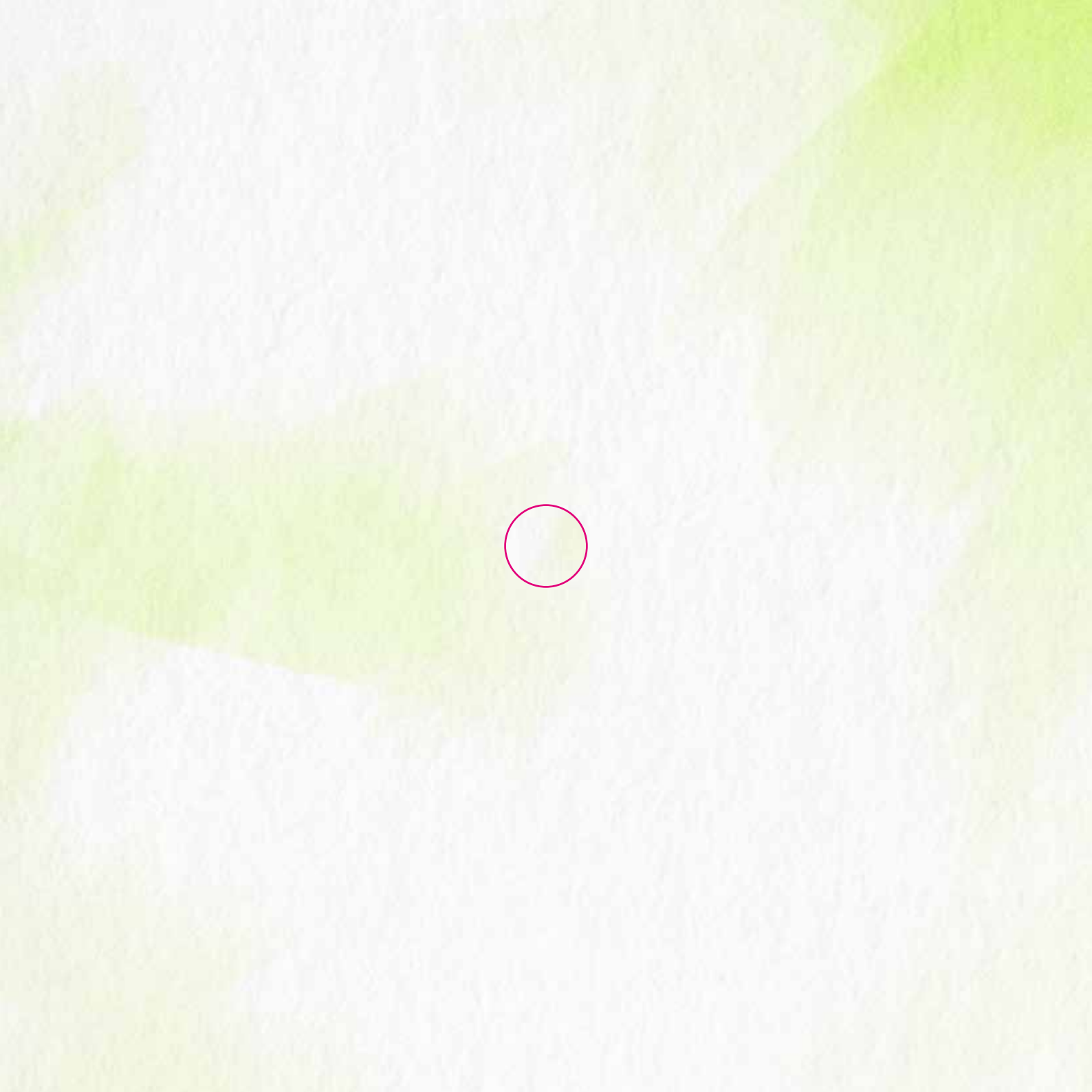




# bewildered

Alcohol, drugs & your children

**Te Whatu Ora**  
Health New Zealand



# He Mihi

**E ngā rau rangatira, tēnā koutou katoa.**

**Tuatahi, he mihi ki te runga rawa, nāna nei ngā mea katoa.**

**Tuarua ngā mihi ki te iwi whānui.**

**Nō reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.**

**To all the people, greetings to you all.**

**Firstly let us greet that which is above all else,  
for all things from that source.**

**Secondly, let us greet the people.**

**Greetings, greetings, greetings to us all.**

# Foreword

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bewildered has been produced in recognition of a significant gap in resources available for parents and caregivers dealing with their children's alcohol and drug problems.

