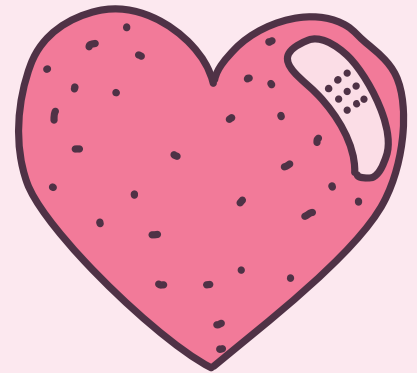
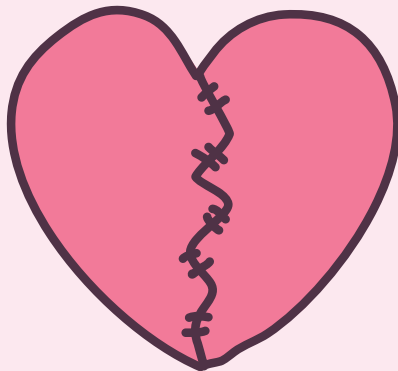
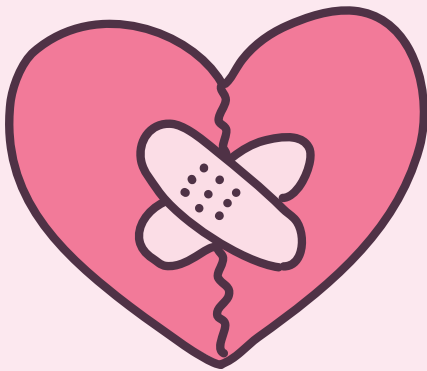
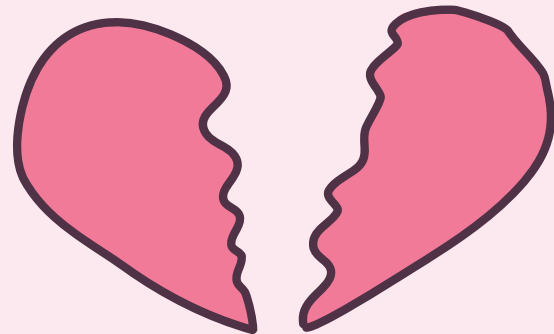


REVELSTOKE WOMEN'S SHELTER

UPLIFT

magazine



What I learned

One woman looks back on her abusive relationship

Healing stages

What are the six stages to move on from hidden abuse?

Deeper Insight

A look at what causes addiction and homelessness

Men's Issues

How shame and rigid gender roles stop men connecting



TOGETHER E V E R S T O K E

Photo: Jordan Eadie

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UPLIFT Magazine
ISSUE 02 - 2022

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Funded by the Revelstoke
Women's Shelter Society
RevelstokeWomensShelter.com

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Please get in touch with feedback
or if you'd like to contribute any
articles or artwork. We'd love to
hear from you.

*This magazine is for information
only. Call our shelter or consult a
health professional for help with
your specific situation.*

The shelter:

- Comfortable, private rooms
- Stocked communal kitchen
- Access to free counselling
- Women's group
- Confidential help
- Safe location
- Support and referrals with work, housing, transport, and more.

24/7 Helpline 250-837-1111

Reach out for support or to stay
at the shelter. Staff are happy
to chat and conversations are
confidential. Call or text.

From the editor

EMILY KEMP



Understanding the incomprehensible

"From what I've seen, it seems if someone has had a disadvantaged upbringing, they're likely to have a disadvantaged life."

Before I started working at the women's shelter in Revelstoke, I didn't really understand abusive relationships and behaviour. Now I see the prevalence of abuse everywhere.

Similarly, after I moved and started working with the homeless population in Penticton, I didn't understand how addiction could rule people's lives. I thought overdoses — death — as sad as it was, was part of the risk in choosing to continually use drugs.

But of course it's not that simple. And I'm still learning. From what I've seen, it seems if someone has had a disadvantaged upbringing, they're likely to have a disadvantaged life. It's hard to unlearn what has worked for survival.

All of us have some type of trauma and healing to contend with, and generally that can be muddled through during our lives, hopefully coming out stronger.

On the other end of the spectrum are stories of extreme trauma and lack of safety in childhood. I now think it would

be surprising if someone didn't turn to drugs to deal with those experiences.

Plus the sheer strength of addiction means a person has to be superhuman to beat it, and our support system needs more. If you wonder about what type of trauma leads to addiction, and your own likelihood, look at the Adverse Childhood Experience test on page 15.

When I write for this magazine, I feel like it deals with a lot of heavy stuff that, contrary to the name, is not very uplifting. But the point isn't to uplift superficially, it is to uplift and provide strength to anyone who may be feeling confused or lacking validation in their experiences. In providing information, it can take some of the shame away.

On a positive note, when I pass time lurking in forums on Reddit or watching TikTok, people seem aware of what abuse and gaslighting is and are educating others. And in particular the younger generation appears more open about their mental health.

Contributing talent

HAILEY LACROIX



From the moment I picked up a copy of Uplift over a year ago I knew I wanted to be a part of its future creation.

At the time, I was a year out of a toxic relationship and still contemplating how to fully move forward. I had done plenty of self exploration and could see how much my life had improved since the relationship ended, but there was still something missing. I had accepted my experience but couldn't commit to forgiveness. The dissolution of a toxic relationship can feel incredibly isolating, confusing, and

shameful. What had pushed me through my healing thus far were the stories and knowledge of others and the reassuring feeling that I was not alone, that my experience was valid, and that happier days were on the horizon.

