



Transcript:

African American Children of SUD Parents (M.8)

Presenter: Mark Sanders
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MARK SANDERS: And good day everyone. This is Mark Sanders, presenting this webinar, the eighth of an eight-part series on working with African Americans with substance use disorders. And would you join me in giving the Great Lakes ATTC a virtual round of applause for facilitating all of these webinars and all the other learning opportunities they provide for our region?

I'd like to begin with a few stories. The first one is based upon the movie *The Lion King*. I imagine that many of you have seen the movie *The Lion King*. And the father's name in the movie was Mufasa the King, and his son was Simba. And Simba was destined to be king.

You might remember that at the beginning of the movie, he would dance around, singing a song called "I Can't Wait to Be King." His father Mufasa the King had one piece of advice for his son. He said, son, wherever you do, stay away from there. And there was the forest. And lurking in the fourth were the hyenas.

And Simba made his way into the forest, and the hyenas surrounded him. He thought they came out to play. And that little bird yelled, Mufasa, the hyenas are about to eat Simba. Mufasa roared, and the hyenas ran away. He scooped Simba up in his arms. He hugged his son.

And that caught my attention because I hugged my father three times in my life. The first time I hugged my father was when I graduated from undergraduate school. The second time I hugged my father was when I graduated from graduate school. The third time I hugged my father, he was in his casket.

He had just died smoking crack cocaine. And then Simba asked his father Mufasa the King-- he said, Dad, are you as courageous as the hyenas? He said, no, son, I'm not always courageous. In fact, I thought I would lose you today. He said nothing frightens me more than the fear of being without you.

I just muster up courage when I have to. Simba had an uncle whose name was Scar. I think that one reason that there's so many teenagers in drug treatment is because a relative like Scar. They're the ones who abuse you, who neglect you, who abandon you.



Scar was envious. He was jealous because he wanted to be King. And at one point during the movie, the lion king Mufasa was killed, and Scar said to Simba, it's your fault your father was killed. Get out of here. And Simba ran away. And he stumbled upon a meerkat and a warthog, Timon and Pumbaa.

And the first thing they did was they introduced Simba to a slimy substance to eat. And that wasn't what a king ate, and so he coughed it up. Like, you remember the first time you tried marijuana, you coughed? And then they taught him a song called "Hakuna Matata," which means don't worry about anything.

So look at this picture. There was Simba, destined to be king, hanging out with Timon and Pumbaa, smoking marijuana, singing "Hakuna Matata." It's kind of like a client that you work with that before active addiction, they were on par to become a dentist, a doctor, a judge.

And then one day-- and then they started hanging out with the wrong crowd. And then one day Rafiki, the little monkey-- you remember Rafiki. We'll call Rafiki a certified alcohol and drug abuse counseling for Madison, Wisconsin, or how about a sort of certified social worker from Chicago or a clinical counselor from Ohio?

You were swinging on the vine, and you spotted Simba hanging out with Timon and Pumbaa, about to sell some crack cocaine. So you swung past, and you gave him a gentle tap. And Simba said, who are you? And you said, no, the question is, who are you?

You says, I know who you are. You're Mufasa's son. You're the son of the king. And here you are, hanging out with a pig and a cat, cutting class, smoking marijuana, singing "Hakuna Matata." So you took him to a body of water, and you told Simba to look in the water and see what you see. And at first, he saw his own reflection.

But then, as a good therapist, a good counselor, you said, no, look a little closer. Tell me what you see. He saw his father's reflection in the water. And his voice, father's voice said, Simba, you were meant to be more than what you have become. Go and take your place in the circle of life, and ultimately, Simba became king.

To me that story is more than a children's story or a cartoon. It's the story of recovery. There was Simba. There were purpose connected to his life to be king. There was a trauma, a loss, the death of his father. There was no support from his family. He ran away, lost his value system, started hanging out with the wrong crowd.

And then he met with you. And there was an intervention. And ultimately he became king. I never tire, after 30 years of doing this work, of recovery



stories. About two years ago in April, I was sitting in my favorite chair at home, watching the Chicago Bulls lose another basketball game.

The phone rang, and the person said, I'm calling on behalf of Joe. And I said to myself, oh, Joe's been dead for 30 years. Hang up. This is a crank call. Once they find out you're a social worker, you're going to start giving them money. Hang up. And then she kept talking on behalf of Joe.

She said, did you play basketball in a tournament in Chicago in the 1980s? I did. Did you have a teammate that was deaf hearing impaired, named Joe? I did. I said, oh my god. This is not a crank call. I sat down. Here's the story. In the 1980s, I played in the basketball tournament in Chicago.

And I had a teammate named Joe who was deaf hearing impaired. And following the games, the team would go to a bar and get something to drink. And I don't know why, but for whatever reason, I've learned that when people are drunk, they want to learn sign language.

So they would ask Joe to show them some signs, and they would buy him drinks for free. By 1988, my friend Joe was into full-fledged alcoholism. So that year, he fled to California. In 1990, we received the phone call that Joe died of active addiction.

