



ATTC

Unifying science, education
and services to transform lives.



In My Own Words. . .

*A compilation of essays honoring the family members
of a loved one struggling with addiction or
in long-term recovery . . .*

In partnership with Faces & Voices of Recovery
and National Family Dialogue

ATTCnetwork.org

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*raising
awareness
building
skills
changing
practice*



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The purpose of the Addiction Technology Transfer Center (ATTC) Network is to develop and strengthen the behavioral healthcare workforce providing addictions treatment and recovery services to those entering the treatment system. Annually in the United States, more than 1.6 million friends and family members receive treatment for the abuse of alcohol and drugs (NSDUH, 2008). As part of the United States Federal Government's effort in drug control, the Network is funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT).

In partnership with Single State Authorities, treatment provider associations, addiction counselors, multidisciplinary professionals, faith and recovery community leaders, family members of those in recovery, and other stakeholders, the ATTC Network assesses the training and development needs of the behavioral healthcare workforce. To meet the identified needs, the Network develops and conducts training and other technology transfer activities, especially targeting the frontline counselor. Particular emphasis is on raising awareness of and improving skills in using evidence-based and promising treatment/recovery practices for the purpose of changing practice.

Established in 1993, the Network consists of fourteen Regional Centers and a National Office, which serve all 50 states, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Pacific Islands.

Together we take a unified approach in delivering cutting-edge products, services and resources to support a powerful workforce...a workforce that has the potential to transform lives.

Letter from
Sharon L.
Smith

MOMSTELL, Inc./
National Family
Dialogue
Pennsylvania

Congratulations to the 2010 award recipients of the “In My Own Words...” Essay Contest.

I would also like to acknowledge the top 20 group, as well as each and every family member who had the courage to share their stories. This year's contest was truly unique because each family member not only shared their perspective of a loved one's struggle with addiction and recovery, but also related their own story of recovery. Addiction is a family disease. As with any disease, each family member is affected by the loved one's illness and struggle to recover. Their incredibly inspiring stories are what made this contest so important to families across this nation, who are alone and dealing with a loved one's substance use disorder. This is a journey which at least one in four American families has taken. Recovery is not only a goal for the addicted loved one, but for each family member.

There are millions of families across this country who are suffering in silence, not knowing where to go or who to call in order to obtain help. Family members need a method to share their concerns regarding substance use disorder issues, and that method is a collective voice. In March of 2009, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT), convened the first *Families of Youth with Substance Use Addiction: A National Dialogue*. This historic meeting brought together 65 family members from 34 states and four tribal nations across this country to discuss strengthening family involvement within the youth substance use disorders, addiction treatment and recovery field.

These family members shared similar accounts of their journeys to recovery. It was through the sharing of the stories family members stepped out of their silence and found a bond with others who shared similar experiences. For those in attendance, it was both eye-opening and inspirational. As a result of this meeting, and through outreach and collaborations, the National Family Dialogue (NFD) was proud to partner with the Addiction Technology Transfer Center (ATTC) National Office and Faces and Voices of Recovery (FAVOR) on this journey to bring the family voice out of the shadows of silence. These essays are a testament to the resiliency of families impacted by addiction. The realities expressed serve as a reminder to everyone addiction is a family disease and recovery is an attainable goal. They also give professionals and policy makers a glimpse into the dynamics of a family's journey to recovery.

This booklet is a "MUST READ" for everyone, including professionals and policy makers, but especially for all those family members who are looking for wisdom, encouragement, understanding, hope and those beautiful words of recovery.

Thanks to all who entered and again congratulations to the award recipients.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sharon L. Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sharon" and last name "Smith" clearly distinguishable.

