



## Humanizing The Addict

**Overview:** The goal of this activity is to challenge our existing attitudes about who addiction affects. Using statistics on the opioid epidemic, along with a poem contributed by a social worker and substance abuse counselor, participants will explore the reach of opioids in Ohio.

**Tags:** statistics, addiction, stigma, empathy

**Theme:** Challenging Assumptions

**Time:** 60 minutes

**Materials:** paper, pens, participant handouts

**Participants:** 3-25

**Room Configuration:** Flexible

### Activity

**Introduction:** Initial Questions (10 Minutes)

1. Present the participants with a synopsis of addiction issues and statistics capturing the current/recent situation. Review the factsheet with the audience, covering some of the key points related to the book manuscript. Ask the audience if they have any initial thoughts, questions, or concerns.

**Engagement:** One Sentence Summary (35 Minutes)

1. Give participants a copy of *The Addict*. Ask participants to read the poem or watch the recording of the poet reading. (Facilitator: if watching video of the poet reading poem, navigate to that activity on the web site)
2. Once participants have finished reading, they should be instructed to summarize the main themes/ideas/takeaways of the poem into one sentence. Encourage the participants to incorporate who/what/when/where/why/how into their sentence.
3. Once participants have written their sentence, ask them to turn to the person next to them and share their response. (**Variation:** If group is large, or facilitator feels that this step isn't necessary, the facilitator may wish to just pose these questions to the group.)  
Allow participants to focus on questions such as:
  - a. Was your sentence vastly different than your partners'? If so, how? Do you have thoughts on why they might have been different?
  - b. What common themes or ideas were captured by both of your responses? What passages in the text allowed for this to happen?

- c. What different themes or ideas were captured by your partner that were not included in your response? What influenced their decision to include this?
  - d. Upon reading your partner's sentence, would you go back and revise yours? If so, how and why?
4. Bring the group back together. Allow for a general discussion of the participants' experiences sharing their one sentence summaries. If a natural conversation does not develop, ask the following to encourage discussion:
  - a. How many groups (if any) had drastically different summaries? Would you mind sharing with the group?
  - b. What were some commonalities that were identified through sharing your summaries? Did anyone have almost identical summaries?
  - c. Did anyone decide that they wanted to change their summary after their discussion with their partner? If so, why?

**Conclusion:** Wrap-Up and Next Steps (15 Minutes)

1. Announce that 15-minutes remain for the session.
2. Summarize the main points of the discussion. What were some of the key takeaways? Were there any differences in opinions? Any controversies? Based on the dialogue, what will you be thinking about after your leave?
3. Wrap up the session by speaking about the manuscript, further efforts, additional resources, etc. Exchange contact information and continue further conversations if needed.

## Some Facts about Opioids in Ohio and the U.S.

- Over 72,000 Americans died of a drug overdose in 2017; two-thirds of these deaths resulted from the use of illicit or prescription opioids. To put this into perspective, nearly 50,000 individuals died per year at the height of the HIV epidemic in the United States.
- In 2017, there were around 58 opioid prescriptions written for every 100 Americans.
- More than 17% of Americans had at least one opioid prescription filled, with an average of 3.4 opioid prescriptions dispensed per patient.
- About 80 percent of people who use heroin first misused prescription opioids.
- Opioid abuse grew significantly in 2017 in the over 65 population.
- Drug overdose is now the leading cause of death for Americans under the age of 50; overall life expectancy has declined for the last two years in a row.
- About an equal number of overdoses occur in urban and rural areas, but overdoses are increasingly more quickly in rural areas. Source:
- $\frac{2}{3}$  of drug overdoses in 2017 were among males;  $\frac{1}{3}$  occurred in females.
- Opioid overdoses are higher among white Americans, but are increasing faster among nonwhite populations.
- Ohio is one of top five states with the highest rates of opioid overdose.
- The rate is more than double the national rate.

*Sources: Centers for Disease Control, National Institute on Drug Abuse.*

**Reading:** “The Addict, A Human Being” by Stephanie Kendrick

When I think about the women  
who make it to us  
who make it  
through detox, still willing  
I am scared.

Not of them, they will resist  
losing control (who wouldn't?)  
They will not trust others  
(they have been hurt too much)

They will take note of what we say  
then cry when waking  
from dreams so vivid they swear  
they smell the heroin burning  
through their pillow. Some will run

and some too fast and when I think  
about those women  
I am terrified  
and sad.

And tonight after working with these women  
I might pour a 2<sup>nd</sup> (maybe 3<sup>rd</sup>) glass  
and remember that I've been hurt (too much)  
and I am not so different from them.

*Stephanie Kendrick*

*These Community Conversations are funded by the Ohio Humanities Council. For further information, as well as information on rules for use, please see [OpioidsOhio.org](http://OpioidsOhio.org).*