And then almost 30 years later, there he was on the phone. Three miracles occurred that day. One, he was alive. Number two, Joe told me that after he left Chicago, he discovered that everywhere he went, he took himself with him.

So his addiction got him in jail and prison repeatedly. He got into recovery, he told me. He's been sober for five years. That's the second miracle. The third thing Joe told me was that he's working in the field as a counselor, as a drug counselor. And he saw a flyer.

He saw a flyer where I was coming to his town to give a speech. And he said, I sure can't wait to see you. That's the third miracle. As I mentioned, I never get tired of recovery stories. Our presentation today is entitled, "African-American Children and Adolescents of Parents with Substance Use Disorders: Protective Factors and Counseling."

I want you to know that I qualify. Both of my grandfathers were alcoholic. My great grandfather was alcoholic. If you were like-- you're looking at my picture on a screen. If you lean in and look really carefully, you'd notice on the left side of my face, I have a little dot on my face.

I've had this dot on my face since I was 2 years old. My mother told me that one day, when I was two years old, I was left in the care of one of my



grandfathers who went to the bar to get some alcohol to drink. And they left me on the kitchen floor. And there was a bottle of Drano on the kitchen floor.

My mother told me I went over, and I swallowed the Drano. And this little dot on the left side of my face is caused by my having swallowed the Drano. And I have a fantasy about that because I'm from one of those families that rarely finish a story, but they don't-- they tell the story. They rarely finish the story.

Here's my fantasy. I drank the Drano, and the Drano was bubbling in my system the way Drano does. It made its way to my face. Left dots all over my face, but the doctors pumped my stomach and save my life so I can speak with you today.

About six years ago, I had a friend who came to me with an application. Said Mark, we need to join a health club together. We're not getting any younger. We're fat, we're old. Let's take care of our bodies. I said, are you kidding? My body's fine. Did you know when I was two years old, I swallowed Drano?

And the only sign that I swallowed the Drano was that little dot on my face. He asked me a million dollar question. Said, if the dot is the only sign you swallowed the Drano, he said, how do you know your body's not green inside? Took two steps back and said I don't know. But I do know that I've never been clogged up.

There's the good news. Now, if you lean in and look at the picture again, on the left side of my face, my eyebrow, the hair doesn't go to the end. This is not a fashion statement. I didn't have my eyebrows clipped in order to impress you doing this webinar.

One day, when I was seven years old, again I was left in the care of my grandfather. I tripped, and I cut my head against the wall above my eyebrow, and I started bleeding. So I went in my grandfather's room to wake him up. I couldn't wake him up because he was under anesthesia, meaning what? He was drunk.

So I went in the bathroom. I found the tape, the band-aids, and the gauze, and I doctored myself up. And I remember saying to myself at seven years old, if I'm going to depend upon anybody for the rest of my life, it's going to be me. I'm the only one that I depend on.

And I found in my work that many children and adolescents who have parents or grandparents with substance use disorders have a similar mindset. So let us begin. So we want to talk about the impact that parental substance use disorders on children and adolescents.

The first thing we have here is that parental substance use can impact adolescent academic functioning. For the bad, meaning that the young person



has a hard time focusing on school because of the trauma and chaos happening at home connected to the alcoholism. For others, there are some children of addicted families, addicted parents, who actually become heroic.

You know, Sharon Wegscheider wrote a book called *Another Chance* about the impact of alcoholism on the family. And she talked about a child being born, often the first, the oldest, who have the family role of hero. And purpose of their position, the hero, is to be so great in terms of academic performance and athletic performance, et cetera, that they hide the family secret.

This is the perfect one. So in spite of the alcoholism, they go to school. They get straight A's. They might even, when they go to college, major in not what they're interested in studying, but what their parents always wanted them to be to make the family look good, to protect those family secrets.

So they go to Harvard and get a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, a PhD from Harvard. And they're unhappy in adult life because they realized they did none of that for themselves, that the primary purpose of their striving academically was to make their family look good. Some children of substance using parents have emotional behavior and social problems because the tendency is to keep all of the pain inside.

And when you keep it inside, it shows up in the form of the emotional, behavioral, and social problems. The earlier onset of substance use-- the average adolescent African-American young person I'm working with around alcohol and drugs who do use drugs start experimenting with drugs at age 12, which leads to a faster acceleration of substance use patterns and high rates of substance use disorders and abandonment issues.

If you were to force me with one word to share with you what I think is the root cause of addiction, it would be abandonment or trauma. This is a model by John Friel called the Iceberg Model. It starts from the bottom, and it works its way to the top.

According to John Friel, at the root of addiction is abandonment or trauma. It's so easy to abandon a child. All it takes to abandon a child is for the mother to spend nine months while she's carrying the child not wanting the child and then for the father to spend nine months while the mother's carrying the child denying paternity.

And this child has been abandoned before it's born. Children who are abandoned. And by the way, parental addiction often leads to automatic abandonment of the children. You go on to experience what's called toxic shame. For 21 points, what is the difference between guilt and shame? I'm glad you asked.



Guilt is about behavior, like I've done wrong. I've done bad. I made a mistake. So guilt is about something that you've done. Shame, on the other hand, is about your being. And you feel like there's something wrong with you, like you are bad, like you are a mistake.