The DVD documents the personal struggles of five Kiwi parents and two young people as they talk about their experiences and about their process of change. Although these parents and young peoples' situations are unique to them, our hope is that their stories will help those that use this resource to work through their own situation and to access the help they need.

## Acknowledgements

**The invaluable contributions of Jackie, Quentin, Carmel, Tania, Cathie, Robyn and Paora who courageously shared their struggles in the hope that other families will benefit.**

“



Paora

You know, my young boy, I remember he said that to me one time – you never say sorry. And I got a fright. It's like... well I'm a parent, you know? I don't say sorry. I don't need to. But actually I realised it's a bit different now, you know? Actually he had a point there. When I've done something wrong that's offended him – just because I'm a dad means that I'll get away with it. And you see he carries resentment with him now that... a way to fix that up is that I'm going to have a drink.

”



# Let us introduce ourselves

**This DVD and workbook was produced by parents whose teenagers are experiencing problems with alcohol and drugs, and as such appreciate that bringing up teenagers is a process for which there often seems to be no end and little support.**

We have learnt that there is no one solution to any given problem and that what we think of as a remedy today can turn out to be a problem tomorrow.

There are no 'quick fixes' or 'shoulds' in the parenting process... each family has its own way of being a family and needs to find what works for them.

In the 'bewildered' resource we offer you a privileged insight into other peoples' lives. Hopefully you will be able to pick through these experiences and find something to help you develop your own strategies for change.

We chose the people in the DVD because of what they had to say about their experience. We don't pretend to have included every dilemma ever faced by a parent nor have we offered up ideas to solve every parental problem.

We produced this resource for parents because there is so little available to support parents through these kinds of difficult times.

Although it might be tempting to show it to your kids immediately, hold off for a moment or two. Keep something for yourself and reconsider when you have had a chance to work your way through the pack.

**Take it easy  
Kia kaha**

# Tena koe welcome

## **Welcome to the book of our video documentary 'bewildered'.**

This pack aims to offer insights and techniques to help parents and their children through difficult times.

By now you will have hopefully had a chance to watch the DVD. There is a lot on it. There are the real life experiences of parents, opinions, ideas and helpful tips.

To gain the most from the DVD it is probably best to look through it a couple of times. Once you have had a thorough look at it then it will be good to have a look at this book.

If any issues come up for you as you engage with the book or DVD please feel free to call the Alcohol Drug Helpline on 0800 787 797 – they are there to help you 10am to 10pm 7 days a week.

This is a book for change.

Change is quite an easy word to say and a simple idea to grasp. But actually making changes in our lives can be a painful and all encompassing process.

This process is made trickier by the impact our children have on our lives.

This book of change supports and follows the format of the DVD. It helps you start a process.

It is not intended to be a solution to all the dilemmas you are facing nor does it pretend to have all the answers.

We suggest that you work through this book a piece at a time. There is a flow to both the DVD and the book and we think you will get the most out of the book if you potter through from the beginning to the end.

We wish you well in your journey.



**When you have any issues, questions or queries about your situation call the Alcohol Drug Helpline on 0800 787 797.**

# Let it all out



*Tania*

"Sometimes I will sit down at night and think, gosh, what if one of my kids wasn't... What if they're not here? And, you know, the tears well up in my eyes. I could never imagine losing my son to drugs."



*Carmel*

"Things got worse and worse. Like every weekend there was an incident. I was chasing her. I didn't know where she was. There were parties she shouldn't have been at. And every week at school I was waiting for a phone call on Monday as to what had happened for the previous week at school, what classes she'd missed."





"Oh yes. I had high expectations of my children. I have none now. None. Just that they do their own life's journey; make their own mistakes, pick themselves up and I just pray to God they don't die along the way – that's my prayer."



"So like... one day you get this totally rational person who's just lovely – a credit to society, works hard...and, on the other side, you can wake up the next day... and it's a black mood... the world's a problem. It's never anything to do with him."

# So the first thing to think about is you

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- What is going on for you right now?
  - Write down your experience. Use what these people have said as thought starters, but remember that your story will be unique.
  - Get it all down! Having a clear impression of what is really happening in your family is a very good place to start the healing process.
- 





## Let's talk about it

*We have found that it helps to write things down – as much or as little as you like. Writing will help you to get things off your chest and will help give you a new perspective on what's happening. You are able to let go, even if just for a short time. You may want to get a note-book and go for it. Take it easy, you are embarking on a difficult and challenging journey; take it easy, but keep at it. If you find writing difficult don't let this hold you back.*

*Talk about what you're going through with a trusted friend, or draw it. It is important that you get it out of your head somehow. Thinking round and round in circles about this stuff just seems to make it worse.*

# Being a teenager

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*Carmel*

"But when she tells me they drink to get drunk and I've asked her 'why do you do that?' and she said it helps them forget. And I said, forget what? And she said: forget about their work at school that they have to complete. She forgets about who they are as people. That they lose their inhibitions, they all laugh and feel happy together. If the girl with the blonde hair doesn't like them, well they don't care; they can say what they like back to her. So I do feel that there is peer pressure there that we're not exposed to as parents. We're not seeing that because we're not at the parties with them."





