

REMAKE

A FILM BY ROSS MCELWEE

COMMUNITY SCREENING & DISCUSSION GUIDE

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Introduction

Thank you for hosting a screening of the award-winning documentary feature film ***Remake***.

For nearly forty years, filmmaker Ross McElwee has turned his camera on his own life - chronicling romance, marriage, family, and loss. His son, Adrian, grew up in front of that camera, and eventually picked one up himself. When a Hollywood producer sets out to remake McElwee's 1986 breakthrough ***Sherman's March*** as a fiction film, Adrian sees it as his father's long-overdue shot at wider recognition. But the adaptation stalls for years, and meanwhile Adrian's life unravels into addiction. In 2016, Adrian dies of a fentanyl-related death at his father's home. Drawing on decades of footage, some shot by Ross, some by Adrian himself, ***Remake*** becomes an act of grief, reckoning, and love: a father searching the frames he kept for the son he couldn't save.

Every screening of ***Remake*** is unique because each audience member and community brings different experiences of love, loss, recovery and hope. This guide is designed to help you create an environment where those experiences can be shared safely, respectfully and meaningfully.

Screenings can become:

- conversations
- acts of remembrance
- community healing
- spaces that reduce stigma
- catalysts for policy change
- opportunities for people to find support

We hope through this guide to support you to create a space where you can reflect together on how the story of ***Remake*** resonates in your own lives, listen deeply to one another, and connect with hope.

Content Guidance and Activation Warning

With tender love and affection, **Remake** navigates addiction, family, mental health, and loss. A grieving father's reflective narration gives voice to the complex emotions experienced by families affected by substance use, addiction, and drug-related loss.

Countless young people navigate overlapping challenges involving mental health, substance use, and addiction, often without access to the support and care they need. **Tens of thousands of people in the United States die each year from drug-related deaths**, including overdoses and poisonings - a preventable tragedy. Behind each number is a person, a family, and a wider community affected.

A Note About Language: Overdose and Poisoning

Overdose generally describes taking more of a substance than the body can safely tolerate. With medications, there is a known or prescribed dose, and an overdose can occur when too much is taken.

Illicitly manufactured fentanyl presents a different kind of risk. There is no controlled or reliably measured dose in the illicit drug supply. **As little as 2 milligrams can be potentially lethal**, depending on the individual. Illicit fentanyl may be mixed into powders or pressed into counterfeit pills made to resemble legitimate medications or other drugs, exposing people to a substance they may not know they are taking.

Illicitly manufactured fentanyl is produced without pharmaceutical safeguards, consistent dosing, or quality control. It may be added to other drugs to increase potency and addictiveness, and counterfeit pills can be deliberately made to look like legitimate medications.

For people who did not intend to use fentanyl, particularly those who are fentanyl-naïve, “fentanyl poisoning” may more accurately describe what occurred: exposure to a highly potent substance without knowing its presence or strength.

Some people today knowingly seek fentanyl, but their intent does not create a controlled or reliably measured dose; a fatal exposure to illicit fentanyl is still appropriately described as a poisoning.

Using the word “poisoning” does not erase addiction or intentional fentanyl use. It recognizes that not every drug-related death occurs because someone knowingly consumed too much of a substance they intended to take.

Remake is a film that engages with heavier themes interwoven with more lighthearted moments to make it a varied tapestry of family life. It deals with themes of:

- Family conflict
- Grief and emotional distress at the loss of a child (Adrian died aged 27)
- Substance use, addiction, and drug poisoning/overdose (including footage of injection drug use)
- Bipolar disorder and mental health struggles
- Memory, archive and the passage of time
- Art as healing

Director's Statement

My son died of fentanyl poisoning and I made a film about that.

I made **Remake** to honor my son's too short a life, and as a way to come to terms with the grief I felt. The world is not disposed to want to "honor" the life of a drug addict. I hope that by including ample examples of how wonderful he was as a child that this would counterbalance the more troubled version of Adrian, the one that eventually won out.

I was also determined that despite its tragic ending, **Remake** would also offer up moments of humor, especially with the confounding and at times comic tangle presented by navigating between fiction and nonfiction as Hollywood attempts to adapt one of my earlier documentaries into a fiction feature.

