



Alpha Court

alphabits newsletter



Community Mental Health & Addiction Services

SPRING 2024

Message From the Executive Director



The week of May 6th to 10th marks Mental Health Week in Canada. This event was first organized by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) in 1951 and has been recognized yearly since then.

The focus of Mental Health Week 2024 is the healing power of compassion. In health care, we are learning that compassion is just as vital as any physical or pharmacological intervention when promoting recovery. Compassion can be displayed in many ways from being aware of other people's experiences and emotions to acting when another is suffering.

When we are compassionate to others, our body releases the hormone oxytocin which is associated with pleasure ¹. Demonstrating compassion helps us feel more connected to others and decreases our physical and mental stress. Research has suggested that a lack of connection to others can be just as bad for our health as high blood pressure or obesity ([AAAS 2014: Loneliness is a major health risk for older adults | University of Chicago News \(uchicago.edu\)](#)). One study in particular found that people who show compassion for others through volunteering can live longer. ²

While it's good to have compassion for others, it's also crucial that you take the time you need for self-care. Compassionate people are sometimes at risk of "compassion fatigue". Compassion fatigue can be experienced by any "empathetic individual who is acutely conscious of societal needs but feels helpless to solve them" ([Compassion Fatigue | Psychology Today.com](#)). Compassion fatigue usually happens gradually and over time. Symptoms of compassion fatigue can include disrupted sleep, a decrease in empathy for others and a feeling of helplessness (to name a few).

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¹ Esch and Stephano. [The Neurological Link Between Compassion and Love](#). PubMed (2011).

² Konrath S, Fuhrel-Forbis A, Lou A, Brown S. [Motives for volunteering are associated with mortality risk in older adults](#). Health Psychology. 2012;31(1):87-96. doi:10.1037/a0025226

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Some ways to prevent compassion fatigue include:

- Self care through nutrition, exercise, meditation and rest.
- Engaging in a hobby and other activities you enjoy.
- Ensure you have healthy relationships in your life.
- If you work in a helping profession, ask your employer to help initiate a wellness in the workplace program.
- Engage in personal therapy.
- And my favourite, spend some time with animals.

“Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive.”

– Dalai Lama XIV, *The Art of Happiness* 

Indigenous Adventures

This winter Alpha Court introduced the Indigenous Adventures Program at the Day Centre. We meet the 1st Friday of each month from 1-3 pm with facilitator, Natalie Stobert.

Indigenous Adventures is an interactive group learning cultural traditions based on the Seven Grandfather Teachings and held in honour and respect for First Nation people and their way of life. Each month we open the group with a teaching on the ceremony of smudging followed by an invitation to participants to smudge if they wish to do so. Smudging is intended to cleanse ourselves (releasing the worries of the mind and the negative energy), and to connect with our spirit and with the Creator.

The group was introduced to the Four Sacred Medicines used in First Nations ceremonies and in our daily lives – tobacco, sage, sweet grass, and cedar provided by Mother Earth. Teachings were provided for each medicine’s purpose and physical healing and wellness components.

To date, the group has participated in workshop teachings of Love (December), Courage (January), and Respect (February). The Teachings of Honesty, Humility, Truth, and Wisdom will be conducted in future workshops.

The Teaching of Courage workshop included making tobacco ties. A teaching was provided about tobacco which is also the first and key medicine given to the people and tobacco is offered as a sign of respect, of gratitude, or to make a request. Tobacco is paramount to culture, spirituality, and healing and tobacco ties are a means to communicate with Spirit. To make a tobacco tie, tobacco is placed in a piece of cloth with one’s thoughts, feelings, prayers and/or intentions then tied into a “bundle”. This represents courage. It can then be hung in a tree, laid on Mother Earth, or put in the water to give back to Mother Earth.

Cedar tea and boughs were brought to the group by the facilitator. Teachings were provided with respect to offering tobacco to honour Mother Earth before picking medicine, the healing aspects of the medicine, and the boughs used for protection against negative energy entering your space (hung over the entrance door of your home with a tobacco tie). A teaching of the cedar cleanse was explained and demonstrated to the group. Participants were invited to take a cup of cedar tea and a bough to their own individual space and do a cleanse on their body, mind, and spirit.

