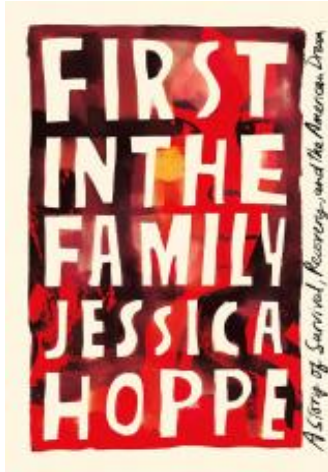


# First in the Family: A Story of Revival, Recovery, and the American Dream

by Jessica Hoppe

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## About the Book

**An unflinching and intimate memoir of recovery by Jessica Hoppe --- Latinx writer, advocate and creator of NuevaYorka.**

In this deeply moving and lyrical memoir, Jessica Hoppe shares an intimate, courageous account of what it means to truly interrupt cycles of harm. For readers of *THE RECOVERING* by Leslie Jamison, *SOMEBODY'S DAUGHTER* by Ashley C. Ford and *HEAVY* by Kiese Laymon.

During the first year of quarantine, drug overdoses spiked, the highest ever recorded. And Hoppe's cousin was one of them. "I never learned the true history of substance use disorder in my family," Hoppe writes. "People just disappeared." At the time of her cousin's death, she'd been in recovery for nearly four years, but she hadn't told anyone.

In *FIRST IN THE FAMILY*, Hoppe shares her journey, the first in her family to do so, and takes the reader on a remarkable investigation of her family's history, the American Dream and the erasure of BIPOC from recovery institutions and narratives, leaving the reader with an urgent message of hope.

## Discussion Guide

1. *FIRST IN THE FAMILY*, the title of the book, can mean many things. What was Jessica the first in her family to do? What are some things you were first in your family to do?
2. On page 11, Jessica uses the word *desalmado*. What does this word mean? How does Jessica use it to describe addiction? How would you describe addiction?

3. Jessica's first addiction wasn't alcohol. What was it? What do you identify as your first addiction, if any?
4. Jessica discusses the impact of the "American Dream" and the ways in which it affects immigrants. What is the American Dream? In what ways might the American Dream be helpful or harmful?
5. In the US, we often think of addiction as an individual problem. Is this the way Jessica thinks of it? If not, how so?
6. Jessica talks about the "AA MFA." What does this refer to? How is narrative part of the healing process?
7. As much as AA was helpful, Jessica also became aware of its limitations. What are some of the ways recovery programs might better serve BIPOC who are struggling with addiction?
8. What are some of the Indigenous traditions of recovery that Jessica discusses? What can we learn from them?
9. On page 231, Jessica describes how she reclaimed the AA Serenity Prayer, making a quote by Angela Davis her new mantra: "I'm no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I'm changing the things I cannot accept." How would you respond to this call to action?
10. *FIRST IN THE FAMILY* offers a blueprint for liberation practice: By understanding the way a drug operates within our bodies, it can help us see how systems of domination are at work in our lives. How have dominant cultural narratives such as gender norms, misogyny and white supremacy affected how you see yourself? How can we establish a daily practice to externalize the harmful narratives we've internalized?
11. Jessica encourages us to look at the language we use to discuss substance use disorder with our families. How would you navigate these difficult family discussions? What did you take away from Jessica's discussions with her family?
12. In Chapter 28, Jessica describes the medical correlation between racialized trauma and chronic illness. Has racial trauma or chronic illness impacted your family and communities? If so, what can you do to interrupt the cycle of harm and embark on a path to recovery?
13. Jessica credits one poignant question for saving her life: Do you know what's happening to you? How would you answer that question today?
14. On page four, Jessica welcomes the reader to the page by declaring her intention: "I'm writing this book not because I believe my story can save you but because I want you to know: yours will." Will you share your story with us?

## Author Bio

Jessica Hoppe is a Honduran Ecuadorian writer and creator of @NuevaYorka. She has been featured on ABC News, and *Pa'lante!* Max. Her work has appeared in *Latino Book Review*, *the New York Times*, *Vogue* and elsewhere. Jessica is a board member of Time of Butterflies, a nonprofit supporting families through domestic abuse recovery, and is an organizer with the CentAm & Isthmian Writers group. She lives in New York City. *FIRST IN THE FAMILY* is her

debut memoir.

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Recovery, and the American Dream**

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