In terms of self-destructive behavior, shame is a much more debilitating, powerful emotion than guilt. You see, if you made a mistake, you can fix it. You stole \$100 out of your grandmother's Bible to buy some crack cocaine. She kept it in Genesis, the third chapter of the 23rd verse.

You feel guilty about it, put it back. Again, if you've made a mistake, you can fix it. But if you are a mistake, how do you fix that? Children abandoned by their parents are not guilt-based. They're shame-based. Brené Brown, Dr. Bernie Brown, defines shame as the belief that I'm unlovable and unworthy of belonging.

So she was having lunch with Oprah Winfrey. And they were talking about people who have great relationships. And Oprah asked Brené, what does your research say about people who have great relationships? She said, Oprah, you're not going to believe the findings.

She said the biggest difference between people who have great relationships and people who have horrible relationships is that those who have great relationships believe they're worthy of great relationships. How many clients have you worked with who get into active addiction and have horrible relationships and recovery?

The reason has to do with the belief that I'm unlovable and unworthy of belonging-- a family-of-origin, childhood issue. According to John Friel, children who are abandoned who go on to develop toxic shame often develop what's called codependence. What is codependence?

Is it when I'm dying, and your life flashes before my eyes? I tell you what we used to think that codependence was when I first became a drug counselor 38 years ago. Believe it or not, 38 years ago, most of the clients in addictions treatment were men. Do you believe that, that most of the clients were men?

And that is because we hold women to a higher moral standard than we do men. And by the way, the handful of women that would come into treatment back then in the early '80s who would attend substance use disorders groups would need to sit in the group close to the group facilitator or close to the door.

They didn't feel safe because, as the research indicated, the great majority of those women had histories of childhood sexual abuse or sexual assault as women. So when these men would come in, they would almost always come in drunk, either for the last time or for the last time for a while. And because



we understood blackouts, when these men would come in for treatment in the '80s, we'd pull out a Polaroid camera.

For those of you unaware of a Polaroid camera, it takes instant pictures. We would take a picture of the man and put it on the bulletin board because we wanted them to see how they looked when they came in. And every Thursday night, we would have what we call family night.

And from family night, the girlfriends and the wives would come in, looking immaculately perfect, whereas he came in, the client, looking disheveled. And the staff would whisper, how did she wind up with him? He messed up her life.

So 30 something years ago, much of the field of addictions believed that a codependent was a perfect woman who got into a relationship with someone with an addiction who messed up her life. But then, over the course of the next four decades, individuals who had codependence got into recovery and started writing books.

And what we learned from their books is that marrying an alcoholic or becoming a social worker or a drug counselor trying to save the world is just a symptom of codependence. It has a lot to do with childhood abandonment and trauma and toxic shame. So according to John Friel, codependence is an overinvolvement with things outside of us and an underinvolvement with things inside of us.

And then they make a bold statement. "Left untreated, codependence leads to addiction." Let's go back one slide to talk-- let's share what he's talking about. If what's inside of a child is trauma, abandonment, feeling unlovable, like they don't belong, who would want to feel that?

So the way you avoid feeling that is by becoming other focus. You take care of the world or you marry someone with an active substance use disorder, and you take care of them. Now the bold part of that statement is, "Left untreated codependence can lead to addiction."

Remember earlier when I said we thought addiction produced codependence? Well, Friel is saying, no, the opposite is true. Do you know Marilyn Monroe? I'm not asking you if you and Marilyn Monroe had breakfast together at Tiffany's. But you know of her. Libraries indicate that when she was five years old, her father left the family. So she was deserted by her father.

At age six, her mother felt like she could not do this by herself, so she placed Marilyn Monroe in an orphanage. Did you know that Marilyn Monroe was orphaned? While in the orphanage, she was sexually abused, like the majority of women we work with with substance use disorders.



At age seven, she told the person who ran the orphanage that she was being sexually abused. This person physically abused her. So let us repeat. Let's recap her early life. She was deserted by her father, placed in an orphanage by her mother, sexually abused and physically abused. What's written in biographies about her is she never felt as beautiful on the inside as what others saw on the outside.

You've probably met people who the world thinks they're beautiful, but they feel ugly on the inside. We call that shame. In our early years as an adult, she dated these really high powered men who were all emotionally unavailable to her. For example, Frank Sinatra-- he was too busy in Las Vegas with Dean Martin and Sammy Davis Jr. and the rest of the Rat Pack.

She married a baseball player named Joe Dimaggio. Boy, did he love Marilyn Monroe. But he was too busy too. He played 158 baseball games for a year. And then there was playwright Arthur Miller. You know the author of *The Death of a Salesman*? It's written that when Marilyn Monroe married Arthur Miller, she finally found her spouse.

The problem is that she was so needy, the biographies say, having been abandoned as a child, as she would cling to him. And he got no writing done. So after Arthur Miller divorced Marilyn Monroe, she started drinking alcohol. And when that was not enough the pain-- take away the pain, she started using pills. And some people might think she took her own life, suicide.