The Medicine Wheel teachings were introduced to the group. The Medicine Wheel reminds us that everything comes in fours – the four colors, the four directions, the four seasons, the four elements, the four Medicines, the four stages of life and so on. Participants were introduced to the four aspects of life – physical, mental,

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Photo Credit: indigenousreflections.ca

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emotional, and spiritual with Creator and self in the center. The Medicine Wheel is about balance – maintaining balance in all four aspects that are interconnected with the purpose of living in harmony with our self and within all relationships. For example, if I feel sadness or hurt in my emotional being, my mind, my body, and my spirit will be affected. We continue to examine the ways in which we can improve balance in our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual beings.

Spring Solstice (March 20th) was a celebrated event and individuals enjoyed making 2 kinds of ba’wezhiganag – blueberry and raisin bannock. Historically, Bannock is a traditional food adopted when Europeans colonized the land and moved Indigenous people off their territories and onto reserves. They were not able to hunt as they once did and food sources was scarce. The government supplied Indigenous people with staples and Bannock became a necessity to survive.

After indulging on delicious Bannock, the group participated in a Sharing Circle with further discussion about balancing the Medicine Wheel in addition to water and strawberry (known as the Heart Berry) teachings. Drumming and singing was performed by Natalie and Mike – special Miigwetch to Mike for all his help and for singing his beautiful inspirational songs! The afternoon was completed with the feasting and the Travel Song and the event was enjoyed by all and so spiritually uplifting!

We look forward to honouring and learning more about the traditional Indigenous culture in the months ahead. We attempt to adapt the simplicity and beauty of the teachings to enhance our own individual journey to the Good Life (Mino Bimaadiziwin – to live life that is balanced and in connection with family, community, and the land). *For more information please call Natalie Stobert @ (807) 632-9230* 

Truth Love Respect Courage Honesty Humility Wisdom

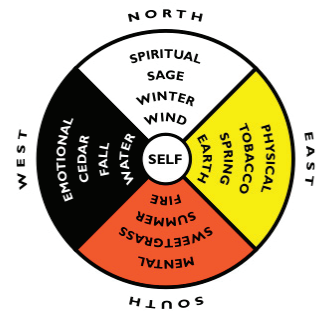


Photo Credit: connectability.ca

Mike's Story: *I Asked For Help!*

At the start of my journey, things were rough. I struggled with mental health, addictions, and low self esteem - daily living was challenging to say the least. My apartment was a mess: chores left undone, dishes piled high. Going to bed before 3 am was rare and getting up before noon was an accomplishment. Although I had a few friends, I would self-isolate. I felt lost, unhappy, and alone most of the time.

Life started to overwhelm me, and I knew that I had to do something about it. It was time to break the cycle, to really try something different. Something that I'd never really wanted to do before, but needed to be done. I worked up my courage. *I asked for help.*

Change started slowly and subtly at first: making connections; building a skill-set; taking stock of where my issues were and getting a sense of what needed to be done about them-what **COULD** be done about them. I spent a great deal of time talking with my case worker, my psychiatrist, and my support network of trusted friends and family.

Once I had the lay-of-the-land, once I could see how much work needed to be done to get from where I was to where I wanted to be, I felt overwhelmed with just how far away it seemed-how out of reach my dreams really were.

I asked for help: help to understand what I could do; help to form a plan, help to follow through; help to get myself to where I really wanted to be in life.

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Asking for help was hard at first, a humbling experience. I had always thought that I could manage on my own willpower and determination alone. I was the guide of my own journey, the architect of my own fate; I was so certain that if only I could catch a break, everything would fall into place the way I wanted it to. Then I looked around and saw where it had gotten me.

I was not happy with what I saw - I made a decision! I would do whatever it took to achieve a better state of mind, a healthier living environment, and to find a sense of contentment and purpose in life. ***I would need help.***

So again, I asked, and again help was offered. This time though, I accepted the help that I had found. It wasn't as hard as I thought it would be. The dramatic, fundamental upset that I had feared turned out to be a myth. It wouldn't be a case of turning the whole world upside down after all. It turned out to be much simpler and easier to manage than I had expected.

