

Sarah's story:

"When I first came to ADA I was at the end of my tether. My health, my work, every aspect of my life was affected by my son's addiction, like a constant cloud hanging over me. His addiction was ruining his own life but also our family's life and I couldn't see a way out. We have another child too who I felt I was neglecting, they were suffering not only from the worry of their brothers' behaviour but by missing out on necessary attention because everything was always about my using son. What state he was in, what trouble he was in & what to do next.

My relationships with friends and family were also being put under pressure. Because my son and his situation was always on my mind, it was almost all I talked about. The group gave me a vent to talk about things rather going over and over the problem with family and friends. I felt like I must be a chore to them but it was also frustrating for me to share my feelings with people who didn't understand.

Being amongst other people who know what it's like has been so important to me. In the group, we all come from different backgrounds, the only 2 things we definitely have in common is that we love our children and they have a problem with alcohol or drugs. That alone, showed me that perhaps the cause of all this was not me, or a mistake or something we did and the cause didn't actually matter, what was important was what came next.

There was a lot of guilt and blame on my shoulders and the ADA workers helped me look at this differently. The group also helped me see that looking after myself is not a selfish thing to do but a vital thing to do. They helped me detangle myself a little bit, see how important it is I look after myself and my family and only then can I be able and available to help my son, when and if he is ready to accept help.

Now, when new people come to the group, it helps me to see the progress I have made in my own journey. Seeing the members of the group that are further along the journey than I am gives me hope. I get a huge amount of perspective. I genuinely don't know where we would be if it wasn't for ADA, the group has kept me from feeling overwhelmed and from giving up altogether.

I now understand my son's problem is not solely on my shoulders but that I can be of help in the process. I am now much stronger, the problem my son has is not all-consuming, it is now one aspect of my life, not the whole focus of it."