She ran the whole gamut, from childhood abandonment to shame to codependent, unhealthy relationships to addiction. Now, what I'd like to ask you to visualize on top of the word addiction is icicles. And those icicles represent how drug use numbs the pain of shame, abandonment, and trauma.

What's interesting is that when clients come in receiving services from us, we only treat the addiction. We don't address codependence or shame or abandonment of trauma issues. No wonder relapse occurs so frequently.

So let's talk about the impact of parental substance use disorders on African-American children and adolescents-- early marijuana use. You know, I work with lots African-American adolescents-- 13, 14, 15 years old. And I ask them, why do you primarily smoke marijuana? Why not other drugs?

And they tell me because if you drink alcohol, you walk down the street staggering, and you look vulnerable. They tell me that they don't use crack cocaine because they had an uncle or an aunt who died smoking crack cocaine. They don't use heroin because they had a friend that died using heroin. So primarily marijuana. But what many of you don't see is that marijuana is addicting in and of itself.



And the earlier that you start to smoke, the more early consequences you have connected to its use. African-American youth in the 1980s who were found with cocaine in their system were labeled as crack babies. Native Americans have taught, if you want to love something call it a flower. If you want to destroy, call it a weed. Such a negative term applied to these young people.

Increased involvement in the child welfare system are some of the consequences of being African-American with substance using parents. More likely to live with one parent. So think about the consequences of that. You have one parent that you live with who's addicted to alcohol and other drugs, and the other parent is absent. So you suffer a double loss there.

Gang affiliation-- we all have a need to belong. And disproportionately, young individuals who are gang affiliated grew up in families where there's a use of alcohol. School expulsion-- African-American youth are more likely to be expelled from school, including those with substance using parents. And of course there's something that's called the school-to-prison pipeline, that those African-American youth who drop out of middle school or high school are more likely to be involved in the criminal justice system.

The child grows up and becomes an adult child of an alcoholic. So a researcher by the name of Joan Jackson interviewed several thousand members of Alcoholics Anonymous-- sorry, of Al-Anon, started by Lois Wilson, Al-Anon, specifically those who have grown up with substance addicted parents and wanted to find out what these adults had in common as adults having grown up with addiction in their family. And here's what she found-- that adult children of alcoholics guess at what's normal.

They often lie when it's easier to tell the truth. Let's talk about how those two work. If you grow up in a household where it's calm one day and then explosive one day-- one day a parent is sober, the next day they're intoxicated, you're kind of guessing what's normal. If you grew up in a household where the adult with a substance use disorder was also physically or verbally abusive, and you discovered it has consequences related to telling the truth, you might find yourself as an adult lying, not to hurt anyone, when it's easier to tell the truth.

We judge ourself harshly. We call that shame. We have difficulty having fun, especially the oldest. Let me just give you a personal example. My mother was taking care of my stepfather, who was opiate-addicted. And my older sister who was 18 years-- sorry, 18 months older than me-- I'm second born-- was taking care of me and my other three siblings.

She was our mother while our mother was gone. So by age 18, she raised-- my big sister raised four kids. So she never really had fun. She never played. She was busy raising kids. I got to tell you, my friends, it was so refreshing to



see my sister in her mid 30s get a job at a comedy club, an African-American comedy club, downtown Chicago, called All Jokes Aside.

And my big sister was the booking agent for Steve Harvey, Cedric the Entertainer, and Bernie Mac before they were famous comedians. I met them when they began. And they will be-- it was really amazing to see my sister be able to laugh after having so many years as a child where she was not able to laugh because she was an early parent, taking care of her siblings.

We have difficulty with intimate relationships. If you've never seen a healthy relationship, how do you develop one? We overreact to changes over which we have no control. We are approval seekers, beginning with our childhood years, where we always wanted to get the approval of our parent who had a substance use disorder.

We either put the needs of others ahead of our own needs-- that's called becoming a social worker-- or we're spending the rest of our lives believing that the world owes us. You see, some people who grew up in addiction homes feel like they have the right-- they have to take care of the world. But other children who grew up in the same family believe that the world owes them because they were abandoned, abused, neglected as a child.

We feel alone and different from other people. Claudia Black wrote a book called, *It Will Never Happen to Me*. And she said, those are the words often uttered by children from addicted families where they say, I'll never be alcoholic like my mother or like my father. But of course, it's three times more likely to happen.

And she said that children who grow up in households where there's active addiction grow with these three unwritten rules. Don't talk-- in other words, don't tell anybody what's happening in this family. Don't trust-- you can't trust anybody outside of the family. And don't feel-- don't express your feelings.

Any child who grew up with those three unwritten rules, who don't talk about their experiences, often grow up as adults they feel like they're alone and different from other people. We're either super responsible or super irresponsible. This is the one that really catches my attention.

Adult children of substance addicted parents are extremely loyal, even when there's evidence that the loyalty is undeserved. They tend to stay in relationships longer than they should, jobs longer than they should, even while they're being abused at work, and friendships, even one-sided friendships, longer than they should stay in these friendships.

The origin of that is as follows-- the child grew up in a home where in spite of the fact that their parents were not there for them emotionally, they loved



them unconditionally anyway. We have a tendency towards perfection. That's one way to hide the family secrets around addiction.