To get from where I was to where I presently am takes effort, yes, but no more than small consistent changes.

$$1.00^{365} = 1.00$$

$$\text{But } 1.01^{365} = 37.7834$$

Making a 1% difference each day is really not so challenging. Over the course of a year, it makes for a remarkable outcome. As it is said ***"Nothing changes if nothings changed"***.

I started making small, easy to manage changes: simple SMART goals that added up over time; I kept talking with my case manager, my psychiatrist, and my support network. I got the help I needed to manage my issues then working towards my dreams. I got the chores under control; I got help managing my finances; I started getting out of bed in the morning, and going to bed at night. Over time, I got help in building my job skills through the support of Independent Living Resource Centre, and successfully obtained my security guard licence. I found purpose-a career I love; I built a life for myself that I no longer feel the need to escape from. I am happy, joyous, and free!

I asked for help! I accepted the help that was offered! I got myself into a better situation. There have been challenges along the way and life is certainly better compared to a few short years ago. I can say with great certainty that I would not trade my worst of days today for the best of those days back then.

And to think, all I had to do was ask for help.

Today, Mike is employed part time at Wequedong Lodge as a security guard. He brings with him an Indigenous traditional lifestyle and he lives the Seven Grandfather Teachings as he connects with his ancestry roots. Mike plays the trumpet and one can watch his grand performances with the Thunder Bay Community Band. In his free time, he enjoys nature, drum circles, and writing poetry. Mike will be celebrating 5 years of sobriety this summer and his gentle, caring, and empathetic ways are demonstrated in peer mentoring. We wish you continued success in The Good Life Mike! 🍀



2SLGBTQI+ and Allies Support Group

Alpha Court continues to facilitate the **Walking Proud Group**, a support group for people who are 2SLGBTQI+ and Allies (significant others, friends, and family members). We meet the 2nd Thursday of each month from 2-4 pm at the Alpha Court Day Centre. Facilitators are Barb Lovie and Natalie Stobert.

An essential component of the Walking Proud Group is making connections and this is displayed by generous acts of kindness and inclusiveness amongst group participants. Peer connection is key to fostering a sense of belonging, shared experiences, and

building one's supportive social network. This is prominent during our time together as we have developed into a cohesive group and we enjoy banter and conversation. Diversity and equality are embraced by all as the positive energy flows around in this safe and informal setting provided.

And some of our highlights since our last newsletter:

Winter Solstice was celebrated with a Christmas "Oji" Gift Exchange Party where participants were asked to bring a used and meaningful item. The teaching of giving from the heart was illustrated by seeing all the gems under the tree. Laughter could be heard as we played the "White Elephant" game. Listening to the stories about the treasures brought more meaning to the gifts people chose. A sense of camaraderie and closeness enveloped the room and was felt by all!

The group decided they wanted to learn new recipes and improve their cooking skills. A variety of recipes were reviewed and decided upon by the group. Each month a "head chef" is nominated and delegates food prep jobs, and everyone contributes to the process in their own way. Individuals are learning cooking skills with step-by-step instructions, how to do measurements and temperature settings, and of course, clean up! Once again, inclusiveness, self-empowerment, social skills, team work, and cooperation are experienced in addition to acquiring kitchen skills. We enjoyed eating delicious homemade macaroni and cheese, carrot cake with cream cheese icing, and chicken alfredo with noodles-- with the homemade roux-not the store-bought jar of sauce!

A Speakers Series took place with invited guests who shared her/his/their personal 2SLGBTQIA+ life journey. The group members were able to identify with the challenges and the discrimination our speakers experience first-hand throughout life stages and shared during their talks. Sadness penetrated the room as stories were told of brokenness; rejection by family and the community leading to shaming and feelings of unworthiness and guilt; additional compounding fears; being forced by society to live by their assigned sex at birth; and coerced to follow traditional male and female roles. Additionally, our spirits were moved and connected in unity as we witnessed their resilience to remain their authentic and true self in the face of overcoming oppression, discrimination, trauma, and abuse.

Each year on **March 31st** we honour **International Transgender Day of Visibility**. The Human Rights Commission of Nova Scotia recognizes this day as *"a day to celebrate and honour transgender people and increase visibility and awareness of the transgender community's struggles and triumphs"*.



