



Highlights from the 7th Interactive Global Recovery Dialogue: **"Inspire By Example"** September 12, 2024

Moderated by Michael Botticelli, Chair, Global Recovery Network (GRN)

Presentation by Chris Cull, two-time cross-Canada cyclist, filmmaker, motivational speaker, recovery peer and founder of **Inspire By Example.**

Chris highlighted the profound impact of a sense of purpose in recovery, emphasizing how it can be one of the most powerful drivers for individuals overcoming substance use disorders.

Chris's lightbulb moment came after reading Viktor Frankl's "**Man's Search for Meaning**", which sparked a realisation of his potential and desire to help others facing similar challenges. Inspired, Chris set out on a mission, training and preparing to cycle across Canada to raise awareness about addiction. His compelling story illustrates the transformative role of purpose, showing how it can be a beacon for those seeking a spiritual and meaningful recovery.



Chris's journey demonstrates the transformative power of effective storytelling in recovery. He found meaning and passion through his struggles, and in turn, Chris inspired others to see that recovery was possible and that there was hope beyond substance use disorder. His storytelling motivated those facing similar challenges and gave support and hope to others on their recovery journeys. Through his mission, Chris learnt that...

“You get to choose what your attitude is going to be in any circumstances given to you.”



Chris's Personal Experience of Mental Health Challenges as Leverage:

- √ **Depression** – Helped him prioritize and adapt, reshaping his life during recovery.
- √ **Anxiety** – Became a tool for strategic thinking, allowing him to plan ahead like a chess game.
- √ **Addiction** – Taught him perseverance, showing that if he wanted something badly enough, he could achieve it.
- √ **ADHD** – Harnessed his ability to hyperfocus, excelling in areas of passion, including his advocacy and film work.
- √ **PTSD** – This kept him grounded and connected to his purpose, serving as a constant reminder of his “why” in recovery.

The graphic is split into two parts. The left part has a black background with a white and red starburst icon. The text reads: **MY MENTAL HEALTH = MY SUPER POWERS**. Below this is a list of five items, each with a bullet point: **Depression** - Helps me prioritize and reorder my life at a higher level (Adaptability); **Anxiety** - Helps me think ahead like a chess game (Strategic Thinking); **Addiction** - Taught me if I want something bad enough, I will find a way (Perseverance); **ADHD** - Interest based learner. If I'm interested in what I'm doing, I can excel at it (Hyperfocus); **PTSD** - Helps remind me of my "Why" (Staying Grounded). The right part of the graphic is a photograph of a person wearing a white and red Canadian flag shirt and shorts, standing on a sandy beach and holding a bicycle high above their head. In the background, there is a large bridge over the ocean under a blue sky.



For many, the sense of purpose is not merely found but actively shaped during their recovery journey as they rediscover themselves and rebuild their lives around recovery. Passion and purpose become the guiding forces throughout their struggles with substance use disorder.

Key Highlights about Sharing Your Story

- √ **Be Relatable** – Ensure that your story resonates with your audience by allowing them to feel a part of your journey.
- √ **Provide Value** – Focus on what knowledge or experiences you can share that will benefit or educate your audience.
- √ **Use Non-Stigmatizing Language** – Incorporate first-person, non-judgmental language to avoid reinforcing stigma.
- √ **Highlight the Recovery** – Focus on the lessons learned and the positive aspects of your recovery rather than tying your worth solely to your trauma.
- √ **Pace Your Vulnerability** – Gradually share deeper aspects of your story when you're comfortable, to avoid overwhelming yourself or your audience.