“It was good to try, to see what our limits were and what we could push them to, so... we were all stoned many times.”

“I know that none of my friends and whoever I used to hang out with never used to pressure me into it. Like there was no peer pressure involved at all. And it was more just you wanted to do it – like you actually wanted to be cool kind of thing and that was dumb but now you want to do it ‘cause you enjoy it.”

“And it kind of annoys me that parents always take that view on things. Like your mates have been pushing you into it and you’re actually like: no, I wanted to do it. And can you just take a step back and see that? It wasn’t my mates.”



“But I know by the end of the year I was regularly drinking on weekends and doing drugs and things like that. And... yeah... it was just the norm and like no one worried about it or anything like that. Just we did it every weekend and that’s what we did.”

“You don’t really hear of girls breaking letterboxes and running over people’s roofs and things like that – that’s sort of left up to us.”



When you have any issues, questions or queries about your situation call the Alcohol Drug Helpline on **0800 787 797**.



# Confusing times

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OK. So here we have a little insight into the lives of Carmel, Jackie and Quentin. A family. We wouldn't like to say a 'normal' or 'typical' family. It's just one family.

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- › What did you see in this series of quotes – what is going on between the children and the mother?
  - › What are the differences between how the kids think and how mum sees their behaviour?
  - › Do you consider Jackie and Quentin's attitudes to be just that of 'normal' teenagers or do you think they are out of control? Why?
  - › Do these attitudes reflect your own experiences in any way? In what ways?
  - › If not, how is your situation different?
-



## Confusing times

*We understand how confusing this phase of your child's development can be... we understand the pain and the despair and for those reasons, among others, we developed this resource. As you go into panic mode think two things – you are not alone and it will pass.*

# Growing up

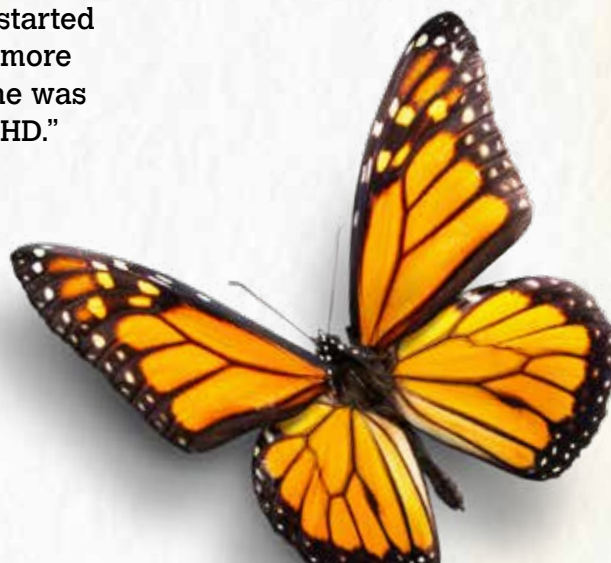
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*Cathie*

“Bongs, the knives, the bottles and the condoms and prescriptions for morning-after pills. And shit! And they’re all addressed to Jessica and they come from her bedroom. It’s no one else’s. They’re hers. I was numb for days. My heart was broken.”

*Tania*

“When he was at intermediate, he started getting into a lot more trouble. In 1998 he was diagnosed as ADHD.”





"The first thing we noticed was he got a very bad attitude towards everything and everything we did was wrong and suddenly everything we did was... was not to his liking. He became very awkward."

"He started to smoke pot first – smoke cigarettes first I suppose – and then pot and then other things, and he became very aggressive and abusive and in fact dangerous I think – dangerous to himself and certainly dangerous to us."



"He was always a kid that was sociable, physical, like hit the ground early in the morning at 6 o'clock and go non-stop till he dropped."

"From then on, he never settled; he always needed be in a rigid pattern and know what was happening. Laughter and spontaneity had gone out of him."



*You know your children are growing up when they stop asking you where they came from and refuse to tell you where they're going.*

– P.J. O'ROURKE

- › How would you describe your children when they were little?
- › When did things start to change?
- › What were those changes?
- › How did you respond to those changes?
- › Don't only think about the drink and drug related changes, but also other changes that were going on at the same time. What else was happening?
- › How have your children responded to puberty, secondary school and their adolescence?
- › How did you respond to their changes and struggles?
- › Did anything happen that you feel had a big impact on your son or daughter?



