



BY Pallium Canada

# Grief & Bereavement Literacy ECHO Series

## Session 1: "Healing Hearts Support - Finding Hope and Resilience After a Substance Use Related Loss"

Tuesday, August 15, 2023  
12:00pm – 1:00pm PST, via Zoom

AGENDA ITEM	DISCUSSION	RESOURCES
<p><b>Introduction &amp; Territory Acknowledgment</b></p>	<p><b>Grief &amp; Bereavement Literacy ECHO Series – Healing Hearts - "Healing Hearts Support - Finding Hope and Resilience After a Substance Use Related Loss"</b></p> <p><b>Presenter: Jennifer Howard, Program Coordinator, Moms Stop the Harm (BC)</b></p> <p>Welcome to all participants, and introduction of the presenter, and presentation outline. Participants are notified the session is being recorded.</p> <p><b>Learning Objectives:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Share a better understanding of the drug poisoning crisis and its impact on bereaved families in BC,</b></li> <li><b>2. Identify the unique needs of families who are grieving a loss related to substance use harms,</b></li> <li><b>3. Understand the stigma that families may feel related to a loss from substance use harms.</b></li> </ol>	
<p><b>Overview Summary Presentation &amp; Discussion</b></p>	<p><b>Presentation Summary</b></p> <p><i>Full session title and topic:</i> Healing Hearts, Supporting the Bereaved following a substance use related death, breaking down the stigma, and building understanding, compassion, hope, and resilience, in grief.</p> <p>Jennifer Howard is the Program Coordinator at Mom Stop the Harm BC Division and coordinates the 'BC Healing Hearts Bereavement Support', using her voice and story to amplify the urgent need for our reform in our approach to substance use related loss and drug related issues. Jennifer herself is a bereaved mother and a drug policy advocate. Jennifer shares a slides presentation during the recorded video, some details here below:</p> <p>Loss is hard and loss is difficult, but when someone you love dies from a toxic drug poisoning, it can be especially painful. At only 24 years old, on May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2016, Jennifer’s only child, Robbie, was found deceased from a drug overdose, and while profoundly grieving his death, Jennifer became more awake and educated as to what was developing in our communities.</p>	

Seven years into this drug crisis, advocates and bereaved use the term “the Forgotten Public Health Crisis”. With the Healing Hearts support group, it has brought countless preventable losses to the surface, with no end in sight, the bereaved in this province grows rapidly.

Moms Stop the Harm network is a non-profit started by three mothers who came together over their mutual loss of their sons, it has grown to over 4,000 members across Canada; organizations, friends, families, and allies who have all joined in support in demanding change so that another family doesn’t experience this kind of loss.

It started around advocacy and moved to becoming a powerful place of peer support and healing, and from that the need for bereavement support developed.

**Moms stop the Harm**

- Advocate to end substance use related stigma, harms, and death
- Vision is that people who use drugs are not criminalized and that their rights are respected
- It sees health care as the way to equitably provide for a safe supply of substances and diverse pathways of support for all those
- It included support and empowerment of families to use their voices without shame, to share their stories and to advocate for positive change

The collective mourning in this province grows and as of June of 2023, we’re on record to surpass any other years since 2026. The call for huge change is happening, and substance use affects everyone. As a bereavement support group leader, Jennifer has met parents of college professors, young teens, working professionals, young men celebrating at a bachelor party... If we don’t change the trajectory of our approach, these numbers will continue to go up.

For families, stigma is a big part of their life as they support their loved ones and stigma is a big part of their lives as they grieve their loved ones.

**Healing Hearts** is a ‘Peer Facilitated Bereavement Support’.

The groups were launched in BC and Alberta in 2017, and in 2020, the BC team received funding from the Ministry of Addictions and Mental Health. Currently, there are 15 support groups and 1 virtual support group to help those in remote areas receive support. What started as an advocacy group has organically grown into support network for grieving families and helping people to heal through shared experience and loss and community support. It’s an open format and peer facilitated model. The support groups are a mix of those with recent losses and those who have been healing for many years coming together to encourage and support others along their bereavement journey, providing hope to those who have had a recent traumatic passing. All facilitators are trained volunteers and have lived experience with loss and who understand complicated grief.

To locate a group in your community visit:

**healingheartscanada.org**

Also, Jennifer’s welcomes people to please reach out if you’re interested in bringing a support group to your community: *jennifer.howard@momsstoptheharm.com*

	<p><b>Marilyn Schick</b>, Advocate and Member, <i>Moms Stop the Harm</i>, shares her personal story and lived experience of losing her son who passed away on July 10, 2017, at 50 years old, honored in this story and session, and processing grief and dealing with the stigmas around drug related loss.</p> <p><b>Leslie Hoyga</b>, Advocate and Member, <i>Moms Stop the Harm</i>, shares her personal story and lived experience of losing her son who passed away on January 2020, honored in this group session, and processing grief and dealing with the stigmas around drug related loss.</p>	
<b>Session Materials and Additional Resources</b>	<p><b>Resources shared in the group Chat:</b></p> <p><a href="#">BC Centre for Palliative Care Newsletter</a></p> <p>Please reach out with any questions or if you are needing support or know of someone needing support - Jennifer Howard's email address: <a href="mailto:jennifer.howard@momsstoptheharm.com">jennifer.howard@momsstoptheharm.com</a></p>	<p><b>Session Recording</b> is uploaded on the BCCPC's YouTube page: <a href="#">HERE</a></p>
<b>Closing</b>	<p><u>Next ECHO Session, (new) Grief &amp; Bereavement Literacy Series:</u></p> <p><b>September 19<sup>th</sup> 12:00pm to 1:00pm PST</b> <u>Topic: "Grieving the Death of a Pet"</u> Click: <a href="#">REGISTER</a></p> <p><u>To learn more:</u> Visit the BCCPC ECHO session website page <a href="#">here</a></p>	<p>Link to <b>post-session Survey</b> <a href="#">HERE</a></p>