Amidst the lingering pain years later, I decided the best way forward was to offer my story and knowledge to others, in hopes it could help someone else along their journey of healing. Now that this project is complete, I can't help but feel a sense of release and rejuvenation.

The opportunity to connect and educate through this magazine has been transformative. I hope this magazine does just what its namesake describes, uplifts its readers as it has uplifted me.



Artwork donated to women's shelter.

Caring for strangers

Revelstoke Women's Shelter Society executive director is heartened by donations from the community, wanting clients to feel comfortable.



During the last two years the world has changed significantly largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 20/21 years were filled with uncertainty and fear.

Those living with abusive partners became significantly impacted with the stay-at-home order. The ability to leave became harder and the risk of abuse heightened. For women in

those relationships, they now lived with no reprieve for themselves and their children.

The pandemic brought out the worst and the best in people. The overdose rate became so severe it became a pandemic and loneliness on some level became the new norm. Mental health became an issue for many, not only those living with abuse but individuals who were isolated.

Through it all the Revelstoke community stayed strong, doing our best to address the issues associated with a global pandemic. Volunteers stepped forward to deliver essential goods such as groceries and other items for our most vulnerable with the Revy Helps program. Our art, yoga and counselling programs turned to Zoom to keep people connected.

Fundraising was a huge success with our Coldest Night of the Year event in February, which we are bringing back for 2022. Thank you to everyone who donated what they could as well as those who donate through the Canada Helps website. Thanks to our local organisations who consistently support us including

Southside Market, Speers Construction, Revelstoke Selkirk Tangiers, Downie Timber Mill and more.

Regardless of what the donation is, it's the meaning behind it. Many community members donate to make the women and children staying at our shelter feel comfortable and cared for.

For example, we received handmade quilts from the Quilter's Guild and hand-made teddy bears from Terri, who lives in Burnaby. Dorothy Skentelberry knitted and sold merino wool hats, donating \$150. And every year Conin Erbenich raises funds to create Christmas baskets filled with goodies for our clients.

Often we learn the stories behind these gifts and we're heartened that people go out of their way to care for people they don't know.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
LYNN LOEPPKY**

Lynn Loepky



Photo: Some donations to the Revelstoke Women's Shelter. A quilt from the Quilter's Guild and hand-made teddy bears from Terri.



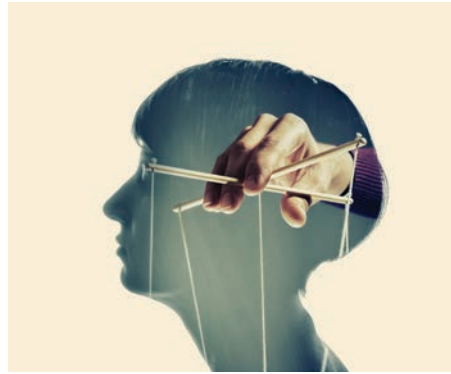
Revelstoke discusses healthy relationships

For many, there is confusion about what makes a healthy relationship.

The Revelstoke Women's Shelter Society last year released a video to help fill this gap. Made by local videographer Francois Desrosiers of FD Productions, it includes footage of the city and hits the streets to ask local residents what they think.

Watch it on YouTube under *Healthy Relationships Revelstoke*. The women's shelter also educates local students on healthy relationships. Youth today may grow up with a better understanding due to their exposure to information and education in schools.

Social media apps like TikTok and Instagram are full of videos and messages from people sharing their experiences. Counsellors and experts have also flocked to these platforms to grow awareness.



Canada considers coercive control law

Canada is considering adding the term coercive control to the Criminal Code, indicating the seriousness of abuse in relationships.

Coercive control is defined as a pattern of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten.

Coercive control laws have already been introduced in Scotland, England, and Wales, and have impacted decisions in legal proceedings. Before these laws, victims could only be protected if they were physically assaulted, not if their partner restricted their everyday movements.

Coercive control laws give police more power to respond to a pattern of behaviour within a relationship, rather than one-off incidents.

SPOTLIGHT Q&A

SHELTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Vice-president Dustin Fransoo



Why do you believe the women's shelter is worth helping? I see the shelter filled with staff and volunteers who are hardworking, passionate individuals that have a clear and common goal. The shelter exists to help those in need — how could that not be worth helping?

Coming from a male perspective, what do you think can be done to reduce violence (physical and emotional) against women and/or contribute to healthy relationships? Everyone should spend time examining themselves rigorously. It's almost hard for your ego to accept that your personality and character actually takes work to improve. Stop your emotions from letting you make irrational decisions. Build a strong resilient sense of self and focus on developing empathetic skills.

What has being a dad and husband taught you? Becoming a parent includes so many difficulties. It's a *ton* of work. But there's also excitement and infinitely rewarding experiences. Watching my daughter get excited over the smallest stuff helps remind me how wonderful life actually is.

Join the shelter board

Our volunteer board of directors is a great group of community-minded people with links in management, media, hospitality, and more. Board members meet with the shelter's executive director about seven times a year. Together you set the policy and direction of the women's shelter.

You choose your commitment level. It may be minimal with attendance at meetings or you can choose to get more involved with fundraising and events.