“

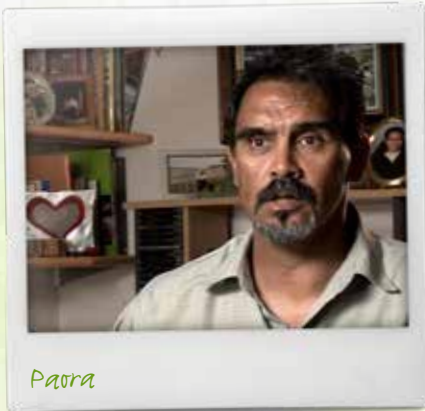
## Let's talk about it

*It is helpful to talk as well as write. So we suggest you talk to somebody you trust. Possibly another parent of teenagers. A close friend, maybe not too close, or somebody that you know can listen without judgement.*

*However the last thing you want to do is expose yourself and your family to unneeded ridicule, so be careful who you chose. Anybody spring to mind? Someone supportive, not too close, non judgemental, not a gossip... is there anybody like that?*

# Mirror images

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“My son had a lot of difficulty at school, from the first years, in his primary school right through. Difficult. I was always constantly over at the school and finally he got chucked out of the school. When he did start drinking he drunk very heavily.”

“And drunk to get drunk. And drunk to just get rotten, wasted.”

“And it was a very difficult time for me really because in one way there was a lot of myself I saw in him. It was like there was a ‘little me’ constantly attacking me, you see.”



“

Drinking until you pretty much can't walk and sometimes don't walk and yeah you gotta run to keep up.

I paint-bombed the principal's car. [laughs] Yeah. That wasn't too flash-hot when everyone found out about that.

”



When you have any issues, questions or queries about your situation call the Alcohol Drug Helpline on **0800 787 797**.

# Boys to men

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**Some questions for you to think, write and talk about:**

- › Does your son or daughter remind you of yourself in some way?
- › If so, how do you feel about your 'little me'?
- › How are your children coping with school and with life in general?
- › What does your gut tell you?

*Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself.*

– LEO TOLSTOY





## Let's talk about it

***There seem to be a couple of key points raised in this section:***

- 1. the difficulty some teenagers have in school.***
- 2. the realisation that seems to come about this time that this child is growing into a 'little me' and there is nothing that can be done to halt this change.***

*We know that a lot of books and videos on parenting all offer ideas and tips for dealing with the problem. Well, we may offer a few of those later, but only as they relate to what is said by our parents. What this resource aims to do is help you look at your situation and your experience and then to help you find unique solutions to your issues or problems. Oh yes and it is worth noting here that this is a book for change. Your change. It does not tackle the tricky question of change in your child!*



# Choices

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“What can you do? You can tell him that if he’s going to come into your house that he’s not to use drugs. You can tell him and tell him and tell him.”

“But, after like a week of just punishing myself, I thought: no, it’s her responsibility. She has to learn to make better choices. And the consequences for her actions will take a toll on her.”

“

The final straw was when Jacqueline was offered marijuana during the day – at school. Now she was under the peer pressure situation with the other two girls – the girl who bought it and one of the other girls – and she felt compelled to have a puff.

”

“

Yeah, it wasn't  
anything different.  
It was kind of  
pretty normal to  
get stoned before  
school, at lunch.

”

---

Three important ideas have come out of this section. It may be helpful for you to explore how the ideas relate to your situation.

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**1. Drugs are more important than anything else**

- Does this seem true in your situation?
- 

**2. The child's actions are their actions and ultimately their responsibility**

- What do you think when you read this?
  - Your child may be acting in ways that are unsafe to themselves and others. These situations are very difficult and we suggest that you ring the alcohol drug helpline for advice of where you can get help in your area if this is the case.
-

**3. How a parent sees things can be entirely different to how the young person sees it. Does this idea ring any bells for you? Try and think of a situation where you saw things one way and your child saw them another.**

- What happened?
- What did you do?
- What was helpful about what you did?
- What was unhelpful?
- What things do you think you could do differently?
- Have you had to deal with drinking and using in your house and the consequences of that?
- How have you reacted to this?
- How do you feel about your reactions today?







## What about their point of view?

*Now we begin to get to the nitty gritty of things.  
If you like to read, two books by Stephanie Weavers  
to get are:*

***'Teenage Girls Talk' and 'Teenage Boys Talk.'***

*Both are very illuminating insights into the views  
of New Zealand teens.*



# High Impact

30

*Paora*

“

Now, for my daughter, I didn't know at all she was drinking at all, until – or drinking heavily – until the night she fell on the floor here. And then I found out what she's been doing around at parties.

