



Fall 2018

# PEPtalks

## Parents Empowering Parents

Providing education, innovative programming, support and hope for individuals or families dealing with or concerned about substance abuse/addiction.

## There is always hope... — a parent's story

**W**hen I think back to that awful day in July 2009 when I found out our youngest son was heavily abusing cocaine and marijuana I know it was the worst day of my life as his mother. How does a mother reconcile a nineteen year old paranoid, lying, drug abuser with the beautiful little boy who used to cuddle with her while she read him his favourite storybook?

My first thought was, "Now what do I do?" The answer came from our family physician who I had immediately called. Her response was to call the support line for Parents Empowering Parents (also known as PEP) and find out when their meetings were. She said that PEP was an amazing support group who had many coping strategies for parents of drug abusers and addicts and they would help us navigate our way through this nightmare we found ourselves in. I immediately got in touch with PEP...the woman who took my call was so helpful and understanding that I knew I wasn't going to be alone on this journey.

The following Tuesday, we arrived at our first meeting in Sherwood Park not knowing what to expect. I was surprised that there were so many parents present...the facilitator was very kind and understanding to those of us who were new to the group. During the "go around" where everyone has the opportunity to introduce themselves and tell their stories, I listened to the other parents and realized we were not alone...other families just like us, who never thought they would ever be in this situation, were living the same nightmare. Through my tears, as I told our story, I felt a sense of indescribable relief. I was able

to unload some of my burden of pain and guilt to these people who knew exactly how I felt and what I was going through.

After listening to my story, the facilitator advised us to do everything in our power to lure our son away from the person or persons with whom he had become involved using any means possible. She explained that since he was still in the early stages of drug abuse and even though he was nineteen and beyond our control as a young adult there were ways that we could begin to take action. She gave me the support line number and said that someone would always be there to take my call should I need any advice or support.

One of my sisters has a vacation home in San Diego and she and her husband offered a possible solution to our dilemma. They needed help that summer with a major landscaping project and they generously offered to take him under their wing for the month of August. I had explained to them that the facilitators at PEP had recommended we remove him from the influence of the group he was hanging out with and they agreed that it would be best to get him as far away as possible...my sister is also our son's godmother and wanted to help any way she could.

Based on the suggestion of the PEP facilitator we enticed our son with the trip to San Diego to visit his extended family and give them a helping hand. I had the support line number on speed dial as we steered our very paranoid son to the day when he would actually get on that airplane. Needless to say, I was at the receiving end of some very nasty, abusive texts and phone calls while he was in San Diego detoxing and working his butt off for

his uncle and aunt. Thank goodness he had no financial means of leaving their place so he had to tough it out. On the suggestion of PEP I flew to San Diego myself at the end of that summer and with their guidance had many volatile mother/son discussions on what the boundaries would be when we went home in September. If he wasn't going to abide by these rules then he would not be welcome in our home.

Fast forward to today...our son is 28 years old and starting his second year at NAIT in September in Wireless Systems & Engineering Technology (finished his first year with a 3.9 grade point average!!). It has been a very long and arduous (at times) road to this point and I still have concerns and wait for "the other shoe to drop" even though he has proven that he is committed to living a clean & healthy life. Let me tell you that the last nine years were not easy and there were many pitfalls along the way. Our son struggles with depression and for years had a very hard time keeping a job because he just didn't want to get out of bed at times. I had many "angels" helping hands along the way as we guided him to the path that he is on now and I count the beautiful souls that make up the PEP organization as the most influential of these "angels" in our life. There is always HOPE...



### FAMILY SUPPORT LINE

Did you know that PEP has a professionally managed support line available days, evenings, and weekends?

The number is 780.293.0737

# My PEP Experience by MEDD-X Alumni

Motivational Education/  
Experience for X Drug Dealers



When I found out that I was going to PEP, I thought it was a program for parents with children that need discipline. I was thinking of young children and my children are all grown up, why would I need this program. But I was required to attend for my program with Edmonton Drug Treatment Court, so I came with an open mind and open heart.

It was about my third session I started to get involved actively, I started to share some of my stories with the other parents. I was starting to see the effect of the disease to the parents that are just new into the program. I saw parents or couples on their first day they attend PEP. I can see the sadness in their faces and the pain they're going through even without talking and sharing their stories. And I was thinking this PEP is a sad place, a sad program. But I was wrong. It's a place where people get hope and learn tools on how to handle the pressure of real life, real life of having a child in addiction; learn how to have a normal life or at least try to have a normal life even with a child still in addiction.

PEP is a really good program, I saw parents some are very sad but after they come for a few sessions, I see progress. I could see it in their faces; it's like when I was in a treatment center, people with the disease come in and their faces are pale and sad, but after few days, I start to see

color in their face. It's the same with the parents; after a few sessions, I'm starting to see hope in their faces and they're sharing things that are hopeful and they leave a little happier than when they first come in.