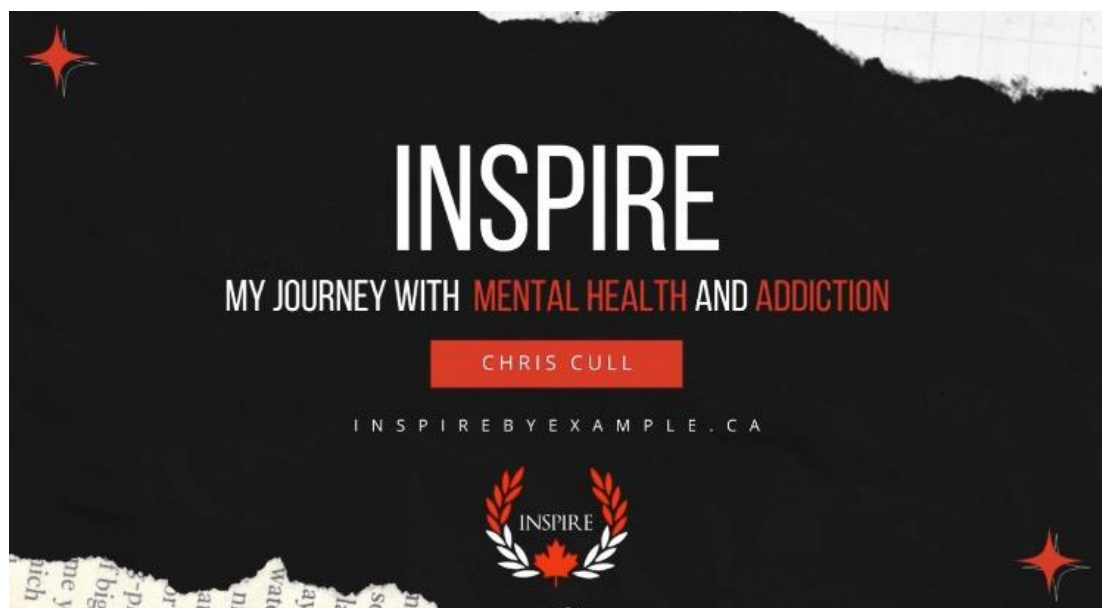
DECISION TO SHARE YOUR STORY

- Recovery and sharing your story is a unique pathway for everyone
- Will I be hurt by sharing my journey?
- Will others be hurt by sharing my journey?
- Should I prepare my family and friends before sharing?
- How do I know what I should share and what I shouldn't?



Key Highlights about Engaging the Media

- ✓ **Target the Right Media** – Reach out to journalists or outlets already focused on addiction and recovery topics.
- ✓ **Be Mindful of Scrutiny** – Understand that media exposure can invite scrutiny, which may evoke negative emotions or past associations.
- ✓ **Highlight Triumph** – Emphasize the successes and triumphs in your recovery journey, not just the struggles.
- ✓ **Develop a Social Media Strategy** – Build a strong presence on platforms like LinkedIn, then strategically share your messaging.
- ✓ **Consider Impact on Others** – Be mindful of how sharing your story might affect those around you, particularly family members or close friends.



- √ **Inspire without Needing All the Answers** – You don't have to be an expert to share your story. It's about inspiring others, and it's okay not to have all the answers.
- √ **Not Everyone is Ready or Qualified to Share** – Mentors, recovery advocates, and media need to be cautious about who takes the stage, ensuring they are prepared and equipped to share responsibly.
- √ **Self-Awareness and Limitations** – Be mindful of your personal boundaries and limitations when sharing your story. Understanding your emotional capacity is essential for maintaining well-being.
- √ **Preparation is Key** – Before speaking publicly, ensure you are adequately prepared to avoid misinformation or harmful narratives, particularly in prevention settings.
- √ **Lived Experience is Valuable, but Not the Only Credential** – Just because someone is in recovery doesn't automatically make them an expert. Training and balanced perspectives are needed to inform their approach.
- √ **The Power of Stories to Educate** – Sharing personal stories has the power to educate and inspire, creating opportunities to effect change and drive the recovery movement forward.



***Recovery is More Than Abstinence –
Recovery is a transformative process; the
person in recovery is not the same person who
was using, and this journey shapes their identity
and growth.***

Dr. Robert DuPont