Sharon L. Smith
President
MOMSTELL, Inc. / National Family Dialogue



Resilience

In My Own Words

*“Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet.
Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be
strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved.”*

Helen Keller

Addiction is a chronic disease similar to other chronic diseases such as type II diabetes, cancer, and cardiovascular disease. As the result of pioneering research, the disease is known to affect both the brain and behavior,ⁱ and is often an emotionally painful experience impacting not only the person suffering from the disease, but also their loved ones. Researchers have identified many of the biological and environmental factors and are beginning to search for the genetic variations contributing to the development and progression of the disease. Scientists use this knowledge to develop effective prevention and treatment approaches which reduce the tremendous toll experienced by individuals, families, and communities.ⁱⁱ Over the years, the behavioral healthcare field has learned prevention works; treatment is effective; and people do recover from substance use disorders.ⁱⁱⁱ

In recognition of the 2010 National Alcohol & Drug Addiction Recovery Month, the Addiction Technology Transfer Center (ATTC) National Office, in partnership with Faces & Voices of Recovery (FAVOR) and National Family Dialogue (NFD), orchestrated the 3rd annual “In My Own Words ...” Essay Contest to invite family members of those who are struggling with addiction or in long-term recovery to share their own story of recovery. They were asked to describe, in their own words, the most challenging part about having a family member with a substance use disorder; what it means to have a loved one find long-term recovery; and explain why they are committed to recovery.

“I lost my daughter to addiction, and I have a son who struggles with a co-occurring disorder. It took me many heartbreaking years to realize addiction is truly a family disease,” said Sharon Smith, Founder of MOMSTELL, Inc./National Family Dialogue. “When your focus is on the treatment and recovery of your child, you don’t see how it is affecting you or the rest of your family, because you become enveloped by the disease. Recovery is needed not just for the addicted loved one, but for each member of the family. Once I understood this, I could begin to deal with my own enabling issues and work towards my recovery.”

Nearly 100 essays, from over 30 states, were received and reviewed by the ATTC National Office and an Essay Review Panel. Within this Essay Booklet you will find the first, second and third prize-winning essays chosen by an Expert Review Panel, as well as 17 additional essays receiving honorable mention. All participants received a special certificate and appreciation gift for their willingness to share these very moving stories. It was a difficult task selecting the contest winners from such a rich pool of entries. We are grateful to all who shared their very personal experiences with us. In turn, we hope these essays will offer hope and inspiration to those who are still struggling, as well as acknowledgment of the tremendous accomplishments made by family members and their loved one in long-term recovery.

i National Institute on Drug Abuse. (n.d.). Treatment and Recovery. Retrieved 03 25, 2011, from National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA): <http://www.drugabuse.gov/ScienceofAddiction/treatment.html>

ii Ibid.

iii Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2011). Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Retrieved 03 28, 2011, from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: <http://www.samhsa.gov>

Sierra
Desnoyers

Placerville, Ca

I am a fifteen year old daughter of two recovering addicts. As short and sweet as that statement is, the story behind it is not. When I was seven years old, I stole hundreds of dollars from my mom's purse, I walked alone to the store to buy some food while my mother lie passed out on the couch and my father in jail.

The most challenging part about having family members with addiction is knowing it is a silent disease that at any moment can be unleashed on my family. My family has been in and out of recovery in the past. It feels like waiting so long in line to see a great movie and right when you get to the front of the line, the movie closes. For the first twelve years of my life, I never knew what each day would bring me. Would my parents be in jail? If I did have clothes, would they be clean? I prayed every moment of every day my family would get pulled out of the wreckage and by the grace of God, it happened in time.

My family is committed to recovery because recovery is the place where we all can breathe deeply, relax and love freely. Recovery has also given us a life beyond our wildest dreams, and it has only just begun.

*give us
new life*

The most challenging part about having a family member with addiction is ... knowing where I end and he begins. I want to help. I don't know how. I want to fix. I don't know how. I want to control. I think I know how, but I can't. I ache. I cry. I pray. I hurt. I hate ... this disease.

We are siblings, sharing parents, heritage, history, but not this disease. Why him and not me? Why not our other brother? Why did this disease choose one of us and not all of us? So many whys, and not enough because. It's challenging, knowing what my part is and what isn't.

