

Book Club & Reader Guide



Dear Reader,

Thank you for picking up this book and for allowing me to be part of your conversation.

I wrote *Drugs, Lies & Docs* for several reasons. As a physician who has spent years teaching medical students, residents and practising doctors about addiction—particularly how it manifests within the healthcare professions—I wanted to ensure those teachings could continue even after I retire. More broadly, I hoped to offer a perspective on addiction and recovery that reaches beyond lecture halls and into the hands of people who may never have imagined themselves touched by these issues—until they are.

Almost everyone is affected by addiction in some way. We hear about it in the news, especially in the context of the opioid crisis, but these reports can feel confusing, frightening, and impersonal. I wanted to share a different view—one rooted in lived experience, hope, and the possibility of healing. *Recovery* – with a capital-R.

This book is not just about the illness. It's about the joy, honour, and humanity that can be found in the process of getting well. It's about confronting shame and stigma, and understanding addiction as part of the broad spectrum of human experience. If my story helps even one person find the courage to reach out for help—or offers someone the tools to extend their hand to anyone suffering—then it's done its job.

With gratitude,

Dr. I. Michael Kaufmann

About the Book

At its heart, *Drugs, **Lies** & Docs* follows two intertwined narrative threads.

1

The Lecture

The first is built around a lecture I delivered for many years to medical students across Ontario. Through this lens, I teach readers about the realities of addiction in the medical profession—how it shows up, how it's often hidden, and how Recovery is not only possible, but profoundly meaningful.

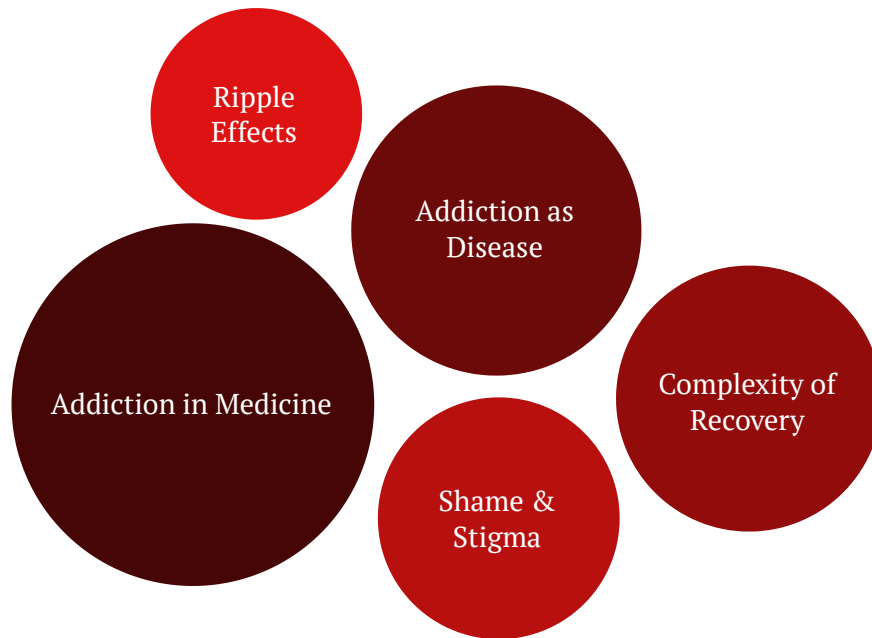
2

The Personal Journey

The second thread is my own story. My testimonial. In sharing my personal journey—from my origins and early experiences to the height of my illness and the long road to Recovery—I aim to bring to life the key ideas I taught. This narrative is raw and honest, but it ends well. I became a doctor to care for others, and this memoir is my way of continuing that mission.

Key Themes to Explore

Here are some central themes to reflect on in your group:



Addiction in the Medical Profession

What happens when the healers themselves are struggling? How is this seen, supported, or ignored in healthcare systems?