Email teamleader20@outlook.com for more information.

Safety when you need it



**Make the call
250-837-1111**

REVELSTOKE WOMEN'S SHELTER SOCIETY



revelstoke feb. 26, 2022

revelstoke women's shelter society

The **Coldest Night of the Year** is a winterrific family-friendly walk to raise money for local charities serving people experiencing hurt, hunger, and homelessness. Team up, walk, and fundraise! It's cold out there... but there's no place like home.



walk / donate / volunteer / #cnoy22 / cnoy.org

Coldest Night of the year fundraiser returns to raise money for shelter

Revelstoke's Coldest Night of the Year is returning in February 2022.

This family-friendly fundraising walk will see tens of thousands of Canadians step outside the warmth and comfort of their homes to support causes in their community.

The Revelstoke walk will support the Revelstoke Women's Shelter Society in raising funds to continue its programming. This includes three additional beds (not funded by BC Housing), free professional counselling sessions for clients and the community, a women's group, and assistance with daily tasks for vulnerable members in the community.

The walk will be held on February 26, 2022 with snacks and toques. Register at CNOY.org/location/revelstoke to create a team, add friends and family, and compete to meet your fundraising goal.

Big thanks to Southside Market who was the shelter's major sponsor for the 2021 event, and we look forward to the fun of 2022!



Second-stage housing planned for Revelstoke

The Revelstoke Women's Shelter Society is in talks with B.C. Housing and the City of Revelstoke to construct units for women in need.

Shelter executive director Lynn Loeppky has worked towards this for years and says it is long overdue as the strain on Revelstoke's housing market continues.

"We have women staying at our shelter longer because there is no suitable housing in town for them," she says. "Once we have this, we can offer women something stable while giving them that extra help they need to get back on their feet."

There will likely be about ten units ranging from studio to three-bedroom apartments. These will be part of a second-stage housing program that is common for

revelstoke women's group Moving Forward

- Calendar of events
- Emotional freedom technique classes
- Painting class (in-person or Zoom)
- Indigenous beading classes
- Trauma-informed yoga
- One-on-one support
- Free professional counselling

movingforward@telus.net | 250-814-8387

women's shelters to have.

They are often the next step for women staying at a transition home which offers around a 45-day stay. Second-stage is semi-permanent housing with leases from six-to-18-months with the services of the transition house such as counselling and advocacy.

The units are part of the City of Revelstoke's Housing Action Plan. As stakeholders are still working on potential land sites, completion date is unknown.

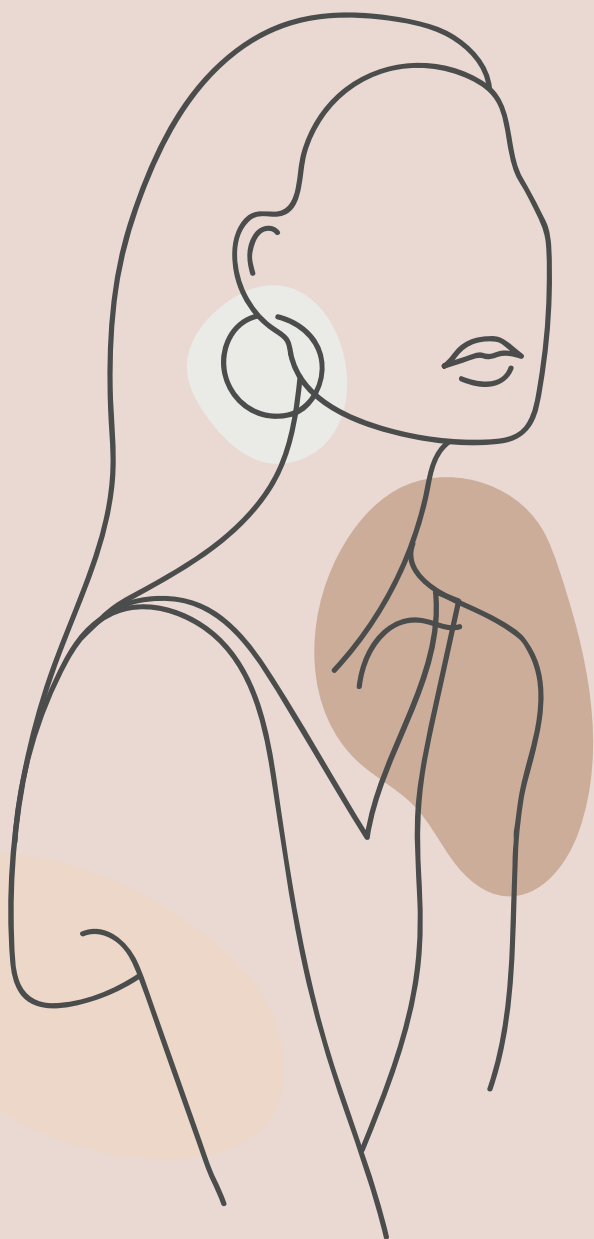
volunteer with

REVVY HELPS

shovel driveways | help seniors
revvyhelps@gmail.com
250-837-8131

Looking back on: an abusive relationship

Alyse, 34, was in an emotionally abusive relationship in Revelstoke for two years. In sharing her story, she hopes that it may help others.



Looking back on your relationship how would you describe it?

