

# **Mothers Against Methamphetamine**

## **Family Support Group Manual**

# Contents

Opening Principles page 3

## **Dealing With Addiction**

Denial page 4

Issues unique to methamphetamine page 5

Why are addicts so resistant to change page 7

Detoxification page 9

Relapse page 10

Rehabilitation page 11

Minor children and teens page 12

Sibling relationships page 14

Addiction in a Marriage page 15

## **Family Processes**

Overcoming attachment page 16

Boundaries page 18

Setting and Keeping Boundaries page 19

The Blame Game page 21

Self image page 23

Fear and Anxiety page 24

Thinking for yourself page 25

Goal setting – Five Year Plan Page 27

Communication page 28

Control Issues Page 29

Guilt Page 30

Anger page 32

Forgiveness page 33

Grief page 34

Tough Love page 34

Tough Love on the Phone page 36

Prayer Page 38

Spiritual Warfare Page 39

## **The Twelve Steps for Family Members**

Step One page 40

Step two Page 42

Step Three page 43

Step Four page 44

Step Five page 46

Step six page 47

Step seven page 49

Step eight page 51

Step nine page 52

Step ten page 53

Step eleven page 54

Step Twelve page 55

## Opening Principles

This manual can be used by any relative or friend of an addict or alcoholic. It includes special sections on methamphetamine addiction, but can apply to any type of addiction. The focus of this manual is on you, the relative of the addict, not on the addict himself. You are the only one you can change. You can't change your addict, but you can change the way you respond to your addict and improve your own quality of life. As you retake control over your own life and feelings, your addict will have to adjust to the new you. That can be life giving for your addict as he learns to take responsibility for himself.

Each section of this manual can be covered in an hour or two in a group setting with some exercises to be completed between meetings. Emphasize the confidentiality of everything that is said or done at a group meeting. Do not tolerate gossipers in your group.

Each person should be encouraged to keep a journal writing down their prayers, reflections, observations and feelings as they complete this course. Each person is also advised to share the things they learn here with a trusted friend as they work out their individual issues since every person and situation is unique.

We include the 12 steps of recovery in this manual. Even though you are not the addict, you can benefit from following the 12 steps beginning on page 40. In a way, you have become dependent on your addict, a condition called co-dependency. You have adjusted to the reality of living with an addict and have come to accept some clearly unacceptable conditions in your life. The goal of the 12 steps for co-dependents is to free you from unhealthy ways of relating to your addict and adopt more constructive approaches.

You will learn for example that nagging doesn't work, but forcing your addict to face the natural consequences of addiction does modify behavior. You will draw closer to God as you discover the power of prayer to change impossible situations. You will learn to respect yourself and insist that your addict learn to respect you. Even if your addict never changes, you will grow as a result of this little booklet and your support group experience.

### **Discussion Questions:**

Each section will include a set of questions to stimulate discussion of key aspects in the lives of each person present. Go around the room and introduce yourself and your basic problem. This lets each person know that it is okay to have a problem person in your life. Introduce new people as they appear in your group. Make them feel welcome and let them talk or not talk as they feel comfortable.

### **Journaling:**

Each section has suggestions for journaling in your own private composition book or notebook your personal application of the teaching in this manual. Make it your prayer journal too, as you record in writing your prayers to God for yourself and your addicted loved one. Over a period of months you will notice the ways God has answered your prayers – not always in the way that you expected him to.

Be perfectly honest in your journal. Keep it somewhere private and do not let your addicted loved one know that you are keeping it. Do not limit your journaling to the topics suggested in each section, but use it in your own way to express your true thoughts and feelings on the subject at hand.

# Dealing with the Addiction

## Overcoming Denial

Denial is a powerful escape mechanism by which we protect ourselves from painful realities. It's really not that bad. He didn't mean to hit me. She stays out all night sometimes and it's really okay. I thought I had a \$20 bill in my purse and now it's gone; I must have spent it and just forgot what I used it for. He lost his job because his boss had it out for him, it really wasn't his fault. She left her children at my house for a week with no explanation; maybe she just needed a break. Those drugs I found in his room belonged to his friends; my son would never do drugs.