For me, I feel all the things that the parents are talking about, I can totally relate because I went through all that experience with my oldest son. I lost my son to this disease. We fought for a long time, but he couldn't hang on any longer, that's why I say I've been through all the worrying and the fear. I have experienced the worst fear that any parent could have; but me and my wife have survived it and still on our journey to recovery from this tragedy. Anyway, the worrying went away but it's replaced with sadness and loneliness. We're working on how to cope with these feelings still.

The best thing I could take away from this program was a lesson from a facilitator at one of the meetings. I think it said: A person may have had the addiction already long before the chemicals or drugs was introduced to the person; it can start from early life experience for that person. When I heard that, a lot of things started to make sense to me why the things are the way they are for me with my addiction.

I want to thank all the people in PEP, the parents and all the facilitators at PEP. They are doing an awesome job.

## PEP family...a parent's message

So, my husband and I have been attending PEP meetings for three years now and have found such a sense of family in this group. Part of our PEP family includes the MEDD-X participants (Motivational education/experience for X-Drug Dealers). We, as many new parents do, had feelings of anger and confusion. Thoughts like, "How dare you sit in this room!", "You are the reason that my child uses drugs", "It's all your fault" and "You should be in jail".

As we sit with these people, we start to realize that they too have families. They have stories. They have pain. They carry shame. None of them wanted to be sitting in this place. I believe that it takes a lot of courage to sit in a room full of grieving, terrified and angry parents. We see as they start to really understand the pain that they've caused their own loved ones. We see them grow. We get to understand that it could be our very own child sitting in that chair.

And our child is not a terrible person. Our child made some horrible choices and decisions. Our child deserves love and support. Just as we feel our MEDD/X people do. We work together to hopefully get our loved one to a place of recovery. We learn from one another and we care for each other. \*\*They are the greatest example of hope\*\* that we can have and we think of them often after they complete the program.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Love You Forever *A Gathering of Hope & Healing*

A night of music, stories...a step into healing and the grieving process of having a loved one lost to addiction or having a loved one "lost" in addiction...

**Friday, Sept. 28, 2018**

7pm to 9pm, Festival Place, Sherwood Park

**More Information:**

www.pepsociety.ca Office: 780.410.8516  
Parent Support line: 780.293.0737



### Like You For Always

Support our new fundraiser. Share a meal, celebrate our successes and support our programs! The evening will feature the musical talent of MLA Leela Aheer. She will be performing her new song written for our parents.

**Saturday Sept. 29, 2018, 6 to 10 pm**

Headquarters Restaurant and Bar, 101 Granada Boulevard, Sherwood Park. Tickets \$75 available on Eventbrite or contact Office 780.410.8516 or Lynda Talviste @780-719-9254

All contributions to our silent auction will greatly be accepted. Please contact Lynda Talviste with your donations @ 780-719-9254. No item is too small! Thank you in advance for your support.

### PEP Talks Opioids Community Education Forum

**Tuesday November 20th**

Doors open 6:30 pm, Agora Room  
Sherwood Park Community Centre

The ripple effect of the opioid crisis has affected families and individuals, cutting across generations. This collaborative event is made possible with a partnership between Strathcona County Library, Family and Community Services and Parents Empowering Parents (PEP) Society

**Guest MC Ryan Jespersen**... join us as we learn not only from experts but from those whose lives have been personally touched. We all have a role to play in the community's response and your voice matters!

This project is funded by the Government of Alberta's Opioid Response Public Awareness Grants for Communities. Administered by the Alberta Rural Development Network.

### PEP's Christmas POTLUCK

**Tuesday December 4th**

6:00 pm, PEP Meeting to follow  
Lower Level County Hall Sherwood Park

For more information about upcoming events, call 780.410.8516 or visit [www.pepsociety.ca](http://www.pepsociety.ca)

# “How Can I Help?”

by Lerena Greig

Recently I saw a trailer for a new fall series called *New Amsterdam*.

There is a newly hired Medical Director and his ways are different.

In his introduction to the staff he asks his team to put up their hands and responds with,

“You’re all fired”... A little extreme maybe but in his observation, the team valued billing above care. The new direction under his leadership and his team is to put care before anything else; “How can I help?”

In the same trailer for this new series, one of his team suggests “they’re not going to let you just come in here and help people” and his answer was “well then, let’s help as many as we can before they figure it out”.

Can it be that simple, could we start a new movement with this idea, like

“pay it forward” that happened a few years ago....? “How can I help?” Is our focus on the wrong thing?

I have worked in the field of mental health and addiction for about 14 years and I have heard and even participated in the conversation that the system is too big to change; what if we looked at it from a different perspective as spoken in this same promotion for this new series, and recognize that “we ARE the system so we need to change”. “How can I help?”

Does society, do we, value something else over the value of care?