I know in my family if you came home with a report card where there were eight A's and one B, they wouldn't say it's wonderful that you got those eight A's. They'd say, why'd you get that B? We have a tendency towards procrastination. The tendency towards procrastination and a tendency towards perfection are connected.

You see, the adult realizes that they can't be perfect, so they put off task in order to avoid the pain of not doing it perfect. We continue to be impacted-- these are African-American children of alcoholics. All the other characteristics we talked about earlier apply to African-American adult children, along with, we continue to be impacted as adults by our disproportionate representation in the child welfare system.

We continue to be impacted as adults by our involvement in the juvenile justice system. As you know, one of the greatest determinant factors of who winds up in the adult criminal justice system is whether or not you were in that juvenile system. We can continue patterns from childhood through multiple generations, including childhood of addiction, neglect, involvement in the criminal justice system, et cetera, until someone in their family meets with one of you listening to this webinar. And then we can begin to break those intergenerational patterns.

So let's talk about protective factors for African-American children and adolescents with parents with substance use disorders. Let us begin with parenting styles. On this slide, you see three parenting styles. I'm going to describe each and then ask you question. There's an autocratic parenting style.

You know where the child has no voice. You've probably heard the expression, children should be seen and not heard. As a young African-American male, I heard that expression when I was growing up. Children should be seen and not heard. Be quiet and watch what I do and learn from that.

An autocratic parenting style says it's my way or the highway. And then there's more of a democratic parenting style. No that I know that as long as there are children and adults, there will never be a perfect democracy. It's not like a family of five sitting at the dinner table-- the parents of seven-year-old child, a four-year-old child, and a one-year-old child.

It's not like the 7-year-old child can say, at the dinner table, I think the four-year-old should be able to drive the family's car. If you agree with me, raise your hand. And the seven-year-old raises his hand, the four-year-old raises



their hand, and the one-year-old child raises his hand, and then the parents throw the four-year-old the car keys and said, be safe.

What I'm talking about, about democracy, is where you teach your kids to think and problem solve by asking them questions and not providing all the answers yourself. You see, children, by the time they enter middle school will have to answer some really difficult questions around alcohol or Oxycontin, heroin, sexual activity, et cetera.

And if you've taught them to think, then they're in decision-- they're in position to make better decisions. And then the third is a laissez-faire parenting style. That is the only French word I know is laissez-faire. This is the parenting style that says anything goes. If you want to drink in the house, you can. You want to use drugs in the house, you can. If you want to stay out until 3 o'clock in the morning, you can. Anything goes. My question to you is this, look at these three parenting styles, and which parenting style produces children that uses the least amount of drugs?

Which parenting style, on average, produces children that use the most drugs? And then which one produces the children who use drugs and the amount of drugs they use fall in the middle? Here's the answer. A democratic parenting style produces children that use the lowest amount of drugs.

The autocratic style is number two. It falls in the middle. And the laissez-faire parenting style produces children that use the most drugs because anything goes. You see, my friends, when I was a boy growing up, my father sold marijuana by the brick, by the pound. I had no curfew.

There was an unlimited amount of marijuana around. I was never asked about my grades. Anything went. And when anything goes, anything goes. When you have a family that has a laissez-faire parenting style, these are the parents that go to the liquor store and buy liquor for their kids.

This is the household where other kids go to get high. So what we've done with this is when I've worked with African-American adolescents with substance using parents in groups, we've met with their parents, and we've encouraged those who have more autocratic parenting style to loosen up a bit and let their children have a voice so they'll be able to make good decisions later in life.

And for those who have a laissez-faire parenting style, we suggest to the parents that they might try tightening up a little bit, being more assertive and firm, a little bit more authoritative. Let me tell you a quick story. In one residential facility where I work with adolescents, African-American with substance using parents-- in this residential facility, these kids will go on weekend passes.



These were also kids who got high and used other drugs. They tended to take three times the weekend passes. One is what I call the neighborhood pass, where they would go home on the weekend, kiss their mother on the cheek, and then spend the whole rest of the weekend in the neighborhood. The second type of pass is what I call a gang pass, a street gang pass.

These children would go home, kiss their mother on the cheek, and then spend the whole weekend with the street gang. Then the third type of family pass-- weekend pass, is what I call the family pass, where the young person spends most of their weekend time with their parents.

You're wondering, of these three times of weekend passes, which is the young person most likely to come back sober or drug-free over the course of that weekend. The ones who take the family pass are the ones most likely to come back not high when they return to the facility.

But if the parenting style was laissez-faire, we'd have to encourage them to structure some activities for their child to do. The one that falls in the middle is that those young people who take a neighborhood pass. They don't spend very little time at home, just in the neighborhood, are more likely to come back high than those who took a family pass.

And then finally, the young people who are most likely to come back high is the group that spent the most of their time over the weekend with the street gang because as you know, within communities, street gang activity and drug use go hand-in-hand. Protective factors continued, family celebrations.