At this point, I can see how unhealthy it always was. It was never equal; I was constantly striving to earn his love and affection and he was steadily giving me just enough to keep me from leaving. I couldn't express my needs or boundaries without being told I was too sensitive, emotional, or needy. Any trust issues I had were met with accusations that I was controlling and didn't trust him enough. If I took offense to any degrading comments or criticisms it would be turned on me that I had no sense of humour and couldn't take a joke. Promises were often broken, and his interests took precedence over mine.

Over time I learned not to speak my mind or question him because it would inevitably lead to him retreating. He would tell me how lucky I was to have him, how he gave my life meaning, and how I was always expecting too much. I spent less and less time with friends and his 'jokes' began to slowly erode my confidence.

He often played the role of the victim. His work was stressful, his friends weren't loyal, his art wasn't appreciated enough and so on. I found myself bending over backwards trying to put him at ease and make him feel loved. I longed to see the charismatic, spontaneous, and generous person I'd fallen in love with, the person who now only seemed to come out around friends and strangers. I was holding out hope that what I was giving would be reciprocated and rewarded. I look back now and see that no matter how much I gave it would have never been enough.

What did you notice after leaving the relationship?

When the relationship ended it felt like a shock to the system. Everything that I had been conditioned to ignore or deny was coming to light, forcing me to face the truth. I had given so much and stayed so loyal, only to be betrayed and discarded. It was as though I no longer meant anything to him as a person. I had lost myself so completely in the maintenance of the relationship that I had little to no sense of who I was or what my purpose was anymore. It was hard to shake the feeling that I was the emotional, paranoid, and controlling partner he'd made me out to be, that the end of the relationship was due to my inadequacies.

My self esteem and sense of self worth were at an all time low with feelings of being abandoned, disposable, and replaceable. As time went on, I began to feel increasingly more ashamed

and embarrassed that I had tolerated so much, like it was somehow my fault for not knowing better. I was realizing how reluctant I'd been to face the signs of abuse, how I'd contemplated leaving many times but how it had always been easier to cling to what I knew and the hope it would get better. I realized that the person who had been breaking me down was also the person I'd been turning to for comfort and reassurance. When that small sense of respite disappeared, I was left feeling fragile, full of anxiety and a shell of the person I'd been before entering the relationship.

What made you realize you had to heal?

I was struggling to get through day-to-day life without breaking down. I could barely sleep or eat. My work suggested I take a leave to recover. I'd been through breakups before but this felt like nothing I'd ever experienced. In talking to friends, I began to receive doses of reality and assurance. They gave their perspectives on how they'd watched me change over the course of the relationship and expressed relief that I was out of it. They saw how much brighter my future would be without him and were excited for my new chapter. Deep down I too knew this would be the case, but it was still hard to come to grips with the failure of the relationship. A part of me did still miss the pattern of highs and lows. I saw myself as weak and foolish for having tolerated so much and for loving someone so blindly.

Eventually I started seeing my pain through a different lens. I began researching topics like gaslighting, trauma bonds, narcissism, and codependency. I listened to podcasts, joined online support groups, and began seeing a counsellor regularly. It was comforting to know that so many others had experienced a similar dynamic and that what I was feeling was valid.

I began to see my capacity to love as a superpower instead of a weakness, I realized I had just been using it on the wrong person. The more I opened up about my experience the more empowered I felt to grow from it. I began the process of forgiving myself and learned to practice gratitude. I felt determined to turn what had happened to me into something positive.

How do you feel today?

As much self work as I've done and continue to do, I still have my moments. Healing is by no means linear and there are still triggers that can send me back to that hurt, anger, and shame. As happy as I am that I'm not in that toxic place anymore, there's still a sense of failure and regret that accompany it. Even the moments I'd like to look back fondly on feel empty and calculated. So much of me still craves for an admission of remorse, an apology, anything to help me make peace with those memories.

Unfortunately, you can't always get that closure, sometimes it's something you have to create within yourself. Since the relationship, I've spent time analyzing my own patterns, trying to make sense of the role I played in the relationship. I try to practice compassion and forgiveness for myself and for him, recognizing that both of our past traumas contributed to our behaviour and choices. The experience

certainly led me towards healthier relationships and a better understanding of myself, and for that I will always be grateful.

Would you have turned to the shelter?

At the time I didn't feel like my experience warranted the help of the shelter. I held the mindset that what happened to me couldn't be compared to the physical abuse that some women endure. I felt like it wouldn't be taken as seriously and didn't want to waste time or resources.

Now, since learning so much more about abuse and volunteering with the shelter, I see that abuse is abuse. I think that's what keeps people in emotionally abusive relationships for so long, the mindset of "my partner isn't violent so I don't need help, it's not that bad". I encourage anyone who is questioning the health of their relationship to reach out to the shelter, there is so much more it can provide to you than just a place to stay.



SIGNS YOU'RE IN A TRAUMA BOND



A trauma bond is an attachment we have with someone where there is repeated physical or emotional trauma that is served with occasional positive moments. These positive moments prove to you how good your connection is and reinforce your desire for them.

IT'S A ROLLERCOASTER:

Are you having fun?! Your relationship is intense but it is also inconsistent. You do everything to please your partner and are unconditionally loyal while getting little back. Conflict creates fear of abandonment and you absorb whatever comes your way, without pushback, in order to keep the peace.

