

EDITION 71 SUMMER 2018

# NEWSLETTER



We've been there

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Welcome to the summer edition of the Family Drug Help Newsletter with the focus, "by families for families". Family Drug Help has been a beacon for families and friends devastated by the ravages of addiction. At the height of heroin overdoses in Victoria in the late '90's, families lobbied to set up Family Drug Help – a service that could uniquely connect with others to provide understanding, support and education. From its inception in 2000, a suite of state-wide programmes and supports has developed beginning with the Helpline, and expanding to family support groups, family counselling and family education programmes including InFocus (formally ARC), BreakThrough and Gambling InFocus. Addiction and its impact on friends and families is deeply personal and unique.

At Family Drug Help we help to make sense of that experience, and explore ways of being able to move on in helpful, positive ways without judgement. Family Drug Help supports thousands of families each year and is recognised for the invaluable work it does in the community. Underpinning this is the amazing contribution of our trained volunteers and staff who bring their lived experience to show that there is hope, that there is someone to talk to, and that shame and stigma need not be a barrier to getting help.

Family Drug Help is always here – by families, for families.

On behalf of everyone here at Family Drug Help, we wish you a happy and safe Christmas and New Year!

Robert Campbell  
Programme Manager

## InFocus

InFocus is a FREE six session education program for people affected by someone's drug or alcohol use.

Helping break the stigma, the program offers practical support, relevant information, coping strategies and the opportunity for people to connect through their shared experiences.

The program is facilitated by professionals who have also been impacted by someone's drug and alcohol use.

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

*Some of the staff including myself, were recently interviewed in a pilot for a documentary. What will come of it I don't know but I was struck by some of the interviewer's questions. I was asked 'why is Family Drug Help different?' and it made me pause. There are a number of drug and alcohol services out there that offer family support but what indeed make us different? I thought about my work with families over the many years I have been here and I often feel as if they are lost or frightened children. A stranger has come and taken away someone they love and it's bewildering and shrouded with dread and worry. The stranger is unknown and confusing. It's a scary place to be in. All the volunteers and staff at Family Drug Help have been that lost or frightened child, including myself. We have a sense of what can lead us out of the dark: support, kindness, guidance, information, understanding, community. That's what makes Family Drug Help different; the hands that nurture families have been nurtured themselves and it can make that touch especially gentle.*

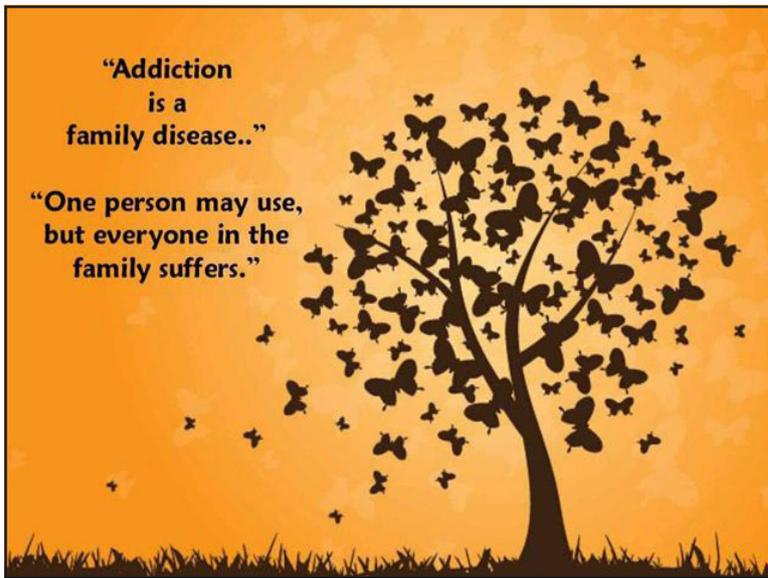
FDH staff member



Call our helpline for enquiries or bookings for any of the programs, including counselling, or go to [familydrughelp.org.au](http://familydrughelp.org.au) for further information.



**1300 660 068**



*My sister and her husband are alcoholics, deep inside the chasm of addiction. It's so hard to watch them drink, and drink, and drink – all the while actively denying that anything is wrong. I've tried to talk with them about how I'm concerned for their wellbeing, and they just fob me off. And it's not just me and my other sister who are concerned. Their adult children can see what is going on, to the point where their daughter won't leave her children alone with either my sister or her husband. She just doesn't think her children will be safe with them. My sister loves her grandkids, but seemingly not enough to do something about her alcoholism. Hopefully one day she will. In the meantime, we will continue to love them, but ensure we maintain our boundaries - we love them, but we hate their addiction.*

Simon - FDH family member

*In the earlier years of my partner's drug use, I really felt that they were choosing to do something horrible to our family. And I was furious with them. There was an enormous amount of financial and relationship stress - so many secrets and fights, so many calls from debt collectors, so many late rent payments. On top of that I was I doing all the heavy lifting with parenting and running the household. I wasn't talking to anyone about what was going on and I constantly felt like a simmering pot on the verge of boiling over.*

*I was so angry and exhausted, I didn't have any room for thinking about what my partner was going through. When I couldn't cope with the chaos any more, I finally reached out for support. I called the helpline, went to support groups and got some counselling as well. It took a really long time for me to stop being so angry and start feeling the grief that was hiding underneath it. That was incredibly scary - anger was much more comfortable than sadness – but so necessary.*

*In the end, our relationship didn't continue, but that has been the best thing for both of us. We are able to be more cooperative when it comes to the kids and I am not constantly in blame-mode. I have more empathy for my ex's struggles with substance use, but I am also more confident to set boundaries to look after myself. I have learned lessons for my next relationship too. It is a relief not to be so angry any more. I am a better parent and, most importantly, a better friend to myself.*

Tess - family member

## Support Groups News

Our support groups are an opportunity to connect with others who are having similar experiences. All of our support groups are all taking a break over the Christmas/New Year period. So please check our website for when each group is re-starting in 2019.

### *Gambling Family Support*

A first of its kind in Australia, InFocus Gambling is delivered through a peer support framework, facilitated by professionals who have also been impacted by gambling.

The program's purpose is to reduce gambling harm and stigma for families and friends, with the opportunity for people to connect through their shared experiences. We also run monthly support groups.



## BREAKTHROUGH

Ice education for families

*'I was stuck and unable to tackle his addiction. Now I feel positive and empowered to use the framework learned in the course to navigate my way through the challenges.'*

Breakthrough attendee

BreakThrough offers workshops to families and friends who have been impacted by someone's ice use. It supports you to get the facts, develop strategies and find out where to access help and support.

## 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.

All of us at Family Drug Help, both staff and volunteers, have lived the experience of addiction within our families. Whether it's our children, partners, parents, or siblings we know how difficult it can be. But we also know that recovery is possible, for both you and your loved ones. And we want to help you and your loved ones. Whether it's on the helpline, in a support group or one of our structured programs, you will always be dealing with people who know what it's like because we've been there. Family Drug Help - by families, for families.

## We'd like to hear from you?

**We want to know how you would prefer to receive this newsletter. And we'd love you to let us know by completing a short survey. Just go to [familydrughelp.org.au](http://familydrughelp.org.au) and click on the survey link.**