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(R-L) Steve M. Grant with his sons Chris and Kelly. (Courtesy of Steve M. Grant)

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How One Father Is Helping Families Struggling With Addiction

Steve M. Grant lost two sons to drug overdose

BY ANDREW THOMAS | March 4, 2020 Updated: March 5, 2020 A ⁺ Text size Print

Losing a child is a parent's worst nightmare. Steve M. Grant of Greenville, South Carolina, is 61 and tragically lost his two and only sons, both to drug overdoses. His oldest son Chris passed away when he was only 21 years old from a cocaine and methadone [overdose](#). Only

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five years later, his youngest son Kelly died after a heroin overdose. Now, Grant is on a mission to help families with an adolescent or young adult who is struggling with addiction. He is the author of “Don’t Forget Me: A Lifeline of Hope for Those Touched by Substance Abuse and Addiction.”

I had the opportunity to speak with Grant about his story, and the advice he has for families with a young loved one who may be struggling with addiction.



Steve M. Grant lost his two and only sons to drug overdoses. (John Booker Fisheye Studios)

The Epoch Times:

What were your sons Chris and Kelly like growing up?

Steve M. Grant:

Christopher was from day one very active—larger than a lot of his friends. He was kind of clumsy initially and then became a very good athlete. Kelly was un-athletic and small for his age, and then eventually grew very tall, but he was very calm, never gave you any trouble. Just a very, very good kid.

The Epoch Times:

How did they develop their addictions?

Mr. Grant:

They took two very distinct paths. Christopher probably started using some sort of drug and alcohol, probably marijuana I would think, at about 14 years old. It progressed over an eight-year period until he died of a methadone and cocaine overdose when he was 21. Over time it was

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five rehabs, a boarding school—a lot of things went on in the middle trying to help him.

Kelly died of a heroin overdose, but it was very different. He was at college and he signed a record deal and was in a band. Everything was going well, and then I found out about the June before he died that he was using heroin, which stunned me because he was afraid of his shadow—and to put a needle in his arm, I couldn't even fathom it.

He had passed out in a parking lot in June of 2010, and I got a hospital bill because he went to the emergency room. He told me that he had passed out from exhaustion because he just got back from this concert, South by Southwest, in Austin, Texas, driving all night. So it sounded plausible to me, but then a couple of months later one of the band members called and said that it was a heroin overdose.

When I found that out, I went out and got him at school and brought him home. It was the end of the school year anyway, and I drug tested him very often. He obviously was clean, but he went back to school and we had an agreement that he was going to go to rehab if he started using again—and he started using again. In October of that year, I went down and got him with the intention of taking him to a rehab facility in North Carolina, and along the way, we lost our leverage on that. He never went to rehab, and he died in December of a heroin overdose.

The Epoch Times:

How did their addictions affect family life?

Mr. Grant:

It was very stressful.

I started looking for different rehab facilities. It basically separated our family because it put me in with Christopher and it put my ex-wife with my other son Kelly

He didn't have this behavior, and his addiction was very short-term. It really separated us. We were not consistent anyway, which may have been some of the problems, but I had to take over for Christopher, and she took Kelly. Obviously it was very stressful on our marriage. We dreaded Friday nights when Chris would be out. We dreaded nights when he didn't come home. Ultimately, we divorced after almost 25 years of marriage, which is about 45 days before Christopher died.

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The Epoch Times:

How did you try to address their addictions?

Mr. Grant:

We threw everything at Christopher's. I just didn't know what was out there. I think there are more services now than there ever was, but in 2005 I didn't know anyone who had died of a drug overdose. So the preceding years when we tried to help Christopher. Again it was five rehabs, a boarding school, and hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent. He got better at times, but it was very short-lived. Every time he got back from a rehab and relapsed, the drug of choice got worse.

Kelly, we tried to address it with rehab when I found out, but he was 24 at the time. Chris was 15. You can take a 15-year-old kicking and screaming to rehab. A 24-year-old has to want to go, and can walk out at any time.