”



“Probably four or five weeks later after the first episode – seemed like forever – Laurence and I and Luke were at home having dinner and Luke took to my husband with a fire-poker. We were feeling really terrified. Laurence couldn’t get the strength of Luke; he was just so strong. He was just like a wild-man. He was swearing – almost incoherently. He had Laurence pushed against the wall with the poker across his throat, saying he was gonna kill him. And so at that stage I rang the police saying: what do I do?”



“He was so nasty and so aggressive and I was quite frightened for my life. I was frightened he was going to kill me because he just got so uptight and so angry... I didn’t really know what to do. I told the police that I was frightened and I had one policeman that was watching over me and I kept his number by the phone and I got Tim to put a lock on the door of the bedroom door.”



“Well I did try to kill myself in 3rd Form and I didn’t even really have a reason to do it; I just did it. And I ended up going to counselling and after I got over that whole episode... that’s when I started doing the drugs and drinking and stuff.”

- › Now it would be good to write out your story again, and talk to a friend.
- › Talk to the other parents if you can.
- › Try not to downplay what you're going through.
- › Have a good honest look at what is going on for you.

*It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the most responsive to change.*

– CHARLES DARWIN





## When it hits the fan

*There is some pretty serious stuff here. Maybe a lot worse than you have experienced or maybe not as bad as what you're going through. If your experiences are less dramatic this in no way minimises their importance. It's all about the impact that the alcohol or drug related behaviour is having on the family/whānau and how you are coping with that. Our interviews drew out some stories that are more extreme than those above. If you are one of those parents our hearts go out to you and we hope what follows will be as beneficial to you.*



# Siblings

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“

From his sister's perspective (I think I'm speaking correctly how she feels) is that she's almost lost her brother, as you would in a death – that the brother she loved is no longer around. She's totally honest, hard working, everything that, to some degree, he's not. And she can't understand a world that's so foreign to her and why can't he just give it up.

”

*Quentin*

“Jack does what she does... follow my lead you might put it? Like I know that in the weekends and stuff she used to hang around the worse crowds and that was sort of the same time that I was – except for she didn’t have the two years’ experience.”

*Tania*

“He had a lot of influence over my youngest daughter. She didn’t... She knew it but she was always there for him.”

- › What is going on for the siblings in your situation?
- › How are they reacting to each other's behaviour?
- › How are they jointly reacting to you?
- › Do you feel that you could do something to improve the situation?
- › What could you do?

*Like all the best families, we have our share of eccentricities, of impetuous and wayward youngsters and of family disagreements.*

– ELIZABETH II



## Relationships

*While we have focused mostly on parents in this book, let's now for a moment think about the sisters and brothers. Let's think about how they feel. Do you know how they feel? Is this something you talk about in the family?*

*Do they deal with the problem with the innate loyalty that goes with sibling relationships? Are they angry or sad or withdrawn? (mmm, but is that a mothers view?) What do you think the sister really feels? Anger, frustration, despair?*

*This section highlights the fact that alcohol and drug problems impact on the whole family and wider whānau. These problems spread like an oil slick, sliding a film of confusion and distrust over many relationships and often over relationships that were once strong and healthy.*



# Where did we go wrong?

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“

You dread it when you go out and people say ‘Oh, what are your kids doing?’. I like going out with the people that know and no one else. You always feel they think ‘Oh what did you do wrong as parents?’ or, oh, you know, like I used to think of other people, I suppose. I think if nothing else, I’ve become more broadminded about it.

”



When you have any issues, questions or queries about your situation call the Alcohol Drug Helpline on **0800 787 797**.





**"I yelled, I screamed and I didn't deal with it in a very good way. And she took no notice of me because I yelled at her and I screamed and I said: You, you, you. Then I'd ban her and try and make her stay in her room. So we got nowhere."**



**"It's the first thing that you do, when your child goes off the rails is that you blame yourself, your parenting, your attitude, what you'd done wrong."**

**"So, in fact, you keep all your talking within the Tough Love group and you pretend to others that everything's just honky dory, everything's fine in my family – oh yes, everything's going really well. But you just share your heartbreak with your friends at Tough Love."**

# Reaching out for help

40

**Turning in on yourself seems to be a common intuitive approach to dealing with the problem.**

- › Have you tried to get help outside your family before?
- › What was your experience?
- › Do you need to get help now, or to try again if you've tried already?
- › What is something you can do today to get help?
- › How have you felt about your child's behaviour?
- › It might help to write a list of feelings that come to mind when you think about her or his behaviour.
- › Who in your circle of family, friends or community has been helpful?
- › Who has been unhelpful?
- › What is something you can do for yourself so you can feel better as a parent?