Remake offers a parent's perspective on how in the world the opioid crisis was allowed to reach its present level – a million US deaths and counting. It's a film that does seem to resonate with most people who see it, but I especially hope that it will reach people who have lost loved ones, or those who are still struggling with addiction.

I hope that people struggling with addiction themselves might find in **Remake** a different kind of perspective, one that may help them understand how their addiction can affect the people who love them.

First and foremost, **Remake** is about a father's love for his son, and the fragile bond that the camera created between us. It represents both my attempt to hold onto my son, and to let him go.

Ross McElwee
Director, Remake



More about the Director

Ross McElwee is a key figure in the American "diary film" tradition, which describes documentaries where the filmmaker is both narrator and subject, turning the camera on their own life.

McElwee's breakout film ***Sherman's March*** captures his funny, anxious search for love as he retraces a Civil War general's route through the South. It was later preserved in the Library of Congress National Film Registry in 2000. McElwee continued to mine his own life across other movies including ***Time Indefinite*** (his father's death) and ***Bright Leaves*** (his family's tobacco-industry roots).

The confessional, first-person documentary ***Remake*** continues this 40-plus year tradition, and exists within this same personal universe.

Before You Host

We want your screening to be a meaningful and successful experience for you and your community. Here are some practical things to think about that will help you create a well-organized, welcoming and thoughtful event.

Choosing a Venue

Pick a space that feels safe and low-barrier. Libraries, recovery centers, community centers, houses of worship, and schools could all work well, since these are spaces people already associate with support or learning. Whatever you choose, make sure there is a private or semi-private area for anyone who needs to step out during or after the screening.

Curating a Guestlist

Perhaps you already have a network, but why not reach out across your community to invite students and young adults, recovery communities, healthcare professionals, teachers, artists, and/or policymakers. A mixed audience will often produce the richest conversation. If your community is better served by a more targeted audience (e.g., a recovery-community-only screening), that can be a great fit too.

Selecting Timing

The time of day can make a big difference to who is able to attend. Consider whether a midweek daytime, evening or weekend screening will best reach the people you want in the room - for example, young people, parents, frontline workers, and others may have different schedules. Choose a time that makes it as easy as possible for your intended audience to participate.

Inviting People to Attend

Use warm, inviting language that invites curiosity, rather than making assumptions about your audience's experience. Make it clear that you don't need personal experience of addiction or bereavement to attend - the screening is an opportunity for anyone to listen, reflect, and be part of a compassionate conversation. Rather than labels such as "addict" or "drug abuser," use person-first terms such as "person with a substance use disorder," "person who uses drugs," "person in recovery," or "families affected by substance use or drug-related loss."

Accessibility Checklist

Try as far as reasonably possible to ensure inclusion measures such as wheelchair access, ASL interpretation, accurate captions or subtitles when available, and reserved seating near exits for anyone who may need to step out. Make accessibility information clear before the event so attendees can plan accordingly.

Preparing Yourself to Facilitate

The post-screening conversation is an important part of the experience, so take time to prepare yourself before the event. Read through the discussion themes and prompts in advance, and think about why you are hosting this screening and what you hope people will take away from it.

If you don't feel comfortable facilitating a conversation around such sensitive themes, consider inviting an experienced moderator, counselor, community leader or other trusted professional to lead this part of the event. The most important thing is that the person facilitating feels confident holding the space with care, curiosity and compassion.

Creating a Trauma-Informed Space

Given the subject-matter of the film and the invitation to respond, set clear ground rules that support emotional safety. These should include: confidentiality; no pressure to speak or disclose personal experiences; speaking from personal experience rather than for others; listening to understand; no judgment, diagnosing or “fixing”; and, freedom to step out or leave at any time. Normalize emotion, have tissues available and make local and national support resources easy to find.

Suggested Run of Show

Good time management will help your event run smoothly, create a better experience for your community and make facilitation much less stressful for you as a host. **Allow a minimum of 2 hours 30 minutes for the screening and discussion, and plan for up to 4 hours if you want to include a full hour for discussion**, giving yourself enough time to welcome people, settle in, transition between sections, and close the event properly. Here is how that time might break down into sections.