My family is committed to recovery because . . . we love him. We lost one member, Mom, years ago, and we don't want to lose another. We agreed back then to have no secrets. So, discovering this secret was painful, but not terminal. We love him. Coming to Family Week was optional, but not for us. California. Minnesota. Colorado. Didn't matter, we came. And we learned, because we love him.

Now we are starting new patterns of communication. We go to meetings. We pray. We read books, talk to our sponsors, and work our own steps. Because we are committed to recovery and because we love him.

Denise
Greiner

Gold Canyon, Az

> *First Place Recipient*

The most challenging part about having a family member with addiction is the uncertainty, the doubt, and the fear of the dreaded unknown. When my son was active in addiction, I spent my days waiting, and worrying and wondering if he would ever get well. My recovery began a year and a half before my son got clean, when I untangled myself and my emotions from his drug addiction. I learned the best way to love him was by gently letting go and learning to say “No.”

The focus shifted from his sickness to my wellness and our family dynamic changed. I yelled less and encouraged more. I feared less and loved more. I found hope by sharing my experience and strength with others.

Today, my family walks the recovery road together. We are committed to building each other up, supporting one another and celebrating successes along the way! Should one of us stumble, we are there to hold out a hand and offer hope. Together, we practice resilience and find joy on the journey. What was once our secret shame has been transformed into a message of renewal and restoration.

We share a heartfelt gratitude for this precious gift of recovery. We keep what we have by giving it away. Our family’s mission and motto is to walk in wellness and invite other hurting souls to share in the journey.

Today, I invite you to receive the gift of recovery!

1st Place Recipient

The most challenging part about having a family member with addiction is ... knowing that they are not the only ones who are affected. I wish I could say I only know one person in my family that has wrestled with addiction but that is just not the case. It has been generational. The phrase that “we are sometimes doomed to relive the past” rings in my ears. Today, however, my family is committed to recovery because ... our lives depend on it and we depend on each other.

Today I can say that I am grateful because I have seen my loved ones take steps out of the darkness and into the light. My family is committed to a substance free lifestyle because today: we get to see our baby girl walk for the first time, celebrate graduations from college, empathize with those who are still struggling, praise God for another day and look back and see that sometimes tough times bring about amazing change.

The most challenging part about having a family member with addiction is accepting powerlessness. When I was a child, I believed if I could be good enough, my mother would stop using drugs.

She didn't.

When I told my alcoholic ex-husband that if he didn't stop drinking, he would have to leave his children, his home, and me. I thought it would make him change.

He left.

When my child became addicted to heroin, I knew I had to make her stop.

I couldn't.

When my son wanted to shut her out of his life, I pleaded with him.

He closed the door.

When my other daughter was angry with her addicted sister, I shamed her.

She became angry with me too.

When my husband tried to tell me I was losing myself, I worked harder at acting fine so we could be normal.

He shut down.

When I called the police, I was hysterical, because I was sure my daughter had overdosed.

She hadn't.

When I assured everyone that once she was in treatment, everything would be OK.

It wasn't.

Trying to accept the realizations that I couldn't make any of the insanity that was destroying my family stop, at times made me feel like I couldn't breathe.

With joy and gratitude, I breathe deeply today.

My daughter is alive and in her second year of recovery. My family is committed to recovery because addiction and codependency nearly tore us apart. Through recovery our relationships are growing ever stronger.

The most challenging part about having a family member with addiction is the helplessness I feel at times. To not be able to “fix” my daughter’s pain or my grandchildren’s pain is an indescribable burden. **I have realized I can’t fix my own pain or ignore it. It is real and I have to grow through it.**

The reality of supporting a family member’s recovery is it is difficult. Sometimes every moment, every breath of every day is filled with uncertainty. I have come to understand what “one day at a time” truly means. There have been periods where it was “one minute at a time,” when her existence teetered between life and death. I feared phone calls— that one of those calls would be informing me she or one of my grandchildren was dead as a result of decisions made while under alcohol’s influence. Fear reminds me that our family is alive and thriving. The fear has evolved into hope.

