Welcome to the Spring Edition of the Family Drug Help Newsletter, which is all about shifting focus.

Many of you will be familiar with the optical illusion below. What do you see?

Typically we’re drawn to the caricature of an old hag, but on closer viewing we can shift our focus to something different to reveal a beautiful young woman. The impact of addiction is often stark, harsh and ugly. As affected family and friends it can be all we see, feel and think. We can become immersed in worry and hopelessness losing sight of our own needs, but also the capacity to have another perspective on the person’s addiction, and the beauty of change when recovery takes place.

While we cannot control someone’s addiction or their behaviours we can get support and understanding that help us to see anew. It may be by developing acceptance, a spirit of gratitude, or seeing the beauty of change and transformation. At SHARC we celebrate recovery, and a highlight in the InFocus family education program is when a guest speaker shares their recovery story, which always instills hope in the group.

As always, there’s lots to look at in this edition, including promotions of new programs that have been developed at Family Drug Help, including InFocus, and a pilot program working with families affected by problem gambling.

Remember, FDH is always here to help you shift your focus – 1300 660 068.

From all of us at Family Drug Help.
From ARC to InFocus

One of the most successful and popular services Family Drug Help has offered families has been the six session education course Action for Recovery Course or ARC, as it was affectionately known. Almost ten years ago the staff at FDH identified that there was a real gap in what was being provided for families. While we offered the Helpline and support groups, we realised that families sometimes needed more in the way of information, strategies and guidance around how to respond to a loved one who is struggling with substance use. With this in mind, Angela Ireland worked tirelessly to develop a structured course that assisted families, and thus ARC was born.

Over the years ARC has been delivered throughout Victoria from Portland to Shepparton to thousands of families. It was evaluated by Turning Point in 2015 and was found to improve the overall personal well-being of participants with hope for the future, better self-care through setting boundaries, reduced worry and improved relationships.

Despite this success, time passed and whilst ARC still had a positive and often life changing impact on families, it was time to review and update the course. With this in mind, we have revamped, updated and revitalised ARC and changed its name to InFocus. It’s still a six session education program full of practical information and strategies designed to help families who are coming to terms with the impact of someone’s addiction. It’s still facilitated by professional staff members who know exactly what it’s like to love someone who is using. You will learn, gain support, understand addiction, manage your emotions, and your focus and energy will most definitely shift.

We encourage those who have attended ARC or are interested in learning more about InFocus to attend a course near you.

There is more information on InFocus over the page.
Introducing the new InFocus Education Program

At Family Drug Help we are delighted to launch the new InFocus Education Program—a community-based psychoeducational program for families and friends affected by someone’s drug and alcohol use.

The program provides the opportunity to pause and reflect on where our focus has been and how this has impacted ourselves and our families. We explore addiction, family dynamics, communication, boundaries, coping strategies and most importantly our own wellbeing, safety and supports.

InFocus is facilitated by professionals who have also been impacted by someone’s drug and alcohol use and provides the opportunity for people to connect through their shared experiences.

“I couldn’t cope before. I felt like I’d tried everything but now I’m able to put boundaries in place and stick to them, most of the time. It has reduced conflict with my daughter and I’ve started thinking about my own needs again. I have hope now. It’s been a long time since I’ve been able to say that.” – Participant.

You don’t have to do this alone – we’ve been there.

We invite you to register for an InFocus in your local area. This program is free.

For information about upcoming delivery of the InFocus Education Program near you or please call Family Drug Helpline on 1300 660 068 or go to www.familydrughelp.com.au
Addressing Behaviours

Over the years of helping those affected by addiction, it’s become obvious that in order for sustainable change to happen, the behaviors of the loved ones must be addressed. When family and friends enable the addict, the addiction is almost guaranteed to continue. Loved ones must make the first moves and modify what they’re doing in these very difficult situations if the substance user has any hope of a lasting recovery. And, let’s face it, it’s unlikely that the user is going to approach their family and friends and say, “Please let there be some consequences for my behaviour!”