## Careful now

*Another pretty gnarly section. Nobody wants to see themselves as having made mistakes. It seems from what the parents on the DVD say that it is not about wallowing in your faults, it is about acknowledging them and being open-minded enough to start to do things differently.*

*One of the first things you can do differently, if you're not already doing it, is to reach out to others. Overcome your feelings of shame, guilt, remorse and embarrassment, whakamā, and talk to others about what is going on for you. We hope by now that you have found someone you trust and that you are talking to them. Now may also be a good time to call the alcohol drug helpline on 0800 787 797 to get a list of people you can talk to in your area. Parenting groups, Tough love groups, Al-Anon, Child Adolescent and Family Service (CAFS), other youth services, counsellors etc.*



## Careful now

*Please seek a support group or an individual that will help you. Oh yes, and please remember as you take this fearsome step that not all support groups or people may suit your family situation. Check it out before you throw yourself into something that is less than helpful to you or your child. One common response from those who don't understand, especially around drugs is "why don't you just call the police?" While this may be appropriate in some situations, in many cases one would have to ask 'how exactly is that going to help?'*





*He tangi to te tamariki,  
he whakamā to te pakeke.  
The children cry, the adult is  
ashamed.*



# Paraphernalia

44

“



I just found a whole heap of paraphernalia in Daniel's room – stuff they'd made themselves. There was like bongos and things. And I gathered it all up and I thought: he's not going to have that in his room.

”



Desley

“

That was when I was first coming to terms that the fact that my son needed drugs, and ... after that, it was just rules – for nothing to come into the house, anything I found was to go into the bin, but I was always finding plastic bags and spotting knives and little buds and things.

”

**This section is not so much about the paraphernalia, (and don't forget that there is paraphernalia for alcohol too!!) as it is about the intrusion into your house, walking over your boundaries and coming to terms with the fact that in your case this is more than youthful experimentation.**

- › So, have you come across any paraphernalia, or hidden bottles?
- › Have you asked about the things you've come across?
- › Did you feel like the wool was being pulled over your eyes?
- › Often it is about this point in the journey that parents seek outside help.
- › Most often for their child. Sometimes for themselves.



When you have any issues, questions or queries about your situation call the Alcohol Drug Helpline on **0800 787 797**.



“

I didn't know things like lightbulbs. We've got an awful lot of blown light bulbs and we'd say to Luke: oh, where's the light bulb? He'd say: Oh it blew today and I can't find another one.

”

# Counselling

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- › Have you sought help?
- › Who from?
- › What prompted you to do so?
- › How did you feel about the whole experience?
- › What was the reaction from your child to you seeking help?
- › What can you do today to access help?

*One who asks a question is a fool for five minutes; one who does not ask a question remains a fool forever.*

– CHINESE PROVERB





Tania

“And I said to him well if he does come into this house then he has to go to counselling. I’ll go to counselling with him but something needs to be sorted out pronto.”



Jackie

“The counsellor was good. We talked over heaps of stuff. Like family issues, from my parents breaking up – that I thought I had dealt with, when I really hadn’t. And so that was good.”



Tania

“I didn’t really find the counselling very professional though. It was kind of... “Oh... so, you know, tell me about... how are you feeling?”... I was frustrated.”

# Whānaungatanga (relationships)

50

“

Whānaungatanga has this wonderful word right in the middle of it, is this word ‘au’. Now, in Māori, ‘au’ means ‘me’ – OK? Right in the middle of it – if we take that ‘au’ and everything else falls to bits; there’s nothing else. ‘Au’ must be well. Once we get ‘au’ well, you see, well we can join the rest to it.

Because once we get ‘au’ well, well ‘au’ becomes family, whānau, and then the children (whanaunga) and then the greater picture is the community (tānga) and a national view. So that’s whānaungatanga. But it all starts with getting myself... I get myself well. My family gets well. Their friends, their children, and so it’s a sort of incremental journey of wellness if you like.



”

- 
- › What do you think Paora is on about here?
  - › Have you thought about how your state may be impacting on the rest of your family/whānau?
  - › How will you take on board Paora's idea of the importance of getting yourself well?
- 



# Taking the steps to change

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*Cathie*

"I picked her up from school. I dropped her off at school. I monitored her phone calls. They were very urgent. She was only allowed on it for two minutes but she had to stay in the room where I could hear what was being said. She would go on speaker."