Look at the situation you are in from the perspective of an outsider observing you. What would a normal observer think of the actions and verbalizations of your problem loved one. Would they consider it normal for your husband to cuss you out every evening after work? Would they consider it acceptable for your teenage son to ignore you and flaunt your home rules? To steal money? To lie about their whereabouts? To have drugs in the house?

Look at your own behavior objectively, through the eyes of a normal person. Would they consider it normal for you to worry constantly about the behavior of your loved one? Would they think it is okay for you to be so depressed you can hardly get out of bed in the morning? To constantly nag your loved one to go to work, clean up after him or herself? To take over functions that are really your loved one's responsibility like child care or getting your loved one up in the morning? Are these really your responsibilities or have you taken responsibility upon yourself that is really not yours?

Admitting you have a problem on your hands is sometimes a difficult and painful step. You may feel like a "bad mother" or a "bad husband" if you admit there are problems in your relationships. Remember, your loved one makes decisions and choices that have nothing to do with you. They are choices that he or she has made without consulting with you. Let the shame and embarrassment fall where it belongs, on the person with the problem behavior, not you.

Be honest with yourself and be honest with God. Read the Psalms, particularly Psalm 57. David didn't sugar coat his problems, but he did put them in perspective. The God we serve is more powerful than any situation we find ourselves in. Prayer and praise for God are two indispensable weapons in spiritual warfare. Recognize that your battle is not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual powers in high places. Identify the problem apart from the person. Your husband is not the problem; his drinking and using drugs is the problem.

*Psalm 57*

*Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, until the destroying storms pass by. I cry to God Most High, to God who fulfills His purpose for me. He will send from heaven and save me. He will put to shame those who trample on me.*

*God will send forth his steadfast love and His faithfulness. I lie down among lions that greedily devour human prey; their teeth are spears and arrows, their tongues sharp swords.*

*Be exalted, O God, above the heavens. Let your glory be over all the earth.*

*They set a net for my steps; my soul was bowed down. They dug a pit in my path, but they have fallen into it themselves.*

*My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast. I will sing and make melody. Awake, my soul! Awake o harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn. I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations. For your steadfast love is as high as the heavens, your faithfulness extends to the clouds.*

*Be exalted, O God, above the heavens. Let your glory be over all the earth.*

### **Discussion questions.**

Share your story with at least one other person, someone you trust, and get another perspective on the problem. How does it feel to be real with another person?

Can you relate to the other people in your group? Find shared experiences and feelings?

Knowing you are not alone with your shame and grief is generally a relief. Express your real feelings in your group and in prayer to God.

### **Journaling**

Start a journal of your thoughts, feelings and prayers as you progress through this work book. A composition or spiral bound book dedicated just to this program is recommended. Keep it in a private place and use it often, perhaps daily. Writing your thoughts and prayers down makes it easier to be objective about them; negative emotions lose some of their power when the situation is laid out in black and white.

## **Issues Unique to Methamphetamine Addiction**

Most of the material in this booklet is applicable to any drug addiction, but there are issues that are unique to methamphetamine, and we will discuss those first. Ongoing methamphetamine use leads to serious mental illnesses that are very difficult to deal with. It makes users paranoid and suspicious, they often have hallucinations and delusions, and their moods swing dramatically even from one moment to the next.

Delusions are sometimes difficult to identify because they often have an element of truth to them. Addicts frequently think that someone is out to get them, or reporting their activities to the CIA or other law enforcement, or poisoning their dope, or cheating on them. They make accusations and do ridiculous things in response to their delusions. Sometimes they get violent in the context of a delusion, injuring their children because they think the child is doing something against them. Addicts can become quite dangerous to themselves and others when in this state of mind.

Generally you can't talk an addict out of his or her delusional beliefs. They know that what they believe is true and think you are against them if you insist on pointing out the truth. It is tempting to go along with the delusion to keep the peace, but that usually does not work. Mental illness of this magnitude needs to be treated by a competent psychiatrist, one experienced in dealing with addicts.