Instead, loved ones must learn to say to the substance user in their lives, “We love you enough to no longer support you in active addiction. When you’re really ready to be in active recovery of some kind, let us know and we will do whatever we can to help you make that happen.”

Reasons to Stop Enabling

1. Enabling keeps the addiction going.

An enabling behavior is one that makes it just too easy for your addict to continue to stay in active addiction. This can include actions such as giving money with no accountability, or driving the substance user to the liquor store to pick up more booze. If you’re wondering why the addict you love isn’t becoming or staying clean and sober, it’s always a good idea to take a look at what you might be doing and ask yourself whether it is helping or enabling.

2. Enabled addicts lose faith in their own resilience.

When we enable addicts, we generally try to take over their lives and do all kinds of things for them that they are actually quite capable of doing for themselves. We give them money that they haven’t earned, we buy and cook their food, we do their laundry, we pay their rent – or let them live with us, rent-free, and we drive them around when they’ve lost their licenses to DUI charges.

I understand the fear in loved ones that is at the root of these types of behaviours – the fear of what may happen to them if we don’t do those things. But until we acknowledge
that what we’re doing isn’t helpful, we will continue to work way harder than the users do. When we do these things for our loved ones, it’s like saying we have lost faith in them. As a result, they count on us to continue to behave this way and they begin to lose faith in themselves. If you want this to change, ask yourself these questions:

- What message am I actually giving to the substance user I love when I’m enabling them?
- Why should they have any sense of their own abilities or resiliency, if I keep doing everything for them?
- If I don’t believe in them, how will they start believing in themselves?
- If I’m going to work harder than they are, do I really think they are going to ask me to stop doing that?
- How can I foster in them more of a sense of independence and resiliency, so that they can live healthier, more productive lives?

3. As a loved one, you’re really meeting your OWN needs.
This is a difficult one for most loved ones to admit, but the fact is that if you are enabling a substance user, you are only meeting your own needs.

You are not doing anything that benefits the user in any way. Yes, users in active addiction generally do need assistance to stop – but no one needs to be enabled.

Think about this: How will YOU feel if you start saying “no” to your loved one? How will YOU feel if you tell them they need to be in active recovery in order to live in your home? How will YOU feel if you set a boundary stipulating that they either have to be at work or in school – no more using all night and then sleeping all day?

What will it be like for you to set, and maintain, these kinds of very important boundaries? That thought likely feels scary for you, just as it would for the substance user you love. But, trust me, if you continue to do what you’ve always done because of that fear, your life and their life will not improve.

4. Enabling and Self-Respect cannot co-exist.
The loved ones of substance users I work with often say to me, “I just don’t know what to do!” My response is, “Yes, you do, you just don’t want to have to do it – which is understandable.” I know it’s scary to make changes, but unless we’re willing to do just that, our vitally important self-respect will
take a hit. When we do things that we know we shouldn’t be doing - especially when they could hurt ourselves or those we love – that’s a loud and clear signal that we don’t respect ourselves.

Self-respect is earned by doing the next right thing and the next right thing after that, one step at a time. When we stray from doing what we know is the correct and healthy next step, we stop trusting ourselves and lose some of our self-respect. If you model your self-respect to the addict you love by behaving in much healthier ways, it’s likely that they will want a piece of that for themselves as well.

5. Substance users do not respect enablers.
On some level, substance users know when their loved ones are enabling them and, deep inside, they wish you would stop doing that and instead hold them accountable for their actions. They are not likely to tell you that because if you stop doing what they “want” you to do, that would feel scary for them.

But please understand that when you enable your loved one they are aware that you actually need to be behaving differently toward them – and they want you to do just that. We now understand that children feel more loved and secure when there is healthy, loving structure in the home. The same holds true for addicts in active addiction, whether they are your children, siblings, partners or friends. When you don’t hold them accountable and present solid, healthy boundaries and consequences, they feel like you don’t care enough about them to do that. They feel like you’ve given up on them, and that’s often when they start to give up on themselves. Sometimes they even give up on you, as their loved ones – and that is often when even more abusive behaviours begin to happen.
From stigma to strength is my story.