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A transgender person is someone whose gender identity is different from their assigned sex at birth. Other identities include non-binary people, multigendered, gender non-conforming, third gender, and two-spirited people. Statistics Canada tells us that The International Day of Visibility “reminds us that we can all be allies in many ways and work together to stand up for the protection and promotion of the human rights of people in Canada who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or two-spirited, or who uses another term that refers to gender or sexual diversity”.

March 31st – International Transgender Day of Visibility



Walking Proud Group Motto... “We are NOT alone...Together We CAN!”

And coming up...! The Walking Proud Group plan to attend community events this summer--we experienced inclusive and fun adventures last summer and we hope for a repeat this year!! Walking Proud Group will be participating in the Pride Parade and Festival coming in June and in addition to some of the other events during Pride Month. Members spoke of feeling uplifted, empowered, and “a part of” when we attended last year. We will be having a Pride Celebration and potluck at the day centre. And let’s not forget...an afternoon at the CLE Fair in August. Also, a nature walk is in the planning in addition to a BBQ. Please join us!

If you or someone you know is interested in participating in the Walking Proud Group, please contact the Day Centre or Natalie Stobert @ 807-632-9230.



Alpha Court Day Centre

Hello! Bonjour! Boozhoo! We're Sharon and Ashley! We are the faces that you will see when you attend the Alpha Court Day Centre.

Before we get all caught up about who we are, let us tell you about the Day Centre and all the wonderful programs and services we provide to the individuals in the Thunder Bay community who experience living with mental illness and/ or addiction concerns.

The Day Centre is located at 270 Windsor Street (Room 221), second floor of the Boys and Girls Club. We have been a part of the Thunder Bay community for the past 12 years.

Throughout the last decade we have had success with Day Centre Facilitators providing a majority of programming with the assistance of Alpha Court Case Managers and community partnerships which the following agencies: Brain Injury Services of Northwestern Ontario (BISNO), St. Joseph's Care Group, People Advocating for Change through Empowerment (PACE), and the Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre. We also provide and offer programming outreach at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre – Adult Mental Health and Spence Court; with the hope of expanding partnerships.

The purpose of the Day Centre is to provide a safe, welcoming and judgement free space for those with a mental illness and/or addiction.

A saying we have always used is “an hour of attending meant that was an hour without substance”. We do encourage sobriety when attending Day Centre programming both at the centre and in the community.



What makes the Day Centre unique?

We offer a wide range of activities - some programs require a pre-registration to attend while others are just strictly drop in.

How do you access Day Centre programs?

We require all participants to fill out a referral form specific to the Day Centre. This means individuals can self refer (no doctor's note required) but of course you can have a physician, psychiatrist, social worker fill out one also. Referrals can be easily accessed on the Alpha Court website. Participants can stop by the Day Centre to fill out a paper referral or we can also send referrals via email to community workers to fill out on the behalf of the client. The wait time for a referral to be processed, you can expect to hear back from a Day Centre Facilitator in within one business week.

We have a huge selection of programming for participants to choose from – every month we provide a Day Centre calendar to participants and to the community. We encourage you to check out the calendar at www.alphacourt.ca because we wouldn't be recreationists if we spoiled everything on the calendar.

If you or someone you know would benefit from attending the Day Centre and would like more information please have them contact a Day Program Facilitator. 💡

Contact information

Phone: (807) 683-7729

- Sharon Greshuk ext. 3176
- Ashley Spaxman ext. 3175



Meet your Day Centre Facilitators

Sharon Greshuk

I've been a Day Centre Facilitator for over 10 years. I studied Recreation Therapy at Confederation College

Fun facts:

- I love to be crafty! Knitting/ Embroidery/ Painting
- Camping & Sunshine – Summer is my season!
- My favourite movie that I've watched way to many times since it was released – Cruella!
- I'm fairly stubborn!

What I love about my job!

Watching our folks spread their wings and grow. That means from being able to attend programming on their own, to getting a job.

Ashley Spaxman

I Graduated from the Recreation Therapy program in June of 2019. I have worked with several different populations in the community of Thunder Bay.