My daughter is a survivor, a warrior and my hero. The lessons she has taught me are life sober can be daunting and so much more— of perseverance, forgiveness and acknowledging fleeting victories.

My family is committed to recovery because addiction knows no limits nor does it have a system of selecting those affected. Too often its effects are generational. To be in recovery means we each have the opportunity to heal and to embrace where we are in the process, right now.

*grow
through*

I remember the day God held my hand to help me survive my mother's alcoholism. I even stated out loud before opening the front door that "I would always remember that day." Mommy drank her "special ice tea" and slept most days while I was in the first grade. What made this day different is she didn't wake up when I called for her. At first I kissed her saying, "Hello Mamma." She did not stir. I shook her, and began to cry.

I called Dad at work to tell him, "Mommy would not wake up." There was urgency in my father's words when he said, "Go next door and get the neighbor, and call 911 for an ambulance." She was taken to the hospital by ambulance. I never did know why. I can still remember the sound of the sirens — that day and other days which followed.

The most challenging part about having a family member in addiction is the denial and secrets. What was wrong with my mother? No one would tell me what was going on. "You're too young, everything is just fine now." I felt lost, alone and cried. I cried so much my parents jokingly referred to a small pillow I had as "Katie's crying pillow."

My family is committed to recovery because God touched our hearts and saved our lives. That day when I was 8, I had a premonition a miracle was about to begin. Our family has had difficult challenges and extraordinary support from God and friends in the rooms of recovery as the years have passed. God held my hand through it all. I hold on tightly today.

*touched
our hearts*

In my experience, the most challenging part about having a family member with the disease of addiction would be overcoming fear. I could easily list any number of challenges we faced as a family due to this disease, but at the core of it all, was fear.

As a family, we enabled my husband, because we were afraid of what would happen to him, or us, if he had to face the consequences of his actions. We were afraid he would go to jail, end up in a mental institution, or die. The truth is, our fear-induced enabling was helping him along that path of destruction, and consequently, destroying each and every one of us.

Luckily we found a wonderful therapist who helped my husband and our family find the path to recovery. We educated ourselves about the family disease of addiction and we learned how important it is to detach with love from our addicted loved one. Now, four years after our journey began, we no longer live in fear. **Our family is stronger and happier than we have ever been and that is why we are grateful the disease of addiction has touched our lives.** It has truly been both a blessing and a curse.

My family is committed to recovery because we no longer want to live our lives in fear of the disease of addiction. Addiction thrives on that fear, and becomes more powerful with each fearful action or step we take.

Maurice Payne

Albuquerque, NM

The most challenging part about having a family member with an addiction is the loss of respect we had for our brother. We felt he had gone to the lowest depths of addiction by taking many things from our grandmother. When she saw him, she would say, "Get him away from me, because he will steal all my money." Even though she had Alzheimer's and would not speak for days, when he came to her house, she would become afraid. The greatest challenge his addiction presented to us was having to take his children in our home since they were taken into state custody. We had to tell the children that their father was unable to care for them, because he was sick. He had an illness that made him unable to love anyone, even himself. I know they didn't understand, because they kept asking when daddy would start loving us again. I was unable to give them an answer, because I really didn't know. The power of love children have for their parents was even more heart-wrenching because of the unconditional nature of their love. His children kept looking for their father knowing he would knock on the door any day and take them in his arms giving them a big hug.

That knock came after many months of his addiction tearing us apart. He finally went to treatment and began the road to recovery.

My family is committed to recovery because it has brought us closer together and allowed us to communicate more effectively and in deeper ways. We all attend church and have developed a spirituality that is the foundation of our family— addiction actually brought us this. This commitment has also given us new hope and insight into our own lives as to how fragile and precious life can be and how addiction can take that life away.

