



15 YEARS

Agenda Item 5.14 Handout 1

Fall 2019

# PEPtalks

## Parents Empowering Parents

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

## Own Your Story

— a parent's message

**Fall 2002:** The school calls. Our 15-year-old son has been caught smoking marijuana. We are devastated. School meetings, counselling, consequences... Thank goodness that is over.

**Summer 2003:** The police call. Our now 16-year-old son has been caught defrauding debit cards. We are horrified. Court, counseling, consequences... It's all so unbelievable and we don't understand how this happened. But it's over now.

**September 2003:** Our son goes missing. Police, missing person report, unimaginable fear, we don't sleep, we don't eat.

He is found at a meth house in Sherwood Park. What the hell is meth? He is charged with possession of drugs. He is a different person when the police bring him home, and we can't believe that this raging, sketchy, hateful person is the kind and loving boy we raised.

### **Our son is a meth addict.**

How did this happen? A "good kid", a decent student, a talented athlete, loved beyond belief by two parents, his sister, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins.

What did we do wrong? How did we cause this? Why are we the only ones living through the hell of addiction in this perfectly perfect suburb with hundreds of perfectly perfect families?

We have a "family support worker" assigned to us, and our son has a "probation officer" assigned to him. In a time of grief and chaos, these grounded, experienced experts become the lifeboats that save our sanity. Maralyn Benay and Tina Dow – gentle and firm, kind and realistic, strong and knowledgeable.

For the time being, we drape our lives in secrecy, too ashamed to share this new reality with our friends and family. We try our best to maintain some semblance of normalcy for our daughter, while her brother becomes a stranger in our home.

**Spring 2004:** My guardian angels (Tina and Maralyn) convince me that we need to test our utopian society in Sherwood Park. Maybe my family is not the only family struggling with this horror of addiction. We advertise one outreach meeting and over 30 parents attend to find help and hope.

My heart broke for each and every one of them. They were all physically and emotionally exhausted, filled with fear and confusion. I was no longer alone in my shame, despair, and self-blame. And neither were they.

And so.... Parents Empowering Parents (PEP) Society was born.

If you are the parent of an addict, or the partner, friend or other family member, you will know that at first, your emotions control the minutes and hours of your life. It goes something like this:

**Guilt**

*What did we do wrong?*

**ANGER**

**Guilt**

*Why did he try drugs?*

**FEAR**

**Guilt**

*Were we terrible parents?*

**WORRY**

**Guilt**

*We were too lenient?*

**SADNESS**

**Guilt**

*We were too strict?*

**SHAME**

**Guilt**

*We put too much pressure on him to achieve.*

**DESPAIR**

**Guilt**

*How did we miss the signs?*

**PROFOUND GRIEF**

*This is not the life we dreamed of for our beautiful blonde, blue-eyed, perfect baby. What happened to our dreams?*

Loving an addict is living life on a rollercoaster – hoping, praying, seeing gains, envisioning having a normal world... up, up, up... followed by heartbreak, disappointment, fear, anger... down, down, down... then up and down and up and down. Friends, family and co-workers are swept up with you along this crazy path. They often have advice born of care and concern, but not always delivered or received in that way.

*continued on page 2*



### **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



## Own Your Story... *continued from page 1*

What kept us going? Meeting with other families who shared their own pain and struggles, who shared tears and laughter, and become unlikely friends in an unlikely place. This incredible gathering of people who understood each other because they were living the same experiences. And learning from our facilitators – learning how to set boundaries, how to manage emotions, how to love our addicted child and move on with our own lives at the same time. We learned to lean on each other and take professional advice, because we had to.

For our family, the past 15 years have been a blur of remand centres, courtrooms, jails, hospitals and treatment facilities interspersed with brief periods of something close to “normal”, whatever that is. I wish I could say that our son has now recovered and is living a healthy and productive life. Unfortunately that is not his reality. He still struggles with addiction, and the consequences of criminal behaviors and unhealthy choices. He does try to escape the “world” that he has lived in for most of the past decade and a half. I hope that one day he will succeed and become the man that I know he can be. However, that is his journey.