Arrival

Doors open. Have sign-in, name tags (optional) and accessibility info visible.

Welcome (2-3 minutes)

Introduce the screening and hosting organization/s, and briefly explain why this film is being shown in this community. This is also the moment to point out fire exits, restrooms, and any quiet/private space. Verbally acknowledge that the film deals with difficult topics including substance use, addiction, mental health, grief, and bereavement. Explain that there will be a response and discussion time after the screening, and reassure attendees there is no expectation for them to participate if they do not wish to do so.

Film Screening (1h 54m)

Turn the lights down and play the film. Perhaps remind your audience that they're welcome to step out at any point for a break if they need to.

Pause (5 mins)

Give audiences a moment of space after the credits roll to process privately. Ensure anyone who wishes to leave can do so quietly.

Facilitated Discussion (30–60 mins)

Briefly walk through the trauma-informed guidelines from the "Before You Host" section - confidentiality, no pressure to share, speaking only from personal experience, no judgment or fixing and the freedom to step out or leave completely at any time.

Use the questions in the "Discussion & Reflection Prompts" section below as needed to facilitate an open conversation, making sure that anyone who wants to speak has an opportunity to do so.

For groups comfortable with a more vulnerable format, consider a story-circle structure to let participants share their own experiences of loss or family memory-making, but only when participants have been clearly invited into that format and appropriate support is available.

Keep an eye on the clock! A good discussion can easily run away with you, so agree timings in advance and nominate someone to keep an eye on the time. It's better to leave people wanting more than to let the conversation run long and risk the energy of the room dropping.

Closing Reflection (5 minutes)

Remake is built from decades of ordinary footage, from birthdays and everyday moments to small arguments, that only became precious in hindsight. As a closing activity, invite participants to think of one photo, video, or object connected to someone they love (living or deceased) and reflect quietly, or share in pairs, on why that particular memory matters to them now.

Action Response (5 minutes)

Healing is not only something we witness on screen - it is something communities can practice together, one conversation at a time. In wrapping up the discussion, gently invite your community to see themselves as part of the film's continuing story and decide on a tangible action they can take to continue the messages of **Remake** beyond the screening room. Use the actions in the “Carry It Forward” section below as prompts where needed.

Closing (2 minutes)

Wrap up the event clearly with thanks to everyone for attending and sharing openly and honestly with the group. Thank attendees for helping create a thoughtful community conversation. Invite your audience to anonymously complete a short card or QR survey to capture the impact the screening has had on them. This will also help inform your report-back to the POV team - see the section “Reporting Back” below.

Refreshments (Optional)

If including these, think about how they best work for the flow you wish to create. For example, if people are arriving straight from work they may appreciate a drink before settling into the film. To be sensitive to the subject matter of the film, we strongly suggest you refrain from serving alcohol.



Facilitator Notes

We recognize that some people hosting a **Remake** screening may be doing this for the first time, and that facilitating a conversation around such personal and complex themes can feel daunting. We've included a few suggestions below to help you feel prepared and confident.

● You are not expected to be an expert

You don't need to be an expert in addiction, mental health, grief or any of the other themes explored in **Remake** to facilitate a meaningful discussion. Your role is to create the conditions for people to listen, reflect and share - not to provide answers or solutions. If factual or policy questions arise, it is okay to say you do not know and direct people to reliable sources rather than improvising.

Prepare by reading the discussion prompts in advance and be comfortable guiding the conversation using them (or ask someone experienced in moderation/facilitation to lead this part of the event).

● **Hold space, don't lead opinions**

Let the conversation develop naturally rather than trying to steer people toward a particular conclusion or viewpoint. If the conversation becomes dominated by personal stories, gently bring it back to the film or use one of the discussion prompts to open up a new line of reflection. When discussing policy or harm-reduction approaches, distinguish established evidence from advocacy and invite respectful questions and differing perspectives.