A PATTERN OF NON-PERFORMANCE:

Issues are resolved but only temporarily. Words fail to follow-up with actions. Your partner make promises but they often let you down. You explain away these instances, believing their justifications and forgiving them easily.

DEFENSE AND PROTECTION:

Your friends and family may be concerned, even judgemental, but you choose to defend your relationship and withdraw from anyone who questions it. You brush off the negative and hurtful incidents you experience and make excuses for your partner. You may even feel protective of your partner because they had a difficult past or childhood. You focus on their redeeming qualities and the potential you see in the relationship.

LOSS OF SELF:

Remember when you had a semblance of confidence? Some love for life? Now you lack confidence and self trust. You've become complacent, insecure, and find yourself doubting yourself and your emotions. You may recognize that you are being manipulated but choose to block out your intuition. You might not trust or even necessarily like your partner at times, yet you feel compelled to stay. Your sense of worth is attached to the success of the relationship.

INABILITY TO LEAVE:

The thought of leaving makes you feel like a failure. You feel like you have put in so much effort, sacrificed so much of yourself, that it can't go to waste. The lows feel worth the highs, even though the highs are few and far between. You fear what life would be without your partner and you may feel ill at the thought of it. You are accustomed to taking care of your partner and would feel guilty to leave them. You perceive them as the victim instead of yourself.

Shame and rigid gender roles

What leads some men to be more abusive than others? As Jess Hill explains in her book *See What You Made Me Do*, study after study finds that men are more prone to abusing if they've a) been socialized into rigid gender roles, b) believe that men are naturally superior, or c) feel their masculinity or authority has been threatened, particularly if women have not complied with their gender role expectations.

Shame is a powerful motivator in why some people abuse others. As Jess Hill writes, "Shame is felt by both genders. It is biological and psychological yet the way we react to it is gendered. For women shame is a web of unobtainable, conflicting, competing expectations about who they're supposed to be. And it's a straitjacket."

"For men, shame is not a bunch of competing, conflicting expectations. Shame is one: do not be perceived as weak."

Hill explains that a shame-obsessed person hears ridicule even when none was intended. "They lose the ability to



distinguish between their inner feelings of worthlessness and everyday happenings. In their minds abuse makes sense when they've been somehow shamed by their partners, however ridiculous that may be. That is why they see themselves as the victim of the other's "abuse."

Shame boils down to the fear of being exposed as defective and unworthy of love.

In our society, expectations of

masculinity and rigid gender roles hurt men as much as women. Men have been taught to disconnect from themselves and women may inadvertently support this through their own socialisation, such as feeling awkward or disgusted when exposed to male vulnerability.

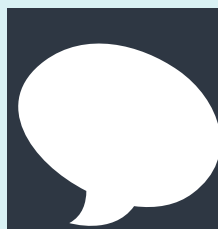
Entrenched gender roles harm us when only the feminine is allowed to be emotional and vulnerable.

THINGS WE NEED TO NORMALISE FOR MEN



Niceties

Men giving compliments or hugging one another without it seeming sexual.



Talking

It being ok for men to open up and talk about their problems and feelings without fear of ridicule. Being safe to be vulnerable can build bonds.



Crying

Allow men to express vulnerable emotions such as sadness without seeing it as weak. Generally anger is a more acceptable emotion for men to outwardly express, but anger is the after effect of feeling hurt or fearful.



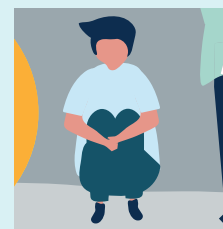
Being feminine

Society teaches us that being masculine is strong and being feminine is weak. Normalise the feminine for men including having emotions, men earning less, or staying-at-home. Even fashion and style doesn't need to be gender exclusive.



Improving mental health

Men are less likely to seek help than women, yet more likely to die by suicide, or abuse drugs and alcohol. Normalise men going to therapy, understanding their past trauma, and improving self-awareness.



Being victims

Men also experience domestic abuse/coercive control, physical violence and sexual harassment.



6^{the} stages of healing from hidden abuse

HAILEY LACROIX

Hidden abuse often goes unnoticed or is easily explained away by the abuser. This is the definition licensed social worker and counsellor Shannon Thomas gives in her book *Healing from Hidden Abuse*. “This type of abuse doesn’t leave bruises. There are no broken bones. There are no holes in the walls. Instead, the bruises, brokenness, and holes are held tightly within the survivor.”

This abuse is subtle and is often characterized by degradation, gaslighting, manipulation, isolation, control, and erratic behaviour. In the aftermath of this type of relationship, Thomas says there are six stages to healing:

Despair

The survivor doesn’t yet understand the depth and reality of their experience. They know something wasn’t right about the relationship, but they find it difficult to express what that was exactly. The loss of their partner may trigger anxiety, depression, and an inability to manage daily life. Survivors are often in a stage of self blame and regret, with little to no self esteem. They neglect to see the fault in their partner and instead question what they could have done better or differently. This is a time when many choose to seek professional help, as their world seems turned upside down.

Education

The survivor develops a curiosity towards their experience and begins to honour their intuition by investigating what was wrong in the relationship. They learn about the different forms of hidden abuse and specific methods used by abusers such as manipulation, gaslighting, and intermittent reinforcement. This can be a difficult time for survivors, as they begin to come to grips with the reality of their partners motives and the true nature of the relationship. They receive support from professionals and loved ones and may connect with other survivors to build empowerment through a sense of community.



