



By Cory Soal
R.H.A.D.

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NEWS

GEORGETOWN MOM AND SON GET REAL ABOUT ADDICTION AND MENTAL HEALTH IN NEW VIDEO BLOG

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Sitting in front of a silver tarp blowing in the wind of a Georgetown backyard, Ben Murray and his mother Sandra propped up a cellphone on a table, using a selfie stick and two cigarette packs on either side for support.

Then, they pressed record and created the first video of their new video blog called Spirit to Live, centred on both of their experiences over the years, dealing with Ben's struggles with addiction and mental-health issues.

At the time the introductory video was created, Ben was going on three months clean of the substances he had previously been using including cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin, oxycodone and fentanyl.

The mother-son duo said their decision to start the blog and publicly disclose their most difficult stories, marked the first step in the 21-year-old's recovery and their determination for him to become a future success story.



Veronica Appia/Metroland

Sandra and Ben Murray have started their own video blog, shedding light on their very personal struggles with addiction and mental illness.

But as I entered the Murray home the following week to sit down with Ben and Sandra to talk about the blog, something in the air felt different. And they wasted no time telling me what was going on.

"I messed up," Ben said, looking me right in the eye at the kitchen table, adding that he had relapsed and was coming off his high, while recovering from four days without any sleep.

He continued: "You have to fall 10 times and get back up 11. This is

me falling once, but now I'm learning how to not fall."

We chatted for a long time. And when we were done, Ben and Sandra recorded and posted their second video, titled Relapse, outlining the challenges they were specifically facing that day.

"He's owning it," Sandra said. "We're doing this blog to be real and to educate, but also, we're doing this for us. I'm doing it because I'm loving that we are having better conversations."

The Murrays say, with their video blog, they intend to touch upon a variety of topics from the self-esteem issues and struggles with depression that impacted Ben's decision to initially start using drugs in Grade 8, to the dozens of times he was hospitalized over the years, to his relationship troubles with friends and family members.

"I learned that my reaction to what he does makes a difference in his world and I ask myself 'Do I want to be right, or do I want to be effective?'" Sandra said. "I stopped arguing. He knows I don't want to

fight. And I've learned that it's his choice what he does. As a parent, we want to protect and we want to say, 'Come on, buddy, you need to quit.' That hasn't worked. This morning started off rough and the old Sandra would have tried to fix it. I can't try to fix it. He needs to fix it."

Since Ben and Sandra launched their video blog, positive responses have been pouring in from members of the community showing their support.

"Love the video. Much love to you guys!" one comment on YouTube reads.

"Sending you both all my love and support. Stay strong B-Man ... you can do this!" another one says.

"We want to take the stigma off of (addiction and mental-health issues)," Sandra said. "Because there are so many people suffering alone. And the responses that we have gotten have been overwhelming."

Ben adds that making the videos will help keep him accountable. He says that he will not only continue to try to get clean, but also that he strives to be honest about the struggles he will face throughout the entire process.

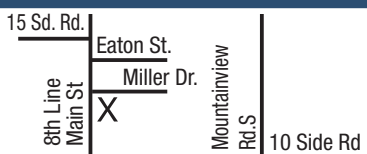
"I can't give up. If I do, I'm going to die," he said. "This is my journey and one day I will be a success."



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