

## AMERICAN FIX

*Inside the Opioid Addiction Crisis - and How to End It*

by Ryan Hampton

### Reading Group Discussion Questions

Before finding lasting recovery, Ryan attempted to quit using heroin many times. One of the biggest barriers he faced was not being able to find a bed in a treatment center, or not having insurance to pay for medical care. Why do you think drug education programs focus on “Just Say No” instead of teaching people where to go for medical care when they need it?

Discuss the *AddictionXAmerica* project that Ryan and his best friend Garrett created. What are some of the drug-related problems in your neighborhood? Are they similar or different to problems in other communities?

Now that you know more about substance use disorder, do you think that getting addicted is a choice? Do you think that all addiction is the same, or are there different kinds?

Do you think that the criminal justice system helps people with substance use disorder? Are jail recovery programs equal to the treatment someone might get in a rehab?

Ryan is a person in recovery: he’s also a gay man. *American Fix* compares recovery to other social justice issues that focus on equal rights. What barriers do people with substance use disorder deal with that are similar to the ones other marginalized groups face? Where do those barriers come from?

Prior to Ryan’s addiction and throughout his years of opioid use, he worked in politics. He worked with leaders like Bill Clinton and Barack Obama. When you think of a “heroin addict,” do you imagine someone like Ryan, or is the picture in your mind different? How so?

Ryan’s “aha” moment was when his friend Bear died. Many other people only chose to fight the drug epidemic after losing a child or loved one to an overdose. What would it take for you to get involved? How do you see yourself participating in ending the drug epidemic?

Many people only identify with the drug epidemic because either they or a family member have struggled with addiction. Ryan makes a case that all Americans are impacted in one way or another. How are you impacted?

Ryan’s close relationship with his mother helped him keep trying to get help, even when he was ready to give up hope. His mother’s boundaries, such as refusing to give money, but bringing Ryan something to eat when he was homeless, helped Ryan in the long run. What would you say to encourage someone who was suffering from addiction? How would you help them?

9 out of 10 people can use alcohol safely throughout their life and not switch into an addictive pathology. However, the 10% who do only exhibit symptoms far into the progression of the disease. Do you know how to spot addiction? What are the signs?

By lifting up the voices of the recovery community and speaking out for justice, Ryan has been able to make changes and save lives. What are some things you wish you could change? How do you use your voice?

What is the role of faith in recovery?

If you could sit down for an hour with any policymaker, leader, or elected official to talk about addiction and recovery, who would you choose? What would you say to that person?

*American Fix* offers an agenda for a political solution to the drug epidemic. Addiction and recovery are nonpartisan issues, because they affect people from very different backgrounds. Which of the items on Ryan's agenda are the most important to you, and why? Will you take action? How?

Ryan is dedicated to being a positive force for change, and helping as many people as possible. Does *American Fix* make you feel hopeful? Angry? Brave? Discuss.