

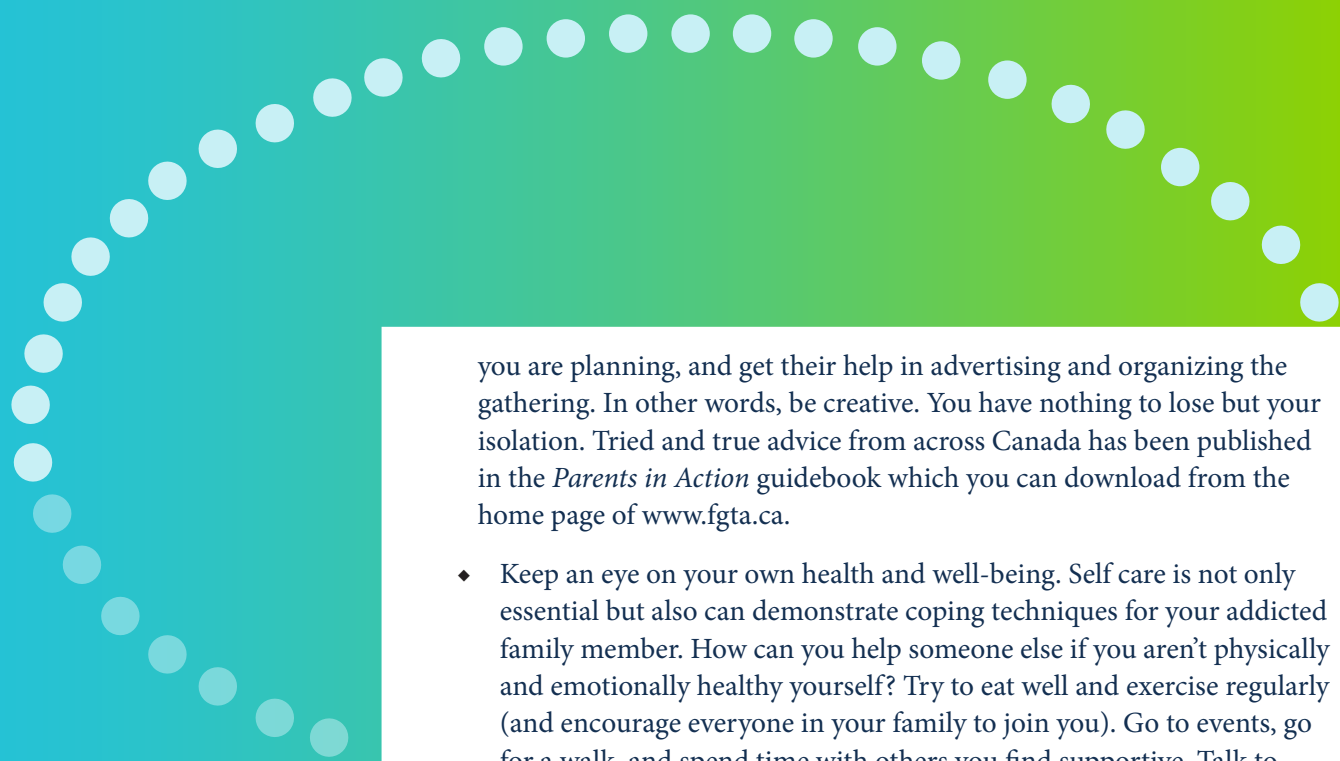
Taking Care of Yourself

May I be granted the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. (Serenity Prayer)

- ◆ Don't blame yourself. Guilt is not a useful emotion. Other people's actions (unless extreme) generally do not cause alcohol/drug dependency.
- ◆ It is natural to feel anger, hurt and disappointment.
- ◆ Admit it when you've blown it, apologize, and move on.
- ◆ Focus on what you can do, and let go of what you can't. Nobody can force an addict to be well.
- ◆ Educate yourself. There's a lot of information out there, and you'll have to pick and choose. Try the websites and other resources you find on www.fgta.ca. Stay connected. This is a time when you need to reach out to your family and friends, not to withdraw because of feelings of shame. You'll be amazed at how understanding most people will be, especially if you talk about addiction as a disease.
- ◆ Explore paths you may not have tried before. Many find daily readers like Al-Anon's *One Day at a Time* helpful during difficult times, and this may be a time to investigate your own spirituality. A list of resource books is also on the FGTA website.
- ◆ Get support! You don't have to go through this alone, and you don't have to stick with the first counsellor you meet. If they are to be helpful, you have to be able to agree with their philosophy and on a course of action. Keep trying until you find one you can work with.
- ◆ If one-on-one help doesn't appeal to you, join a group. There is no substitute for personal experience, and self-help groups (Parents Forever, Parents Together, Al-Anon, Nar-Anon) offer mutual support from people who have been there and are still struggling with addiction issues.
- ◆ If there is no group in your area, start one. Don't let embarrassment or shame get in the way of taking action. Others in your community are bound to be struggling as you are. You just need to find one another:

Try posting a notice of a meeting at your local church, community or health centre. Let health and other professionals in the field know what

"I
have found that
advocating
for a better
understanding
of addiction
has been very
therapeutic."



“It
won’t
help my child
if I’m sick or
falling apart.”

you are planning, and get their help in advertising and organizing the gathering. In other words, be creative. You have nothing to lose but your isolation. Tried and true advice from across Canada has been published in the *Parents in Action* guidebook which you can download from the home page of www.fgta.ca.

- ◆ Keep an eye on your own health and well-being. Self care is not only essential but also can demonstrate coping techniques for your addicted family member. How can you help someone else if you aren’t physically and emotionally healthy yourself? Try to eat well and exercise regularly (and encourage everyone in your family to join you). Go to events, go for a walk, and spend time with others you find supportive. Talk to your GP or other health professional if you need more help than you’re getting now.

Above all, don’t give up on your own life, dreams, and goals. You will survive — one day at a time.