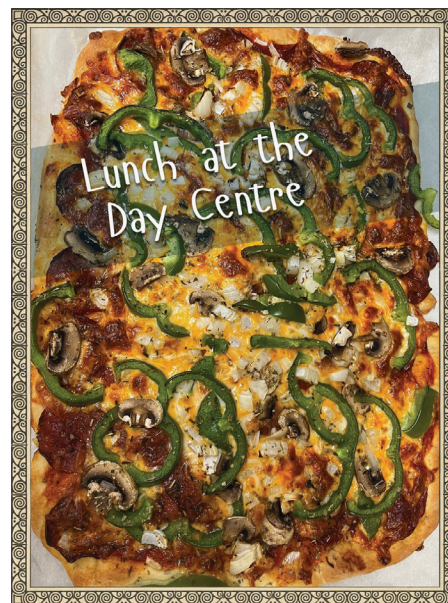
I have been with Alpha Court since November of 2019- I initially started with the Day Centre and then moved into Case Management for 2 years and then most recently back to the Day Centre.

Fun Facts:

- I am not at all a morning person- after work you can find me napping.
- I live for the summer- Sunshine and Swimming are my 2 favourite past times.
- I love animals- I have 2 cats and a dog at home.

What I love about my job?

I have a passion for making connections with the people that attend our programming. I am always exploring new hobbies and ideas to bring to my work to create an evolving atmosphere for the attendees. I appreciate the creative freedom that my line of work allows. 💧





Ooshke Programming
Ornamental Mukluks




#may7icare National Child and Youth Mental Health Day



- Approximately 1.2 Million Children and Youth are affected by Mental Health and/or substance use each year. (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2017)
- Research shows that individuals between 15-24 are the most at risk age group to experience adverse mental health. (Pearson, Janz and Ali, 2013)

The above statistics are a testament to the importance of funding programs and services for youth mental health and/or substance use in today's society. This is why Alpha Court has a Youth in Transition program dedicated to supporting youth between the ages of 16-24.

Our Vision is that all people who experience mental health and/or addiction challenges can reach their full potential. We are here to support youth through their transition into adulthood by offering services that are flexible, individualized, and mindful of the complex intersectionality's that exist within this demographic. Together, we collaborate on self-identified goals that are guided by the interests and passions they hold. This means meeting youth where they are, and starting to work on areas of their life that are most meaningful to them.

Our Youth in Transition program believes that learning goes both ways and we embrace the unique qualities of the young people we serve. We can learn a lot by leading with compassionate curiosity. 



Adrianna Harvey RSW
Youth in Transition Case Manager



Photo Credit: may7icare.ca

S.M.A.R.T. Goals are a Game Changer!

“A goal without a plan is just a wish” – Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

Goals are a part of life; whether you want to eat healthier, meditate, read a book, save money for school, spend more time with family, change careers, buy a house, travel to Italy, or perhaps all of the above! However, we know that without a defined plan as part of your goal, it may feel impossible to achieve.

S.M.A.R.T. goals can help you get clear on what it is that you want and how you will achieve it! Let's break it down:

S = Specific. The goal is well-defined and clear on the 5 W's: Who, What, Where, When, and Why.

M = Measurable. How will you know when the goal is accomplished; think how much, how many, something quantifiable or tangible.

A = Attainable. The goal includes small steps that you can complete and although people may be able to support you in reaching the goal, accomplishing it does not rely heavily on others.

R = Realistic. The goal is within reach and relevant to you. You have some sense of confidence in achieving it; it may be challenging but it feels manageable. You are excited and willing to work on it.

T = Timely. A clear timeline of when you would like to start working on your goal, and when you wish to accomplish it. Is it a long-term goal or a short-term goal? What can you do today to start?

