis of AA’s teachings, which describes how to recover from alcoholism using personal stories and anecdotes. About 20 years later, Narcotics Anonymous was founded in Sun Valley, California.

Integral to the philosophy of both AA and NA programs is “working the steps,” or following a set of 12 guidelines designed to bring about a life change and assist the alcoholic in moving into recovery. Step 1, for example, states, “We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.” There are strong opinions from 12-step supporters that AA/NA is the only successful treatment for addiction. After all, they say, AA has been around for 70+ years for a reason: it works. However, AA’s first step can be a big hurdle for many users, as it is difficult to accept total “powerlessness” against a substance.

Moreover there is research to suggest that this model is not a one size fits all medium of treatment. Factors such as an individual’s personality, social capabilities, mental health, or physical problems, can all negatively impact on a small percentage of the population who seek assistance from AA style programs. Therefore, it is crucial that those who do not complete the programs are not left by the wayside.
It’s important to explore other programs akin to AA which have made and sustained efforts to further aid those individuals who do not find the AA program suitable. It could be helpful for those new to the program openly stating that AA is not suitable for everyone, and as such, that discontinuation of the program should not be seen as failure.

Instead of allowing the individual to become reclusive about their drinking/drug taking once more, the pack could provide both psychological and medical contacts or centres that can enable the individual to seek alternative types of help.

(Montalto M. 2015)


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the supper club

The supper club is a place you can come to gain support and talk openly about a loved one who has passed away as a result of substance use.

The group meets on the second Tuesday of each month at SHARC, 140 Grange Road, from 6pm - 8pm.

A light meal is provided.
To attend the group contact John on 9573 1784
Family Drug Help offers the Action for Recovery Course (ARC) for family members of a person with problematic alcohol or other drug use. ARC provides families with a new set of skills to help improve their relationships. It runs for six consecutive weeks for two hours each week. The cost is $60.00 per person which covers resources and refreshments.

Some comments from recent participants:
I have put boundaries in place and I am no longer covering up for her. I don’t feel so guilty.

It helped to know we weren’t the only ones going through this and our response was quite normal.

I didn’t realise how broken I was. I have learnt to repair myself brick by brick.

For details of forthcoming program dates please go to www.familydrughelp.com.au or call the ARC facilitator on 9573 1761
email: arc@sharc.org.au
Please put me on the Family Drug Help Mailing List

Preferred newsletter format
email □ post □

Name:

Address:

Suburb:

Postcode: State:

Email:

Return to: Newsletter, Family Drug Help. 140 Grange Road. Carnegie, VIC, 3163 or email talder@sharc.org.au

A great website featuring recovery stories to helping individuals and families recover from addiction and mental health problems:

www.recoverystories.info
Where do I go for support?

**Family Drug Help**
1300 660 068
familydrughelp.com.au

**Reach**
support for young people with life issues
reach.org.au

**Orygen**
Youth mental health programs, clinical service
oyh.org.au

**Lifeline**
131 114
Telephone crisis support
lifeline.org.au

**Headspace**
03 9027 1011
Mental health for 12-25 years
headspace.org.au

**YoDAA**
1800 458 685
Youth Drug and Alcohol Advice
yodaa.org.au

**ADIN**
Australia’s Alcohol & Drug directory
adin.com.au

**DirectLine**
1800 888 236
Counselling and referral line
counsellingonline.org.au

**Beyond Blue**
1300 224 4636
Resource for all things mental health
beyondblue.org.au

**Australian Drug Foundation**
03 9611 6100
adf.org.au

**Suicide Helpline**
1300 651 251
families can call for support
suicideline.org.au

**Youth projects**
health outreach & more
youthprojects.org.au