

HOPE ReNEWS

In Every Journey There is Hope From End to End

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Summer 2008

Foundation Update

“Cycle of Recovery” can be an optimistic phrase, if one focuses on the recovery. But that word, “cycle” tells the real story.

For many of us and our children, actual “recovery” per se is never going to happen. Many of the conditions that lead a child to treatment can’t be fully cured. Addictions will always tempt; mental illness can be a lapsed pill away; and self harm is an easy way to allay the emotional turbulence that is always a part of living.

“How is a parent to navigate the turbulence?”

How is a parent to navigate the turbulence? How should one let them feel their own way as young adults? This is not my personal strength. My kids are in their mid twenties and I burst with ideas about how they should live their lives. I sometimes plot strategies to manipulate them WITHOUT their even suspecting it. Suffice it to say, I am not successful. And I know, in my heart of hearts, I shouldn’t be. This is now their journey – obstacles and all.

We must tend to our own peace of mind as they grope to find their way. We have

to align our expectations to reality.

Hope Renewals is here to lend a hand to families caught in the whirlwind of the cycles their kids go through. We need help doing that. Families of troubled teens have no place to turn. The benefits of helping these kids are huge – to the child, the parents, and let’s face it, to society. Indeed, nothing could be more important than saving these lives, for that is what we do.

I hope you will join us.



Cathy Gilson
President



P.S. We are proud to announce that David Sheff, author of *Beautiful Boy*, will be our guest speaker at this Fall’s Parent Conference.

**Save the date!
San Francisco
October 24, 2008
Details to follow**

Hope Renewals, Inc.

is a non-profit organization established to:

- ▲ Provide partial scholarships for families committed to the therapeutic process who face financial challenges.
- ▲ Serve as a source of support and information for families with children in residential treatment.

For further information:

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Board of Directors

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Parent's Point of View

David Sheff

How does an award-winning writer and editor better our world? If you're David Sheff, you can write truthfully about your life as the father of an addict, and in so doing help families in a similar situation know they are not alone. In *Beautiful Boy*, published by Houghton Mifflin, that's exactly what the Bay Area journalist and author did. Sheff was inspired to write this book, about the methamphetamine addiction struggles of his son Nic and the effect on the family, after an overwhelming response to his *New York Times Magazine* article "My Addicted Son".



Nic and David Sheff

Q: Do you think all of this attention is good for your and other families dealing with addiction?

A: Initially I was unsure about exposing our family to this kind of scrutiny, but the result of the attention to the books has been remarkable. It has been like an on-going rehab for Nic and me – continuing the healing dialogue about addiction and the related issues among ourselves and so many, many others who have been affected by addiction. It has been humbling, of course – often overwhelming – but also useful as ongoing therapy, for us and hopefully others as well. When early on my editor asked (psychologist and author) Mary Pipher to consider reading *Beautiful Boy*, she provided a quote that the publisher put on the jacket: "When one of us tells the truth, he makes it easier for all of us to open our hearts to our own pain and to that of others." Opening up in this way has prompted a flood of dialogue with many people – some of whom say that they've never talked to anyone before about whatever it is they're going through – that feels so useful. In the 12 steps, they say, "You're as sick as your secrets." On the other hand, openness is the first step toward healing.

Q: Were you in denial while Nic was using?

A: At the time, I'm looking at Nic in rehab, seeing him with the others there, and thinking, he's not like those kids, he's not a drug addict. I told myself that Nic made a mistake, he pushed things too far. Even a counselor told me, "Nic's rebellion is extreme because you didn't give him a lot to rebel against." But the whole time I'm thinking that it's good he's in rehab, he's safe for the moment and then we'll get back to our lives. Nic will get back to college and all the expectations and assumptions I had for my son, everything would be OK. I was very naïve.

Q: Nic was on a roller coaster. How did you and your family survive his relapses?

A: Relapse is a part of the treatment but every relapse is potentially fatal. Relapse is never going to be a good thing but sometimes it takes a while to get it. It's important to understand that because otherwise, as a parent, you feel so defeated instead of realizing that there's still hope. There is still hope.

Q: Was Nic OK with you writing this book?

