Supporting Women to Prevent FASD
Creating a Circle of Hope

Kathleen Tavenner Mitchell, MHS, LCADC
Vice President and National Spokesperson
National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome
The effects of FASD last a lifetime

FASD is the leading cause of intellectual disability and is a leading cause of birth defects and learning and behavioral disorders.

FASD’s can be PREVENTED!
The **Weekly Roundup** is published to provide a spotlight on media, industry research, and events pertinent to FASD and alcohol exposed pregnancies.

- **NOFAS** Facebook Page, COH Facebook, & Twitter account.

- Alcoholfreepregnancy YouTube Channel
  - 188 interviews
NOFAS Circle of Hope
Birth Mothers Network
www.nofas.org/coh
Mitchell@nofas.org

- Peer mentoring
- Support
- Speakers Bureau
- Newsletters
- Private Facebook site for birth moms
- Webinars
Empowerment

The process of increasing the capacity of individuals to make choices into desired actions and outcomes
And allow women to discuss the **unthinkable:**

- Sexuality
- Abuse (emotional, sexual, physical)-help client to define
- Substance use during pregnancy and possible consequences
- Menstruation-Menopause
- Secrets
Honor & Empower Women

- Maiden * Mother* Crone
- Intuitive wisdom
- Motherhood: Sacred vessels of the future people
- Healers
- Caretakers
- Artisans
- Visionaries
- Desires, dreams and fantasies
Self Actualization

Treatment, 12 step, PCAP or other recovery:

- Physical needs
- Safety and security

COH membership

- LOVE and BELONGING-feeling connected
- Self-esteem
- Self: sense of purpose, morality, inner peace
Our journey’s are circular, we are all connected & cross paths with perfect timing if we listen to the stories.

“\textit{It’s the stories that will create the change. If you want to serve, you need to begin with the stories.}”

\textbf{Bill Clinton}

\textit{Mitchell, K 2009}
1977
Karli, Danny and Erin
A Happy Little Hippy Family
Diagnosis was a gift:
Learned to view the glass as half-full

- Don’t take simple things for granted
- Don’t take yourself too seriously
- Make each day fun
- **Conscious Contact** is real
- Pay attention to the little joys—they matter most
- How we say things can effect others; try to be nice to all
- Saying good morning and good night is very important
100% Alcohol Free!!
My Child has FAS: The Scarlet Letter

A lifetime of Shame & Judgment

Mitchell, K. 2009
Recovery

- A return to a normal condition
- Something gained or restored
NOFAS Circle of Hope
Warrior Mom Network
www.nofas.org/coh
Current Education & Household Income

**Education**
- College Graduate: 11%
- Some College/2 Year Technical School: 33%
- Some Graduate School: 16%
- Highschool Graduate: 14%
- GED: 9%

**Income**
- $<16,000: 17%
- $17,000-$30,000: 17%
- $31,000-$50,000: 17%
- $51,000-$75,000: 9%
- $75,000-$125,000: 7%
- $126,000-$200,000: 2%
- Above $200,000: 1%
- Public Assistance: 30%

The NOFAS 2012 BMN Survey/ n=93
After the Women Became Sober...

26.5% increased their household income

37.5% pursued further education
Current Family Situation

- Single Parent Household: 32%
- Married or live with birthfather: 23%
- Birth father assists with parenting/resources: 9%
- Share parenting with someone other than birth father: 15%
- Divorced or separated from birth father: 10%
- Birth father does not assist with parenting or resources: 11%

The NOFAS 2012 BMN Survey/ n=93
Knowledge About Drinking While PG

Has anyone ever talked to you about the effects of drinking alcohol during PG?
- Yes: 78%
- No: 22%

If so, who?
- HCP: 35%
- Friend: 10%
- Teacher: 13%
- Counselor: 20%
- Elder: 2%
- Spouse: 2%
- Parent/Grandparent: 9%
- Traditional Healer: 1%
- Other: 8%

Which substance is most harmful during PG?
- Alcohol: 63%
- Heroin: 14%
- Cocaine: 8%
- Marijuana: 3%
- Painkillers: 3%
- I Don't Know: 9%

Can it be prevented?
- Yes: 94%
- No: 6%

The NOFAS 2012 BMN Survey/ n=93
Motherhood

Average Number of Pregnancies:
3 (2.72) Pregnancies

Average Number of Living Children:
2 (2.24) Children

Average Age of Mother When She Was Pregnant with...

Her 1st Child: 22 (21.77) Years Old
Her 2nd Child: 25 (25.43) Years Old
Her 3rd Child: 28 (28.47) Years Old

The NOFAS 2012 BMN Survey/ n=93
Why?

- I am a social drinker, drank before I knew I was pregnant and stopped when I found out. **28.1%**
- I knew I shouldn’t, but I couldn’t stop. **21.9%**
- Doctor never said I shouldn’t drink. **21.9%**
- I was an addict in active addiction. **18.8%**
- Doctor said I should drink. **9.4%**
- I was an addict and ashamed. **9.4%**
- I am an alcoholic, drank before I knew I was pregnant, and stopped when I found out. **6.3%**
- I thought it was ok to drink, just not excessively. **3.1%**
- I was an addict and could not get into treatment. **3.1%**
The Most Common Mental Illnesses: Depression & Anxiety

**Addiction Diagnosis**
- Alcoholism: 23%
- Drug Addiction: 33%
- Both: 28%

**Mental Health Status**
- No Mental Illness Diagnosis: 33%
- Diagnosed w/ Mental Illness(es): 67%
Hello Soul Self!

Treatment is the safe cocoon, that releases the butterfly!

I CAN and WILL Experience Good Things in Life.... I can giggle, hug, create, take risks

...and we get to watch a BEAUTIFUL SOUL BLOOM
Practice Compassion

They are doing the best that they can, with the tools they have been given.

- Be Gentle * Listen to their story
- Help them to find safe haven ~ if it’s obvious they need help to stop drinking ~ help them find support
- Go the extra mile ~ check in with them
- Never under-estimate the power of giving just 2 minutes of your time ~ let them know they matter
Embrace your femininity!

- Release the guilt ~ life is too short.
- Dance like no-one is watching!
- Play and create everyday!
- Dress-up and enjoy decorating your body.
- Own your artist self.
- Spend time with your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren...you are their teacher.
- Immerse yourself in water, play in the snow, lay in the sunshine, and jump in the leaves.
- Open your heart, help others...it is the way of the feminine.
- Allow the tears to come, so that the sun will shine brightly.
- Meditate, listen...your inner wisdom is speaking to you.
- Sing loudly, hug trees, scream with the wind, and howl at the moon.
- Fill your house with fresh flowers.
- Paint your walls in bright colors.
- Make love; scream and howl if you want to!
Contact me ANYTIME!

Thank You!

Kathy Mitchell
NOFAS.org
Washington, DC

mitchell@nofas.org