Let's take the example of reading a book and turn it into a S.M.A.R.T. goal:

Goal	S.M.A.R.T. Goal
To read one book this year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To read the paperback book titled Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones (2018) by James Clear• I want to read this book to get better at forming healthy habits in my daily life• I will read the book for 15 minutes in bed (9-9:15pm) x5/week (Monday-Friday)• I will set a timer in my phone for the 15 minutes and turn off the television for the duration of reading• What I can do today: find the book amongst the pile of books on my shelf. Get a bookmark ready• Start date: May 6th, 2024• Target date: to finish the book by Sept. 30th, 2024

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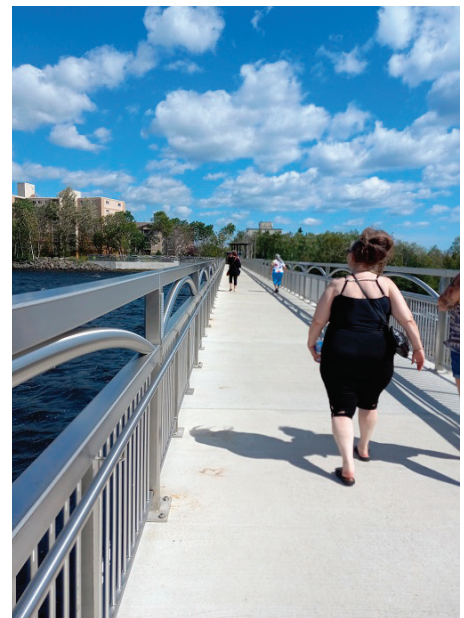
Quick Tips:

- Write down your goals.
- Review your goals often.
- Find an accountability partner.
- Take small actionable steps towards your goal.
- Edit or change your goal if it's no longer serving you.
- Believe in yourself; what you say to yourself matters – you can do it!

With the help from a case manager to work on goals, our hope at Alpha Court is that all people can build and maintain the skills necessary for independence, and create sustainable solutions that will help them continue on their journey long after services have ended. *Written by: Amanda Orr, MSW, RSW* 💡

Women's Group

Women's group is a place for women to meet, socialize and build friendships with other women without judgement. Ashley Spaxman and Christine Kempton facilitate the group. It is open to all women and those who identify as women. The goal of this group is for women to meet and form the friendships and social supports. It is also designed for women to participate in different activities such as bowling, picnics, walks in different parks. The group also engages in therapeutic conversations about coping and managing day to day life. This past year the group attended the CLE together and everyone had a blast. Ashley and Christine plan to repeat this adventure for 2024. Ashley and Christine are always exploring new activities and things to do with the group. The group meets every two weeks. *If you are interested in attending, get in touch with either Ashley aspaxman@alphacourt.ca or Christine ckempton@alphacourt.ca to register for the group or get more information.* 💡



“Let's Get Back 2 Basics!”

Back 2 Basics is a weekly recovery group facilitated by partner agencies that include Alpha Court, Sister Margaret Smith Centre, Norwest RAAM Clinic, Dilico Adult Residential Treatment Centre, 3C's, Thunder Bay District Health Unit and Balmoral Withdrawal Management Services.

A variety of recovery oriented topics are presented each week, including principles of addiction, developing healthy routines, stress management, and improving overall wellness. Participants are invited to engage in active discussion in a supportive and nonjudgmental environment.

Back 2 Basics runs every Wednesday afternoon at Balmoral Centre (Detox) on Sibley Drive from 1:30 – 3:00 pm. Anyone looking for a safe and sober space to be in community with others are welcome to attend. There is no registration required. We look forward to seeing you! 💡

Alcohol Awareness Month: APRIL



ALCOHOL AWARENESS MONTH

APRIL

Alcohol Awareness Month is a great opportunity to update your knowledge about alcohol, alcohol use, and the impacts on health and society.

The Cycle of Alcohol Addiction

Alcohol addiction is a chronic relapsing disorder associated with compulsive alcohol drinking, the loss of control over intake, and the emergence of a negative emotional state when alcohol is no longer available. [Alcohol use disorder \(AUD\)](#) is a condition characterized by an impaired ability to stop or control alcohol use despite adverse social, occupational, or health consequences. It is a spectrum disorder and can be mild, moderate, or severe and encompasses the conditions that some people refer to as alcohol abuse, alcohol dependence, or the colloquial term, alcoholism. Alcohol addiction refers to the moderate to severe end of the AUD spectrum.

History of Alcohol Awareness Month

[National Alcohol Awareness Month](#) began in 1987 and was established by the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD). Marty Mann, one of the first women to find sobriety through Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), founded the NCADD. Mann realized the importance of educating individuals and communities about alcoholism and its effects and started the NCADD to support and promote scientific research on the topic.