A: I never would have written the *New York Times* story that led to the book or the book itself if Nic wasn't OK with it. On the contrary, he encouraged me to write it. He understood that there was value in telling our family's story. He thought it might help people who were going through some version of what we went through. In addition, a book editor approached him to see if he was interested in writing a memoir, which resulted in *Tweak*, his extraordinary book about the same period of time covered from my perspective in *Beautiful Boy*.

Q: In a perfect world, what is the title of your next book?

A: I don't have a title yet, but I do have a subject. I learned about the horrors of addiction and told a personal story about it in *Beautiful Boy*. Now I'm going to wrestle with the broader issues around addiction in America – public policy, the real cost to society (everything from health care costs to crime and prisons), the disaster that passes for a mental health care system in America, the disaster that's the war on drugs, and what needs to be done.

"I was not naïve about drugs," Sheff told an Oprah audience this Spring. "I used drugs when I was a kid...but I still thought, like most of us, 'This could never happen to our family.'" When it did, we were blindsided and devastated. I realized that this is something we have to talk about."

Conversation With A Therapist

Linda Steele, LCSW

The psychological foundation of addictive behavior is shame. The definition of shame is feeling badly about who I am. The feeling tone of shame causes people to hide, not to want to be seen, to lose hope. This feeling tone supports external behaviors such as lying or avoiding certain situations and people. We use mind-altering chemicals to suppress these feelings and thoughts.

Shame supports internal actions or thoughts such as “I am not___”, “I am hopeless”, “I am bad or immoral”, or “I don’t deserve”.

“Why is it that some use and also abuse for a period of time and then return to use but never move into addiction?”

When human beings feel shame they are suffering. Our egos or identities are designed to alleviate suffering through the application of coping strategies and defense mechanisms. These strategies and mechanisms are cognitive processes that support us to think differently, which then supports us to feel differently.

A few of these cognitive processes are minimization (“It’s not that bad”), intellectualization (“I can figure this out”, “I can control this or change this”), and rationalizations (“I only do this or feel this way because of ___”). The use of these cognitive processes reduces our suffering if applied appropriately and supports mental health.

The “use” of mind altering substances is initially an attempt to cope or defend. The “abuse” of mind altering substances is the overuse or misuse of a coping strategy and defense mechanism and this leads to disturbed mental health.

Why is it that 10-15% of our population move from use to abuse or addiction? Why is it that some use and also abuse for a period of time and then return to use but never move into addiction? These are both good questions that are being asked

by the professionals and researchers in the field today.

Vernon Johnson, in his book, *I’ll Quit Tomorrow*, talks about the cycle of shame. This cycle paired with more recent research on the brain that talks about changes in the brain’s pleasure and pain centers, along with the preferential cortex and its ability to inhibit impulse thoughts, is what I believe the definition of addiction to be.

HERE IS THE CYCLE:

PHASE 1

– I use mind altering chemicals to cope to either enhance my pleasure or decrease my suffering, (i.e., “to really have fun” or to “get my peers off my back and fit in”).

PHASE 2

– This phase occurs due to one or both of two reasons. First, I was born with or inherited a genetic predisposition for addiction (an imbalance in my chemistry that runs in my family). Or second, I use too much mind altering chemical for too long a period of time and the mind altering chemicals alter my chemistry. Either/or, I lose my ability to say no to myself, to put on the brakes, to inhibit my impulses. As a result, I begin to inconsistently lose control over the amount I intend to use and/or my behavior when I use. I begin to go against my values and my morals.

Initially when the loss of control begins, I and those around me usually blame the loss of control on something other than using. This is because sometimes I use and I don’t lose control and then other times I use I do. This inconsistency in the early stage of this phase is because my body’s constitution can still offset the effects of the mind altering chemicals on some occasions and not on others. When my constitution is weaker I lose control more readily or the drugs have a greater and more devastating effect on my brain’s ability to inhibit its impulses.

PHASE 3

– After periods of loss of control and going against my values and morals I make

The first step in breaking this cycle of shame is I must stop using. Then I must find alternative strategies for coping that do not alter my brain’s ability to inhibit impulses.

a promise to myself to “never do that again”. The problem with this promise is it is not a promise to stop using; it’s a promise to not lose control. This is a promise that is based in ignorance of what the mind altering chemicals are doing to my brain and its ability to inhibit impulses (Phase 2).

