

INTO LIGHT

Changing the Conversation about Drug Addiction

Dear Facilitator:

Thank you for acting as a facilitator for this exhibit. The INTO LIGHT Project interactive facilitator guide is designed to guide discussion with your group. Please read through the guide in advance to become familiar with the various questions and prompts. *Facilitator prompts are italicized and underlined.* Not all prompts will be used with every group, you may wish to mark ones appropriate to your group and the time you have allotted for exploration of the exhibit.

The exhibit and the reverential way we present it are intentional. Many of the individuals presented here did not get the respect or understanding that they deserved in life because of their disease. Instead, they, and their families, were met with stigma, shame, criticism and rejection. It is the goal of INTO LIGHT to change the conversation about drug addiction by humanizing those with substance use disorders and reducing stigma. We want those who enter the exhibit to be respectful in their approach and aware that families have shared their loved ones' faces and stories in order to educate others about the disease of addiction. It is important to them that their loved ones be valued and appreciated.

Thank you,
INTO LIGHT Project

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Changing the Conversation about Drug Addiction

INTO LIGHT PROJECT
Drug Addiction: Real People, Real Stories
Facilitator Guide

The INTO LIGHT Project Facilitator Guide can be customized for use with any group of people touring the ***Drug Addiction: Real People, Real Stories*** *exhibition.*

Content Warning: This exhibition contains original hand drawn portraits and accompanying life stories of those who have died from drug addiction or drug poisoning. Quiet space outside the gallery is available if needed. (Facilitator–check with administration about location of quiet space.)

Facilitator:

This is an exhibit first of the heart and emotions, it humanizes those who have lost their struggle with addiction to drugs/and those who have died from drug poisoning. The goals of the exhibit are to:

- *Change the conversation about drug addiction.*
- *Understand that mental health challenges and addictions are not the result of flaws or failures.*
- *Humanize those with substance use disorders illustrating it can happen to anyone.*
- *Reduce stigma by understanding its negative impact on help-seeking.*
- *Recognize and understand the feelings and experiences of others.*
- *Provide resources and support.*
- *Take Action.*

The group should stay in the exhibition room, and not move to another room, during the entire exploration. Suggested time is one and a half to two hours.

Setting the Tone:

Facilitator:

- *Create an atmosphere of calm and ease before inviting the group into the exhibit.*
- *The idea is to emphasize the experience of the people represented in this exhibit with understanding and to feel their experience of having a substance use disorder.*
- *We see these lost lives as precious, valuable and worthy of our attention and compassion.*

Some prompts:

- *The faces you are about to see are real people with real lives.*

- *The creators of this exhibit offer this as a space where we can momentarily enter their lives.*
- *Look closely at their faces and read their stories and see what we can learn.*

Facilitator:

- *Encourage the group to walk through the exhibition, viewing portraits and reading stories.*
- *Go to the Slow looking exercise.*
- *Have them choose an "Ask Me" button of "their person."*
- *Choose various facilitator prompts to promote discussion.*

Slow looking exercise

Facilitator:

- *Each participant chooses one portrait/story with which they identify.*
  (participant can take notes if desired)
    - *Study their face, look at each pencil stroke. Look into their eyes. What is revealed to you about this human being?*
    - *Read their story.*
        - *What are your thoughts after reading their story?*
            - *Were they like others you know with or without an addiction?*
            - *How are they the same or different?*
            - *How do you feel about them?*
            - *What do you think they felt about themselves?*
    - *Think about their family/friends.*
        - *What are your thoughts about their family?*
        - *How do you think their family felt having someone they loved with an addiction or who died from drug overdose/poisoning?*

Group Discussion

Facilitator:

- *After viewing the exhibit and choosing one person and button, engage the group in conversation about what they saw and felt.*
    - *What thoughts do you want to share after viewing this exhibit/interacting with "your person?"*
    - *What made you choose the person you did?*
    - *What are you feeling after viewing this exhibit?*
    - *Create a list of feelings on a whiteboard or flip chart.*

What was your first impression when walking into the exhibition?

- *Facilitator:*
- *The presentation–white frames highlighting the faces, everyone lined up.*
- *The solemness, respect, integrity and honesty of the exhibit.*

- The number of people in the exhibit.
- The ages–most of them are young.
- *How did it feel walking into the exhibit?*
- *What is the mood?*
- *Is the exhibit what you expected?*
- *How do you feel about the people in this exhibit?*
- *Why do you think the families submitted their loved ones for this exhibition?*

What common denominators do you see in these portraits/narratives?

Facilitator:

- *Age*
- *Sex*
- *Common personality characteristics*
- *Race/Ethnicity*
  - 2020 stats show that Black non-Hispanic males have the largest increase in the last two years of overdose deaths.
  - Given this statistic–are black males underrepresented in this exhibit?
  - If so, why?
  - Note: Know that INTO LIGHT Project has specifically reached out to communities of color and various ethnicities with little or no results in most of the states.
  - You may ask: Why do you think minority populations are rarely submitted to the project?

Why do you think the organization is called INTO LIGHT?

Facilitator:

- *Sheds light on the topic of drug addiction, stigma and need to change the conversation.*
- *Everyone has dark and light aspects of their personality.*
- *No one should be defined only by one aspect of their character.*

Discuss the choice of using hand drawn portraits vs photography.