When I was a little girl, my view of life was simple, you grow-up, meet a nice man, get married, have children and live happy ever-after, just like all those fairy-tale endings stories we read so much as little children. Somehow, this little childhood dream was not to be.

I am now in my early seventies and very often, when I look back in my life, I see myself asking those age-old questions, why me? What have I done wrong with my life? I deserved better. After many years trying to hide my many personal issues, which included being raised by a mother that was verbally abusive, a husband that subjected me to mental and verbal abuse, a son that turned against me and later became hooked on drugs with all the horrific consequences, I accepted, in my own way, that’s how life has panned out and there’s nothing I can do to change it.

It took me a while to realise, that nothing, including blaming myself or others will change the past, but I also realised that I can influence my own future with the right mind-set and more importantly with the help of family members, friends, and the general community. I am not alone.

I often told myself that no one would understand my predicament and feared that I would be judged by my family members and friends. I went on for years pretending to be coping until one day my son pushed my buttons a little too far.

Believing that callers to agencies such as Helpline was for the dispirited, on this particular day I realised, to my astonishment, that I belonged to this group and I needed help. In desperation, I made a call to the Helpline.

The lady on the other end of the line was so calm and willing to listen and before I knew it I was pouring my heart out to her. She asked me if I had any support and after hearing my response that I had none, she recommended a drug and alcohol carers support group in Watsonia.

My immediate response to her recommendation was that my situation was not that bad and I do not need any support groups. In reality, I was
reluctant to tell complete strangers about my family issues. No way was that going to happen. A month later I decided to check it out, after all, I figured, I don’t have to speak, I will just listen to what others have to say. I went to the Watsonia group as the Helpline lady suggested. I was met with friendly faces and a welcoming cup of tea. Despite all this I was still very uncomfortable and it took all my strengths to stay for the duration of the session. For some reason, as everyone started to share their stories, I couldn’t stop crying and felt all eyes looking at me. It was the longest 2 hours of my life. The session was over, I was relieved and set out to leave when a gentleman approached me with a phone number, he told me to call the SHARC organisation and book myself into a course called ARC (now renamed InFocus). The next day I called SHARC and booked myself into a course that had just started close to where I live.

This course was my turning point. Everything I had been struggling with was covered: guilt and worry, boundaries, acceptance, assertiveness, self-worth, setting goals, the list goes on and I couldn’t wait to attend the next session. A few months later I decided to do the course again in case I missed something important.

I was so overwhelmed by such support that I felt the need to help others by offering my time to start my own support group which I now run at Greensborough Community Centre. This is a very brief history of my life. Having support meant I don’t ask myself “why” any longer or “why me”, as I have now learned to accept my life as it panned out. My life is still troubled but I found a way to live with it and accepted the fact that I can’t change anyone or anything but myself.

My hope for sharing my story is to encourage others to seek help and realise that although problems are still present WE as individuals with autonomy can help ourselves to live a less stressful lives. Thank you for taking the time to read it.

By Doris
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.
Volunteers Training Day

On a chilly Saturday in May, FDH held our first combined Helpline and Support Group Training Day for our wonderful team of volunteers. We welcomed volunteers from as far away as Cohuna, Colac, Warragul and Bacchus Marsh as well as many from metropolitan Melbourne for a day of learning, problem solving, networking and surprises!!

The theme for the day was “Help Yourself, Help Your Family Member” which focused on the notion of family members looking after themselves, so that when the opportunity arises, they are mentally and physically able to support their family members. This is especially important for our Support Group Peer Leaders and Helpline volunteers who have the added responsibility of their peer support role.

