

pep talks

Spring 2025

I Will Love You Forever, My Baby You Will Be — a parent's message

On September 24, 1997, at 4 AM, my life changed forever. I learned what love was—I felt it with every fibre of my being. My son, Kolton, was placed on my chest, and in that moment, I experienced a love like no other. He was my firstborn, my first true love. Kolton was the light of my life, the sunshine in every room.

When he was just 20 months old, during a routine doctor's appointment for my daughter, our family doctor, who was also a close friend, said, "Jennifer, you know he has ADHD, right?" I replied, "He's a healthy, busy boy." But I heard him. That day, I became an advocate for my son.

Fast forward four years, and the school called me in—it was time to medicate

Kolton's ADHD. I was heartbroken. My perfect child needed medication. I tried everything—specialists, naturopaths, pediatricians, fish oil supplements, an organic diet—but nothing was enough. Three assessments later, another specialist told me, "If your child had diabetes, would you deny him insulin? This is no different." His teacher, a wonderful man named Darren Picking, was hesitant about medication as well. We agreed to a two-week trial. If nothing changed, we'd move on. But in those two weeks, Kolton transformed. The boy who would get up ten times a day to sharpen his pencil was now sitting in his seat, engaged in class. He made the starting lineup on his hockey team and became an assistant captain. He was catching up with his peers, both socially and academically. One specialist compared the medication to removing a set of screaming earphones from his head. To this day, I'm not sure if I would rewrite this part of our story any differently.

Like 50% of families, ours ended in divorce. It was a difficult time for all of us, and Kolton rebelled by refusing to take his medication. He began experimenting with drugs, seeking the balance that his medication had once provided. Marijuana led to cocaine, which led to meth, and he spiralled down a dark path. Unfortunately, that path became his lifestyle. He has spent most of his adolescence and young adulthood incarcerated. I lived every mother's nightmare—visiting my child behind a piece of glass.

I don't share my story for sympathy. I have enough tears of my own. I share it

because he is still my son, no matter how bad it gets. I have heard the comments: "If only parents disciplined their kids better, they wouldn't end up there." "Put them all on an island and let them care for each other." "Enough of our tax dollars supporting them." These words have been said to me—by friends and family. But addiction is not a parenting failure. It is an illness, and it can happen to any family.

[PEP] has been a beacon of hope, guiding families like ours through the darkest times.

My daughter and I have found great comfort in a local Parents Empowering Parents (PEP) group. This group has been a beacon of hope, guiding families like ours through the darkest times. They teach us to manage anger, accept our new normal, and establish firm, healthy boundaries. In between meetings, we called the family support line for a listening ear and processing some of the pain we were experiencing. Please reach out to PEP as soon as you can. The family recovery meetings and the support line are a safe space to gain knowledge, share your now, be supported and find moments of hope. You are not alone.

Kolton was raised to believe he could be anything. I thought it, too. He was

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TOLL FREE FAMILY SUPPORT LINE

8 am - 10 pm / 365 days a year
(includes holidays) professionally managed

1.877.991.2737
Reach out and be supported

PEP is Alberta-wide

PEP is now a provincial organization. We are Alberta-wide, removing barriers of location to support all municipalities across Alberta and their families. Supported by the Alberta Government, Mental Health and Addictions Ministry.

Permanent Virtual Wednesdays Group

Visit pepsociety.ca for details



Are you and your family concerned? We can help.

intelligent, charismatic, and confident—a natural leader. I never imagined his path would lead here.

As a mother, I am still on this journey. Kolton has spent more of his life as an addict than as the son I once knew. Thirteen years have passed, and he continues down this criminal lifestyle. As a family, we have had to set firm boundaries. My journey continues to

be about helping those less fortunate, educating people on the impact of this illness called addiction, being intentional with my own personal recovery and remembering that person struggling with addiction and homeless is someone's child. I'm so thankful to PEP that they continue to empower families to heal and recover even when their child is still in the grip of addiction.

This past year has been filled with several painful firsts—the first year without a birthday call, the first Easter without an “I love you, Mom,” and the first Christmas wondering if he was wishing on the same star. The years continue to pass, but my love for him remains unchanged.

I will love you forever, my baby you will be.