*Tania*

"Because there was a structure at the Rongo Atea marae... I could see that Māoritanga coming through and it's getting stronger and stronger to this day. He wants to get better."



*Desley*

“When I went bewildered and devastated and broken-hearted, the first thing Tough Love did for me was that the other women made me laugh with their stories of the stupid behaviour of their children and all of us would have a really good healing laugh about the silly things that these children were doing.”

*Carmel*

“I did a programme through school called the Gain Programme and I learnt strategies how to approach her in a non-threatening way.”





“And I think it takes a bit of courage to go along as a parent to admit you’ve got a few problems and I was really surprised my daughter wanted to go. At first she didn’t – ‘This is a load of trash. I don’t want to do this. This is rubbish. What are we going to get out of that?’ And after the first night she was one of those girls waiting to put her hand up.”



“It taught me how to let go, taught me how to detach and disengage from their behaviour. Taught me how to still be able to cuddle them and to tell them that I love them but don’t like their behaviour... Whatever we’ve done in the past, that’s got into that position, we don’t even think about that – we go forward with practical solutions. From that day forth, we think about the practicality of what we’re going through.”

*Robyn*

“

It's understanding the cycle of a addict. That you can't make a difference. They have to make a difference – you can only be there to support them... realising that all I want to do is protect him from hurting someone else. If he hurts himself... that's unfortunate, but I don't want him to hurt anyone else, I don't want him to hurt anyone else's property and probably that's what I want to protect him from. I don't care if he goes to jail any more – he's making his own destiny. I mean... I don't want to tell anyone my son's in jail but that's the way it is.

”

# What can we do?

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- Again, think about the latest quotes. What can you do?
- Go through each quote and see if there is an idea there for you; some suggestion that might work for you, an insight that is just what you needed.
- Note these down. Make a list of things you can do. Then do them.

*Don't limit a child to your own learning, for he was born in another time.*

– RABBINICAL SAYING



## *What can we do?*

*This is a huge meandering section. It is the section in which our parents talk about the positive actions they took as they come out of the darkness and into the light of taking back their power.*

*Topics like, boundary setting, counselling help, Al-Anon, Tough Love, laughter, seeking help, acceptance, understanding, letting go, support, detachment, self help, looking forward, to name a few, are all touched on here.*

*Read through the quotes several times and watch this section a few times on the video. There is a lot of very useful stuff there.*



# Self help groups

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- Have you sought out a self-help group like Al-Anon or Toughlove?
- If you have, that's fantastic. What has been your experience?
- If you haven't, would you consider going along?
- What holds you back?







"It's lovely at Al Anon. Again you've got these wonderful supportive people who are all sharing the same experience. Their experience is living with an alcoholic. And it's making themselves feel good – I mean they're not taking the blame that their partner or their son or daughter or whatever is an alcoholic; they're not taking the blame."



"Probably if I'd understood more about Al-Anon I would have gone along to them more... someone only substitutes one addiction for another and I know that myself now. So when Luke went from drugs to drinking... I thought oh well it's better than the drugs. But it's not; it's just one to the other. He's got to find some way of getting a natural high."



"OK, so you're not perfect but you're here and you're allowed your space and other people mustn't make you feel bad for having your say. It's not OK for Daniel to make me feel bad for making my space on earth... although you've made all the mistakes that you have with him, it's still not OK."

# Closure

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- › What do you hear in these last quotes?
- › How did you feel as you came to the end of the video?
- › Who did you relate to most strongly?
- › Which person did you identify with the least?
- › Why do you think that is?
- › What are your next steps?

*Ko te kairapu, ko ia te kite.  
He who seeks will find.*



**"It's still an emotional journey because now I can see how he is coming out of it and it touches me and I have got my son back. It's been so many years."**



**"I'm going to go forward in life now, letting go of my children. Letting them live their own lives and not being so involved in their lives."**



**"I have to step back, you know? Because really they're your children but they're only on loan to you."**



**"It was all about me with my son, you know? A constant attack on me. What about me? What are the neighbours thinking about me? And, you know, it was never ever about him. So it was difficult for me and my son. It was more easy to be angry than to be compassionate with him because you know I mean he's a man now, he's 18, you know, he's doing this because he's doing this again me and I'm going to put my foot down. And really, he just wanted me to love him, you know? And I've had to learn that..."**



**"I'm really sorry that he's got an addiction problem but I can't take it on my shoulders. That doesn't mean to say that I don't care for what's happened... they have to move on at some stage and you have to move on. But he's got to start taking responsibility for his own actions and I can only be there to pick up and support him when he... it's not even worthy of supporting him but when he is trying to support himself."**

# The final word

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We acknowledge that your journey is infinitely more important and relevant than anything we can say.