Extreme mood swings are also prominent in the methamphetamine addict. He or she can go from one extreme to the other, happy and elated and full of energy one minute, tired and grouchy and miserable the next. Methamphetamine addicts are often diagnosed bipolar, and medication for bipolar does help, but the mood swings will continue as long as they are using methamphetamine, and usually for several months after they quit using.

During the withdrawal from methamphetamine, depression is almost universal, sometimes severe, and may result in suicidal tendencies. Some degree of depression can persist even for years after getting off of methamphetamine. Depression in the meth addict may not respond to medications used for depression, and may require large doses of strong medications, including antipsychotic medications.

Memory loss and difficulty concentrating are also common in methamphetamine withdrawal, and may last for several months into recovery. This makes rehabilitation challenging and time consuming since it may be several months before the addict is capable of processing new information.

The good news is that most of the mental illness seen in methamphetamine addicts resolves on its own within the first year off methamphetamine. He or she may require psychiatric medications during that first year, but they are generally not required life-long. The bad news is that meth users with psychiatric problems are very difficult to deal with while they continue to use methamphetamine. They are very resistant to therapy, refuse to see a doctor and refuse to take their medications, while they are actively using methamphetamine.

Methamphetamine addicts cannot be required to see a doctor or take their medications. The only person who can hold them against their will and make them take their medications is the local sheriff in jail, or the psychiatric hospital during a period of commitment, usually no more than three days. Apart from the courts, there is no way to restrain an addict and force him or her to stay off drugs and take medications. They have to decide on their own to get off drugs and cooperate with mental health professionals. Sometimes they do not survive long enough to get proper care.

**Discussion questions:**

Ask each person present to describe the behaviors of their addicted loved one that suggest a mental illness.

What have you had to do to protect yourself from potential violence related to the mental illnesses common to methamphetamine users.

### **Journaling:**

Describe in your journal why you think your addicted loved one may be mentally ill. What have you done to try to get help for your addict? Has he or she cooperated in getting psychiatric care? What can you do to force your loved one to get help?

## **Why Are Addicts So Resistant to Change?**

Drug addicts, and especially methamphetamine addicts, are much more resistant to change than abusers of alcohol for instance. There are biochemical reasons for that and you must understand them in order to effectively deal with your addict.

Methamphetamine and cocaine addicts have damaged part of their brain; they have functional holes in the brain in areas responsible for self control. Both the inhibitory (resist the temptation to do something) and the active (do something that you do not want to do) aspects of self control are damaged from the cortex of the brain all the way down to the centers for temper, impulses, sex drive, appetites, etc. In order to exert self control, your addict has to activate alternative brain pathways that are slow and inefficient and may not be able to completely suppress a desire, craving or impulse. That is why they have such a hard time quitting drug use; it is also responsible for their outrages and potential violence. Getting clean is not just a matter of quitting drug use, it also means regaining normal emotional control, and that takes time and practice.

We used to think that methamphetamine addiction was untreatable. Back in the 1990s we thought only 6% of addicts were able to get clean, even with appropriate treatment. Now, as of 2011, we know that is not true; methamphetamine addicts can get clean and be successful in long term recovery. We understand the brain mechanisms involved and we have modified the treatment standard of care to accommodate the special demands of methamphetamine addiction. It is crucial that your addict obtains some form of treatment, whether in-patient in a facility, or out-patient in a clinic for addicts. It is also crucial that treatment be extended for at least 6 to 12 months as it can take that long for brain areas affected by meth to begin to heal.

People who are currently using methamphetamine or cocaine have deficiencies of key neurotransmitters in the brain that mediate such things as pleasure, satisfaction, peace and harmony. Dopamine levels in the brain are massively increased during a high, and then completely depleted after the drug wears off. During the down times, dopamine transmission is completely absent and addicts feel depressed, anxious, moody, irritable and grouchy, and have intense cravings for another high. That is

the emotional state your addict is in when he comes around looking for money. His brain is sending desperation impulses and he is compelled to get more of his drug of choice. He has no thought at all for you and your needs; all he can think about is himself and his need for \$100 right now.

Getting off drugs, especially methamphetamine requires a twelve to eighteen month period of abstinence during which his brain chemistry is restored, and he learns to use back up brain pathways to control his temper, cravings, impulses etc. There are no shortcuts. He is going to be very hard to live with while using and for at least six months after getting clean.

