

Not My Child

NFSD May 2013 By Radha Selvester

It's a nightmare most parents never consider in their wildest dreams. After so many years of dedicating oneself to raising their child to become a happy, productive, and contributing member of society, discovering that one's son or daughter is an addict is a horrifying experience.

I interviewed local author Anna Azabi about her experiences described in [A Mother's Challenge for Life: Volume 1](#). She is dedicated to helping other parents make sure their children stay drug-free and for creating ways to help those who do suffer from addiction. At the time of this writing, her adult son is in his second residential rehabilitation program and she yearns for the time when he will be standing by her at a book signing event, sharing his story and helping others! Her faith and love of her son is unbreakable, in spite of the many tests she has been through trying to help him overcome the demon of addiction.

Radha: Tell me a little about your early years, before Vance was born.

Anna: I was born in Jerusalem into a very close knit extended Catholic family. We immigrated to the United States when I was ten. My parents were very strict, especially my father. He followed the old-fashioned ways. Girls especially were never unsupervised. I did not go out with friends or date. Most of my time was spent with family – including cousins, aunts, and grandparents. I was happy but yearned for more freedom and privacy. I was married to a man I didn't love at the age of 15. On our honeymoon, he spent all his time gambling. I didn't recognize this as addiction at the time and I stayed with him for 25 years. He was self-centered and abusive. When I finally got divorced, my oldest two were pretty much grown. Vance was only 8 ½ years old.

Radha: When did Vance start having trouble?

Anna: Vance had a tendency to keep his feelings inside him. He was very disturbed by the divorce but didn't really express it. I thought I was doing him a favor by not letting him see the abuse I was experiencing so even though he lived with me on the other side of the country, he still maintained a lot of loyalty to his dad. His father filled his head with lies about me so Vance resented me. Eventually I remarried. Though his new stepfather was kind to him, I think that may have further confused him. I believe Vance started smoking marijuana before middle-school. In high school he was abusing prescription drugs and other illegal substances.

CONTINUED IN NEXT ISSUE – see full article on our web site www.cdsfl.org

CDS Family and Behavioral Health Services Inc. offers free counseling for youth age 6-17, as well as drug prevention programs in some of Gainesville's middle schools. For help, please call 352 244 0628.

PART TWO:

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Last month I shared the first half of an interview with Anna Azabi, local author of A Mother's Challenge for Life: Volume 1. Her son Vance started smoking marijuana in middle school and was addicted to prescription drugs and other illegal substances in high school.

Radha: Were there any drug addiction warning signs? Why did it take so long to get help?

Anna: Vance was always moody so it was hard to recognize that his irritability in high school was due to the influence of drugs. I would ask him if he was using drugs and he would tell me no. I always trusted my children, so I believed him. In retrospect I realize I should have taken him for drug testing when I first had a suspicion that something wasn't right. He was always going out, never wanted to be around the family and became a very private & secretive person, he was always in need of money – and later we found drug paraphernalia hidden in his room. He started having arguments with his girlfriend and it was actually she who told us that Vance was an addict. He was 17 at the time. Since I knew nothing about drugs, I had to do a lot of research but eventually found a rehab place to send him to in South Florida.

Radha: What advice would you give parents now? How can others learn from your suffering?

Anna: I believe kids should be routinely drug tested each year with their physical or at any time parents have concerns about their children. Youth need to be supervised not just when they are little but on through the teen years. Monitor their friends – know who they are hanging out with and know their parents. There is no need for sleepovers. You never know how carefully other parents are monitoring the kids. Don't be afraid to put your foot down – you are not your kids' friends, you are their authority figures. Help children deal with their emotional pain – start counseling early before they try to "self-medicate" with illegal substances.

Radha: This quote from your book really sums up the answer to the question, "what makes people use drugs?" Vance said, "Why do you think they call it painkillers? To forget your pain." Illegal prescription drug use is a huge problem in America now. It's not just marijuana, cocaine, or methamphetamines that youth are using. Many kids start using drugs they find in their own family medicine cabinets.

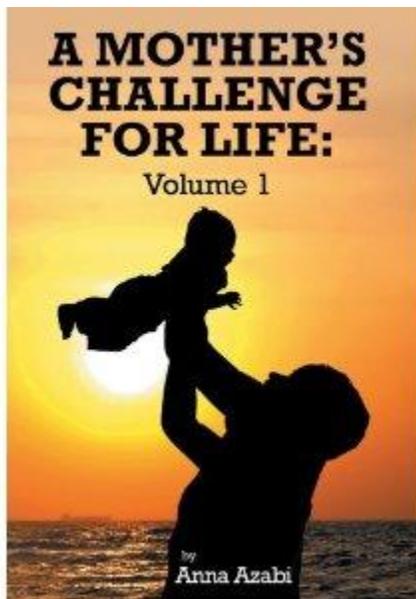
Anna: Yes I wish I had helped him deal with the emotional pain he was in due to our divorce and his relationship with his abusive and addicted father. I think if Vance had received help dealing with this when he was still a child it might have helped him avoid the path of drug abuse he wound up following.

Radha: Another quote from Vance in your book really shows the importance of drug education from a young age. Vance said, "If I knew I was going to be sucked into this drug, do you think for a minute I would have even tried it?"

Anna: Yes I thought he was getting enough drug education in school but I think parents have to take on more responsibility in making sure their children don't ever get started.

Radha: Thank you for sharing your story. CDS Family and Behavioral Health Services Inc. offers free counseling for youth age 6-17, as well as drug prevention programs in some of Gainesville's middle schools. For help, please call 352 244 0628. www.cdsfl.org

Good graphic for first part of story



Good side bars for second part of interview:

“If I knew I was going to be sucked into this drug, do you think for a minute I would have even tried it?”

**“Why do you think they call it painkillers?
To forget your pain.”**