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Steve M. Grant with his sons Chris and Kelly when they were toddlers. (Courtesy of Steve M. Grant)

[With] Christopher, I do tell people that there's only one thing that I regret. I should have sent him to one of those programs where he's gone for about 18 months or two years—one of those wilderness programs or something like that because he really needed to be rewired. I tried to do that with one of those rehab trips, but he ran away from me down in Texas. I regret that I didn't try that sooner.

The Epoch Times:

How did you cope with the loss of Chris, and then Kelly five years later?



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Mr. Grant:

I have a great deal of faith, and I know I'm going to see my boys again someday. That helps me a great deal. With Christopher, I have to admit, after five rehabs, a lot of effort, I hate to say this, there was an expectation that he could die. I knew that I tried everything I could do to help him, and the root was going to be up to him. I had a dark quit.

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help him, and the rest was going to be up to him. I had a dark suit hanging in the closet for that day. Kelly's was such a surprise and it really hurt me. When I found Christopher he looked like he was sleeping. When I found Kelly he was curled up on the floor with a needle in his arm and vomit coming out of his mouth, and it was just tragic. I knew that he was capable of using heroin, but we saw each other almost every day so it was very difficult for him to use.



Kelly and Chris Grant. (Courtesy of Steven M. Grant)

The Epoch Times:

What are the steps a family member should take to try to help a loved one who is struggling with addiction?

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Mr. Grant:

Take it very seriously. Don't disregard the signs. People always ask me, "How do you know when someone's addicted?" I say if they're making decisions that are unusual, abnormal, or dangerous that they normally wouldn't make, and something's controlling their life, that's when you have to get serious, real serious. But you have to get serious before that. I get people who call me and say they found marijuana in their son's pocket or their daughter's purse. That doesn't mean that they have an addiction. That just means that they're using, and it's something you should take seriously.

The Epoch Times:

What should family members not do when trying to help a loved one who is struggling with addiction?

Mr. Grant:

You want them to have as much latitude as they can, but obviously you don't want to alienate them. You want to keep them in that family unit as much as you can and make them a part of it because they already typically have low self-esteem, low self-worth, and you don't want to add to that as a family. I remember telling my son one time that I didn't understand who he was anymore, and that really hurt him. It is a disease, but you have to treat him like he's normal and make him continue to be a family member.

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The Epoch Times:

How should a family member contend with the relapse of a loved one?

Mr. Grant:

Every place I went and everything I read said you plan for relapse. I tell

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every parent that I talk to that you have to plan for relapse. It's a fact of life, and there's nothing bad about it. People feel disgraced, the ones who are really trying, they feel terrible about it, but it's a process.

The Epoch Times:

How can a family member support a loved one who is struggling with addiction?

Mr. Grant:

I think they can be there for them. We did a great support system on both our boys. They need emotional support, but at the same time, you can't forget that they have an addictive behavior. You've got to continue to build the trust, and keep your family unit together.

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A Lifeline of HOPE for Those Touched
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STEVE M. GRANT

"Don't Forget Me: A Lifeline of Hope for Those Touched by Substance Abuse and Addiction"
by Steve M. Grant. (Courtesy of Steve M. Grant)

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The Epoch Times:

What motivated you to write your book?

Mr. Grant:

I was actually motivated from a sales meeting when somebody asked me what my legacy was going to be when I left this life. I told them that I wanted to help adolescents and young adults who struggle with addiction, mental illness, and substance use. I had no idea I was going to say that. That was two weeks after Kelly died. Everybody kept telling me "You need to write a book," because it was unusual that both your only kids die, and they also took two very distinct paths to the same result. Keep in mind in 2005 I didn't know anybody who had died of a drug overdose, and I don't live under a rock here in Greenville. Then in 2010, when Kelly died I didn't know anyone other than his brother who died of a drug overdose. Now, it's a very big thing. People die every week. Across the country, they probably die every day of a drug overdose. When I saw that, I said this book has to happen now. It's got to be very timely.

The Epoch Times:

What do you hope readers—whether they're parents, treatment professionals, or someone struggling with addiction—take away from your book?

Mr. Grant:

Most of it is that here's a very tragic story. Here's why it happened, and then afterward that there's hope for continuing. I meet a lot of people who had the tragedy that I had, and that book helps them because it says here's a guy that's still going, there's hope, you can continue your life, and maybe make even something good out of it like we've done.

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