



15 YEARS

PEP *talks*

Summer 2020

Parents Empowering Parents

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

A New Normal

— a parent's story

As the world contemplates a new normal, there's a new normal in which many parents have had to face way before the pandemic. Loving and parenting a child who suffers from addiction (no matter the age) is challenging, often painful, and requires a whole new set of skills and education.

When parents see the ultrasound image of their baby for the first time or hear that wondrous heartbeat, they have no plans of one day deciding to have a restraining order put on that child in order to stay safe. Or of having that child detained in a detox centre.

When a baby is born into a family so too are dreams and aspirations. Love and adoration bursts from our chests as we look down at this new life. How thrilled we are when they roll over for the first time, sit up, and take those first steps. Aren't those first steps amazing? Whoever thinks baby steps are small has missed the miracle of a human's very first steps in life because those are huge steps. As we parents witness that momentous moment, our hearts swell with pride and joy. We can not wait to share it with friends and family. It's not even entering our minds that one day those steps will take our children into a life of drugs and danger and instead of pride and joy, we'll feel self-blame, shame, and despair.

I was cocky as a young parent. I had my plethora of parenting books and Oprah shows there to help me be the best parent possible. I was going to correct all the mistakes I perceived my parents made while keeping all the achievements. I aspired to raise strong, confident, well-rounded, happy, loving children

who would be successful, contributing members of society. All I wanted was to be the ideal, perfect parent. That's not too much to ask, is it?

Obviously, there is no such thing as an ideal, perfect parent. We can all only do our best. Just like baby steps, I underestimated the depth of that statement. "Our best." That's all any of us our doing – including our children. Sometimes, admittedly, someone's best may look horrible from the outside, but from that person's understanding and capabilities in that moment, it truly is their best. That's part of my new normal that I've come to accept.

I tried my best to be a good parent. And my children...well, they have their own autonomy in the matter. That's what the parenting books don't tell you: that you could do everything right, you could love your children so well and thoroughly, yet it's not a guarantee that everything will turn out the way you want it to. Why? Because it's not our lives. It's our children's lives. They get a say. And like, us, they're trying their best.

Young children don't dream of one day becoming an addict. This is not one of the careers talked about in elementary school. In fact, for the most part, they don't live in the future like parents do. They just want to love and be loved for who they are.

Addiction may appear to begin with a series of choices. That first drink or smoking of a joint, for example. Many blame the addicted person, saying they made the choices. Many of us, as parents, blame ourselves. We should have stopped them from making those choices. However, part of our new normal is

educating ourselves about addiction and understanding that addiction is way more complicated than choosing to try cocaine or heroin. There's so much more to it than good or bad children and parents. Do we want to learn about addiction? No. But it is the key to letting go of blaming ourselves and our children.

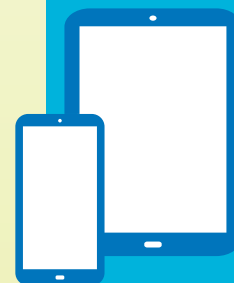
A new normal for me looks like hearing from my child every few months through text messages and being grateful that at least she reaches out once in awhile. It looks like not helping when all I want to do is swoop in and save her. It looks like saying no to requests for money and dealing with my fear that it means I'm abandoning her. It looks like hearing her claims that we abused her and instead of angrily defending myself or sinking into despair, understanding that this too is the journey of addiction. It looks like

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Family Recovery Group Meetings

SEE YOU "ZOOM" Due to the ongoing challenges with physically connecting, PEP is joining the "Zoomers" and having 'virtual' Family Recovery Group and U-turn (16-24) meetings.

www.pepsociety.ca. See pop up and home page for times and links for both groups and calendar for dates. Check PEP website for when face-to-face meetings will resume.



A New Normal...

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acceptance and forgiveness. It also looks like allowing space for grief and anger.

Most of all, my new normal includes attending PEP. Parents on this journey can't do it alone. We need an education that we never signed up for and we need support. We need to know that we're not alone. When something unthinkable happens, we need a place to go to that is safe and empathetic. So many of our well-meaning friends don't understand the true nature of addiction and the accompanying impact on families. Some may have addiction in their lives but haven't educated themselves, so they perpetuate shaming statements like "it's their own fault". Or they refer to those suffering from addiction as losers, missing that they're talking about our beloved children who are not losers so much as lost.

Creating a new normal means letting go of the old one and saying good-bye to who we hoped our children would be and accepting who they are right now. Much of the pain in this journey comes from living in the past. Instead of seeing the child as they are in front of us, we remember that innocent one taking their first steps and that memory, instead of the joy it once brought, brings a sharp pain of regret in our hearts, wishing we could go back to that time and start over somehow. But we can't, my friends. We can't. We

must let it go like the dream it is. Those years are finished. Holding onto them like an unfulfilled wish steals the joy we once felt. They can be happy memories again by not piling the future onto them. Let them be what they were: a childhood. And now...now we have the present.