April was chosen as Alcohol Awareness Month to raise awareness about the dangers of binge drinking and to encourage responsible attitudes toward alcohol. During the month of April, NCADD uses traditional and social media campaigns to draw attention to the causes and risks of heavy drinking. The campaigns aim to educate people about the harmful effects of alcohol and to encourage individuals to seek help before it becomes fatal.

Since its inception, Alcohol Awareness Month has helped many individuals struggling with alcoholism. The various campaigns, such as Alcohol-Free Weekend, DARE, and Know Your Limits, have helped educate children

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and adults about the dangers of alcohol and promote responsible drinking habits. They've encouraged candid discussions and information sharing about alcoholism and urged people to seek help. Through these efforts, Alcohol Awareness Month has helped to save many lives from alcohol-related deaths and continues to be an essential tool in the fight against alcoholism.

How to Observe Alcohol Awareness Month

Observing Alcohol Awareness Month can be a meaningful way to raise awareness about the risks associated with alcohol consumption, promote responsible drinking habits, and support those who may be struggling with alcohol addiction. Here are some ways to participate:

- **Participate in Alcohol-Free Weekend:** Alcohol-Free Weekend is an initiative that encourages individuals to spend 72 hours without alcohol. You can participate by committing to abstaining from alcohol for a weekend and encouraging others to do the same.
- **Start conversations:** One of the most effective ways to raise awareness about alcohol is to start conversations with family, friends, and coworkers. You can discuss the dangers of excessive drinking, share personal stories, and discuss ways to promote responsible drinking habits.
- **Host 'clean' parties:** Instead of throwing parties where alcohol is the main attraction, consider hosting events that don't involve alcohol. You can plan a game night, movie night, or outdoor adventure that doesn't involve drinking. If you do choose to serve alcohol, make sure to have non-alcoholic options available.
- **Attend Alcohol Awareness events:** Check out local events in your area during Alcohol Awareness Month. Attend lectures, seminars, and workshops that focus on the impact of alcohol on individuals and society.
- **Educate yourself:** Take time to educate yourself about the risks of excessive alcohol consumption. Read books, watch documentaries, or attend online webinars that provide information on the subject.

Impacts of Negative Stigma Associated with AUD

The stigma associated with alcohol use disorders can have harmful effects on individuals who are struggling with alcoholism or seeking treatment. This stigma is often fuelled by stereotypes and myths that portray individuals with AUD as weak or lacking willpower. Here are some harmful effects that negative stigma can have on individuals:

Discourage Treatment

Stigma can discourage individuals from seeking help or treatment. They may feel ashamed or embarrassed to admit they have a problem and fear being judged or ostracized by others. As a result, they may avoid seeking help and continue to struggle with their addiction, which can lead to serious health problems and even death.

Discrimination and Social Isolation

Individuals with AUD may be discriminated against in the workplace or denied opportunities because of their addiction. They may also be shunned by friends and family members who do not understand or accept their condition.

Quality of Care

The negative stigma associated with AUD can also impact individuals' quality of care. Healthcare providers may hold negative attitudes towards individuals with AUD, which can lead to discriminatory treatment and inadequate care. This can further discourage individuals from seeking treatment and perpetuate the cycle of addiction.

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How Does Addiction Develop in the Brain?

Alcohol, like other drugs, has a powerful effect on the brain, producing pleasurable feelings and blunting negative feelings. These feelings can motivate some people to drink alcohol again and again, despite possible risks to their health and well-being. For example, research shows that over time, drinking to cope with stress—while it may provide temporary relief from emotional discomfort—tends to enhance negative emotional states between bouts of alcohol consumption. These changes can motivate further drinking and cause an individual to become stuck in an unhealthy cycle of alcohol consumption.

As individuals continue to drink alcohol over time, progressive changes may occur in the structure and function of their brains. These changes can compromise brain function and drive the transition from controlled, occasional use to chronic misuse, which can be difficult to control. The changes can endure long after a person stops consuming alcohol, and can contribute to relapse in drinking.