Lets try to sum up what the parents in the video have said to us:

1. Our children can suddenly go from charming children to less tolerable teenagers.

2. *Many teenagers compound their teenage challenges with alcohol and drugs and some take this beyond the realm of experimentation.*

3. *The impact of drugs can be very dramatic on the parent(s) and on the whole family/whānau.*



4. A common way to respond to negative changes in your child is to use old discipline techniques.

5. When attempts to change behaviours fail, parents tend to become frustrated, despairing and bewildered.

6. Parents tend to then blame themselves.

7. Typically, as a consequence parents become ashamed and embarrassed of their children's behaviour and feel their family is marred by a horrible secret.

8. The teenager's view of the situation is often entirely different from that of their parent.

9. It seems that the more embattled and confused a parent feels, the greater the extremes of the teenagers behaviour.



**10.** *At a point of 'crisis' alternative 'solutions' are often sought.*

**11.** *In the process of seeking help there is often positive change, but not necessarily in the expected manner.*

**12.** *What commonly happens is that parents realise this is about them changing as much if not more than their expectation of change in their child.*

**13.** *Changes are mostly of an attitudinal nature, especially learning acceptance and the true meaning of letting go.*

**14.** *When the parents make changes for themselves there is often a shift in the behaviour of the child.*

### **In short – there is no change in the family until we change ourselves.**

These changes can include seeking out a support groups like Al-Anon, Tough Love, or a parent support group and talking to a counsellor... or just talking to people you know who have the same issues or who understand what is happening to you.

The suggestions and solutions we hear often feel all wrong and we think, 'but I still need to be a parent', or 'I am sure he or she will grow out of it.' You need to think about what is right for you.

In the end we realise that the only solution is to look after ourselves, have zero tolerance for their destructive behaviours and love them with caring detachment.

We genuinely hope that the video and this book are of help to you and that you are able to begin the move from pain and bewilderment to a lighter place of acceptance and self-care.

### **We must let go or it kills us! With love and compassion.**

**KIA KAHA.**

*He manga wai koia kia kore e whitikia.  
It's a big river indeed that cannot be crossed.*

— WHAKATAUKI



**Further copies of this book and the DVD are available  
from the Alcohol Drug Helpline on 0800 787 797 – just ask.**

# Where to go for help

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**Alcohol Drug Helpline**

For free, confidential advice and details of services in your area call 0800 787 797.

**Child Adolescent and Family Service**

Look in the front of the white pages of the phone book under Hospitals and other health services – for contact details of the service in you area.

**Al-Anon**

Provides support to family members of someone abusing alcohol and other drugs. Visit [www.al-anon.org.nz](http://www.al-anon.org.nz)

**Toughlove**

Visit [www.toughlove.org.nz](http://www.toughlove.org.nz)

**Focus Adolescent Services**

For advice on parenting teens. Visit [www.focusas.com/Parenting.html](http://www.focusas.com/Parenting.html)

**Relationship Aotearoa**

Relationship Aotearoa charge for counselling based on income level. Call free 0800 RELATE (0800 735 283) or visit [www.relationshipsaotearoa.org.nz](http://www.relationshipsaotearoa.org.nz)



# Helpful books & Resources

## HELPFUL BOOKS

### **Teenage Boys Talk**

Stephanie Weaver

### **Teenage Girls Talk**

Stephanie Weaver

### **Before your kids drive you crazy. Read this!**

Nigel Latta

### **Alcohol & your kids. What can you do?**

A booklet and DVD with advice about alcohol for parents of teenagers.

### **The Alcohol and Your Health series**

A series of booklets that help people who are, or know someone who is experiencing problems with alcohol.

The Alcohol and Your Health series include:

- Is Your Drinking Okay?
- Cutting Down
- Stopping Drinking
- Maintaining the Change
- Concerned about Someone's Drinking
- Helping with Problem Drinking

## RESOURCES

### **Ki te Ao Mārama – Had enough?**

#### **Then make a change**

A DVD workbook resource for Māori who want to make changes to their drinking or drug use.

### **Had enough? Then make a change**

A DVD workbook resource for people who want to make changes to their drinking or drug use.

### **Like a Drink?**

A DVD/workbook and online resource for people who want to make changes to their drinking.

## **Te Whatu Ora – Health New Zealand**

**Freephone:** 0508 258 258

**Email:** [enquiries@hpa.org.nz](mailto:enquiries@hpa.org.nz)

**For help contact the Alcohol**

**Drug Helpline on *0800 787 797***

**To order resources visit *resources.alcohol.org.nz***