Awakening

The survivor comes to full awareness of what they have been through. As they deconstruct their experiences in the relationship, they may feel anger and resentment. They may also feel a greater sense of validation and freedom in knowing that they were not to blame for how they were treated. Their sense of empowerment grows as they realize recovery is possible. Survivors will often seek out counselling or support if they haven't already.

Boundaries

The survivor takes steps to separate themselves from any remnants of abuse. They begin to reclaim their safety and peace, often going no contact with their abuser. If communication is necessary, survivors choose to keep unavoidable interactions brief and factual. They learn to recognize toxic traits and red flags, and choose to engage in healthy, reciprocal relationships.

Restoration

Now that there is a greater sense of safety and peace, the survivor can begin reclaiming anything they feel was taken from them during the abuse. This can include pieces of themselves, such as self esteem, confidence, physical, and mental health, as well as their interests and friendships with others that may have been controlled or discouraged in the relationship. It is also a time for survivors to grieve the moments they cannot get back, to reflect, and to practice gratitude. Over time, survivors will start to tangibly see the fruits of their recovery work.

Maintenance

The final stage is considered cyclical as survivors will often loop back to earlier stages and experience deeper levels of healing. Triggers on any given day may cause survivors to re-enter moments of despair and self blame. When this occurs, it is important for survivors to reground themselves through continued education and empowerment. Surrounding themselves with safe people, maintaining boundaries, and practicing self compassion will help enable survivors to live their life of recovery with confidence and patience. This stage also involves being able to experience healthy relationships going forward and using their skills to keep them safe from future abuse.

Check out our previous Uplift Magazine on narcissism with Dr. Ramani Durvasula. Get in touch for a copy or go to RevelstokeWomensShelter.com to view it digitally.



Guideposts for Wholehearted Living

To live wholeheartedly means to live and love with your whole heart, despite the risks and uncertainty. Many of us are held back by feelings of shame and fear of vulnerability. Through her extensive research on vulnerability and authenticity, author Brené Brown breaks down wholehearted living into guideposts, in her book *The Gifts of Imperfection*, which can give you the courage to bring your most authentic self to the table.

HAILEY LACROIX

Cultivating authenticity and letting go of what other people think

Brené defines authenticity as “letting go of who we think we’re supposed to be and embracing who we actually are.” It is not a fixed quality, it is something that requires practice. It isn’t easy, requiring a deep level of vulnerability. You can put this into practice by recognizing who you are when you’re at your best. Make a list of what your best traits are and use them as a reminder when you find yourself worrying about what other people think.



Cultivating your resilient spirit, letting go of numbing and powerlessness

Do you struggle to bounce back from setbacks and losses? Sometimes it is our habits of avoidance that keep us from truly overcoming life’s challenges. Resilience is built on a foundation of acceptance, connection, and patience. Sometimes you need to embrace the fall, understand that it is temporary and use the experience to connect to yourself. Instead of distracting yourself or succumbing to helplessness, use the experience as an opportunity for growth. Develop an awareness of your numbing strategies such as binge watching TV, drinking, or unhealthy eating. Ask yourself, is this helping me grow? What actions can I take to turn this negative into a positive?

Cultivating self-compassion and letting go of perfectionism

No one is perfect, yet often we are our own worst critics. Practicing self compassion involves three things: self kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. Would you judge a friend the way you judge yourself? It’s more likely you would reassure them that making a mistake is okay, that many people have made the same mistake, and that while their emotions are valid, the experience doesn’t define them. As psychologist Tal Ben-Shahar says “Do not do unto yourself what you would not do unto others.”



Cultivating gratitude and joy, letting go of scarcity and fear of the dark

Have you ever had the feeling that things are going too well? Many people carry an unconscious belief of, “something is bound to happen”. Practicing gratitude enables you to embrace moments of joy when they happen and appreciate them after they’ve passed. Keep a gratitude journal of things you are grateful for, big or small.

Cultivating intuition and trusting faith, letting go of the need for certainty

While many of us crave a sense of control and certainty in life, there is a limit to both these things. At some point we must rely on our intuition or faith. When you find yourself feeling uncertain, take time to connect with yourself and let your gut guide you and remember to find trust in yourself.

Cultivating creativity and letting go of comparison

Think back to when you were six. Would you have ever stopped yourself from painting a picture or creating a lego masterpiece simply because you didn’t think it would be good enough? At some point, as our brain develops so does our self consciousness. We begin to measure our creative efforts against others and in fear of judgement, decide we just aren’t the creative type. Don’t fall into the trap of comparison and instead, get into the habit of making things. The fun is in the process.

Cultivating play and rest, letting go of exhaustion as a status symbol and productivity as self-worth

Much like our tendency to lose our creative juices as we grow, we often forget to simply enjoy time playing and resting. We get so caught up in work that we begin to see time for play and rest as a luxury, something we can only attain once the work is done. Remember to allow yourself to rest and play. Recognize when the grind has got you down and allow yourself some time for self care.

Cultivating calm and stillness and letting go of anxiety as a lifestyle

Sometimes it can feel like there is an endless list of things to do running in your head. Even in moments of rest it can be hard to turn off your thoughts about what you need to do next, or even thoughts of the past that keep you asking what could I have done differently. Try to find calm and stillness in the present moment. This can be as simple as taking a few deep breaths. Finding solitude in general, whether it be taking in a gorgeous view, or a ten-minute meditation is like hitting a reset button. It makes room for introspection and connection to self, allowing you to focus on yourself and not the list.