The most challenging part about having a family member with addiction is being able to have faith you will ever get your loved one back. It is very hard to love the person that they have become. You tell yourself they wouldn't be acting this way or doing the things they are doing if it weren't for the drugs. But, there they are, the same face looking back at you. But, you feel like you are talking to a stranger.

It doesn't take long for a serious drug problem to have serious consequences. Things start to go away, like cars, furniture, and a home. My husband and I wanted to fix the problem. We took our son into our home and gave him a truck, so he could continue to work. It didn't take long to realize that he was still using drugs. We asked him to leave. He soon lost his job and our truck. Not long after that we found out his two children were now in foster care. His ex-wife also has a drug problem. We realized financial help was not the answer.

The hardest thing we ever did was to take him to VOA. It was also the best thing. It was there our son learned about Odyssey's program for fathers and children. We visited every weekend and watched our son thrive. His children eventually joined him, and they thrived too. It was a wonderful transformation to watch.

My family is committed to recovery because we have seen it work. We have our son back. We are so proud of him. He has our trust back. Most important, he has his children back and is a wonderful father doing a terrific job as a single parent. Our son has been clean and sober for over two years.

*recovery
works*

> *Second Place Recipient*

Tom
Wark

Purcellville, Va

2nd Place Recipient

Addiction has always been a part of my life. Both of my parents are addicts. They are divorced and I live with my mother. My father is not a part of my life because his addiction to alcohol trumps everything else. The addiction I am faced with daily, however, is my mother's alcoholism. In 1997 we left our familiar house and moved far away, just the two of us.

The most challenging part about having a family member with addiction is I could not understand the pain my mother was going through. She was frustrated, lonely, tired, and constantly taxed by raising a three year old boy single-handedly. Unbeknownst to me, my mother's drinking was steadily progressing over time. Following a near fatal car collision, my mum decided to stop drinking. With this decision started the greatest love affair of her life: her love of recovery. She steadily attended AA meetings and formed a close network of friends who were also in recovery.

My family is committed to recovery because my mother and I want to succeed. She is one of the strongest people I know and is able to face the challenges of her life without the aid of the pain relaxant she had been using since the age of sixteen. They say the addiction never goes away, but her eleven years sobriety is a true testament to the strength she exercises daily, and a true inspiration to me.

The most challenging thing about living with someone with an addiction is uncertainty and fear. My father was an alcoholic. My siblings and I knew by the sound of a door closing whether we should stay away or come to dinner. From moment to moment we did not know what would set him off. Sometimes it was his day at work (when he had a job). Sometimes it was just that we merely existed. Dad was an abusive man, physically and mentally. He would choose two of us, begin teasing and start an argument between us, and then punish us for fighting. I never spent more than one school year in the same school and sometimes never made it through the whole year before moving to the next.

I married an alcoholic/addict when I was 26 and lived through four more years of physical, mental and emotional abuse. My children suffered the horrors of watching. I remember my daughter at the age of eight years old, running barefoot in the snow to a neighbor pleading them to call the police. I never realized how much my staying in that life affected her until one day she took her own beating.

Recovery is important to my family because we now have hope. **We have moved out of the cycle of abuse and found life in 12-Step recovery.** Both my children and I have much gratitude for the people in Alanon, living a life free from abuse and victimization.

The most challenging part about having a family member with addiction is ... maintaining hope, faith and unconditional love. After three or four generations of addiction, we have watched every member of our family struggle with their own addiction and recovery. The road has been long, filled with loss, but also with the joy recovery can bring. When I was four, my father and sister died as a result of my father's addiction. My four siblings and I have had periods of both recovery and relapse. With the help of many people, some of us are sober today. Through the years, we have had to let go with love, only to later embrace one another as we tried yet again to do battle with our addiction.

The challenging part of having a family member with addiction is the fact addiction is unrelenting, insidious and fatal. My family, on the other hand, has been unremitting, compassionate and blessed.