I have been involved with Parents Empowering Parents (PEP) Society for the last 4 years in the following roles: as a facilitator of our parent/family meeting; as a coordinator of the MEDD-X program; answering our support line; and as Executive Director. I have been privileged to partake in the movement of a team that believes in care and advocates for change.

“How can I help?”

It will take all of us working together to make this movement a reality; to recognize we ARE the system, we need to change and respond from the heart where our value is embedded in our care for one another. “How can I help?”

**Lerena Greig**  
Executive Director

What can you do in our current economy to support your community?



Parents Empowering Parents continues to offer free innovative programs to families in this community and surrounding areas. Last year PEP averaged 30 parents a meeting x 52 weeks = 1560 with support, education and resources = *No Small Feat*.

There are small ways you can help. Would you give up just one specialty coffee a week for one year?

**\$5 x 4 weeks = \$20 a month x 12 months = \$240.00 = No Small Feat**

What about a regular coffee a week?

**\$2.50 x 4 weeks = \$10 a month x 12 months = \$120.00 = No Small Feat**

Thank you for your consideration in regular monthly support.

Go to [www.pepsociety.ca](http://www.pepsociety.ca) donations tab and click on Donate Now button...



*Together we are stronger and there is No Small Feat.*

## Thank You to our Supporters

With your help, we are working together to empower families in crisis towards health and wellness.



Felix and Pat Kuefler Fund  
Roger and Riet Bland Family Fund

Also, thank you to our regular monthly donors.



## With a one-time gift

- \$25  \$50  \$100  \$250  
 \$500  \$1000  Other: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## With a monthly gift

- \$25  \$50  \$100  \$250  
 \$500  \$1000  Other: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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Charity Number 8432300270RR0001

Mail form to: Parents Empowering Parents, 2001 Sherwood Drive, Sherwood Park, AB T8A 3W7 or Fax 780-449-1220

## PEP Programs

### Parent Support Meetings

PEP convenes weekly to provide support, education, strength, and hope to parents and families of youth, young adults, and/or adult children. Professionally facilitated discussion provides insight and direction for parents and families dealing with their child's substance abuse issues. No registration is required to attend these drop in meetings, which are held:

**Weekly on Tuesdays from 7pm to 9pm alternating locations each week:**

**Sherwood Park      Millwoods**

Strathcona County  
Community Centre  
2001 Sherwood Drive,  
Sherwood Park

Sunrise Community  
Church,  
3303-37 Street NW  
(upstairs), Edmonton

**September 11**

**September 4**

**September 25**

**September 18**

**October 9**

**October 2**

**October 23**

**October 16**

**November 6**

**October 30**

**November 20**  
(PEP TALKS Opioids)

**November 13**

**December 4**  
(Christmas Potluck)  
PEP meeting to follow

**November 27**

For more information visit our website at [www.pepsociety.ca](http://www.pepsociety.ca)

### Parent Mentorship Program

This program connects parents with parents. Mentors selected to listen, relate, share hope, share ideas, and provide additional support to parents new to PEP. Request for this service can be made with the meeting facilitator.

### U-Turn for youth

U-Turn supports youth & young adults involved in substance use to explore their situations through casual discussion and education in a no-pressure environment. Runs concurrently to the Sherwood Park PEP meetings. See website for schedule. Drop in Meeting. No registration required.

### MEDD-X

The Motivational Education for Ex-Drug Dealers (MEDD-X) is a recognized program that provides convicted drug dealers an opportunity to gain an understanding of their impact on individuals, families, and the community, while supporting parents/families with insight into the drug/street world. Participants for this program must be referred and approved by staff via phone 780.410.8516 or email [pepmedd@gmail.com](mailto:pepmedd@gmail.com)

## Rebuilding Hope Through Giving

PEP Society relies on individual donations, grants, corporate and community group support.

This equips us to support more families dealing with the effects of substance abuse and allows growth in the professionally facilitated programs that we offer.

### There are many ways to provide hope:

1. Monthly giving visit [www.pepsociety.ca](http://www.pepsociety.ca) and go to donations tab and click on Donate Now button (secure web-site through Canada Helps)
2. Donations via cheque or newsletter – can also be mailed directly to 2001 Sherwood Drive, Sherwood Park, AB T8A 3W7
3. Year-end donation for tax reasons.
4. Directed by your request through the United Way (Alberta Capital Region)
5. Corporate Sponsorship
6. Third Party Fundraisers
7. Legacy Gifts

Thank you for supporting your community and rebuilding hope for families. PEP Society is a registered charity

Visit [www.pepsociety.ca](http://www.pepsociety.ca) for upcoming events and collaborations with community partners



[www.pepsociety.ca](http://www.pepsociety.ca)  
[pep@strathcona.ca](mailto:pep@strathcona.ca)  
[info@pepsociety.ca](mailto:info@pepsociety.ca)

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