Our children need us but not in the way we think. They don't need us to rescue them or obsess about their lives. They need us to live and take care of ourselves. They need us to learn about boundaries and self-forgiveness. They need us to understand our anger, feel it, and then let it dissipate into

My Journey with PEP MEDD-X Alumni speaks...

I would like to start by saying a big thank you for allowing me to be a part of the PEP family. Honestly I did not know what to expect at my first meeting and I was a little apprehensive because I was coming in on the other side.

I can tell you that my time with PEP was one of the most rewarding experiences of my recovery. I learned how my actions and choices affected my community. As well I saw my

addiction from a different point of view and have gained a better understanding of the pain my family has gone through. I learned different ways to cope and manage my own addiction and helpful tools to pass along to my family. Overall PEP was very rewarding and a great support group. I'm so glad to be a part of this community. Thank you for all your support in my recovery....

Jocelan

understanding. They need us to let them fail. As hard as that one is, it's almost the most important one. They need us to let them pull themselves out all on their own and when they do, they will be returning to a family who is stronger and healthier than ever. One who has learnt and grown – and healed.

Just like with the coronavirus pandemic, we didn't plan on needing to create a new normal. However, it's here. No one really knows how to do it, but the good news is you're not alone. You have your PEP family now and we can travel on this journey together.

Sponsorship Spotlight

ST. ALBERT
ALLIANCE
CHURCH



Sturgeon Valley
Baptist Church

St. Albert churches "rise" to the occasion by raising support at their Christmas Eve service and hosting the community's education forum **"Not in My Family – PEP talks METH"**

On behalf of families seeking recovery, support and knowledge in the midst of the crisis of a loved one's addiction...

THANK YOU for your heart to serve!

UPCOMING EVENTS

**Annual
General Meeting
has been rescheduled...
watch for date in the fall**

www.pepsociety.ca for updates

Director/Board Positions

Are you passionate about making a difference in the families in your community?

For over 15 years, PEP has supported, informed, and educated families in crisis of addiction. With your commitment, expertise and skills, you can make a difference.

For more information, contact Lerena Greig
Executive Director 780.410.8516 or
info@pepsociety.ca

**Join a diversified team....
Together we ARE stronger.**

What is Normal?

by Lerena Greig

Since mid-March 2020, we have “stepped into” a different way of being, of doing and of interacting. It has changed everything and we had no control over it’s beginning and we will have no control over it’s returning or it’s ending.

At PEP, we talk about normal; the normal of the brain without mind altering substances and the normal of the brain with ongoing attacks of mind altering substances. What is normal?

Normal by definition Webster Dictionary ..conforming to a type, standard, or regular pattern.. Interesting thought, normal is a form of “conforming”.. Who decides what is normal? Are standards of normality culturally relevant? Or is the “norm” based on standards by which we measure our behaviour, such as morality and reason?

In today’s uncertainty with the COVID-19 there are added stressors to the families PEP supports. Their normal has not been “normal” for a long time due to the chaos and crisis that addiction brings forth and now another crisis arises that is changing the way they work, live and survive..

At PEP, we educate about ways to navigate past the “normal”; to stay healthy in the midst of the ever changing normal; to quiet the mind and be compassionate to one’s self. Do not be “conformed” by the patterns of the world; be “transformed” by the renewing of the mind.

What is normal? You decide and then challenge it.

Lerena Greig
Executive Director



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

NOT IN MY FAMILY

PEP TALKS METH

The education forum, held March 5 in St. Albert, was attended by parents and extended family members, persons in recovery, agency representatives and media. Thank you to our panel of educating, telling your story and providing hope.



(top) Terry, PEP parent, speaks on the journey

(right) MC Ryan Jespersen addresses the panel and audience

(far right) Jocelyn, MEDD-X Alumni, talks about her recovery



Thank You To Our Supporters

Working together to empower families in crisis towards health and wellness.



Felix and Pat Kuefler Fund
Roger & Reit Bland Family Fund

Also, thank you to our regular monthly donors.

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With a monthly gift

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

PEP Programs

Family Recovery Group 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 'virtual' meetings.

WEEKLY Tuesdays 7pm to 9pm
BI-WEEKLY Thursdays 7pm to 9pm

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June 2, 9, 11, 16, 23, 25, 30

July 7, 9, 14, 21, 23, 28

August 4, 6, 11, 18, 20, 25

Stay Connected –You are not alone!

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/ Young Adults (15-24)

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 pepmeddx@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 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 for upcoming events and collaborations with community partners



**PARENTS
EMPOWERING
PARENTS**

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info@pepsociety.ca

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