My family is committed to recovery because we have known the many blessings of recovery. We know in those darkest of moments, the memory of happier times can compel us to reach out for help or offer it. We know recovery has forever changed us for the better. We know recovery has enhanced the lives of countless others. With the help of our family, my mother has now been sober for 35 years and I for 30. Being committed to recovery is really the only option.

*see the
blessings*

In 2008, I attended a seminar called “The Science of Addiction.” It was open to addiction professionals and lay people like me—the broken hearted mother of an addict.

I was hesitant, but I had reached the point where the pain, guilt, and fear were unbearable. I signed up.

The trainer asked that we stand, introduce ourselves, and state our reason for coming. My heart pounded as my turn came. I stood, took a breath, and said “My name is Mary B. My son is a heroin addict. I’m here, because I’m desperate to understand what has happened to my family.”

After seven years of rationalizing and denying, this was the first time I had told anyone our secret. I felt an immediate physical and emotional lightness. It was my spiritual awakening.

That day I learned about the disease of addiction. I heard recovery is possible. I felt supported and accepted. I found out most loved ones of an addict keep the secret for seven years before seeking help, just like me.

I started going to parent support groups. Sharing the secret took away its power and allowed healing to begin. The challenge for the family of the addict is to seek help for ourselves. We must stop isolating in order to find hope. We must look for understanding or we will be crushed by judgment. Remember, you are not alone— reach out!

The greatest challenge for an addict's family is the devastation children suffer. This reality struck hard when our niece's out-of-control behavior brought her to live with us. Thirteen-year-old "Nicole" had already joined three previous consecutive generations on her family tree of addiction.

For two years, we tried everything: love, consistency and counseling confronted drugs, thefts and property damage. We took her to 12-Step meetings, church, outpatient and residential treatment.

Nicole's destructive behavior drilled holes in our hearts. She assaulted us and bullied "Mark," our youngest child. Yet, whenever Nickie ran away, Mark feared for her safety.

After incarceration and juvenile parole, Nicole ran from her group home. Bikers, meth cooks and others provided drugs and excitement.

Nickie resurfaced at age 18, pregnant, with no parenting skills.

At age three months, "Joy," Nicole's daughter, came home with us to stay. Our family addressed fetal drug effects and ADHD with love and extra attention.

Nicole repeatedly disappeared and reappeared. To heal our hearts, we turned her over to God.

My family is committed to recovery because it transformed us. When we trusted our Higher Power, learned boundaries and worked our own programs, serenity replaced despair—even when chaos surrounded us.

During adult incarceration, Nicole embraced treatment, 12-Step meetings and God. When released, she faced numerous challenges, but remains faithful to her program.

Joy, now age 10, is academically and musically gifted, loving and content. Mark adores his "little sister"—and avoids all intoxicants.

After generations of addiction, our family tree now blossoms with hope.

Addiction has affected my life since the day I was born. As a child, my mother was addicted to drugs and ended up committing suicide. As an adult, I was plagued again with family addiction when my husband of five years became addicted to drugs. His addiction and my own issues with co-dependency tore our family apart. To me, the most challenging part of having a family member who struggles with addiction is the lack of trust and the lost sense of security everyone longs to have in their family home. Addiction causes so much pain it is almost too much to bear at times. **No one in a family is protected from the devastation of addiction.**

My husband and I remarried two years ago after we were divorced for seven years. When we finally realized the importance of recovery and were able to learn to work our recovery programs and to turn to God for our strength we became new people. He became a new man and I became a woman able to live one day at a time without waiting for someone else to let me down. My family is committed to recovery because we now realize there is no one who can take the place of the addict we love as a father, husband, brother, son and friend. Our family is absolutely not complete without him in our lives! Recovery is absolutely vital to our family's happiness and survival!

