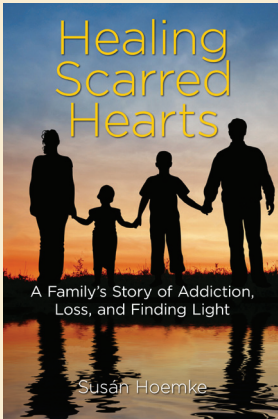


Healing Scarred Hearts

A Family's Story of Addiction, Loss, and Finding Light

With an unflinching look at the tragedy of addiction, author Susán Hoemke offers hope for those suffering its effects.



“I began to think about our family, friends, and people of every walk of life who could face painful situations like ours, which led me to believe I must share what I know and what we had to learn the hard way.”

—Susán Hoemke

DALLAS, TX—Susán Hoemke, devoted mother and author, shares her family’s deeply personal story of crippling addiction and loss in *Healing Scarred Hearts: A Family’s Story of Addiction, Loss, and Finding Light*. With the heroin and opioid crises so prevalent in recent news and events, Hoemke highlights a growing epidemic through the story of her son Hayden’s battle with drug addiction.

By utilizing her own experience, Hoemke uses these events to educate others. *Healing Scarred Hearts* also acts as a resource for parents on the truth behind drug paraphernalia.

“I would like everyone to understand that addiction can happen in any family and by learning and being prepared [...], you can simplify the shock and be able to identify a problem before it escalates,” says Hoemke.

Hoemke uses her gripping account as the platform for raising social awareness while also seeking to create positive change for those affected by drug addiction. For those needing support, she encourages involvement in AA (Alcoholics Anonymous), NA (Narcotics Anonymous), and Al-Anon meetings, as well as other organizations, including Winning the Fight and Hope Sheds Light.

Hayden’s difficult life journey serves as a reminder and warning of the devastating effects of drug addiction on both the user and their family. Hoemke relates the compelling words Hayden spoke during a time when he was clean; “Mom, being an addict is terrible, and I do not want anyone to be like me. Maybe someday I can help people.”

Motivated to fulfill Hayden’s desire to help others, *Healing Scarred Hearts* is the first step in the process for his dedicated mother.

“Through mourning, dealing with the pain, and talking about it, I can now enjoy the wonderful memories I have of him from the joy and the laughter he brought to the family.”

Healing Scarred Hearts releases May 2018. To learn more about this family’s story, visit www.HealingScarredHearts.com

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SUSÁN HOEMKE



SPEAKING TOPICS

**Drug education/awareness/
what we learned**

Marriage during family crisis

Recovering from the loss of a child

Addiction and enabling

Mentoring those in rehab

About the Author

Susán Hoemke knows firsthand what it's like to have a loved one who is struggling with addiction. A wife and mother of four, her life took an unexpected turn in the form of her son Hayden's addiction and other subsequent family tragedies that taught her—the hard way—the challenges of living with this disease.

Now, she hopes to not only bring awareness and understanding to drug addiction but also to offer hope and healing after loss. Her research, experience attending rehab meetings, and time spent living with an addicted loved one enables her to speak on this subject from a deeply personal perspective.

Today, Hoemke is a public speaker and the owner of a product development company. She lives in Dallas, Texas, with her husband, Carl, and youngest daughter, Olivia, while her other two adult children, Landon and Miranda, live in Austin.



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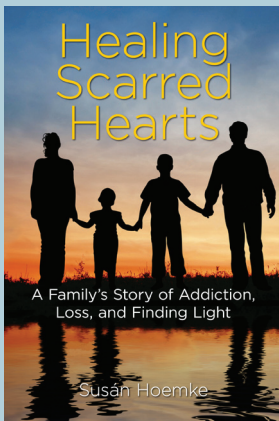
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A Family's Story of Addiction, Loss, and Finding Light

Q&A

with the author



How did you decide to share such a personal story with the world?

When I first began to write, poetry and lyric writing helped me deal with the pain and became a way to process what all the family had been through. I would sit and think about the past, how surreal those eight years seemed. The many situations we faced with limited understanding and knowledge delayed our ability to recognize addiction. I began to think about our family, friends, and people of every walk of life who could face painful situations like ours, which led me to believe I must share what I know. As addiction began to be discussed on the news in 2016, along with the heroin and opioid crises, I remembered my son Hayden's words when he was clean. He said, "Mom, being an addict is terrible, and I do not want anyone to be like me. Maybe someday I can help people." I know Hayden would want this story told, so, with my family's support, I share it for him, with hope that it will help others.

Has the writing experience been positive? Why or why not?

I have been able to heal through writing because it has been therapeutic for me. It was hard, however, because in order to get our story from my mind to paper, I had to relive those hard eight years in my head. It took many tears and a lot of tissue, but I began to notice the great release of pain and the ability to let go of the shame when writing. As time passed, I began to feel a sense of urgency to educate others and share everything we had experienced to hopefully take away the shame and pain others might be living with—or might not even know is possibly coming. Writing our story has been a positive experience for me, thanks to the love and support from my husband and family.