- *Facilitator:*
- *The ability to portray more than just the likeness of a person.*
- *Photos are pretty common and abundant; hand drawn portraits can be more personal.*
- *Knowing that each line is hand drawn and connects with the person has a different feeling than a photo.*

What is the value of using portraiture together with narrative in this project?

- Would either of them work on their own?
- Do you notice anything in the language of the narratives?
- What kind of language do you commonly hear (or use) about substance use disorder (SUD)?

- What kind of language is used in the media about people with SUD?

Facilitator:

- *We have included a link to a guide of destigmatizing language for your use or as a handout/resource.*
- *The anti-stigma language handout is available on the INTO LIGHT website.*
- *May discuss how the use of stigmatizing words like junkie, addict, druggie or clean/dirty further stigmatize people with SUD.*
- *Use in media as "junkie informants" or "throwaways" or people who are less than others.*

Who in this exhibit resonates with you, and why?

- Do any of these stories sound like someone you know?
- What is your emotional/human response to the exhibit?

What would you say is the importance of the INTO LIGHT Project exhibit, Drug Addiction: Real People, Real Stories?

Facilitator:

- *Humanize addiction - bring awareness to who may have substance use disorder.*
- *Help dismantle stereotypes about drug addiction.*
- *Reduce stigma around those with substance use disorder (SUD) and their families.*
- *Encourages people to get help for SUD.*
- *Help to change language.*
- *Create understanding and need to be supportive.*

Discuss the term Art Activism as it relates to the INTO LIGHT Project.

- What does art activism mean to you?

Facilitator:

- *Definition of art activism: "a dynamic practice of combining the creative power of the arts to move us emotionally with the strategic planning of activism necessary to bring about social change."*
- *Can you think of, or have you experienced, any other projects that use the power of original art to relay a national message?*
  - *AIDS Quilt*
  - *Murals that popped up after the death of George Floyd*
  - *Art about Black Life Matters*

Why are changing attitudes and conversation around drug addiction and erasing the stigma important?

Facilitator:

- *So people can feel free to ask for help.*
  - *Fact: 84% of those with substance use disorder do not seek help because of stigma and shame.*

- *Recognize this is a mental health issue and is treatable.*
    - *Caring for mental health requires awareness, self-care, self-regulation and assistance.*
    - *Families feel unsupported and often do not reveal that they have someone in their families with SUD.*
    - *Due to stigma, some families do not admit how their loved one died.*
    - *Here you can use current stats from your State Health Department on prevalence, who is affected the most, etc.*
    - *Know that over 108,000 individuals in the U.S. died of overdose death or drug poisoning in 2020.*
    - *Numbers have dropped, since 2022, but 190 people each day, over 70,000 a year still die from drug overdose.*

How are families and friends of those with substance use disorder affected?

Facilitator:

- *Stress, anxiety, grief, trauma, loss of employment, divorce, financial impact (paying for treatment, etc.*
- *Feel shame, stigma, unsupported and alone–loss of friendships and family ties.*
- *Another outcome is how many family members start a non-profit or do other work in the community, form online or in person support groups, social media pages. INTO LIGHT Project is an example of this. It is a national non-profit inspired by the death of the founder's son, Devin, who is featured in this exhibit.*
- *Some family members have gone back to school to become advocate, counselors, etc.*
- *Many cannot move forward with their lives after this profound loss and report feeling stuck.*
    - What have you learned that you didn't know about substance use disorder from interacting with the INTO LIGHT Project exhibit?

What is the takeaway message after viewing the exhibit?

How did you describe someone with substance use disorder prior to the exhibit and how will you describe them after?

Has your attitude toward those with substance use disorder changed after viewing this exhibit?

Facilitator:

- *Encourage discussion on exactly what has changed, and why.*

How will this impact your life or work?

What changes will you make after what you learned from this exhibit?

Facilitator

- *Use of anti-stigmatizing language.*
- *Be an ally for those with SUD.*
- *Help others to understand addiction and help to dispel negative stereotypes.*

- *Wear the "Ask Me" button*
    - *Benefits of button–carry the message of the exhibit beyond the walls of the museum.*
    - *Since the Button says "Ask me about," you do not have to initiate a conversation, people ask, which makes it easier.*
    - *The button has a QR code on the back that links to the narratives so people can read it for themselves*

Were you aware, prior to this exhibit, that substance use disorder is a disease?

Facilitator:

- *Could discuss the predominate view that addiction is a moral failing as opposed to a brain disorder.*

How can allies of those with SUD, or health care providers, social workers, counselors, first responders and others help to reduce the stigma about those with substance use disorder and change the conversation and dismantle the stereotypes around SUD?

How can you, as an individual, help change the conversation?

Facilitator:

- *Language.*
- *Educating others about how SUD is an illness, not a moral failing..*
- Compassion, understanding, support
- Wear an "Ask Me About" button

Do you think this exhibit has achieved its mission to change the conversation about drug addiction and to address stigma?

- *Facilitator*
    - If so, how? If not, why?

This is a good time to present a "call to action" for the group. "What are you willing to do to help reduce the stigma about addiction/change the conversation?

- *Facilitator*
    - *Have them come up with their own ideas.*
        - *Wear the button and talk about the person.*
        - *Use anti-stigmatizing language.*
        - *Point out to others that addiction is a disease and is treatable.*
        - *Recommend coming to the exhibit.*

Please have the group fill out the paper survey after the exhibition and leave them with the venue. Thank you for your help in gathering data needed for INTO LIGHT Project and for your facilitation of the Drug Addiction: Real People, Real Stories Exhibition.