● **Silence is okay**

Don't feel you need to fill every pause. Some of the themes in **Remake** are deeply personal and people may need a moment to gather their thoughts before responding. Allowing moments of silence can give people permission to reflect and can often lead to more thoughtful contributions.

● **Wrap up clearly**

When it is time to close, do so clearly and warmly, thanking people for their openness and pointing them toward relevant local and national support and resources.

● **Look after yourself too**

Think about what you might need before and after the event, and don't feel that you have to carry the conversation alone. Where possible, have another trusted person available to support you and make sure you give yourself time to decompress after the screening.

Discussion and Reflection Prompts

To help guide your conversations after the film, here are some questions you might wish to draw from. These are designed to help you open up reflection, bring the conversation back to the film if it becomes dominated by personal stories and ensure that different perspectives have space to be heard.



Starting the Conversation :

- What is your first reaction to the film? Is there a particular moment or image that has stayed with you?
- How does love appear in the film?



Grief:

- What does grief do to family relationships? How can grief change over time?
- What does it mean to tell this type of story, and represent someone who can no longer speak for how they're seen?



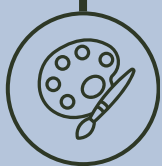
Mental Health and Drug Addiction :

- What barriers prevent people from seeking help for mental health or substance use concerns?
- How does stigma show up in the way we talk about addiction - in the film, or in our own community?
- How does the language we use - including words such as addiction, overdose, poisoning, and recovery - shape how we understand drug-related deaths and the people affected by them?
- What would it look like for someone to feel safe asking for help?



Time and memory:

- How does looking back, years later, change what we understand about the people we loved and the choices we made?



Art as healing:

- What is gained, and what is lost, when personal footage of a loved one becomes a public film?
- How can creativity become a way to move through our grief?
- How can making art help people process grief or trauma?



Action:

- What responsibility do communities have to support people affected by grief, addiction, substance use, or other crises?
- What support for these issues already exists locally? How could our community better support families affected by substance use, drug-related loss, addiction, and/or bereavement?
- What one thing could change in our community? (This could be a moment to talk about Overdose Prevention Centers - see section below)
- What conversation do you want to continue after tonight?

SPOTLIGHT - Overdose Prevention Centers

*We've included this section because **Remake** offers an opportunity to introduce audiences to Overdose Prevention Centres (OPCs), also known in some communities as supervised consumption or supervised injection sites - an evidence-based approach to addiction, prevention, and recovery. **This section is educational, not an endorsement of any specific OPC model.** Facilitators can use it as a springboard for discussion or share it as a resource for people exploring how their community could meet local needs.*

~1M+
US lives lost

The opioid crisis has now claimed more than 1 million US lives. But no statistic captures the toll that addiction takes on a family.

Drug-related deaths occur in many circumstances: some follow years of use, addiction, and attempts at recovery; others involve first-time or unintentional exposure to fentanyl or another unexpected substance. Families are often left with grief complicated by stigma, guilt and unanswered questions, with ripple effects reaching children, siblings, caregivers and communities.

Recovery is an ongoing, uneven journey, often complicated by gaps in care. There is no single response that meets every person's needs.

Communities can help prevent death and support recovery through multiple pathways to care, including medication for opioid use disorder, treatment, behavioral and mental-health care, peer support, stable housing, naloxone, drug checking, syringe services and OPCs — often most effective when connected through a coordinated system. **Remake** raises OPCs as one part of a broader conversation about how communities respond to drug-related risk and loss.

What is an OPC?

Overdose Prevention Centers (OPCs) are healthcare facilities where people can use previously obtained drugs under trained supervision. Designed for people struggling with addiction in their darkest moments, professionals are on hand to offer judgment-free support, sterile supplies, on-site drug checking (testing for contaminants like fentanyl), wound care, infectious-disease screening and referrals to health and social services. There's no single OPC model - some allow overnight stays, others don't, based on each site's capacity.

OPCs are backed by research and endorsed by medical professionals, law enforcement, global advocacy organisations, and families who have lost loved ones to poisoning/overdose.