During this time he is likely to be verbally and sometimes physically aggressive, to the point where you may need to take protective measures against him or her, including changing the locks on the doors, taking out restraining orders, having him arrested or committed to a mental health facility, etc. Serious action is required when serious behavior issues are being manifested.

An out of control addict is a serious threat both to himself and to others. There are times when an arrest by law enforcement is your only choice in dealing with your addict. Don't be afraid to report crimes to the police. Your action in getting your loved one arrested may be what is necessary to save his or her life.

If there are children involved, you must take whatever measures are necessary to protect them from your addict. That may require that you keep them in your home for awhile while their parents go to rehab or jail. It may require that your local child protective services agency take custody of them. Report any instances of child abuse or neglect that you witness or that the child tells you about to local law enforcement or child protective services.

Why does it have to get so ugly? Why does it have to be so hard? Because it hurts so bad to get off of methamphetamine, no one is going to do it until it hurts worse to keep using. It hurts worse to keep using when they are locked up in jail and no one will bail them out. It hurts worse to keep using when the children are taken away into foster care. It hurts worse to keep using when they are reduced to sleeping in the car and eating out of dumpsters. That sounds harsh, but that is the sad reality of methamphetamine.

### **Discussion Questions:**

Allow each person in your group to tell one story about their out of control addicted loved one. Each of you will see that you are not alone in your struggle with your addict.

What measures have you had to take to protect yourself or an innocent child from your addict?

### **Journaling:**

Put down in writing an episode of conflict with your addicted loved one. Then re-read it as if you were an uninvolved bystander. Realize how crazy your episode would sound to a normal observer, how outrageous the conduct of your addict really is in comparison to the normal activities of other people of the same age.



Try to visualize your addict acting in a sane and reasonable way; keeping a normal job, raising children in a peaceful home, paying his or her own bills, visiting you for company and leaving at an appropriate time, being a responsible attentive spouse to you or a respectful son or daughter, maintaining his or her own home, car, money, job etc. What should it look like? Pray for that vision to become reality, whatever it takes to accomplish it. Pray that he or she will be arrested and sentenced to rehabilitation, pray for the children involved. Keep your vision of normalcy in mind whenever you deal with or pray for your addict.

Allow yourself to grieve what you have lost as you visualize what a normal life would look like. Expect some tears as you write out your vision of a normal relationship with your addict. You have lost something of great value. Express your grief and sorrow to God. He understands you and your addict perfectly.

## **Detoxification**

Detoxification from methamphetamine is not a pretty sight. The addict goes through several stages of withdrawal getting off of methamphetamine. The first stage is total collapse. They may sleep more or less continuously for three or four days. When they finally wake up, they are going to be grouchy and depressed for another couple of days. Most use again in this stage and thus perpetuate their addiction. But if your addict is really trying to quit, this next seven to fourteen days is crucial. He or she needs to be protected from the drug using friends that call on their cell phone every day wanting them to come over and party again.

The mood swings during detoxification are fast and furious as he or she goes from depressed and withdrawn to talkative and happy, back to depressed and withdrawn in a matter of minutes. You think it must be something you said that made him so mad he stormed out of the house. Not necessarily. It might just be a mood swing. Methamphetamine addicts are often diagnosed with bipolar disorder simply based on these detoxification mood swings.

An overlay of anger generally permeates the environment when an addict is coming down. He yells at the kids, she throws a frying pan across the room, he screams at the TV, the microwave can't cook her hot dog fast enough, it goes on and on. Often the anger gets expressed as violence, and a methamphetamine addict in withdrawal can be very dangerous. Make sure he or she does not have access to any weapons during this angry phase.

Your addicted loved one has to be highly motivated to get clean in order to survive this detoxification without using again. Get him in to see a counselor as soon as possible, at least a support group if you cannot get him or her into treatment right away. There is nothing medical that can be done to ease the anxiety and moodiness associated with withdrawal. A doctor might prescribe a tranquilizer for short term use, but since most methamphetamine users also abuse tranquilizers, most doctors will not give them a prescription. They just have to live through it, and come out on the other side two or three weeks later still clean and still not liking it much.