If you take two families where there is addiction and one family in response to the addiction stops celebrating holidays, anniversaries, and birthdays, and then the other families, in spite of the addiction, they continue to celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays those who will continue to celebrate in spite of addiction, the children will use fewer drugs and have fewer psychosocial problems because celebrations make all the difference in the world. It means you're important.

A praying grandmother-- where would African-American children be without their grandmothers? I wrote an article on the Online Museum of African-American Addictions Recovery that focuses on grandparents to be celebrated when the parent has a substance use disorder.

Where would I be without my grandmother? So my junior year in high school, my mother was taking care of her husband who was opiate addiction-- opiate-addicted. And my father was at State Hill Penitentiary, picked up on possession of pounds of marijuana with the intent to distribute.

So I had to leave my father's laissez-faire home, where I could do anything I wanted, and go and live with my grandparents. And I was bitter. Where were



my parents? So I would talk to them in a rude manner. And my grandmother was a saint. She went to church eight days out of a seven-day week.

And as I was rude with her, she would just kind of smile. And my grandfather didn't like it. So that year, my junior year in high school, my whopping 2.0 grade point average dropped down to a 1.5. And I went to my grandfather's, said give me money for summer school.

My grandfather said, I'm not giving you anything. If you want to destroy your life, I'm not paying for it. My grandmother overheard the conversation. And she walked into the room where I was having a conversation with my grandfather. And with tears in her eyes, she looked at my grandfather and said, give him the money for summer school. I love him.

She loved me. I went to summer school that year and got two A's. I received straight A's my senior year in high school. So years later, I'm living a successful life, working as a presenter, a consultant in the behavioral health field. And I went to my grandmother, my praying grandmother.

And I asked, did you know I was going to be successful? I asked her, did you know I was going to be successful? She said, no, I didn't know. She said, I just figured you had the devil in you, so I prayed him out of you. Mentorship and a membership-- you see the sign there, Boys Club and Girls Club of America.

Children who were deserted by their parents emotionally due to substance use disorders can benefit from something that they belonged to and human connections. Later onset of substance use-- you see the goal is for children, adolescents, and never take a drink. It's just it's better for them to take their first drink at 25 than 13.

So any interventions we can do to delay the onset of substance use will be really helpful. Early counseling of mental illness and trauma, especially at that therapy that counseling is provided by therapists who will specialize in working with children and adolescents with substance use disorders. And then if we're talking about African-American children, we want to make sure that these counselors are culturally competent or striving for it.

Cultural knowledge and cultural pride are protective factors for African-American children. Peter Bell years ago wrote a book called the-- a whole curriculum on children and alcoholic called Growing Up Black and Proud. The adult protective factor if the parents are using drugs-- helping professionals can make sure that we can-- we rally the extended family around that child, a matrix.

By definition, a matrix is a safe place. We help every child identify a safe place. It could be their bedroom. It could be the Boys Club of America. It could



be their back porch. It could be their grandmother's house, but someplace where they can go and seek safety. Constant and predictable routines-- alcoholism, drug dependence leads to lots of inconsistency and unpredictability.

If we can provide some constant and predictable routines in a kid's life, it can have a stabilizing impact. How about this research-based finding, that children from alcoholic homes, African-Americans children from alcohol at homes, who have the ability to get adopted by surrogate families-- take Mike Tyson, the boxer, who was adopted by his trainer Cus D'Amato. He might have had some rough moments after Cus D'Amato died, but ultimately that relationship played a major role in his latest success.

You know Will Smith, The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air? He said if he was in charge of providing services, protective services, for African-American children, he said all the African-American children would be encouraged to read biographies, biographies of famous African-Americans who had major struggles in childhood and adolescent years but who wound up massively successful.

And the second thing he would require is for African-American children to become distance runners. He says distance runners-- distance running helps you defeat the voice that comes into your head that says you can't do this. It eliminates that, I can't do this, that quit attitude.

And then of course, as a protective factor, lots of activities and sports. You might recognize the man on the left-hand side. His name is Rampage Jackson. He's a mixed martial art champion and started off as a kid as a really mean youth. Fact, his younger brother said, my brother Rampage Jackson was so mean if someone beat me up, Rampage would beat them up and then beat me up for getting beat up.

Rampage Jackson's mother in an interview said that if it were not for mixed martial arts, that sport, her son would have been in prison for a long, long time. You might remember the man-- you might recognize the man in the middle. It's heavyweight boxing champion George Foreman.

Foreman used to be so mean that he looked like he eat bricks and steel for breakfast. Now who would have ever thought he is the founder of the lean mean cooking machine. Kind man, but when he was a youth, George Foreman was involved in delinquency. And he was placed in Job Corps.

And while in Job Corps, he learned to box, and the rest of history. To the right is a bike. And that bike is at the Muhammad Ali Center. It's a replica of the only bike that Mike-- that Muhammad Ali ever had when he was a kid that was taken from him by an older boy.



And he was filled with so much anger and rage his bike was taken, he went to the police station, said I'm angry, someone took my bike. I want to fight. And the police officer in that police station in Louisville, Kentucky said to Muhammad Ali, well, if you're going to fight, I need to teach you how to box. And the rest is history.