Cultivating meaningful work, letting go of self-doubt and supposed-to

Everyone needs to earn a living, but not everyone winds up doing a job they love. Is there a passion or a talent that you’ve been putting aside due to the demands of your work? Remember to nourish those passions. The important part is to let go of what you think you should be doing and start spending more time on what you want to be doing. As author and philosopher Howard Thurman instructs: “Don’t ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”

Cultivating laughter, song, and dance, letting go of cool and always in control

Time to loosen up! Let go of the need to fit in and let your true colours shine. Being able to find humour in this crazy world (and especially our own lives) builds resilience and deepens our connections to others. Think about a time when a friend made you laugh so hard it hurt. In that moment you’re not thinking about how you look or what you sound like, your body is too full of joy. Similarly, singing and dancing are natural mood enhancers. As Brené puts it, “When we value being cool and in control over granting ourselves the freedom to unleash the passionate, goofy, heartfelt, and soulful expressions of who we are, we betray ourselves.” So get out there and be yourself!



THE Sadstate OF HOMELESSNESS & ADDICTION

WHILE FACING THE COVID-19 HEALTH PANDEMIC, CANADA HAS ALSO GRAPPLED
WITH A SECOND CRISIS WITH OVER 19,000 PEOPLE LOSING THEIR LIVES.
WHY?

EMILY KEMP

In early 2020, Revelstoke had the third highest rate of overdose deaths in B.C. with nine deaths between 2018 and May 2020 according to the B.C. Coroners Service. This was a high figure considering its low population, putting it behind the heart of the scene in Vancouver's Downtown East-Side.

Revelstoke hasn't been featured since but it did record three overdose deaths in 2021. Since 2016, over 19,000 people have lost their lives in Canada from illicit drug overdoses. 2020 broke records and 2021 followed suit. Overdose rates in all B.C. health authorities remain high.

The overdose crisis has become political and there have been calls to decriminalize the possession of illicit drugs, provide free drugs for those who are addicted, and build more overdose prevention sites (places where people are observed doing drugs. There have been no recorded deaths at these sites.)

When we see someone who is homeless and/or addicted to drugs, many of us might wonder why. Why can't they stop? Why can't they get their life together? Take some responsibility? Some people say they're being enabled with government support. People with drug addiction face social disapproval and stigma worse than those with leprosy.

This treatment likely isn't a surprise to many who have addiction issues. The Adverse Childhood Experience quiz on the next page shows the start in life that many people addicted to drugs received.

Why do people do drugs?

There are those who do drugs for fun and then there are those that use it as anesthesia from deep pain. Fentanyl, the



drug that has caused many overdoses, has been described as a warm hug.

As primary care and addiction physician Brodie Ramin explains in his 2020 book *The Age of Fentanyl: Ending the Opioid Epidemic*, part of the problem began in 1980 when a letter to the editor, not a study, in the *New England Journal of Medicine* indicated that opioids were not addictive (opioids include heroin, morphine, fentanyl, and oxycodone).

OxyContin (an opioid) was produced in 1996 and doctors prescribed it for

pain relief for issues such as broken legs and other ails. For people genetically vulnerable to addiction, youth, those with depression or anxiety, or those with unresolved trauma, they enjoyed the feeling and asked for more.

The brain builds a tolerance to opioids so people begin to increase their use to get the same high. "They become less sensitive to the stimulation for non-drug related rewards, and they lose motivation to do quotidian and necessary activities such as show up at work and maintain

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ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES TEST

Before your 18th birthday:

1 Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you? Or act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt? ☐

2 Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often push, grab, slap, or throw something at you? Or ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured? ☐

3 Did an adult or person at least five years older than you ever touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way? Or attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you? ☐

4 Did you often or very often feel that no one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special? Or your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other? ☐

5 Did you often or very often feel that you didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you? Or your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it? ☐

6 Was a biological parent ever lost to you through divorce, abandonment, or other reason? ☐

7 Was your mother or stepmother often or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her? Or sometimes, often, or very often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard? Or ever repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife? ☐

What does it mean?

If you say yes to five or more of these questions, that means you are seven to ten times more likely, to have a drug problem.

For each yes, your risk goes up for health issues and stunted developmental growth. This includes high-risk health behaviors in adulthood such as smoking, abuse of alcohol and drugs, promiscuity, and severe obesity. The likelihood also goes up for depression, heart disease, cancer, chronic lung disease and a shortened lifespan.

It's common for people to have one or two of these. For children who have no positive mentors in their life to offset these traumatic events, they will suffer toxic stress caused by prolonged activation of their stress response. These means their developing brain chemistry is damaged and causes lifelong problems in learning, and physical/mental health.

The limits to this ACE test is that the specificity of the questions doesn't acknowledge other types of addictive behaviour such as food, porn, prescription drugs, money, etc.

8 Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic, or who used street drugs? ☐

9 Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide? ☐

10 Did a household member go to prison? ☐

their relationships,” Ramin writes. “The joys of drug use plateau and then decline, but so do the joys of life. Food doesn’t taste as good, careers become a barrier to using drugs, and love feels less like love.”