*one day
at a time*

Sandy
Marberry

Moreno Valley, Ca

The most challenging part about having a family member with addiction is loving them so much while you watch them slowly destroy themselves day by day — knowing there is so much more to them, and to life, than what they see. You see the pain in their eyes and you experience not only the loss of trust that comes from the dishonesty and deceit that is now a part of everyday life with them, but a darkening of their soul and a breaking of their spirit. All that is left is an empty shell of who they once were and who they could be again.

My family is committed to recovery because for over thirty years, addiction has been a disease one or more of us have suffered from. Slowly, one by one, by the grace of God, we have overcome this horrible problem. Those of us who have, keep the light of hope burning brightly for those who still struggle. We reach out, we help and most of all, we love. Life can change and your spirit will heal. We will never give up, and we will pass this message of hope on to all who need it!

*Life can
change*

The most challenging part about having a family member with addiction is the impact it has on the entire family and community. I am a reluctant witness to the devastation my son's addiction continues to have on our lives. Addiction has altered the entire course of my life. In my quest to find answers, I have completed a rotation at a methadone clinic as part of my nursing education. My thesis in graduate school focused on researching barriers families in Pennsylvania face in obtaining treatment for their children. I am a volunteer member of the Parent Panel Advisory Council with the Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Programs in Pennsylvania. One of my goals is to educate legislators, healthcare personnel, schools and the public on recognizing substance abuse in its early stages when an intervention could prevent addiction. I am driven to disseminate what I have learned on my journey.

My family is committed to recovery because I believe love and acceptance is integral to the recovery process. Often these positive emotions are difficult for me to embrace during relapse, but I must remember addiction is an insidious disease that has viable management options. Treatment must be individualized and coordinated with social services, family physicians, counselors, and most importantly the family. An old proverb reads "It takes a village to raise a child." Well, I believe it takes an entire community to treat someone with addiction. Without the family to offer encouragement recovery is elusive at best.

> *Third Place Recipient*

Judy
Hutchinson

Lawrenceville, IL

3rd Place Recipient

The most challenging part of parenting an adult child with addiction is being sure our support for his recovery doesn't compromise the integrity of the family. Addictive lips breathe lies that separate individuals and generations.

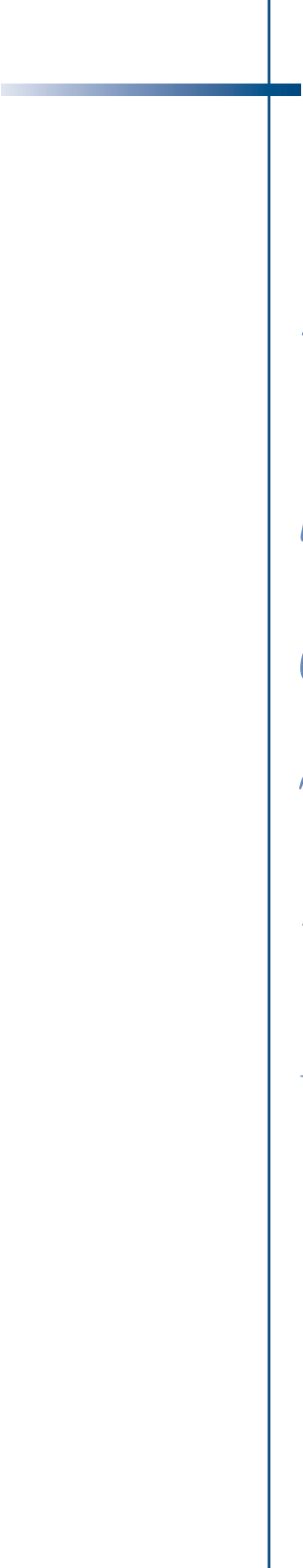
Our parents shuffle between genuine support of their grandson's recovery, and an instinctive protection of their own child's well-being. My husband and I struggle to know how to share our family story with our grandchildren without tarnishing their father's image or relationship potential. Through funny stories of their dad's childhood, I share with my grandchildren a glance of how life used to be. Sometimes they see life's obstacles through his lens. They're learning to empathize and see the emergence of a recovered man with real scars.