25 yrs

Sydney OPC operating,
oldest in the world

12,000+

overdoses managed
- zero deaths

3 of 200

worldwide OPCs are in the
US

"It wasn't what I expected. The members of staff in there supported me and helped me get to where I'm at now. It's helped me massively. I feel better in myself."

- Patient, Glasgow OPC, opened February 2025, referred to supported accommodation, abstinent two weeks at time of interview.

OPCs face heavy misinformation, including unfounded allegations that they increase drug use where research has proven they do not, government opposition, and funding challenges, as well as differing views about their role in drug policy.

In May 2025 in the US, more than 700 families penned an [open letter](#) to President Trump and Congress, urging lawmakers to embrace lifesaving health responses to the overdose crisis. The Rhode Island OPC centre is currently fighting to stay open to March 2028 - a bill has ignited opposition, but has since [progressed](#) to the Senate Health and Human Services Committee. [Vermont](#) has announced plans to open its first OPC - this would be the fourth US centre (after Rhode Island and NYC).

[Learn more about OPCs](#)

Carry it Forward

Remake doesn't have to end when the credits roll. We want everyone who sees the film not only to be moved by its story, but to feel that they can **take an action inspired by it**.

As a facilitator, invite people to contribute to the film's continuing journey by carrying something meaningful forward into their own lives. In this way, every screening becomes part of something larger - reducing stigma, supporting families, strengthening prevention, treatment, recovery, harm reduction, and mental health supports and creating communities where fewer families experience the loss depicted in the film.

Here are some ideas of what that could look like.

Personal

- Start a conversation with someone you care about.
- Check in on a friend or family member who may be struggling.
- Create something, write, draw, make music, take photographs, or tell a story, inspired by the film as a way of processing emotion.
- Learn how to recognize and respond to an opioid emergency and how naloxone can save a life.

Community

- Support local services through volunteering.
- Learn more about local prevention, treatment, recovery, mental health, grief, and harm reduction services, including naloxone, drug checking where available, and Overdose Prevention Centers where applicable.
- Share accurate information about counterfeit pills, fentanyl and the evolving illicit drug supply.

Systemic

- Advocate for evidence-based drug policy by writing to a local representative.
- Ask local leaders how prevention, treatment, recovery, harm reduction and bereavement support are funded and connected in your community.
- Host a community or classroom screening through the POV Community Network Digital Lending Library, paired where possible with a grief counselor, therapist, or addiction recovery specialist for a facilitated conversation.

Capturing Outcomes and Reporting Back

The POV team and filmmakers would love to hear your thoughts on the film event. Feedback is crucial to our understanding of **Remake**'s collective reach and what these screenings are making possible for communities nationwide.

Before people leave, invite your attendees to complete the **POV Audience Survey**, which includes prompts such as:

- How emotionally affected were you by the film?
- Have you been personally impacted by addiction and/or substance abuse?
- How would you describe this film to your friends in a few sentences?

Attendee responses will remain anonymous. All individual responses will be combined and reported only as aggregate data to ensure your privacy. No personally identifiable information will be shared.

Please complete this **POV Event Recap Form**

- Where your screening took place
- How many people attended
- What conversations were sparked
- What actions emerged
- Any stories that show the film's impact locally

Feedback is so valuable to help us understand the collective reach of **Remake** and learn what these screenings are making possible for communities nationwide. Through the **POV Event Recap form**, the team may reach out to highlight your event in an American Documentary social media post or newsletter.

Resources

For people at your event who want to go deeper, or may need specific support, we've included below a few resources that you may find useful. Feel free to supplement these with additional resources relevant to your local context.

Director's Book Recommendations

"I read the books below, as well as quite a few others, during the long months of trying to come to terms with my son's death. I've selected these titles because they seem to offer perspectives which may be helpful to viewers who are grieving from having lost loved ones to drug addiction - but also to people who have lost friends or family members to diseases, natural disasters, accidents, or shootings."

- Ross McElwee

Demon Copperhead

Barbara Kingsolver

Novel, which depicts with great empathy the plight of a young man struggling with prescription meds addiction in rural Appalachia.

Where Reasons End

Yiyun Li

Memoir, in which an accomplished professor and writer deals with the suicide of one of her sons.

