

A mother's voice on opiate addiction

By Dennis Dyer Published: July 25, 2015 4:00AM

This is the fifth article in a series meant to inform the community about the opiate problem in Ashland County.

This article will allow the voice of an opiate addict's mother to be heard. We need to remember that families suffer along with the addict. Many times they are asked to help the addict but their efforts, too many times, lead to more suffering for the parent or spouse. In some cases, recovery does occur in the loved one and their family unit. Although many do find their way and the family's support for the addict is very helpful, if not essential.

The name is not real.

Judith -- A Mother's Words

People think you are trash if you have a junkie in the family.

I tell myself that I won't become caught up in his problems again. I say, "Remember, helping Joe does not help Joe -- you've learned that the hard way." I'll go through times when I stick to it. Then, for whatever reason, I'll be drawn back in, one crisis after another

I may go for long periods without talking to him until he burns every bridge and is back, looking to me for help. When we are out of contact, it's still always there, in the back of my mind, like a sore that doesn't heal. My son is a heroin addict. (Note: Joe had at least two ACEs -- severe adverse childhood experiences.) There is a mourning that takes place for whom he could have been and the life he could have had if the trauma of sexual abuse in his childhood had never happened. I know the narcotics were his way of dulling the pain. Now every new low that he sinks to as an addict, lying and stealing, reinforces his feelings of worthlessness.

I don't like to talk about it. Not so much because I think it reflects badly on me, although I'm sure many people would assume that means I didn't raise him right. I worry that it will make people think less of his brother, who is such a wonderful guy and doesn't deserve that.

I'm always waiting for the phone call that tells me he's dead. I don't think there are old junkies. He's actually putting poison in his body. I see the effects on his skin, his body, his teeth. His brain isn't what it used to be. Could be from the poison or from the seizures he has now. I'm afraid I'll be relieved to hear it's over if the call comes to say he's dead. But no. Then there will be no hope. As long as there's life, there's hope.

I do what I can for my grandchildren. I feel so badly about the childhood they are experiencing. Addiction is selfish, so I'm the only one who puts their needs first. Not the way it should be but the way it is.

I spend a lot of time feeling guilty, wondering how things would be different if I had made different choices when he was a child, trying to go back and see where I could have changed things that might have put him on a different path.

Dennis Dyer is the director of Ashland County Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse. He can be reached at 419-289-7675. This article is part of a public awareness effort done in collaboration between ACCADA and the Mental Health and Recovery Board of Ashland County. ACCADA is a contract agency of the MHRB and a partner agency of United Way of Ashland County.