So why do so many African-American males love basketball? By the way, let me tell you how much I know about basketball. You see the basketball in that young fellow's hand? That basketball has been used outside. That's an indoor basketball. Those little gray spots? Concrete did that.

That black spot towards the top? That's concrete. That basketball should never be used outdoors. Well, why basketball? During my grandfather's generation in my early youth, so many young black boys wanted to be baseball players because of Jackie Robinson.

Why the switch to basketball? So much movement. You're watching everything that's happening since the police shooting of George Floyd. And we're starting to see footage of all of these murders of African Americans and then shootings within African-American communities by African Americans.

Bessel van der Kolk wrote a book called *The Body Keeps the Score*. And he mentioned that trauma lodges itself in the human body. So basketball provides a lot of movement, which can help to reduce trauma from the body, creativity. You've seen Michael Jordan fly in the air or LeBron James or the late Kobe Bryant.

Basketball provides an outlet for creativity. Male bonding and camaraderie. Release of dopamine. To this day, when I hear the sound of a basketball being dribbled, dopamine is released in my brain the way it's released in the person's brain when they use drugs like crack cocaine.

Laughter-- drive by any basketball court in African-American communities and notice how much laughter you see. Human touch-- you bump into each other while you're playing. And legal aggression. You see, if I made a ninth video, it would be a video on helping African-American adolescents deal with rage.

And where rage comes from is when you feel like one of three systems have let you down-- either your family, your neighborhood, or the larger society that looks down upon you. But basketball provides the opportunity for legal aggression. What do I mean?

In language of basketball, if you score 80 points on your opponent, your teammates will say, he killed him. He scored 80 points. Basketball is the one sport where you can kill somebody by scoring 80 points on them and never have to worry about going to prison. And then, of course, it provides stress relief.



These are all protective factors against early use of alcohol and other drugs for African-American adolescents. Protective factors continued. Address the fetal alcohol spectrum. The research says that 50% of children on this fetal alcohol spectrum will have a problem with alcohol and drugs unless we intervene.

When I've asked African-American adolescents with substance use challenges, how do they survive everything they endured? The most common answer is spirituality and God, a sense of belonging. You heard the story about this boy named Mike who played little league baseball on a team known as the Cougars.

And Mike came out with a rare illness requiring him to have chemotherapy radiation treatment. He lost his hair. And Mike was embarrassed to go to the next Cougars baseball game because at the beginning of each game, the team would line up along the third base line.

They would take off their hats and place them over their heart and sing the national anthem. He was afraid that all of his teammates would laugh at him when they saw that he had no hair. And his father took him to the next baseball game. And sure enough, the team lined up along the third base line.

And right before he took off his hat, all 25 of his teammates took off their hats first. And he saw they all shaved off their hair. They looked at him and they said, once a cougar, always a cougar. Having a sense of belonging is a protective factor for early alcohol and drug use.

That is why we stressed a few slides ago the importance of a membership. The Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, the Cub Scouts, little league baseball teams, et cetera, and then later onset of substance use. The more a young person can delay substance use, the more developmental milestones they have without alcohol and other drugs.

Insight-- I used to work in group homes. And every Thanksgiving and Christmas, the teenagers would tear up the group homes. And the reason being often that their parents said they would come to see them on Thanksgiving and Christmas, and they never showed. These children need insight.

The idea that my parent has a disease that's characterized by emotional unavailability, broken promises. So it's not your fault if they don't show up. It's the disease and inconsistency. You did not cause this problem. And you're not the problem or the solution.

And the earlier a child internalizes that who has substance using parents, the better. An affirming mirror-- they need an adult who has high expectations of them. You might have heard this story about this boy who grew up in the hills



of West Virginia. And the teacher gave the class an assignment to write an essay about what they wanted to be when they grew up.

And the boy wrote a glowing essay about his desire to be a doctor. And the teacher put a red F on that paper and said, that's an unrealistic goal for a boy growing up in these hills. Why don't you write about your desire to be a farmer like your father, a coal miner like your grandfather?

So he showed the paper with the red F on it to his father. He said, son, I can't help you. I'm a farmer. I know nothing about what it would take to be a doctor. The boy walked in the classroom the next day, and he gave a paper back to the teacher.

And the teacher said, that was the same paper you handed in yesterday. And the boy said, you can keep the F. I'm keeping my dreams. Now here's a young man who affirmed himself, who had high expectations of himself. But children who have substance using parents can also benefit from having at least one adult in their life who has expectations of them.

Later onset of substance use, encouragement of excellence rather than perfection. Earlier we talked about one way to hide family secrets around addiction is to push the kids sought perfection. But excellence is a better goal because some young people will use because of the pressure of having to be perfect.

Excellence really says that, I will do my best, and only I can determine if I did my best. And my best is good enough. The other thing these children need is the opportunity to express their feelings. And when they express those feelings, appropriate responses from you include, I believe you, I believe that happened to you, and then to normalize those feelings, and then reflect those feelings back to them.

And then let that child know, you got to let them know, I can see why you're angry. I can see how you can feel that way. And you're not alone. One of my favorite things to do when I'm leading groups of African-American children and adolescents with substance using parents is to show them images of successful African Americans who also had parents with substance use disorders.