It takes months for the depression to finally lift and stay gone after getting off of methamphetamine. It takes that long for the brain chemistry to return to normal. During those months, your addicted loved one is at extremely high risk for a relapse. Professional counseling helps, but is not 100% effective.

Prayer is really all you have to offer to help your addicted loved one through this experience. Prayer and peace and quiet, adequate sleep and nutrition, a safe place to crash are what he needs. In your prayers, praise God that your addict is willing to go through this in an effort to get clean. Pray for him or her to have the strength just to get through the day without using. It's one day at a time in detox.

### **Discussion Questions:**

If you have recovering addicts in your group, let them describe what detox was like for them. Everyone will better understand their addict after hearing a few real life stories.

Let a family member of an addict describe their experience with an addict's withdrawal.

### **Journaling:**

Describe in your journal your experience with the withdrawal of a methamphetamine addict. Keep in mind that your addicted loved one knows without a doubt that if he could just get some more dope, all this would go away instantly. It helps you to appreciate the courage of your addicted loved one that he or she is willing to live through this process in order to quit using.

## **Relapse**

If you have lived with an addict for any length of time at all, you have probably been through at least one relapse with them. It is a fact of life with addiction, any addiction, and especially a methamphetamine addiction. As long as he or she lives, your addicted loved one will never forget how good it felt to use methamphetamine. People use it because it makes them feel good, an unnatural "over the top" good that nothing else in this world can offer. The recovering addict is susceptible to relapse for many years after getting clean, and may struggle with relapse on a recurring basis for at least the first year of recovery.

As a relative or friend of the addict, relapse is maddening. How could he do it again, after all we've been through? Doesn't she know better than to hang around with those people again? How many times do I have to visit him in jail before he finally figures this out?

Sometimes relapse is triggered by an external source, an old friend, the old neighborhood, a pipe or grandma's insulin syringe, the music they used to get high to, the smell of pot, or just seeing a person who is obviously high out in the community. The old friends are by far his or her worst enemy. They want to "help" their addicted friend, "Man you look awful! Do you need a hit right now?" That might be all it takes to get your addicted loved one back into his old patterns of behavior.

Sometimes the relapse is triggered by something internal to the addict, a feeling, thought, or stressor that brings on a load of memories of using and getting by with it. He gets pulled over by the police – just

for speeding – but the experience of anger and humiliation makes him want to get high to cope with the negative emotions associated with getting pulled over. A fight with his wife, getting fired from a job, a visit to the probation officer, anything stressful or negative can trigger him to use again. It may even be a positive event, like payday, or the birth of a child that makes him want to celebrate – the only way he knows how – by getting high.

In any event, now you are going to go through the whole detox thing again, the crash, the moods, the depression, the anger – you are disgusted with him, he is disgusted with himself. Relapse is hell. Brace for it. The roller coaster is headed down, fast, right now, ready or not. Can your addict survive it and get clean again? Can you survive it and trust him or her again? It might take some time. Trust isn't established in a week, or a month, or even a year.

### **Discussion Questions:**

How many relapses have you been through with your addict?

How long has it taken for your addict to regain his or her balance and start living clean again?

### **Journaling:**

Record in your journal every experience with relapse you have had. Remember the pain and betrayal you felt – or are currently feeling. Let out all the anger and disgust in writing in your journal. Discuss it with God. He will listen to you all night long if necessary.

## **Rehabilitation**

In the early 1990s they used to say that only 6% of addicts could get clean from methamphetamine. Once an addict, always an addict. That is not longer true. Now with modern science based rehabilitation techniques, it is in fact the precise opposite, only 6% of addicts CANNOT get clean. The other 94% can get clean and enjoy a normal life. What a difference real research has made.

There are several approaches to rehabilitation, depending on the severity of the mental illness that may or may not be present in your addict. Some with serious mental illness related to their addiction need inpatient care, sometimes in a psychiatric hospital before entering a residential drug treatment program. Residential programs are most appropriate for those who have failed outpatient therapy, lack reliable transportation for outpatient treatment, or have relapsed several times. Inpatient therapy is then followed by a period of months or a full year in a “sober living home” or half way house where supervision and assistance is available to get a job, regain their driver's license, pay off fines and child support etc before rejoining the community as a responsible adult.

