

Drugs, Alcohol and Grief

Bereavement Professional Chat Box Transcript

March 1, 2017

**NHPCO Staff:** Hello Everyone! Here is the link to the chat slides at MyNHPCO:

<http://my.nhpco.org/viewdocument/drugs-alcohol-and-grief-chat-slides?CommunityKey=191c46b6-05de-4f1d-8e1e-dca744cc7879>

**Karen Hirsch from Florida:** Repeat the organizations please.

**Anonymous:** Topic of your forum again please.

**NHPCO Staff:** If you are getting your audio through the computer and would like to ask a question by phone, dial 323-920-0091, Access code 862 3670#, then press \*6 to unmute when you are placed in the conference.

**Deborah Pausig from CT:** Resource newtownparentconnection.org in Connecticut has a support group the first Thursday of every month. It is open to anyone who has lost a loved one to substance abuse.

**Wes Sturgis from Charlotte, NC:** Thank you, Deborah!

**Holly Farmer from Mishawaka, IN:** We started a support group specific to this type of loss after having multiple individual clients in our client population.

**Deborah Pausig from CT:** It is a physical group.

**Lori Williams from St Luke's Hospice Duluth MN:** It would be nice to develop a list of books/articles that could be provided to loved ones to help in bereavement.

**Anonymous:** Can you send a copy of the flyer?

**David Houtchens from Klamath Falls, Oregon, USA:** The Newtown site has some resource links.

<http://newtownparentconnection.org/links/national>

**Patti Anewalt from Lancaster, PA:** For those who are seeing bereaved people in groups or individual sessions, are there some aspects of their grief that stand out that are rather unique or specific to this type of loss?

**Lindsay London from Mishawaka, IN:** Book Resource: Devastating Losses: How Parents Cope with the Death of Child to Suicide or Drugs by William Feigelman, John Jordan, John McIntosh, Beverly Feigelman.

**Adrienne Daniels from Rochester, NY:** Our hospice partnered with an addiction treatment clinic to provide an ongoing support group to our community for loss due to addiction. It took off immediately and is highly utilized. The addiction education piece is crucial.

**Eleanor Owen:** What about support for children and teens impacted by substance abuse death?

**Brian K. Shaffer:** I facilitate a "Living through Loss" grief support group weekly at a men's residential treatment facility. It has become an important program in coordination with the other groups and programs at the facility for the clients.

**Deborah Lambo from Hood River:** An issue in reaching people in need of bereavement--even if they manage to contact us for assistance - is that some relatives/loved ones are also users and homeless, having little access to the usual communication and group offerings that we have. Figuring out realities of outreach to assist is difficult.

**David Houtchens from Klamath Falls, Oregon, USA:** <https://childrengrieve.org/>

**David Houtchens from Klamath Falls, Oregon, USA:** <http://www.dougy.org/>

**Liz Balzer:** Compassionate Friends for parents who have lost a child or adult child.

**Patti Anewalt from Lancaster, PA:** Books: When A Child Dies From Drugs by Pat and Russ Wittberger Losing Jonathan by Robert and Linda Waxler Life After the Death of My Son: What I'm Learning by Dennis L. Apple One Way Ticket: Our Son's Addiction to Heroin by Rita Lowenthal.

**Wes Sturgis from Charlotte, NC:** Thank you, Eleanor, Brian, Deborah, David, & Liz!

**Janet Dwyer from Worcester MA:** Other than drug diversion, does anyone have experience with issues related to substance abuse in hospice patients?

**David Houtchens from Klamath Falls, Oregon, USA:** Patti Anewalt is a great resource.

**David Houtchens from Klamath Falls, Oregon, USA:** We had a family member who our staff witnessed selling Rx drugs to youth. We called Sheriff's office and were told, it's not that big a deal compared to other issues their office is dealing with.

**Lori Williams from St Luke's Hospice Duluth MN:** Book: Dark Wine Waters: My Husband of a Thousand Joys & Sorrows.

**David Houtchens from Klamath Falls, Oregon, USA:** Same person is sometimes volatile and now we have the dilemma of a person who may be a danger to our staff if we stay, and possibly more dangerous to us if we discharge.

