

May I be granted the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

(Serenity Prayer)

When you spend most of your time worrying about and supporting your child or loved one and other family members, it can be easy to neglect yourself. Taking care of yourself is just as important. Below are some of the lessons we have learned in supporting our children and loved ones.

- Don't blame yourself. Guilt is not a useful emotion. Other people's actions generally do not cause addiction.
- It is natural to feel anger, hurt, and disappointment.
- Admit it when you've blown it, apologize, and move on.
- Focus on what you can do, and let go of what you can't. Nobody can force someone with a substance use disorder into treatment or recovery.
- Educate yourself. This handbook is a good start, but there's a lot of information out there, and you'll want to choose good sources. Try the websites and other resources you find at www.fgta.ca or the family portal at www.bccsu.ca.
- Stay connected. This is a time when you need to reach out to your family and friends, not to withdraw because of feelings of shame. You'll be amazed at how understanding most people will be, especially if you talk about addiction as a disease.
- Explore paths you may not have tried before. Many find daily readers like Al-Anon's One Day at a Time helpful during difficult times, and this may be a time to investigate your own spirituality. A list of resource books is also available at the end of this section.
- Get support! You don't have to go through this alone, and you don't have to stick with the first counsellor you meet. Find a counsellor who you feel comfortable with, ideally one who specializes in substance use. Keep trying until you find one you can work with. Counselling BC has an online tool that can help you find professional counsellors and psychotherapists who are registered with a recognized professional body in BC and allows you to search by location, areas of practice, approaches, and language spoken. This tool can be accessed at <http://counsellingbc.com/counsellors>.
- Consider joining a group for those impacted by substance use. This may be in addition to or instead of finding a counsellor. There is no substitute for personal experience, and self-help groups (Parents Forever, Parents Together, Al-Anon, Nar-Anon) offer mutual support from people who have been there and are still struggling with addiction issues. The BCCSU website has a list of support groups in BC.
- Consider accessing Family Smart's Parents in Residence and Youth in Residence Program, which provides peer support, mentoring, help with system navigation, and information for youth or young adults with substance use challenges and families and caregivers of youth or young adults with substance use challenges.

- If there is no group in your area, start one. FGTA offers a guide for setting up and running a support group. It can be found in the “Family Support” section of www.fgta.ca.
- Don’t let embarrassment or shame get in the way of taking action. Others in your community are bound to be struggling as you are. You just need to find one another.
 - Try posting a notice of a meeting at your local church, community or health centre. Let health and other professionals in the field know what you are planning, and get their help in advertising and organizing the gathering. In other words, get creative. You have nothing to lose but your isolation. Tried and true advice from across Canada has been published in the Parents in Action guidebook which you can download from the Family Support section of www.fgta.ca.
- Keep an eye on your own health and well-being. Self-care is not only essential but can also demonstrate healthy coping techniques for your child or loved one dealing with problematic substance use. Maintaining and supporting your own physical and emotional health allows you to best support your child or loved one and other family members. Try to eat well and exercise regularly (and encourage everyone in your family to join you). Go to events, go for a walk, and spend time with others you find supportive. Talk to your GP or other health professional if you need more help than you’re getting now. Other ideas for self-care include:
 - Getting enough sleep
 - Eating enough nutritious food
 - Having enough down time
 - Setting healthy boundaries
 - Spending time with friends
 - Getting outside into nature
 - Doing an activity or hobby you enjoy
 - Creating nourishing rituals and routines
 - Moving in a way that feels good
 - Eating your favourite food
 - Spending time with pets
 - Therapy or counselling
 - Taking necessary medications
 - Writing in a journal
 - Exercising or other physical activity

Above all, don’t give up on your own life, dreams, and goals. You will survive—one day at a time.

BOOKS

The following is a list of books that others dealing with their child or loved one's substance use have found helpful.

ADDICT IN THE FAMILY: STORIES OF LOSS, HOPE, AND RECOVERY / Beverly Conyers, 2003

ADDICTION: A MOTHER'S STORY - MY SON'S DESCENT INTO ADDICTION AND WHERE IT TOOK US / June Ariano-Jakes, 2011

AFTER HER BRAIN BROKE: HELPING MY DAUGHTER RECOVER HER SANITY / Susan Inman, 2010

BEAUTIFUL BOY: A FATHER'S JOURNEY THROUGH HIS SON'S ADDICTION / David Sheff, 2009

BEYOND ADDICTION: HOW SCIENCE AND KINDNESS HELP PEOPLE CHANGE / Jeffrey Foote, Carrie Wilkens, Nicole Kosanke, Stephanie Higgs / 2014

CHASING THE SCREAM: THE FIRST AND LAST DAYS OF THE DRUG WAR / Johann Hari, 2015

CLEAN: OVERCOMING ADDICTION AND ENDING AMERICA'S GREATEST TRAGEDY / David Sheff, 2013

DRUG ADDICTION AND FAMILIES / Marina Barnard, 2006

EVERYTHING CHANGES: HELP FOR FAMILIES OF NEWLY RECOVERING ADDICTS / Beverly Conyers, 2009

INSIDE REHAB: THE SURPRISING TRUTH ABOUT ADDICTION TREATMENT - AND HOW TO GET HELP THAT WORKS / Anne M. Fletcher, 2013

IN THE REALM OF HUNGRY GHOSTS: CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH ADDICTION / Gabor Mate MD, 2010

LOVE HER AS SHE IS: LESSONS FROM A DAUGHTER STOLEN BY ADDICTIONS / Pat Morgan, 2000

LOVING AN ADDICT, LOVING YOURSELF: THE TOP 10 SURVIVAL TIPS FOR LOVING SOMEONE WITH AN ADDICTION / Candace Plattor, 2010

LOVING SOMEONE IN RECOVERY: THE ANSWERS YOU NEED WHEN YOUR PARTNER IS RECOVERING FROM ADDICTION / Beverly Berg MFT PhD, 2014

MEMOIRS OF AN ADDICTED BRAIN: A NEUROSCIENTIST EXAMINES HIS FORMER LIFE ON DRUGS / Marc Lewis, 2011

WASTED: AN ALCOHOLIC THERAPIST'S FIGHT FOR RECOVERY IN A FLAWED TREATMENT SYSTEM / Michael Pond, 2016