Most methamphetamine addicts identified by the judicial system because of a drug related arrest can be managed as outpatients with some individual counseling, a lot of group therapy with others who struggle with the same disease, and frequent unpredictable drug testing with the credible threat of incarceration if they fail the drug test. This is how most Drug Courts are conducted. The period of intense supervision should be at least one year and preferably two years.

Adults can check themselves into rehabilitation programs voluntarily and also agree to regular random drug testing, but most of the patients in rehabilitation centers are there because it was mandated by a court system or child protective services. Coerced drug treatment does work, even in the uncooperative patient, if there is a credible threat of incarceration for failure to comply. Treatment and supervision needs to be continued for at least one year and preferably two years in the case of methamphetamine addicts because it takes that long for their brains to heal from the effects of methamphetamine.

Nationwide there is a serious shortage of available drug treatment. Waiting lists are long, especially for inpatient programs that take patients with serious mental health issues. Cost is also a factor for many addicts. They can afford to use dope, but they cannot afford to go to treatment. The drug dealer accepts sex and stolen goods as a mode of payment. The rehab center does not.

For those who cannot afford or manage to get sentenced to rehabilitation, we recommend the do-it-yourself approach of going to recovery meetings every day, perhaps multiple times per day. They make their own rehab center if they can't get into a real rehab center. Motivated patients have been known to get and stay clean using just recovery groups continued for many years.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

Does your addicted loved one have access to rehabilitation services? It is not "enabling" to pay for rehabilitation for your addicted loved one. That is the one thing you can pay for on behalf of your addict with a clear conscience.

#### **Journaling:**

Write in your journal the rehabilitation centers in your area for future reference. If your addict expresses an interest in attending a rehab center have a list of them ready with phone numbers and payment scales.

## **Minor Children and Teens**

You adolescent child's brain is still developing between the ages of 12 and 21. Major changes are taking place in his brain that do not progress normally under the influence of drugs or alcohol. People quit developing at the emotional maturity they have achieved when they start drinking or using drugs. That means, if you have a fourteen year old using drugs, his emotional development will be frozen at the fourteen year old state, and he will act like a fourteen year old even into adulthood. The stakes are high and you cannot tolerate youthful experimentation with drugs or alcohol.

In the case of the minor, under age 18, you have a lot more control over your child than you would over an adult. You can check him or her into a rehabilitation center and they have to stay there until you check them out. You can monitor his phone calls, track his computer use, inspect his or her room, car, backpack, anything you wish to see.

Your child will scream that you are violating his or her privacy. The right to privacy is a construct of the Supreme Court. There is nothing in the Bible about a right to privacy. The right to privacy does not exist,

especially for children. Privacy for a teenager is a privilege, not a right. Privacy is extended to the respectful child making good grades. It is not a right for the disrespectful child coming home at two am and skipping classes.

You can insist on proper respectful behavior and obedience to your rules. If rules are violated, you have the right to restrict privileges, like his cell phone or his car. You can take the keys away and confiscate the cell phone. You can set limits on his behavior and insist on regular drugs test if you suspect drug use in your minor child.

I recommend the saliva drug tests for young people coming home late at night. They are available on the internet at reasonable prices, and are very easy to use. Buy one, and familiarize yourself with the technique for using it, then meet him at the door when he comes home. Let about five minutes of conversation go by, that gets rid of the mouth wash he used in the driveway. Then place the saliva collector in his mouth like a thermometer. Follow the instructions on the box, and you have a result in about five minutes. You can test for alcohol and most drugs of abuse using these tests. The results accurately reflect blood levels of the drug tested for.

Have a set of firm consequences for failing a drug test. Make it something important to him, his computer or game boy set, his car or cell phone. Multiple failures should result in a summer at boot camp or a rehabilitation center. Be consistent in your application of consequences and turn a deaf ear to his complaining. When he is eighteen, the consequences have to do with handcuffs and jail cells, not car keys and cell phones.

