



Association for Workplace Tragedy Family Support

Atlantic Family Forum

May 30 - June 1, 2025

Oak Island Resort & Conference Centre, Nova Scotia

Program as of February 11, 2025. Program subject to change

Day 1 – Friday May 30

3:00-5:00 pm

Room Check-in
Forum Registration

5:45 pm

Welcome Supper

7:30 pm

Reflections Ceremony: Honouring our Families - Past and Present

Day 2 – Saturday May 31

7:30-8:30 am

Breakfast

8:45 am

Opening Session: Welcome

9:00 am

Keynote Speaker: The View from Here

9:30-9:45 am

Coffee Break

The 2025 Atlantic Family Forum has been generously supported by:



Day 2 – Saturday May 31

Workshops

9:45 am-12:15 pm

Masks of Grief and Loss for New Participants

Thomas Marsh, Family Support Coordinator, Threads of Life

In this session, you'll understand how we wear various masks to get through our daily lives and what we can do to safely take off those masks to deal with our journey. Whether your situation involves the loss of life, a traumatic injury or occupational disease, you will benefit from the insights gained in this session. You'll have a short period of time to share with the other participants a piece of your family story and what brought you here. This session will help you develop a connection to other family members attending the family forum and give you a more meaningful experience.

Please note: This workshop is highly recommended for family members attending their first family forum. Members of one family are encouraged to attend different sessions so that each is able to share their own story. **The session will be limited to a maximum of 14 participants.**

The Strength of a Thousand

Darrin Parkin, Spiritual Care Clinician / Conference speaker

In this workshop, we will explore the role of family caregivers who support the family system after a tragedy as well as caregivers who care for a loved one with a long term illness or injury. We will ask, "what keeps us going?", "what is caregiver burnout and what can we do about it?" and "what is the impact of caregiving on family dynamics?"

Chronic Sorrow

Mark Shelvock, Registered Psychotherapist, Certified Thanatologist, Adjunct Professor with the Grief Education Program - University of Toronto, and Clinical Educator with Psychology Today

Chronic sorrow is a unique form of distress, as there is no foreseeable end to the loss. It is the chronicity of feelings that differentiate chronic sorrow, and it is a living loss, as it requires a grieving person to continuously readjust their life in a way that is different than death-related losses. This workshop includes a unique 'speed-dating' format where participants get to learn from each other and is facilitated by a registered psychotherapist.

Numb and Number: Grief, Trauma and Addiction

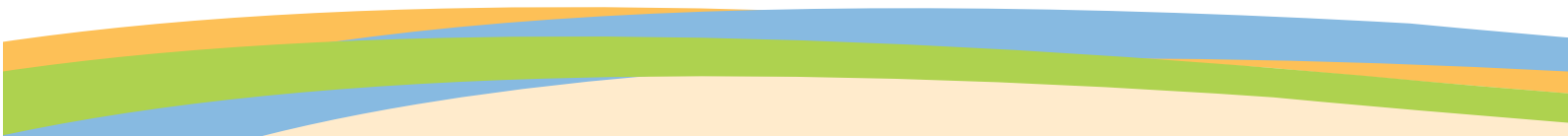
Roy Ellis, Facilitator

People who are grieving, experiencing trauma and/or loss are often in a lot of pain. If you're really suffering, you'll probably try and numb the pain so that you can get along in life. The question everyone asks about addiction is, "how can I stop?" The real question to ask is, "What is the pain I am numbing out?" This workshop will help you understand why we numb out, how it impacts our brains and relationships, and some healthier options for really working with our pain so that we can heal, love and thrive.

12:15-1:15 pm

Networking Lunch

Each worker and family member who has been affected by a workplace tragedy is a thread in the quilt of life. Each thread, by itself, cannot stand alone, but when woven together provides strength. Although we are individuals, we are also connected in the fabric of life.



Day 2 – Saturday May 31

Workshops 1:30-4:00 pm

Hope, Love, Fear and the Shawshank Redemption

Darrin Parkin, Spiritual Care Clinician / Conference speaker

"I don't like it here. I'm tired of being afraid all the time. I've decided not to stay. I doubt they'll kick up any fuss. Not for an old crook like me." —*Brooks Hatlen in The Shawshank Redemption*.