Sponsorship Highlight



AI teams up with PEP

Thank you to GO-JEL for providing another way for our families seeking support and recovery to connect to PEP through AI - CHAT BOT on our website. Support comes in many different ways.

Are you ready to support those who support PEP and bring your company into the AI world? Through the power of AI and automation, GO-JEL brings work-life balance to your organization while supporting your growth and team success. Check out GO-JEL at go-jel.com for your Automation and AI needs.

PEP at the Mental Health Learning and Listening Tour

Lerena Greig represented PEP Society at Her Excellency Mary Simon, Governor General of Canada, Mental Health Learning and Listening Tour in Vancouver. There were 15 other people at the table representing various mental health and addiction providers. The main topic was peer support and how it is valued and understood. At PEP, we understand the power of peer support. Our facilitators have been known to say “the magic happens in the sharing circle”. There is knowledge exchange, empowerment, stories of hope and yes, stories of pain too. Our families feel safe to share their successes and their challenges and realize they are not alone. At PEP, we are always learning and listening to our families who are experiencing growth, healing and are on their own individual recovery journey. Your voice matters and we take your voice with us when we sit at any table that is asking the question “how can we do better?” Remember, you are NOT alone and together we are learning and listening.



Lerena Greig, PEP Executive Director, presenting a PEP journal to Governor General Mary Simon at the Mental Health Learning and Listening Tour in Vancouver.

NEW YOUTH PROGRAM (15-18)

URise Watch for the next session in September

Are you between the ages of 15-18 and have a family member or friend struggling with substance use. Come to URise where you can begin a transformative journey towards wellbeing. Discover your inner strengths and be empowered to navigate those challenges in a safe and open environment.

Watch for updates on the next URise session

at <https://pepsociety.ca/programs/u-rise> or contact Urise@pepsociety.ca for more information or registration.

URise new youth recovery group testimony

Growth, Community and Understanding

As a student in the URISE program, I had the opportunity to participate for several weeks, gaining valuable insight into substance use and its broader impacts. A friend who shared similar struggles and experiences as myself, introduced me to the program. We both wanted to truly understand the reasons behind certain substance use patterns.

When I first arrived, I was surprised by how welcomed I felt. Typically, I struggle with anxiety in new spaces, but during orientation, I found myself feeling unexpectedly calm and at ease.

As the course progressed, I deeply appreciated the mutual respect among my peers. Everyone had the opportunity to share their insights on mental health topics and connect with the material on a personal level. This created a supportive environment where friendships naturally formed, fostering a sense of community while we learned and grew together.

The activities were not only informative but also engaging, incorporating visuals, experiments, and interactive games that made complex concepts easier to grasp. These activities also strengthened our connections, making the learning experience both enriching and straightforward.

By the end of the course, I had all my questions answered on topics, which left me with a greater sense of reassurance, clarity, and direction.

Beyond academic knowledge, I witnessed positive changes in myself and those around me. I developed a greater ability to regulate my emotions, recognize my own challenges, and apply effective coping strategies. Additionally, I gained a deeper understanding of addiction and the critical role mental health plays in overall well-being. I now feel more confident and equipped to face challenges, using the skills and knowledge I've gained into my everyday life.

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This course is ideal for anyone seeking a deeper understanding of addiction and the many facets of mental health.

This course is ideal for anyone seeking a deeper understanding of addiction and the many facets of mental health. Along the way, you'll also gain valuable insights into yourself, fostering personal growth and self-discovery.

Thank you to our supporters

Alberta College of Pharmacy

Alberta Government

ATCO EPIC

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BMO Wealth Management, BMO Nesbitt Burns

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Sturgeon Valley Baptist Church

Sunrise Community Church

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Also, thank you to our regular monthly donors.

Working together to empower families in crisis towards health and wellness.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Red Deer Family Recovery Group (in person)

Starting Tuesday, April 1 2025, 7 pm - 9 pm
YMCA of Northern Alberta, 6391-76 Street, Red Deer

PEP is expanding into your community. We have a great team in place! For more details, contact our Red Deer Team Lead Kath Hoffman via email kath@pepsociety.ca

New opportunities for PEP families and our community

Training and Presentations for Recovery Informed Workplaces

Coming Soon
Monthly Education Series

Moving Sherwood Park Family Recovery meetings to weekly

Check out pepsociety.ca for what's new.