If he is belligerent and violent, call the law. A juvenile arrest will not show up on his permanent record and will have a significant effect on him. If he is stealing from you, file charges. If he threatens you, call the police. Lay down the law now, while he is still under 18, or risk a real adult arrest after he is 18. Do not tolerate behavior in the home that would not be tolerated in public.

Find ways to reward your teen for responsible behavior. Notice and say something when he gets good grades in school or comes home on time in a sober state. Make sure his accomplishments are rewarded with praise and attention.

### **Discussion Questions:**

Describe a recent conflict with your under-aged teen related to drugs or alcohol. You will see that you are not alone in your experience with your child. Even smart kids from good families get caught up in drugs and alcohol as teenagers.

### **Journaling:**

Write out a common conflict with your child. It can be unrelated to drugs – homework or curfew violations, disrespectful comments or demands, etc. Consider how you could better handle this situation. Don't be afraid to involve the law. A juvenile arrest does not show up on his permanent record.

## Sibling Relationships

Siblings of addicts also go through trials related to the addiction of their brother or sister. Often they have been victims of theft by the using sibling, had their cars wrecked or their property destroyed. The drug abusing sibling gets an inordinate amount of the parent's attention, time and money; with little time left over to recognize the "good kid's" accomplishments. Parents often completely neglect their other children because the drug abusing child requires so much of their energy.

The dynamics of a sibling addict are different than those between parent and child or spousal relationships. The problem is not just the behavior of the addict, but also the responses of the parent(s) involved. You can see your mother bailing your brother out of jail every weekend and protecting him from the consequences of his drug use and you know that is the wrong response. I have seen 90 year old mothers bailing their 60 year old sons out of jail until they finally die of liver failure or the mother goes broke and simply cannot afford to continue rescuing her son. By that time, she is usually living in public housing, eating on food stamps, and facing poverty.

But as adults, you cannot control either your sibling or your parent(s). Your clear and valid advice goes completely ignored. You can discuss the issue with your parents and with your addicted sibling, making sure they understand that you will not enable them to continue this destructive pattern of behavior. You can refuse to finance their rescuing; you can avoid contact with them and your addicted sibling if the issue is affecting your relationship. But you cannot control your mother and her rescuing behavior, and you cannot stop your brother or sister from manipulating your parents or using drugs. You have no power over either one of them. But God does, in fact He is the only one who has any power over them.

And God will not control them either. He made each person with a will of their own and he will not take it back, he allows them to do as they wish. That does not mean He is powerless to help them, just that He won't control them, just like He won't control you. He can set the stage for your parents to realize how destructive their behavior has been for your sibling. He can speak deep in their hearts with a warning that your sibling may not survive if he or she keeps using. He can point out to them how they are enabling their addicted child to keep using by meeting his every need. Every time they give the kid \$100 they are buying his next hit of dope and putting another hole in his or her brain.

You can discuss the problem with your parents and tell them that rescuing the addict is not effective in modifying the addict's behavior. They probably will not listen to you, and will come up with a million reasons why their child is different and they cannot make him stay in jail or live in his car or lose his job etc. You can leave them a copy of this book and they may actually read it and see the light, but don't count on it. Denial is a powerful force, especially in a mother or grandmother.

And so you pray. Pray for your parents that they would see the light and realize how destructive their responses have been to their addicted child. Pray for your sibling that he or she would be confronted with the natural consequences of their drug use including jail time if necessary to get through to them. As long as you are praying for them, you have not abandoned them. You may have to cut off all other

contact from both your parents and your sibling because of the conflict involving addiction, but you can still participate in solving the problem by your prayers.

Remember it is the hand of Almighty God that responds to your prayers. The One who spoke a universe into existence is not helpless to intervene in this situation. He can make an impossible situation into the springboard that changes the lives of both your parents and your sibling.

### **Discussion Questions:**

Discuss the powerlessness you feel over the addiction of a sibling and how it compares with the parents and spouses in your group.

What have you missed out on or had destroyed by your drug abusing sibling?