Occasionally, I “relapse” with my son, going back to old thoughts and emotions. When that happens, I hear Tina’s voice, or Maralyn’s words, that bring me back to my “PEP roots”.

I’ve learned that “it’s not about me”. I didn’t cause my son’s addiction, I can’t control it, and I can’t cure it. I have to admit that I still struggle with feelings of guilt, although it doesn’t consume me like it used to. I wish I had done some things differently, but I accept my imperfect choices and actions, and move forward believing that as parents, we did the best that we could at the time.

PEP taught me that the definition of success is not your child’s sobriety. Success is living your own life fully, enjoying treasured minutes and hours without losing them to your child’s addiction. Success is allowing yourself to be happy. My life has moved on, with my son as a part of it, not controlling it. I am grateful for the love and support of family and friends, and now the wonderful gift of grandchildren.

We made a conscious decision in 2003 to go public with our family’s story; not because we wanted to. It was frightening to open ourselves to

judgment and criticism. But it seemed to be the only way to expose the absence of adequate laws and accessible, appropriate treatment to protect and help our addicted youth. Thanks to PEP, we have seen improvements in both areas, but there is still a very long way to go.

To this day, I am surprisingly open about our son, addiction and our family’s struggles. I don’t fear the judgment of others anymore, and in most cases the moment I am honest about our story, the other person begins their own sharing. I truly believe that addiction has touches every life in one way or another. It’s not easy to talk about, but I encourage you to choose courage over comfort, to extend your experience to help others. That in itself can be the beginning of the healing.

“Owning our story can be hard but not nearly as difficult as spending our lives running from it. Embracing our vulnerabilities is risky but not nearly as dangerous as giving up on love and belonging and joy—the experiences that make us the most vulnerable. Only when we are brave enough to explore the darkness will we discover the infinite power of our light.”—Bréne Brown

**New Chapter Starts  
Thursday  
September 5  
6:30 pm**

Drop-in, no registration required

It's  
Here!

**St. Albert  
PEP  
Meeting**

Bi-Weekly Thursdays  
6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

St. Albert Food Bank  
and Community Village

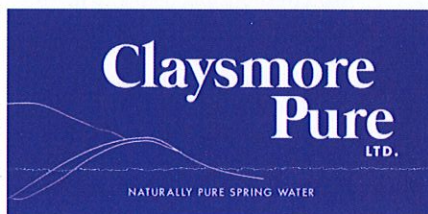
#20, 50 Bellerose Drive, St. Albert, AB  
For more information contact

780.410.8516

info@pepsociety.ca

www.pepsociety.ca

## Sponsorship Spotlight



Claysmore Pure Ltd. provides the most pure element nature has to offer... water!

They are committed to supplying the most naturally pure spring water and ice; providing a full range of services including delivery of their products.

It was built on a dream and has transpired to be a true legacy of family commitment to supply a delicious, locally sourced artesian spring water without any compromises on quality..

Claysmore Pure Ltd. sharing their family treasure with our families...

Thank you for your support to PEP and providing a “fresh drink of water” for our thirsty souls...

**Buy Local – Give Local!**

## Come on Down – the Price TIME is right!

**Calling all PEP'ers from  
our history of 15 years...**

I am doing a “shout out” to PEP’s past family members to attend a presentation to our Mayor and Council on:

**Tuesday September 17  
5:30 pm - 6:30 pm**

The presentation will be a  
“Thank You” for 15 years  
of support.

Council Chambers, Community Centre  
2001 Sherwood Drive, Sherwood Park

*You're invited to be our special guest,  
to show your support for PEP and our  
families.*



**PARENTS  
EMPOWERING  
PARENTS**

[www.pepsociety.ca](http://www.pepsociety.ca) 780.410.8516



# 15 Years of Changed Lives, Changed Stories...

**15** years ago, 3 women (Audrey Holliday parent, Tina Dow probation officer and Maralyn Benay family support worker) recognized a need to support families in the midst of the crisis of a child's substance use. With their skills, passion to empower others and a desire to advocate for change,

Parents Empowering Parents (PEP) Society was birthed.