Our keynote speaker was Kerryn Super, family counsellor at Link Health and Community. Kerryn’s talk focused on the physical and mental effects of stress. The areas covered were:
• Burnout, Compassionate Fatigue and Vicarious Trauma
• What is self-care?
• How it affects the brain and body?
• Putting self-care into action

Following Kerryn, Elizabeth McRea, Advocacy and Family Support Manager at the Mirabel Foundation educated us all about the wonderful work done by that organisation. Mirabel was established in Victoria in 1998. It is the only organisation in Australia specifically addressing the needs of children who have been orphaned or abandoned due to parental drug use. Mirabel supports children aged 0-17 years and works at restoring a child’s sense of self-worth belonging and hope for the future in order for them to reach their full potential as young adults.
InFocus Gambling Programs

**Bentleigh** (no cost)
When: Wednesdays
   September 6 – 27
   (4 week program)
Time: 6 pm to 8 pm
Where: Connect Health & Community
   2A Gardeners Rd
   Bentleigh East

**Carnegie** (no cost)
When: Thursdays
   October 12 and 19
   (2 day program)
Time: 10 am to 2 pm
Where: SHARC
   140 Grange Rd, Carnegie

**Heidelberg** (no cost)
When: Tuesdays
   Nov14 – Dec 5
   (4 week program)
Time: 6 pm to 8 pm
Where: Banyule Community Health
   Main Thomas Roselle Room
   21 Alamein Rd
   West Heidelberg

Developed by Family Drug Help, a program of SHARC, the InFocus Education Program provides practical support, relevant information, coping strategies and community linkages for those affected by problem gambling.

A first of its kind in Australia, this program is delivered through a peer support framework, facilitated by professionals who have also been impacted by problem gambling. It has been developed with the support of the Ian Potter Foundation, Gamblers Help and Three Sides of the Coin with Link Health and will be evaluated by Deakin University.

With an emphasis on personal safety, self-help and empowerment, the program delivers therapeutic and practical content along with the opportunity for people to connect through their shared experiences.

Is someone you care about a problem gambler?
GET THE FACTS, DEVELOP STRATEGIES & FIND OUT WHERE TO ACCESS HELP & SUPPORT

BREAKTHROUGH — an initiative of the Victorian Government’s Ice Action Plan
BreakThrough has been developed to educate the community and families across the state. The aim is to provide strategies to help manage the challenging behaviours around the use of the drug “ICE”.

BreakThrough provides information on:
- Different types of drug use & why people use drugs
- The effects of “Ice” & other drugs on the central nervous system
- The impact of drug use on both mental and physical health
- How to have a conversation with someone about their drug use
- How to respond to challenging behaviours associated with drug use
- The importance of self-care for family members
- A safety plan for family members
- Alcohol and Drug treatment services in Victoria
- Other professional and support services available

For more information or to register for an upcoming BreakThrough education session go to: www.breakthroughforfamilies.com

or call: Family Drug Helpline 1300 660 068 (9am to 5pm)
or Ice Advice line: 1800 423 238

There is no cost to participants as program is State Government funded
New faces in Family Drug Help

There have been a few changes within Family Drug Help recently with the addition of new staff and we want to keep you, our community, in the loop.

Introducing .......

Daina Latta
InFocus Facilitator

Leanne Eames
BreakThrough Project Lead

Tracey Alder
Family Counsellor

Karen O’ Toole
InFocus Facilitator
We regularly post articles related to addiction, families and the drug and alcohol sector.

www.facebook.com/Family-Drug-Help

Veronica Henriquez
Muslim Community Worker

Tess Darlington
InFocus and BreakThrough Facilitator

Shamael Keng
Muslim Community Worker

Sometimes it's good to talk to a professional face-to-face.

We are excited to announce that Family Drug Help's counselling service has been extended. We now operate Monday to Friday, 9 to 5pm.

Call the Helpline to make an enquiry
1300 660 068

We regularly post articles related to addiction, families and the drug and alcohol sector.

www.facebook.com/Family-Drug-Help
Perspective and focus

When clients first come to counselling at Family Drug Help they are usually so overwhelmed with stress that they can no longer think clearly, maintain perspective, look at the big picture or maintain balance in their lives – let alone hold a boundary (what’s that?)

They have often been dealing with stress for so long (years in some cases) that they have developed a chronic level of stress – burn out. This affects all levels of their being such as thought processes, physiological shifts (hormonal/chemical/adrenals), high levels of anxiety and behavioural changes. These usually lead to the enabling behaviors to initially minimize the high levels of anxiety and fears which reinforce the dysfunction in the long term.