**Liz Balzer:** I usually refer for treatment first or to AA etc.

**Liz Balzer:** Yes!

**Eleanor Owen, NH:** <http://www.whatsyourgrief.com/10-helpful-tips-talking-children-drug-related-death-loved-one/Good> - blog post on talking to young children.

**Kimberly Grove:** Another good book "The Grief Chronicles: A Survivors Manual for Death by Overdose" by Marie Minnich.

**Trisha Curioz from St. Paul, MN:** With drug diversion we have a drug contract and usually have a family member have a key to a lock box to administer meds.

**Trisha Curioz from St. Paul, MN:** Obviously family member needs to be "trusted".

**David Houtchens from Klamath Falls, Oregon, USA:** Treating an addict also brings in us educating doctors about that and how much to provide because their needs are often much greater than "normal".

**David Houtchens from Klamath Falls, Oregon, USA:** And sometimes it breaks the bank to give enough meds.

**Trisha Curioz from St. Paul, MN:** I agree David, I went to a training (cannot remember the MD leading) but he said we under prescribe for "addicts" which is counterproductive as they often need more because the pain receptors have been over exposed to the drugs and they no longer have the same affect d/t over use.

**David Houtchens from Klamath Falls, Oregon, USA:** Remembering to treat addicts as people is important. Had brothers on service. Both were long-time addicts. One of their expressions of deep appreciation was for "treating us like people."

**Rachelle Burrell from High Point, NC:** How do other hospices work with the community about overdose issues (i.e. talking to the police, advocacy for parents to empower them, etc.?).

**Lindsay London from Mishawaka, IN:** The feedback we have received from members of our Loss After Addiction group is how valuable the addiction education is to the survivors to help them put into perspective the struggles their loved ones dealt with during their lives. They particularly spoke about education relating to brain activity and changes due to addiction and drug abuse. They shared it helped

them feel less shameful about their loved ones addictions and less guilty about the lack of control they, as survivors, had over their loved ones addictions.

**David Houtchens from Klamath Falls, Oregon, USA:** I find it helpful to explain to people that each of those issues (addiction, death, murder, law enforcement involvement, etc.) is a legitimate reason for grieving.

**Susan M. Coale:** Another issue that grievors sometimes wrestle with is the question of intentionality. I have one family I see whose son died of an overdose, who had attempted suicide on several occasions. Because of the circumstances in the days prior to his death, they believe that his overdose was intentional. One parent defines the death as an overdose, the other calls it suicide.

**Anonymous:** Have been seeing someone with 12 years NA recovery; lost partner and brother to heroin overdose. Her challenge is that about 7 other people in the rooms died in span of two months. She is now in such fear when she attends meetings where she normally found comfort.

**David Houtchens from Klamath Falls, Oregon, USA:** Mixed groups (people in recovery and people who know nothing of addiction) can be difficult, especially when those in recovery are in treatment together. HOWEVER, I have also found that there can be some wonderful connections and healing as people in both groups come to realize people in the other group are people and face similar problems.

**Lori Williams from St Luke's Hospice Duluth MN:** Would anyone have a fairly brief handout that could be provided to families on "addiction education"? I don't feel qualified in that area and sometimes people don't have the energy to read an entire book.

**David Houtchens from Klamath Falls, Oregon, USA:** One of my favorite training sites.  
<http://learn.nctsn.org/>

**Karen Hirsch from Florida:** GRASP website has a lot of book referrals....

**Karen Hirsch from Florida:** Under the resources tab!

**Anonymous:** Our bereavement staff will also be receiving trainings around trauma which impacts on this.

**Nicole Ethier from Madison Heights MI:** I have had a few instances where a very young adult died of substance issues. In all 3 cases the surviving siblings felt a lot of pressure to be "the good kids."

**David Houtchens from Klamath Falls, Oregon, USA:** <http://learn.nctsn.org/enrol/index.php?id=59>

**Wes Sturgis from Charlotte, NC:** It sounds like your staff is being proactive!

**Anonymous:** Yes, thanks Wes... We have two coming up and looking forward to them. One is by Therese Rando.

**Wes Sturgis from Charlotte, NC:** Thanks, Everyone!

**David Houtchens from Klamath Falls, Oregon, USA:** Thank You.