In this workshop, we will explore the themes of hope, fear, and love by taking a look at three main characters in the movie "The Shawshank Redemption". In the aftermath of the loss of a loved one or the impact of workplace injury, how can we adjust to a life lived with love and hope rather than fear?

Mystical Experiences

Mark Shelvock, Registered Psychotherapist, Certified Thanatologist, Adjunct Professor with the Grief Education Program - University of Toronto, and Clinical Educator with Psychology Today

Everyone knows that death ends a person. Or does it? This presentation explores the extraordinary experience of after-death communications for those who have suffered a death-related loss. Experiences range significantly, but in all cases, the bereaved feel that a specific deceased person is around. This presentation is facilitated by a registered psychotherapist who specializes in trauma and grief. This workshop incorporates group discussion where participants learn from each other and share stories.

When Words are Not Enough - Using Art to Express Ourselves

Kelley Thompson, Office Coordinator

Join in this session of creativity and express yourself using various media. Participants will create their own art with a focus on the art-making process rather than the finished product. **Artistic skills are not necessary** as you take part in this creative, encouraging environment. You will be able to express yourself through art and have some fun at the same time.

How's Your Love Life? 10 tips for a Healthy Relationship

Roy Ellis, Facilitator

Many of us became adults without ever learning what it means to live a healthy relational life on this planet. Safe connectedness is our birthright, but healthy intimacy and closeness takes a little know-how and lots of practice. This workshop will offer 10 powerful tips to help couples and anyone interested in creating healthier relationships with those they love. It will pull from the wisdom of multiple marriage and therapy experts, including Terry Real, John Gottman, Esther Perel and Harville Hendrix.

2:45-3:00 pm

Coffee Break

4:00-6:00 pm

Free Time

6:00-8:00 pm

Supper followed by Volunteer Recognition Presentation

Join us in celebrating our amazing volunteers & learn some of the many opportunities you could volunteer to support families and work together towards prevention.

Day 3 – Sunday June 1

7:30-8:30 am

Breakfast

8:30-8:45 am

Please check out of your room. The Front Desk can hold your luggage if needed

8:45-9:00 am

Morning Welcome

Workshops

9:15-11:30 am

To Love is to Grieve

Darrin Parkin, Spiritual Care Clinician / Conference speaker

“To love is to Grieve.” In this workshop, we will explore the various ways in which we grieve, the types of grief, the seasons of grief, as well as the complexities of grief. We will explore questions like “does grief come to an end?” and “do men and women grieve differently?”

Healing with Sound

Jenn Langille, Sound Healing Facilitator

This session is about the power of vibration and frequency and how we can use sound to help trigger the relaxation response and regulate our nervous systems. Sound healing is an ancient healing modality that uses vibration to help facilitate deep relaxation and promote balance. During this session, we will use gongs, singing bowls, chimes, drums, rain sticks and your own voice to demonstrate how you can use sound as a tool for healing.

Family Dynamics and Grief

Mark Shelvock, Registered Psychotherapist, Certified Thanatologist, Adjunct Professor with the Grief Education Program - University of Toronto, and Clinical Educator with Psychology Today

Complex family dynamics can complicate the natural and instinctive process of grief for an individual. While different people grieve differently, this can result in major relational tensions among family members. As such, this workshop provides psychoeducation on the intersections between grief, relationships, and attachment theory [the science behind connection/love]. The presentation is facilitated by a registered psychotherapist who specializes in trauma, grief, and complicated relationships. Practical tips for surviving your least favourite family members are included.

Healing Sharing Circle

Roy Ellis, Facilitator

When we talk about our grief and distress with peers in a safe environment, a number of important things happen – we feel less alone, we feel seen by others, our hurts are soothed and we experience a little support. This facilitated sharing circle provides an opportunity for family members to express feelings and thoughts about their losses, stressors, traumas and challenges. There is no pressure to share, just listening can be a powerful healing experience. This facilitated reflective sharing activity helps people feel less alone, learn a little about themselves, and reduces the incidence of burnout.

10:30-10:45 am

Coffee break

11:30-1:00 pm

Closing Lunch and departure at 1:00 pm

Safe travels home and hope to see you again next year!

Save the date: May 29 - 31, 2025