An example of this that most people can relate to, is giving in to the tantrum throwing toddler in the supermarket because they are loud and embarrassing, you are tired, and basically just want the situation to end. We give in to the moment of stress only to reinforce the behaviour in the long term (because it worked). Hence the vicious cycle of overwhelming stress.

I’ve lost count of how many clients have voiced their fears that they are developing dementia or Alzheimer’s when really they are just highly stressed and losing brain integration as a result. When the brain is stressed/fatigued it loses its energy and switches off (forgetfulness, lack of concentration and can’t focus).

Counselling gives the client an opportunity to lower the levels of stress, de-clutter the brain and make room for clarity, rationality and the ability to maintain a focus. With focus an individual can make better informed decisions and choices to create positive change and balance in their lives.

Obtaining focus allows us to apply our attention where needed: We can.....

- **Face** our fears
- **Overcome** anxiety and stress
- **Challenge** old patterns and behaviours
- **Uncover** hidden potential and strengths
- **Start** respecting self

Having a focus can give a sense of empowerment and self-control in times where everything is overwhelming and you feel hopeless or useless; it can help identify things that are within your control and can change which are often your own health and self-care.
The more in balance we are the more we can handle the stresses in our lives and see our way out of dilemmas. Talking to a professional can help balance out our heads and hearts when we are overwhelmed with emotions we can struggle to access the rational thought processes from our heads, instead we allow our fears and anxiety to make our decisions. A counsellor can help you express those emotions; put fears into perspective and provide some of that rationality and awareness that you are struggling to access.

You do not have to struggle with these issues on your own.

Karen
Family Counsellor,
Family Drug Help

Hi, what brings you here today?
Well, it’s a long story…..

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
Recognition of our Wonderful Volunteers

During Volunteers Week (May 8 – 14) several of our amazing volunteers were recognised for their contribution to Family Drug Help and the welfare of families struggling with the effects of a loved one’s substance misuse.

James Guthrie was shortlisted for the Premiers Award in the category of Outstanding Lifetime Achievement. Although James wasn’t the overall winner it was a wonderful recognition of his years of service to SHARC. Since becoming involved in 2001, James has served in a variety of volunteer roles ranging from building supervisor when the old church was redeveloped, Board member, acting CEO helpline volunteer and now chief statistician.

Deena Shacter, Carolyn Dalton, Charlotte McLatchy (1000 hours) and Jan Coffey (2000 hours) were presented service awards by the Mayor, Councillor Mary Delahunty at the Glen Eira City Council Volunteer Awards night. It was wonderful to see members of our volunteer team recognised officially by the community in which they give their time. All of our fabulous foursome have been involved in leading support groups and on the Helpline.

Carolyn Dalton, Deena Shacter and Charlotte McLatchy
Even more recognition of our volunteers

The Higgins Community Service Awards recognise the outstanding contribution of volunteers who freely give their time, skills and energy to help others in our local community. This award is an opportunity to show thanks and give special appreciation for the wonderful work and dedication of our local volunteers.

Nick has been a volunteer on the Family Drug Helpline since October 2014 and also has been involved in facilitating the Support Group at Werribee. Nick’s role on the Helpline is to offer support, information and referrals to family members impacted by a loved one’s drug and/or alcohol use. Nick commits to a weekly shift on the helpline and offers his support at the Werribee support group once a month.

Nick’s enthusiasm and dedication to his role is testament to the type of person he is. He displays high levels of empathy, listening and understanding to the many family members that he interacts with. Nick partakes in ongoing supervision and personal/professional training days offered as part of his roles and is highly regarded with his colleagues and staff at SHARC.

Nick with his Community Service Award
Where do I go for support?

Family Drug Help
1300 660 068
familydrughelp.com.au

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

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

Reach
support for young people
with lifes issues
reach.org.au

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

Lifeline 131 114
Telephone crisis support
lifelife.org.au

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

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

Australian Drug Foundation
03 9611 6100
adf.org.au

The First Stop
thefirststop.org.au
A guide for families affected by
alcohol and other drugs

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

Youth projects
health outreach & more
youthprojects.org.au

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