Opioids are now known as being highly addictive and the B.C. Ministry of Health has identified opioid use disorder as a chronic disease.

If an addict decides to stop, they face the hell of withdrawal, which in Benjamin Perrin’s 2020 book *Overdose: Heartbreak and Hope in Canada’s Opioid Crisis*, is explained as the sickest you’ve ever been. Many addicts end up continually using to prevent withdrawal symptoms.

“Once people are addicted to illicit opioids, they’ve lost the ability to simply stop using,” Perrin writes. “They’re essentially on autopilot. Their condition is characterized by a strong desire to stop or cut back but an inability to do so.”

Perrin is a top criminal-justice adviser and was a legal counsel to former prime minister Stephen Harper. His book is his change-of-mind journey and he now advocates for the opposite of what his government at the time did.

What is fentanyl?

Invented in 1959 and developed for palliative cancer patients, fentanyl was intended for medical purposes as a powerful painkiller, sedative, and anesthetic. It is up to 50 times more potent than heroin and up to 100 times more potent than morphine. An amount similar to a grain of salt is lethal as fentanyl turns off the receptors that make you breathe. Carfentanyl is also now in the drug supply and is 100 times more potent than fentanyl.

Because of the tiny amount needed to get high, these drugs are easy to distribute undetected and to cut with other substances to increase product.

While some people now want fentanyl, previously it was unknowingly in the illicit drug supply and caught many who used, including recreationally. In 2016, a 27-year-old man died in a hotel room during a wedding celebration in Kelowna. He and four friends had used cocaine, laced with fentanyl. Responding ambulance officers used the life-saving drug Naloxone but were only able to save four of the five.

There are many similar tragic stories of



people losing their lives in this overdose crisis and the trauma ripples through society. Males are high risk, particularly those who work in trades and exposed to injury, needing pain medication. 79% of overdose deaths in 2021 were males.

Treatment and solutions

Perrin says there is a two-hour window when someone wants help from their addiction before they change their mind.

Abstinence is not recommended as users are likely to relapse and when they do, they are likely to overdose as their tolerance is lowered. Therefore users are prescribed opioids to taper off their addiction and street drugs.

The landmark 2008 NAOMI study found a 67% response in reduction in illicit drug use or other illegal activities for those given pharmaceutical heroin (diacetylmorphine) compared to 47.7% using the standard substitute methadone.

While approved by Health Canada, diacetylmorphine isn’t domestically produced and is only provided at Vancouver’s Crosstown Clinic, and one other, with a long waiting list. The 2015 SALOME study showed alternative drug hydromorphone was similarly effective and the province has made it easier for this drug to be prescribed. Overall there are calls for an urgent scale-up of the entire treatment process, including access to treatment beds and stable living

afterwards. In early 2021, B.C. allocated \$500 million to address mental health and substance use over three years with \$152 million to address the opioid crisis and see the creation of 195 new substance use treatment beds.

A fundamental part of recovering from addiction is having a home. Addiction physician Ramin says around 60 per cent of homeless people have a substance use disorder and the overlap between mental health conditions and substance use disorders is immense.

Costs of safe supply have been found to be mitigated through reduced violent and property-related criminal activity and hospitalization.

In 2017 the Vancouver Police Department called for providing clean opioids in a supported setting “as it helps prevent addicted persons from contributing to the organized and disorganized drug market through purchasing and using contaminated street drugs.” While that call hasn’t been heard officially since, a protest outside the department in July 2021 saw \$3000 worth of “clean” drugs distributed. In response to complaints, the department noted the purpose was harm reduction, not trafficking, and no arrests were made.

The City of Vancouver and the Province of BC have made submissions to Health Canada to decriminalize certain amounts of illicit drug possession.



WHY should we go to therapy?

We're kind of like our vehicles. You take them in every so often for an oil change. It's maintenance, just like going to the dentist and exercising.

Therapy isn't only for when you're struggling. Therapy helps you get used to talking about how you feel and not judging yourself negatively, as well as learning tools for emotional regulation.

So when you're suddenly in a situation and your ancient survival instincts are telling you to run away or let all hell break loose, you instead might take a few breaths and approach things differently.

Your emotions need to be felt to move forward. So for an hour or so, therapy allows you to indulge in talking about yourself. And we all need some supportive, undivided attention sometimes. We can't expect loved ones to shoulder our emotional load or that they have the professional insight into what's really going on with us.

Revelstoke mental health providers:

- * Access 10 free sessions with a professional counsellor through the Revelstoke Women's Shelter. Sessions are held downtown and are open to everyone. Email info@mountainsidewellness.ca

- * Access free sessions at Community Connections. There are options for individuals, families or group sessions. Call 250-837-2920 or email info@community-connections.ca

- * Private counsellors in Revelstoke range in price from \$75p/h to \$150+ so ask around. For more info see: <https://RevelstokePrivateMHproviders.weebly.com>. Or try Revelstokelife.ca for a comprehensive list of local providers. Select *Health Care Providers* in the header, and then choose *Counsellors* in the drop-down menu.

- * The HelpSeeker app connects residents to local social services.

- * Access counsellors worldwide with online sessions. Google *online counselling* to find various operators or find a local counsellor from the listing on Psychology Today.

- * If you can't get to a counsellor, take a few moments to breathe deeply and notice what your body is feeling. Try naming your emotions without analyzing them or making a story to go with them, or try journaling your thoughts.