So there's Halle Berry, an Oscar-winning actress. Her father had alcoholism use disorder and physically abused her mother when Halle was growing up. Singer Mario, his mother is addicted to heroin. Didn't stop him from being successful. Tupac Shakur, the late great rapper.

So what did Tupac Shakur have in common with Elvis Presley? Two things. Number one, their fans still don't believe that they're dead. I imagine that some of you on his webinar are going to be looking for Elvis when this



webinar ends. I know every year in Chicago on December 31, New Year's Eve, they have a 5K race called the Looking for Elvis race.

And the runners show up wearing big sideburns like Elvis Presley, Elvis Presley performance costumes, and guitars around their neck, running a 5K race, looking for Elvis. The other day, a Tupac Shakur fan says, I was in Hawaii, and I saw him. You know, Tupac Shakur has been dead since 1996.

The second thing that Tupac Shakur and Elvis have in-- and Elvis Presley have in common is that a woman made both of them wealthier in death than they were in life. You see, after Elvis died, Priscilla Presley opened Graceland. Lots of money comes through Graceland. Then, of course, Afeni Shakur, the mother Tupac Shakur was told by Tupac's childhood friend Jada Pinkett Smith, get a lawyer.

Tupac had an active addiction. He left lots of money on the table. So Tupac's mother Afeni got the royalty from Tupac's performances or from his album and started the Tupac Shakur Foundation. Eminem came along during that time when Tupac Shakur, from 8-Mile in Detroit, and he called himself the white Tupac Shakur.

So question, my friends, what does Tupac Shakur and Eminem have in common? Several things. One, their music speaks to a generation. Number two, they both have mothers that were addicted to drugs. And number three, they hated their fathers, who were absent in their life.

The difference is that Tupac Shakur would die before the miracle occurred. You see, my friends, I study rap. And the great majority of really great rappers come from families with active addiction. And what they do, they journal. They pick up a pen and pad, and they tell their story.

And they tell their story until they heal. You see, Tupac died before he finished the story. But Eminem had an album called Relapse and another album called Recovery where he told his story. And in one of those albums, he acknowledged that he no longer hated his father and that he loved his mother.

And Eminem has been in recovery for 10 years. If you want to watch something amazing, go and look at that video where Eminem is being interviewed by Mike Tyson, two men, unlikely candidates for addictions recovery. Jay Z's work is nothing but autobiographical work. Early on in his career, he rhymed about becoming a drug dealer and filled with rage once his father disappeared.

Then he kept writing. On an album called Fade to Black, Jay Z said, I can no longer hate my father because I now realize we're opposite sides of the same coin. He used drugs, heroin-- I sold drugs. And then on his recent album called 444, he said, I now understand my father, why he used heroin.



I understand the home he came from. Jay Z says, you see my grandfather, his father's father, would preach on Sunday-- his grandfather was a minister. And then he would molest his daughter on Monday. He said, so my father grew up in that atmosphere.

I need to understand that atmosphere because I want to be a better parent than my father. I want to break the curse that's on our family's life, is what he said. Nicki Minaj. Her father was addicted to alcohol and drugs. She became quite successful.

And then there's Rihanna. I wish I could show you the photo of her standing next to her father. You should look for that photo. They look exactly alike. And she's very successful and has a father that's addicted to crack cocaine. I show these young people pictures of Barack Obama.

Barack Obama's father was alcoholic, and he died, ultimately, and he wasn't in Barack's life. And Barack picked up his pen, like rappers, and wrote a book called Letters to My Father, where he expressed the anger and rage for his father not being in his life.

But that was exactly what he needed to do because ultimately, he moved beyond that pain and became the President of the United States. So I share this with young African-American children and adolescents, let them know you are not alone. There are successful people who understand what you've gone through because they've gone through it as well.

So this slide is really a link. And I've shown this in all eight of these videos to the Online Museum of African-American Addictions Treatment and Recovery. Along with these eight videos that Great Lakes ATTC has put together on African Americans with substance use disorders, this museum site is another source of information.

You provide lots of scholarly articles there, podcast is there, your webinars are there. All the material here is geared towards helping you do great work with African-American clients with substance use disorder. So final story-- so a few years ago, my mentor received a call from his mentor, and his mentor was dying.

His mentor asked my mentor, would he get on a plane and fly from Florida, where my mentor leaves, the Kalamazoo, Michigan, where his mentor lives, to sit at his bedside to help him write one more article before he died? My mentor got on the plane. He flew to Kalamazoo, Michigan.

And he's sitting near his mentor's bedside. And he said to his mentor, I love you, but this is a strange request. You've written 500 articles. You have revolutionized the behavioral health field through your pen. Why are you writing this article on your deathbed?



His mentor quoted the philosopher who said, "Each of us dies twice." He said, "The first time you die, it's a physical death. They'll have a funeral for you. And the next time you die is the last time someone on earth speaks your name." My friends, if you continue to help people with their recovery, there'll be people speaking your name for a long time. Thank you so very much for listening to me. And enjoy the rest of your day.