

LESSON 6 – THIRTEEN FAMILY LESSONS ABOUT RECOVERY

The following 13 lessons can help us understand the issues of addiction and recovery when dealing with our loved ones.

1. Substance dependent persons are ill; suffering from an illness which alters their personalities, values, and behaviors. If severe enough, it causes physical, emotional, and social problems for the person.

Focus: A drug dependent person is ill, and that illness affects the **f**_____.

2. Despite their concern, parents cannot control the behavior or attitudes of their substance using son or daughter. Parents are responsible only for their own behavior and attitudes.

Focus: The only person I can control is myself.

3. If parents are to survive, they must set limits on what they expect themselves to do. They are not superheroes. They cannot prevent all bad things from happening.

Focus: Parents have a right and responsibility to manage their homes the way they see best.

4. It is useless and destructive to dwell on your past failures or inadequacies. Parents don't choose to have their children use drugs or alcohol.

Focus: Dwelling on **g**_____ over past failures only depletes energy for present positive focus.

5. Preventing or lessening natural consequences to protect someone suffering from addiction is rarely helpful.

Focus: Rescuing and protection by parents can lead to a lack of motivation to seek professional help.

6. Those suffering from addiction usually only desire to give up drugs when their use brings repeated pain and unpleasant consequences to themselves.

Focus: Painful experience is a good teacher...especially when it relates to the abuse of drugs.

7. Rescuing and protecting routines by parents and others only makes loved ones suffering from addiction more dependent, irresponsible, and resentful.

Focus: It takes **w**_____ and practice to become skilled when dealing with drug-related problems.

8. Reasoning, lecturing, scolding, and threatening are methods that seldom work with loved ones suffering from addiction.

Focus: **W**_____ are weak adversaries of drugs.

9. Accepting promises, excuses or other manipulating behaviors from an abuser only encourages further abuse and denial.

Focus: Promises, excuses, and "reasons" are never substitutes for responsible behavior.

Gem to Share

When they ask for help, be specific and avoid instant answers.

"I will consider it, but I will need some time."

Set a time frame that's best for you.

"Please check back with me after work."

10. Detaching yourself from the burden of worry and excessive responsibility you carry for a loved one suffering from addiction is better for everyone. It's difficult to do it without peer group and/or professional support.

Focus: Love often requires a firmness that many parents find **h**____ _ to deliver.

11. Parents need to set clear, firm guidelines about what is acceptable behavior in the home. Giving in to unreasonable demands only encourages unacceptable behavior and more unreasonable demands.

Focus: Your home and its atmosphere are yours. Stand firm.

12. Loved ones suffering from addiction often need professional help but are often unmotivated to benefit fully from it. Parents are often disillusioned when their hopes for a loved one's quick recovery are not realized.

Focus: Parents can make treatment available to drug abusers, but cannot force them to **b**____ _ from it.

13. Loved ones suffering from addiction often take years to recover from their illness. Recovery is almost never immediate and almost always involves a continuing daily process, requiring a "one day at a time" philosophy on the part of all concerned.

Focus: Love, hope, faith, and patience are as vital today as ever, especially for parents.

Gem to Share

"I love you unconditionally, but, at this time, my involvement with you has conditions."

Note to self: I can set firm boundaries and consequences with my loved one, yet still love unconditionally.

Adapted from "Setting Limits" by William L. LaFountain.
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