How has sharing your story helped you? In what ways do you hope it will help others?

Being able to share our story has given me a chance to soften my heart after losing my son. Through mourning, dealing with the pain, and talking about it, I can now enjoy the wonderful memories I have of him, like the joy and laughter he brought to the family. I wrote the book to not only bring about awareness, education, and more discussion about addiction, but to also bring hope and healing to those living in tough situations or who have lost someone to addiction.



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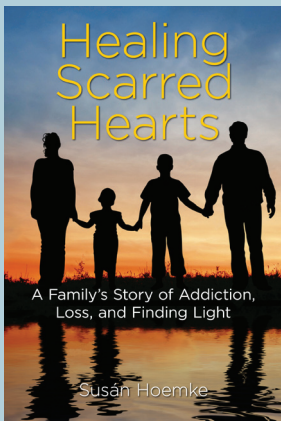
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What do you want to tell others who might be experiencing similar situations within their own families?

Talk directly with the person you are worried about and try to get them to open up to you. Many times, people are reluctant to say anything and are possibly in denial—but do not wait. The earlier you understand there is a problem, the better the odds are for your loved one. If the person is a minor in your home, and you believe they are abusing legal or illegal drugs, buy an advanced drug test from a local pharmacy, insist they take the test, and use an open-door policy when collecting the sample. You are definitely not alone in your struggles. Let go of the shame and embarrassment you might be feeling. Find an outside family member, friend, counselor, or neighbor, or call a church near you that might be able to give you direction of where to go for help. In the first stages of trying to understand what is going on with your loved one, have patience, but be persistent and ask for help.

Additional note to young parents: Please educate yourself now and understand as much as you can about substances that lead to addiction. Talk to your kids early, and use guides for them to learn about substance abuse, illegal drugs, and prescription medication abuse, and try to make them understand the pain and suffering that comes from being addicted to something. The more they know, the better they can grow.

What related organizations are you involved in, and what do they mean to you and others? How can readers get involved in these organizations?

When looking for support, AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) or NA (Narcotics Anonymous) or Al-Anon meetings can be very helpful and are usually found in most cities. There are many groups, such as Winning the Fight and Hope Sheds Light, dedicated to supporting families and having information on their websites. I have been involved with local school counselors to build better drug awareness in our district and speak to parents in hopes of bringing about a better understanding of drug prevention and drug awareness. It will take all of us to reverse the overdose epidemic.



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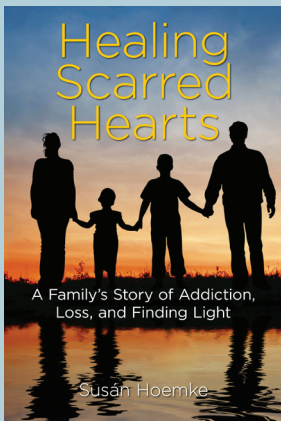
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How has your family found comfort and healing?

It is easier to heal and find comfort if you can stay connected during the very tough times in life. It is not easy and does take effort during a long crisis to hold on to good times and, yes, even laughter, which is so important for family ties. Keep taking care of yourself and your health. Make time to stay involved in what brings you some peace. You have to hold on to the good memories of the past to be able to move forward. By listening and communicating, strength can be found, which keeps the family balanced. Forgiveness, love, and laughter can heal the soul.

What are some of the things that have helped you to get through these difficult years? Where and how did you find hope?

Finding or holding on to a higher power is important in the good times of our lives as well as in the most painful times. My higher power is God, and He has heard many prayers from me, both pleasant and angry. Through faith, I found strength, and through believing in my higher power, I found hope. My best friend and husband, Carl, was with me every step of the way. Because many times we did not have the answers to our problems, we listened to each other and worked together for the good of the family, as best we could. Also, as I looked into the eyes of my other three kids, I knew I would need to help them heal and find order in their lives.

What is the greatest thing you want readers to learn from reading your book?

I would like everyone to understand that addiction can happen in any family, and by learning and being prepared, just in case it happens in your family or a friend's family, you can simplify the shock and be able to identify a problem before it escalates. Taking steps to prevent or slow down addiction in its first stages can save lives. Drugs alter and change the brain, especially during years of youth. Because these changes occur and can get out of control, even causing death, addiction is a disease.



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Excerpts from *Healing Scarred Hearts*

Page 113

“I knew the staff at Burning Tree was sick inside to lose another one of their own, but it was their reality, and they knew the odds. Some made it and some didn’t, just like with any other disease. They gave every bit of knowledge they had so Pete could help himself. It was up to the addict to use it, and if they didn’t, they could lose the battle.

