

Sibling experiences of AOD use.

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Introduction: Sibling experiences of AOD use.

Method: Interpretative study underpinned by Gadamerian hermeneutics.

Discussion: My doctoral research on “Sibling bereavement when the brother or sister dies for a drug related reason” led to investigating the experiences of siblings who have a brother or sister using drugs. Many siblings talked about and knew their siblings in ways that AOD services can never know a person. The sibling relationship shaped the way the sibling was viewed, with many younger siblings seeing their older brother or sister as a hero. The hindsight view, by mostly older siblings, was also revelatory. The worry and distress caused through the inability to intervene in the drug use, led to distance being put in the relationship, which then left them ravaged by guilt and regret as bereaved siblings. Some siblings found ways to keep their focus on the relationship allowing for the sibling’s identity - their roles, responsibilities - within the family to be the primary emphasis. Acceptance of the person and the relationship did not mean approval of the drug use. Acceptance made it possible to know their sibling in other ways, not just as a drug user, because every person is more than just a drug user, they have a family, they usually have siblings, they live in a multiplicity of relationships extending beyond the drug use.

Conclusion: My research, together with other emerging research, illuminates sibling experiences and can inform changes in the AOD sector.