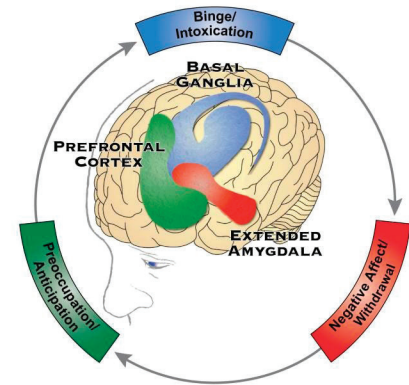


Photo Credit: stigmaunraveled.blog

Ten Fast Facts About Alcohol, Did you know that...

1. 75% of esophageal cancers are attributable to chronic excessive alcohol consumption.
2. Nearly 50% of cancers of the mouth, pharynx and larynx are associated with heavy drinking.
3. Chronic alcohol consumption is associated with 10% increase in a woman's risk of breast cancer.
4. Heavy chronic drinking contributes to approximately 65% of all cases of pancreatitis.
5. Among emergency room patients admitted for injuries, 47% tested positive for alcohol and 35% were intoxicated; of those who were intoxicated, 75% showed signs of chronic alcoholism.
6. There are more deaths and disabilities each year in the U.S. from substance abuse than from any other cause.
7. As many as 35% of heavy drinkers develop alcoholic hepatitis.
8. As many as 36% of the cases of primary liver cancer are linked to heavy chronic drinking.
9. Alcoholics are 10 times more likely to develop carcinoma than the general population.
10. Accidents related to alcohol use are among the leading causes of death for teens.

What are the Risks of Alcohol Abuse?

Alcohol misuse and abuse can lead to many physical health problems, including liver damage, heart disease, and cancer. Overindulging in alcohol is also often linked to accidents and injuries. In addition, a person's mental health can be impacted by alcohol use. While drinking might seem to positively impact a person's mood in the short term, studies show that prolonged alcohol use is linked to increased anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts.

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](https://www.cdc.gov), long-term risks of alcohol abuse include:

- High blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, liver disease, and digestive problems
- Cancer, including breast, mouth, throat, esophageal, voice box, liver, colon, and rectal
- Weakening of the immune system, increasing the chances of contracting illnesses
- Learning and memory problems
- Mental health issues, including depression and anxiety
- Social and relationship issues
- Problems at work or school

Sources:

<https://bradfordhealth.com/>

<https://www.ccsa.ca/>

<https://portal.ct.gov/>

<https://recoverycentersofamerica.com/>

<https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/>

Feedback to Alpha Court

Staff at Alpha Court were so pleased one early morning in February when we opened our general email account to find the following email sent by a person who was once with our services:

“I want to say thank you to the staff and agency for literally saving my life. I was with Alpha Court for 6 years and without the agency I have no idea where I would be today. I have since moved out of province, got married and have two beautiful babies. Alpha Court provided me with a stable home where I was able to work on myself. I did make some mistakes but wasn't just pushed away or thrown out. Alpha court worked with me to help me be better. When I look back on that time in my life when I first needed support, I was a complete mess. The support and understanding I received helped me in more ways than imaginable. I just wanted to say thank you to everyone who works for or who is involved with Alpha Court that help people no matter where they are in their lives. I wouldn't be where I am or who I am today if it wasn't for you”

Thank You! Grant Thornton

Alpha Court would like to extend a huge THANK YOU to the Grant Thornton Foundation for their generous donation in January 2024. The donation has been instrumental in providing start-up kits for people who are transitioning from a state of homelessness to being housed in our Homelessness Initiative Program. People are provided with toiletries, food vouchers and cooking implements.



Welcome to Alpha Court Sara



We would like to welcome Sara Smith, the most recent member of the Alpha Court Team. Sara comes to us with experience in supporting people who are facing mental health and addiction challenges. She is a registered Social Service Worker and is working toward her Honours Bachelor of Social Work. Sara started her career in 2019 and has worked in the areas of treatment and safe consumption.

In her practice with the people she serves, Sara draws upon a strengths-based and harm reduction approach. Sara will be working under our General Case Management Program. We are glad to have you here Sara and we look forward to working with you.



Join a board where your lived experience can make an impact

We're looking to recruit board members

At Alpha Court we're helping people move beyond mental illness and addiction. If you have a passion for change and good-will, we'd love to have you join our board!

Call or visit online for more information
alphacourt.ca | 1 (807) 683-8200