Understanding Addiction as a Disease

Addiction is a chronic condition—common, human, and deserving of compassion and treatment.

The Complexity of Recovery

True Recovery is holistic—biological, psychological, social, and spiritual—and deeply individual.

Shame and Stigma

These are not just feelings; they are barriers to healing. How can we work to reduce them, in ourselves and in society?

The Ripple Effects of Addiction

Addiction doesn't only affect the individual—it's a family disease, and often a workplace one too.

Discussion Questions

These questions are designed to spark thoughtful conversation. Use as many or as few as you'd like:

Dr. Kaufmann describes a typical suburban childhood, with both "normal" moments and significant adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). How would you describe your own upbringing? Have past experiences shaped your personal risk and / or views on health, addiction, or resilience?

The memoir notes that at least 10% of the population is affected by addiction at some point. Has addiction touched your life personally? Your family?

On page 30, Dr. Kaufmann writes, "Addiction separates its sufferers from the people they care about and interferes with all spheres of functioning." After reading this, how do you think about supporting someone close to you who is struggling?

Judy, Dr. Kaufmann's spouse, remained by his side throughout his journey. What do you make of her choice to stay, and how does it complicate ideas about boundaries, love, or loyalty?

Many of the memoir's most powerful moments are deeply personal. How do you feel about sharing your own stories with others—whether close friends or wider circles?

Were you surprised to learn how common addiction is among physicians? Has this changed how you think about the people who care for you?

Shame and stigma plays a major role in keeping people silent. Have you ever been impacted by these, whether around addiction, mental health, or something else? How did you respond?

Making amends is central to many recovery journeys. Can you relate to the idea of repair and forgiveness in your own life?

Have you ever felt unable to ask for help—even when you needed it? What held you back?

Dr. Kaufmann recalls coworkers like Gail and Junior trying to reach out to him before he was ready. Have you ever tried to help someone who wasn't receptive? What did that feel like? He also describes the role of consequences in this setting. What are your thoughts about including certain consequences when someone turns down your offer of help?

After reading this book, have your views on addiction or recovery shifted? What stands out most about your new understanding?

On page 29, Dr. Kaufmann wonders what might have happened if his older self could have spoken to his younger self. If you could go back and speak to a younger version of yourself, what would you say?

Personal Reflection Prompts

For those who want to go deeper on their own, here are a few questions to sit with:

Recovery

What does "recovery" mean to you?

Shame

Have you ever felt ashamed of something you were going through? How did you cope?

Support

Are there people in your life who might need help right now? How can you show up for them without overstepping?

Vulnerability

What role does vulnerability play in healing—for you or for others?

Character

How do you define strength of character?

Book Club Activity Suggestions

Looking for a meaningful way to connect?



1

Alcohol-Free Gathering

In light of what we now know about alcohol and health, try hosting your book club meeting alcohol-free. Explore what that feels like—socially, emotionally, and physically.

2

Letter to Self Exercise

Invite members to write a short note to a younger version of themselves, inspired by Dr. Kaufmann's reflection. Share with the group if comfortable.

3

Story Circle

Take turns (in pairs or as a group) sharing a story of resilience—big or small—from your own life.

4

Stigma Jar

Write down one stigma or internalized belief you'd like to release. Fold and place it in a jar. You can choose to read them aloud or let them go silently.

Resources & Next Steps

To continue the conversation or learn more:



Treatment Centers

- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)
- Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction



Support Groups

- Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)
- Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Cocaine Anonymous (CA)
- Al-Anon Family Programs



Professional Help

- Physician Health Program (Ontario Medical Association)
- SMART Recovery

① Interested in having Dr. Kaufmann join your book club for a Q&A (virtually or in person)?

Contact: Tabitha Rose, tabitha@lifetopaper.com

Author Q&A

SUBMIT YOUR QUESTIONS HERE



Have a question about addiction in healthcare? Recovery journeys? The writing process? Submit your question for Dr. Kaufmann using the QR code or link below.



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