PHASE 4

– Occurs after I have made the promise to myself to not lose control and I do. Feelings of guilt begin to transform into feeling shame.

STEELE continued on page 6



Lynda Steele, LCSW

Lynda has been working in the field of addictive disease since 1981. She has designed and implemented clinical programs for several of the leading addictive disease residential treatment programs in the nation. Lynda has her own private practice specializing in treating individuals, couples and families suffering from the disease of addiction.

Life In The Real World

Nic Sheff

Nic Sheff was drunk for the first time at age eleven. In the years that followed, he would regularly smoke pot, do cocaine and Ecstasy, and develop addictions to crystal meth and heroin. Even so, he felt he would always be able to quit and put his life together whenever he needed to. It took a violent relapse one summer to convince him otherwise. In a voice that is raw and honest, Nic spares no detail in telling us the compelling story of his relapse and the road to recovery.

Nic Sheff is a recovering drug addict and alcoholic. Still in his early twenties, he continues to fight daily battles with this addiction. He is a published author. *Tweak* is his first book.

Excerpt from an entry in his journal:

“How the hell did I get here? It doesn’t seem that long ago that I was on the goddamn water-polo team. I was an editor of the school newspaper, acting in the spring play, obsessing about which girls I liked. The kids in my class are in college. This isn’t so much sad as baffling. At the time it all seemed so positive and harmless.”

After experimenting with various drugs and alcohol, Nic tried crystal meth. He writes:

“I felt like a rock star. I felt so powerful and confident, like I could do anything. This was the feeling I wanted my whole life. I ended up chasing that high for the next six years.”

His memoir is a painfully explicit account of brushes with the law, about nearly losing his arm to an infection from shooting up, about his estrangement from his family.

“I went crazy. I turned into an animal. I stole from my dad, my step mom, my little brother and sister, I was aggressive and mean. My whole character changed. When you come down from meth, it’s the most excruciating feeling, like someone came with a vacuum cleaner and sucked out every happy thought you ever had. So I never wanted to come down.

“It was this horrible vicious cycle. The more I used, the more I did things I was ashamed of, and the more I had to use so I never had to face that.”

The truth was, I didn’t want to stop. It’s not like I enjoyed stealing or hurting my dad, or whatever. I mean, I hated it. But I was so scared of coming off the drugs. It was like this horrible vicious cycle. The more I used, the more I did things I was ashamed of, and the more I had to use so I never had to face that. When I reached a certain point with my drug use, going back just seemed like too far a journey.

Looking back, I don’t know why I didn’t look inside and find out what was wrong with me, why I was in pain. But I was too afraid to do any work on myself.”

After recounting the devastation to his family, Nic recalls:

It’s hard to regret things because I’m happy about where my life is now. I wouldn’t necessarily change things because it took that to be where I am. I’m really grateful for all the gifts in my life today. I wish more than anything else that I hadn’t made my family feel so unsafe.

Introducing Your Board of Directors

Cathy Gilson. Ms. Gilson's background includes two years as a development director of an independent school in Southern California and over a dozen years as a management consultant to programs for troubled youth sponsored by the US Department of Justice. She has been the President of Hope Renews since its inception in 2004.

Tracey Sperry. Ms. Sperry has over twenty-five years of non-profit management experience. She is currently the Director of Development and Research, National Office of the Scleroderma Foundation. Ms. Sperry has served as Vice President of Hope Renews since its inception in 2004.

Patricia Oxman. Ms. Oxman, a residential broker in northern California, has extensive marketing and public relations experience which she has brought to Hope Renews, serving as editor of its newsletter, secretary and board member since 2005.

Hope Renews has also been fortunate to have the assistance of two specialists in the area of adolescent treatment on our Advisory Board.

Anne Lewis. Ms. Lewis is an Educational Consultant in private practice. She is an associate member of the National Association of Therapeutic Schools and Programs and a member of the Independent Educational Consultants Association. She has first-hand knowledge of wilderness camps, residential treatment centers, and therapeutic boarding schools and has made over 500 on-site program assessments.

Anthony Iler. Mr. Iler is an attorney in private practice in Los Angeles. He has spent his entire 21-year legal career at Irell & Manella LLP, specializing in mergers and acquisitions. He has also provided legal services to several non-profit, pro bono clients over the years. He currently serves as treasurer of Hope Renews.