In those days, the drug that was prevalent and causing so much pain was Crystal Meth.

This drug is still causing chaos and pain in families today. A recent article from Alberta Health Services stated that this is the most reported drug used from people who are currently seeking treatment.

That old saying, "nothing changes if nothing changes" may apply to the illegal and legal drugs as we continue to see the

impact of increased substance use with our children, in our families and our communities. Today's number of people struggling with substance use disorder continues to increase at a rate that has been compared to the rise of Diabetes. Will we start to recognize this as a mental health issue and combat it with the same intensity? Change may be slow in our system and slow to moderate change in societal opinion but **change IS HAPPENING.**

For 15 years and serving over 750 families, our team works alongside our PEP families, continuing to empower changed lives, changed stories. Parents and extended family members are educated, strengthened and supported. Due to the changes they are implementing in their health and personal growth, healing and hope is being realized. Don't just take my word for it, visit our web-site and click on our newsletters. Read the stories; even when the circumstances are still chaotic and sometimes painful, positive change still happens. If you or someone you know has a loved one struggling with substance use disorder, don't suffer alone. Together we ARE stronger!

Thank you to those who support us and have supported us over the 15 years. With vision and commitment our Founders empowered 100's of families towards health, knowledge and change...

Thank you Maralyn Benay, Tina Dow and Audrey Holliday.

Your legacy continues... Change begins with me AND you!



Founders from Left – Audrey Holliday, Tina Dow, Maralyn Benay

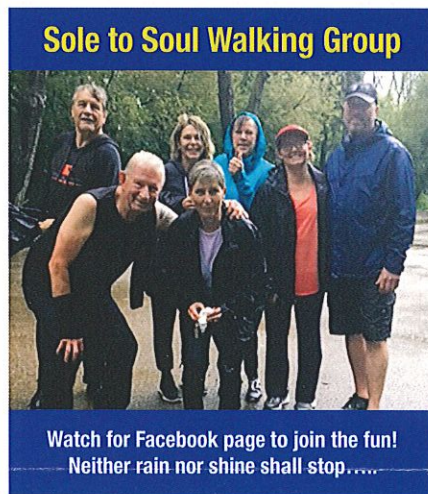
**We need to stop just pulling people out of the river.**

**We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in.**

—DESMOND TUTU—



Jordan Walker (MLA Sherwood Park), Carol Zukiwski PEP Chair, Larena Greig Executive Director



**Sole to Soul Walking Group**

Watch for Facebook page to join the fun!  
Neither rain nor shine shall stop.....

## 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.**



# YES

## I Want to Help Rebuild Hope for Families

### With a one-time gift

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

### With a monthly gift

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

☐ Yes, I would like to subscribe to your email notifications

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Prov. \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Gifts by: ☐ Cheque ☐ VISA ☐ Mastercard

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry Date \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \_\_\_\_\_

Security Code \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

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

Tuesdays alternate locations  
(Sherwood Park/Millwoods) from 7pm to 9pm

#### Bi-WEEKLY

Thursdays (St. Albert) from 6:30pm to 8:30pm

#### Sherwood Park

Alberta Room  
#200, 501 Festival Ave (FCS),  
Sherwood Park

Sept 10

Sept 24

Oct 8

Oct 22

Nov 5

Nov 19

#### Millwoods

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

Sept 3

Sept 17

Oct 1

Oct 15

Oct 29

Nov 12

Nov 26

#### St. Albert

St. Albert Food Bank and Community Village  
#20, 50 Bellerose Drive, St. Albert

Sept 5

Sept 19

Oct 3

Oct 17

Oct 31

Nov 14

Nov 28

### 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.ca

## 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

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



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