The Circle of Hope

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A New Year: A New You!

“You are free to start your day over at any time”

“Misery is an option” anonymous

Many of us have heard these quotes over and over in the rooms of recovery. In recovery, we have the power to start anew daily. We give ourselves permission to be real; to be authentic. When we are using alcohol and other drugs we turn off our inner voice. In recovery, we learn to trust and listen to our inner wisdom and we move in a positive direction of constant change; to a place of self love. We allow ourselves to try new things, to meet new friends, to take time for ourselves. January is a time to rejuvenate. To pray and meditate and be grateful for the opportunities we have to learn in this journey of life. It’s a time to identify the barriers and behaviors that keep us from growing and learning. We release them, and know that with each day

An Eye Opener on the Stigma of FASD

Last summer I had the great opportunity to participate in the NOFAS Hill Day. I led a delegation from my senior high school class to Capitol Hill to discuss legislation on FASD that was being voted on in congress. I have always had a special place in my heart for issues on FAS because my aunt Karli has FAS. I was not sure what to expect out of the day but I knew I had important business to take care of. There I met many members of congress and had a grand time talking to them about FASD and the potential future that research and funding can provide for the advancement in treatment and positive outcomes. What stuck out most to me that day was when one of the congressmen, who at the time represented my local area, spoke very uneducated about the subject and just came to conclusions about drinking while pregnant that were very incorrect. He said, “Isn’t that just a bunch of alcoholic women who drown their children in alcohol?” At that point I realized the importance of educating people in this country about the problem of drinking while pregnant. Education is key to prevention and more emphasis must be placed in our education system about drinking. Josh Mejia.

To join the Circle of Hope or request more information, please contact Kathy Mitchell at the National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome mitchell@nofas.org

What is the Circle of Hope?

The Circle of Hope/Birth Mothers Network, (COH/BMN) is a support group for women who have consumed alcohol during pregnancy and/or have a child with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD). The COH/BMN is here to provide you with:

Referrals and Resources
Factual information on addiction and FASD
Networking with other birth moms
Support for you and your family
You are not alone.
If you are a woman who used substances while pregnant, or who has a child with FASD, contact the COH-BMN.

We will connect you to a Warrior Mom; a mentor who has been down a similar path.
Mary is constantly amazed at how recovery and forgiveness have transformed life for her and her family. She started experimenting with alcohol in grade school and continued through to adulthood when she was starting a family with her husband. She had no shortage of knowledge, brains or will power; these strengths had allowed her to meet many of her life’s goals, including starting successfully in a medical career in family practice. Her alcohol use turned to alcoholism; alcohol caused changes in her brain that overwhelmed all of her knowledge and good decision-making, and led her to drink during her pregnancies despite her most desperate efforts to stop. Recovery took medical catastrophe, many devoted and compassionate people, huge changes, a number of tries, and a long-term halfway house program to ground her in women’s community and recovery.

Mary had 3 different pregnancies during her struggle to stop drinking and her 3 children had completely different effects. Her middle child Michael was the most obviously affected and was diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. In the midst of his struggles, he taught his family to focus on the present, do the job that’s in front of you, laugh when you can and make decisions to go where you are loved. Mary says, “He is our spiritual guru and has taught us how to forgive ourselves and others about the tiniest to the biggest things.” Mary’s oldest son has none of the physical or growth features indicating prenatal exposure to alcohol; he does have brain changes that challenge many aspects of his daily life as an adult. Mary had a healthy pregnancy with her daughter after one binge, and Christina does not consider herself disabled in any way.

The effects of alcoholism kept Mary from returning to a medical clinical practice, so she has used her medical training to teach about addiction, mental health, and recovery to a variety of audiences. She is passionate about prevention and goes to addiction treatment centers to teach women about reproduction, pregnancy planning, and the effects of alcohol and drugs on themselves, their fetuses and their children. She also focuses on health maintenance and resource issues in adolescents and adults with FASD. Her favorite part of teaching is to use her family story (with permission) to help her audience understand the power of addiction, recovery and forgiveness. She is convinced that forgiveness is a missing piece in working with families at risk for, or affected by, FASD. The NOFAS Circle of Hope has been an essential part of her recovery and ongoing women’s community. She hopes to set as inspiring an example for women struggling with alcohol issues as Kathy and the original Warrior Moms set for her.