Blue Nights

Joan Didion

Memoir, in which the writer tries to make sense of the sudden death of her daughter.

Beautiful Boy

David Sheff

Memoir, in which the author traces his son's nightmarish addiction to crystal meth and heroin and its effect on his family. With perseverance and patience, the son eventually succeeds in weaning himself off of these deadly substances.

The Least of Us

Sam Quinones

An investigation into the opioid crisis and how fentanyl is replacing prescription drugs and heroin as the deadliest drug in the US.

Films and TV Shows

● **Union County (Available on Fandango)**

Feature film. Assigned to a county-mandated drug court program, Cody Parsons embarks on the tenuous journey toward recovery amidst the opioid epidemic in rural Ohio.

● **Painkiller (Netflix)**

A fictionalized drama series that explores some of the origins and aftermath of the opioid crisis in America by following the perpetrators, victims, and truth-seekers whose lives are forever altered by Purdue Pharma, the company behind OxyContin.

● **Dopesick (Apple TV)**

A fictionalized drama series that takes viewers to the epicenter of America's struggle with opioid addiction, from the boardrooms of Purdue Pharma, to a distressed Virginia mining community, to the hallways of the DEA.

● **Hamnet (Prime Video)**

The powerful story of love and loss that inspired the creation of Shakespeare's timeless masterpiece, Hamlet. It imagines the home life of William and Agnes Shakespeare, and the soul-crushing loss of their eleven-year-old child.

Substance Abuse and Harm Reduction Support Agencies

[NEXT Distro](#)

[National Association of Addiction Recovery Treatment Providers](#)

[211 - Substance Use](#)

[Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine](#)

[Research Recovery Institute](#)

[Al-Anon Family Groups](#)

[SAMHSA National Helpline](#)

[CDC Overdose Prevention Resources](#)

Facilitators, feel free to supplement these with further signposts relevant to your local context - including signposting emergency and crisis response services.

Credits and Acknowledgements

Guide Produced in Partnership with:



POV is the longest-running independent documentary showcase on American television. Since 1988, POV has presented films that capture the full spectrum of the human experience from around the world, bringing powerful nonfiction storytelling to viewers wherever they are, and sparking dialogue around today's most pressing issues.

Contact Email: events@pov.org



Think-Film Impact Production is the world's premier impact media company, experts in blending art with action for measurable social change. Their impact campaigns, including for Oscar- and BAFTA-winning films, champion social justice and advance national and international policy to make meaningful change where it matters most - in the hands of local communities. Credits include Oscar and BAFTA winner "Navalny", Peabody winner "Black Box Diaries", Emmy and Peabody winner "The Territory", Hollywood feature 'Dark Waters' starring Mark Ruffalo, Florian Zeller's "The Son" starring Hugh Jackman, and Tilda Swinton-starring "The End."

Credits and Acknowledgements

Contributing Experts:



Founded in 2000, Eluna's mission is to support children, teens, and families impacted by grief or addiction. Through the generosity of our donors, we offer community-building camps, interpersonal connections, and a continuum of support for youth and families. Eluna's three signature programs are provided at no cost: Camp Erin, the largest grief camp network for school aged youth and their families; Camp Mariposa, an addiction prevention and mentoring program for youth ages 9-17; and the Eluna Resource Center, which provides bilingual educational resources and personalized support. Eluna has supported over 60,000 youth campers and their families through our network of partnerships with nearly 50 non-profit community organizations across the U.S. and Canada. We provide in-depth programming and data-driven evaluation to ensure high standards of care and positive outcomes.

Credits and Acknowledgements

Language Contribution - “A Note About Language: Overdose and Poisoning”: Facing Fentanyl



Facing Fentanyl is a nonprofit organization dedicated to raising awareness about illicit fentanyl, counterfeit drugs, substance misuse, and related mental health challenges. Through education, prevention, advocacy, and community outreach, the organization works to help individuals, families, and communities understand the risks of illicit and counterfeit drugs and prevent drug-related deaths. Facing Fentanyl also provides resources and support aimed at reducing stigma, promoting recovery, and strengthening community awareness around the illicit drug crisis.