We discern how to support our son's recovery without compromising the emotional health of our family as a whole. **Our hope remains constant over the long term, but we respect the rights of others to feel despair and distrust.** Relapse is not failure for him or us. It's part of the journey.

Our family is committed to recovery because we are determined to bring good from the atrocity of addiction. Our family's recovery and wellness grows stronger when we stand beside others who share our feelings and know our experiences. We pray others will find hope in our story and courage to persevere as together we stand in the gap between what we once were and the strong families we are becoming.

The most challenging part about having a family member with addiction is not having him around for holidays or family outings. Awake at nights wondering where he is: is he hungry, is he alive? I never stopped looking for him. When I found him, I'd feed him and tell him I loved him. While on drugs, he had an explosive temper, resented and blamed me most. He stole, lied to get money, wasn't dependable, became verbally, mentally and physically abusive. He had no time for family or his kids. He became selfish and had poor self esteem. His health started deteriorating, his teeth became infected and he had major weight-loss. His addiction affected everyone, and it was devastating to see him this way.

My family is committed to recovery because after seeing him, in various programs, we have seen positive changes in him. He is building relationships. He is a dedicated father committed and determined to raise his kids in a drug, alcohol and smoke-free environment. His sense of humor has returned. He's calm, patient, understanding and willing to take advice and suggestions. He goes regularly to the gym. Since in drug court, counseling and the 12-Step program, he hasn't wavered. He strives to be the best he can be. We have complete faith and trust in him. We are looking forward to the holidays, family outings and spending quality time together. We are all proud of him!!!



*When we are no
longer able to
change a situation,
we are challenged
to change ourselves.*

Viktor E. Frankl (1984)



Essay Review Panel:

Pat Taylor
*Executive Director
Faces & Voices
of Recovery*

Sharon Smith
*President
Momstell, Inc./
National Family Dialogue*



Bonnie Hatchett, Ph.D.
*Associate Professor/
Author
University of Arkansas
at Pine Bluff
Master's Addictions
Studies Program*

Hope
Serenity

The ATTC Network Regional Centers

ATTCTnetwork.org

Caribbean Basin & Hispanic ATTC

Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands
caribbean.hispanic@ATTCTnetwork.org

Central East ATTC

Delaware, the District of Columbia,
Maryland, New Jersey
centraleast@ATTCTnetwork.org

Great Lakes ATTC

Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio
greatlakes@ATTCTnetwork.org

Gulf Coast ATTC

Louisiana, New Mexico, Texas
gulfcoast@ATTCTnetwork.org

Mid-America ATTC

Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri,
Nebraska, Oklahoma
midamerica@ATTCTnetwork.org

Mid-Atlantic ATTC

Kentucky, Tennessee,
Virginia, West Virginia
midatlantic@ATTCTnetwork.org

Mountain West ATTC

Colorado, Idaho, Montana,
Nevada, Utah, Wyoming
mountainwest@ATTCTnetwork.org

ATTC of New England

Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts,
New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont
newengland@ATTCTnetwork.org

Northeast ATTC

New York, Pennsylvania
northeast@ATTCTnetwork.org

Northwest Frontier ATTC

Alaska, Hawaii, Oregon,
Washington the Pacific Islands
northwest@ATTCTnetwork.org

Pacific Southwest ATTC

Arizona, California
pacificsouthwest@ATTCTnetwork.org

Prairielands ATTC

Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota,
South Dakota, Wisconsin
prairielands@ATTCTnetwork.org

Southeast ATTC

Georgia, North Carolina,
South Carolina
southeast@ATTCTnetwork.org

Southern Coast ATTC

Alabama, Florida, Mississippi
southerncoast@ATTCTNetwork.org

ATTC National Office

no@ATTCTnetwork.org

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Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration
samhsa.gov

Center for Substance Abuse Treatment
csat.samhsa.gov