VADM Rodney P. Rempt, US Navy (Ret). Vice Admiral Rempt served in the United States Navy from 1966 to 2007. His last assignment was as Superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. Prior to that he served as the President of the Naval War College, Assistant Chief of Naval Operations for Missile Defense and prior to that was the first Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Theater Combat Systems. He currently serves as Vice President of Hope Renews.

Matthew B. Checketts. Mr. Checketts is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and the Executive Director, Owner and Primary Therapist at the Vista Counseling Services. His clinical social work experience includes work with Murray School District, the Utah Division of Child and Family Services, the Utah Department of Workforce Services, Valley Mental Health and Vista Adolescent Treatment Center. Mr. Checketts is experienced in treating a variety of emotional difficulties including personality disorders, anorexia and bulimia, depression, sexual abuse, substance abuse, adoption, family discord, and conduct problems.

The Difference You Make

How You Can Help: The success of Hope Renews, Inc. relies on the support of the families we serve. Please be generous so together we can support as many families in crisis as possible!

***Yes, we will help!* Enclosed is our 2008 contribution to Hope Renews, Inc.**

HOPE RENEWS, INC.
11611 San Vicente Blvd., #710
Los Angeles, CA 90049
(310) 775-8474
Hoperenews@adelphia.net

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STEELE

Continued from page 3

Guilt is feeling badly about my actions. Guilt supports me to show up and act in ways that serve me. Shame is feeling badly about who I am. Shame supports me to hide, to feel less than. Now we have come full circle, my using and the consequences of that using causes me to use more to reduce the suffering felt as a result of the consequences and shame. The more I use the more loss of control and shame I experience, so the more I use in an attempt to reduce my suffering.

The first step in breaking this cycle of shame is I must stop using. Then I must find alternative strategies for coping that do not alter my brain's ability to inhibit impulses. I must also find people in the world that do not shame me, people that understand what I have been through, people that can speak my knowing and guide me in directions that serve me.

Thanks For Your Help

"It is not possible to express our gratitude for the assistance that Hope Renews has provided. It would not have been possible for our son to stay in treatment as long as he did without your help. It was a long, hard pull but I think that the folks at Vista were able to give him the tools that he needs to live a good and productive life."

— Parent

"Thank you so much for the financial support that made it possible for me to finish my treatment at Vista. Over time I got to where I needed to be to explore life in a healthy manner. I gained a sweet relationship with my family that I wouldn't trade for anything. Thanks for the support and help. Life is as good as ever."

— Graduate

"It is amazing to see the family work together after so many years of conflict and aggression. The entire system has stabilized and their ability to enjoy themselves while maintaining appropriate boundaries is impressive. Please let the people of Hope Renews know my gratitude and respect for what they are providing my families."

— Therapist

Tools For Parents

CONSULT OUR WEBSITE

The website for Hope Renews provides parents with a valuable link to important information. Past newsletters, reading recommendation, grant applications and more can be found on-line.

Visit us at www.hoperenews.org and stay in touch!

SUGGESTED READING

New in this issue:

Beautiful Boy: A father's journey through his son's addiction

David Sheff. Houghton Mifflin, 2008

Tweak: Growing up on Methamphetamines

Nic Sheff. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2007

Codependent No More: How to Stop Controlling Others and Start Caring For Yourself

Melody Beattie. Hazelden Foundation, 1987, 1992.

Choices & Consequences: What to Do When A Teenager Uses Alcohol/Drugs

Dick Schaeffer. Hazelden Foundation, 1987.

What It Takes To Pull Me Through: Why Teenagers Get in Trouble and How Four of Them Got Out

David L. Marcus. Houghton Mifflin, 2005

Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys

Dan Kindlon, Ph.D. and Michael Thompson, Ph.D.

Ballantine Publishing Group, 2000

Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls

Mary Pipher, Ph.D. Random House, 1994

Angry All The Time; An Emergency Guide to Anger Control

Ron Potter-Efron, MSW. New Harbinger, 1994.

Helping Your Chemically Dependent Teenager Recover; A Guide for Parents and Other Concerned Adults

Peter R. Cohen, MD. Hazelden Foundation, 1991.

Parents, Teens and Boundaries

Jane Bluestein, Ph.D. Health Communications, Inc., 1993.

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