YES

I Want to Help Rebuild Hope for Families

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- \$25 \$50 \$100 \$250
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Charity Number 943200270R0001

Mail form to: Parents Empowering Parents, 2001 Sherwood Drive, Sherwood Park, AB T8A 3W7 or Fax 780-449-1220

PEP Programs

PEP meets weekly to provide support, education, strength, and hope to parents and families of youth, young adults, and/or adult children. Professionally facilitated discussion provides insight and direction for parents and families dealing with their child's substance abuse issues.

In-person resumes every Tuesday at alternate locations in South Edmonton and Sherwood Park (in person, no limits at this time)

Bi-weekly Thursdays St. Albert is now in person, located at sponsored space St. Albert Alliance Church 200 Villeneuve Road St. Albert.

Permanent Virtual Wednesdays - NEW Weekly. See website for details.

In-Person Family Recovery Group Meetings (7 pm - 9 pm)

South Edmonton

Sunrise Community Church 2nd flr 3303-37 Street,
Mar 11, Mar 25, Apr 8, Apr 22, May 6, May 20

Sherwood Park

Alberta Room, 2nd flr, 401 Festival Lane
 (Family and Community Services)

Mar 4, Mar 18, Apr 1, Apr 15, Apr 29, May 13, May 27

St. Albert

St. Albert Alliance Church, 200 Villeneuve Road,
Mar 13, Mar 27, Apr 10, Apr 24, May 8, May 22
 pre-registration required: <https://pepsociety.ca/free-webinars/>

Red Deer

YMCA, 6391-76 Street
Apr 1, Apr 8, Apr 15, Apr 22, Apr 29, May 6, May 13, May 20, May 27

Virtual Family Recovery Group Meetings (7 pm - 9 pm)

Weekly Permanent Virtual Wednesdays (via Zoom)

Mar 5, Mar 12, Mar 19, Mar 26, April 2, Apr 9, Apr 16, Apr 23, Apr 30, May 7, May 14, May 21, May 28

QUARTERLY WEBINARS

Watch our website for the next webinar.
<https://pepsociety.ca/free-webinars/>

NEW URise Youth Program

Youth family recovery program for 15-18 year olds. 12 week program

Watch for the next session!
 at pepsociety.ca/programs/u-rise or contact us at URise@pepsociety.ca for more information.

M.E. program (formerly MEDD-X)

M.E. - Motivational Experience: A Restorative Justice Program

The M.E. program is for individuals in recovery from substance use disorders and addiction who want to continue their journey of recovery. The role of a M.E. participant is to provide support, insight, and hope to families navigating the challenges of addiction. Participants attend PEP's Family Recovery Meetings to listen and participate in the groups. Participants share their experiences, and explore how their past choices have impacted individuals, families, and communities. This is a referral only program. For more information or a referral form please contact ME@pepsociety.ca

Rebuilding Hope Through Giving

PEP Society relies on individual donations, grants, corporate and community group support. This equips us to support more families dealing with the effects of substance abuse and allows growth in the professionally facilitated programs that we offer.

The many ways to provide hope:

Monthly Giving Visit pepsociety.ca and go to donations tab and click on Donate Now button (secure web-site through Canada Helps)

Donations via Cheque Mail to: 2001 Sherwood Drive, Sherwood Park, AB, T8A 3W7

Year-end Donation for tax reasons.

Employee Giving Through payroll deductions. Directed by your request through the United Way (Alberta Capital Region)

Corporate Sponsorship

Third Party Fundraisers

Legacy Gifts

Thank you for supporting your community and rebuilding hope for families. PEP Society is a registered charity

Here is the Zoom Link

for all Family Recovery Group and U-turn meetings go to <https://pepsociety.ca/family-recovery-group-meetings/#>

For dates confirmed, you can also visit <https://pepsociety.ca/calendar/pep-family-recovery-meeting/> Make sure you have calendar set to "month" view.



Providing education, innovative programming, support and hope for individuals or families dealing with or concerned about substance abuse/addiction.

www.pepsociety.ca
info@pepsociety.ca

Family Support Line: 1.877.991.2737
 tel: 780-410-8516

2001 Sherwood Drive
 Sherwood Park, AB T8A 3W7