During our drive back to Dallas, Hayden and I talked about everything that had happened. I told Hayden I never wanted to find him like Pete and this should be a wake-up call for him.

He looked down at the floor and said, “I would never want you to find me that way either, but what if I don’t make it?”

Trying not to show my alarm at what he’d said, and give him support instead, I told him not think that way and reminded him that if he put his mind to it and followed his plan to stay clean, he could make it. I began to list the few friends I had that were recovering addicts and were still clean after many years. I assured him he could do it but could sense he still struggled with doubt and a lack of self-confidence.”

Page 124-125

“Silence was the first clue that something was wrong. Hayden always had music, TV, or a video game playing. It was not like him to be in silence. His passion was audio engineering, and he spent hours trying to make that just-right beat and sound for others to enjoy. Carl told me to stay in the living room and he would head to the bedroom to look for him. He walked around the corner to find our son lying on the side of his bed. A few seconds passed and Carl quickly came back around the corner, grasped me tight, and let me know Hayden was dead. I screamed and fell to the floor in agony and disbelief. Carl came to my side, hugging me, and told me I would not want to see Hayden that way because signs showed he had been laying there for many hours. He quickly called 911 and then sat beside me as he cried out. Our hearts were broken, and I felt as if a part of me had died... The police and investigators filled the apartment and began to search for clues to rule out homicide. Carl continued to answer all of the questions because I could not speak. For the first time in my life, I was without a voice.



Excerpts from *Healing Scarred Hearts*

I had never known real despair and the feeling of emptiness. I had seen images of situations like this on TV or in the movies but never thought this would be a part of my life. The emotion I was feeling was very foreign to me because I had never lost anyone close to me. I felt as if I had been hit with a sledge hammer and could not think straight. I was sitting just around the corner from my dead son, who I would never see again on Earth. With my eyes shut tight, I could see his smiling face, and in my head, I could hear his voice. All I had of my child was memories now. I would have to cling to the wonderful ones and deal with the ones which that made me hurt for him. He had finally lost his battle. An awful, dark journey he had been on for eight years.”

Page 144-145

“Through writing poems and songs, I began to think about other families, parents, and kids who could face troubles like ours. There are already so many people being affected by drug abuse and addiction. Heroin abuse is at an all-time high and so is death from drug overdose and opioid abuse. Many like us had no idea the sadness and grief would creep into their homes, and the families that would talk at rehab shared many similarities to our family. Everyone felt very unaware, uneducated, and many times, in denial about the situation unfolding with their loved one.

The subject of drug abuse is too silent, and many are too ashamed to discuss it openly. I think about all the years my kids heard “just say no” during drug-awareness week (also called Red Ribbon Week) at school and did not really understand what they were saying no to. The schools were having door-decorating contests and daily dress-up for fun to represent the horrible dangers of drugs. But I began to think something was very wrong with this approach. Kids were seeing drug-awareness week as something fun because of the way it was being presented to them. They weren’t being informed how dark, ugly, and deadly drugs were. Many had no idea what drug paraphernalia even looked like, and there was a clear lack of education around prevention.

Like all other deadly diseases, preventative care is needed, and parents have to be educated on early detection. In addition to all of this, parents and kids need to be educated on legal issues on and off school campuses. Because both of our boys encountered different kind of legal issues that cost them many hours in jail and us thousands of dollars, I see a great need to improve how society presents drug and legal awareness to our youth. The more they know, the better they can grow.”



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What People Are Saying...

“This is a story of courage, unwavering parental love, and extraordinary spousal support. It is told without shame, so anyone who may be hiding addiction, either one’s own or that of a loved one, may feel safe and unburdened by judgment and can reach out for help.”

—Angela Mia De la Vega, NSS, ARCLM

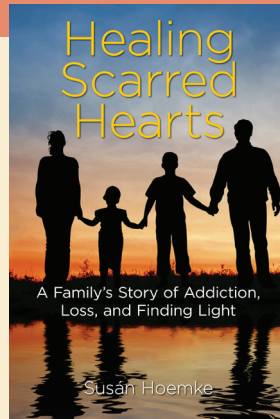


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Author Website	www.HealingScarredHearts.com

SYNOPSIS

In this emotional memoir, Susán Hoemke divulges the heart-wrenching story of her son Hayden's eight-year battle with drug addiction, and his tragic death at age twenty-two. Through the pain of losing a child, Susán unflinchingly relates the crimes that her son's desperation for a fix drove him to commit, and how the mental and physical impact of the drugs on his body turned her happy, creative son into a stranger in their home. The years surrounding Hayden's death have been some of the most difficult in the family's life, his addiction not only affecting him but all those around him. Rebuilding their home and family and attempting to see light in the darkest days they'd ever experienced proved to be an incredibly difficult effort, but not impossible. Hoemke hopes that her family's story will serve as a wake-up call to people everywhere about the drug epidemic across this country and as a song of hope for those suffering through what her family has.



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