### **Journaling:**

Write out the typical behaviors of your addicted sibling in relationship to your parents. How does he or she get your parent(s) to do what the addict wants? Threats, begging, guilt trips, brute force? How can you point out to your parent(s) the destructiveness of their enabling behavior in the life of your sibling? Practice the confrontation with your parents and anticipate their excuses for continuing to enable your sibling to use drugs. Write out your prayer to God asking Him to deliver your family from addiction in whatever way He feels is best.

## **Addiction in a Marriage**

If your addicted loved one is your spouse, there are many special dynamics going on that you need to consider. Your spouse is responsible to be an equal partner with you in life and in the raising of your children. Your spouse's addiction is very costly to you, and not just financially. He or she may be spending the family budget on drugs or alcohol. He or she may also be abusing you and or the children with a loud temper or physical abuse.

Your spouse may be making a lot of unreasonable demands on you to bail him or her out of trouble caused by the addiction. They may want you to call the boss and make excuses for their absence from work. They may want you to call your mother for money to pay the electric bill because they spent the paycheck on drugs or alcohol. They may be ignoring the children and leaving you with the entire burden of caring for the children and working a paying job at the same time. You feel like a single parent because you are living like a single parent.

You are likely trying to control your spouse and stop the madness by screaming at him or her, threatening (but never following through) to leave him or her, intercepting their paycheck from your spouse's employer so that the funds get deposited, following him or her to make sure they go to work. There is no trust in this relationship because trust has been destroyed. It is similar to an affair; your spouse is having an affair with drugs or alcohol.

You cannot control your spouse by nagging, threatening, fighting, or talking. You can only let him or her face the natural consequences of their addiction by refusing to tolerate intolerable behavior. That may mean temporarily leaving the relationship, especially if there is physical or emotional abuse leveled at either you or your children. Sometimes that is what gets through to the addict that his or her addiction is costing them something valuable, their family.

Your spouse is equally responsible for your marriage. He or she must contribute to the support of your family, care of the children, upkeep of the home, saving funds for college or retirement, etc. If he or she is not doing their part the results may be bankruptcy, loss of the children to child protective services, loss of a parent to prison or an early death. Drug addiction is a serious thing.

Spiritually you have a special power in prayer for your spouse. You are viewed by God as one unit, man and wife. God values your relationship and will intervene to save your marriage if you pray in faith believing and then allow your spouse to experience the consequences God sends his or her way. Like a parent of an addict you must insist on being treated with respect. You must not enable your addict to keep using by coming to the rescue every time they are confronted with the results of their addiction. In a way you have to function as your spouse's parent, at least for a time, until he or she is ready to become an adult again with adult responsibilities.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

Ask the husbands and wives of addicts in your group to describe the impact drug abuse has had on their marriage.

#### **Journaling:**

Write in your journal how your marriage used to be before drugs and alcohol marred it. Consider your expectations of a "normal" husband or wife. What should he or she be doing in your relationship and family? What specifically is missing? Does a normal husband for instance allow the family to go bankrupt or lose their home because of their financial irresponsibility?

Keeping in mind your reasonable expectations of a spouse, pray that God will give you wisdom in handling this situation. It may involve leaving him or her temporarily as the situation requires to protect you and your children.

## **Family Processes**

### **Overcoming Attachment**

Attachment is an unhealthy over involvement, preoccupation, excessive worry, or focus on another person. Attachment keeps our thoughts and feelings focused on a person or situation in our lives to the exclusion of other people we are responsible for. If you are constantly distracted with worry over your teenage son who is using drugs and dropping out of school, you will not give your spouse and other



children the attention they need and deserve. You will also neglect your own life, interests, friends, relationship with God, and self care, ultimately becoming depressed, withdrawn, controlling and miserable.

Excessive worry and care about another person can elevate that person so high in your life that you can make him or her an idol, something that replaces God in your life and thoughts. Idolatry is both in insult to God and a destructive force in your relationship with your addicted loved one. You can become so over-involved with your loved one's life and problems that you fail to maintain your most important relationship, your relationship with God.

Excessive worry and preoccupation with another person's problems does not solve the problem, but only magnifies it and allows it to dominate and control you. You don't have enough energy and mental and emotional resources to run your life and the other person's life at the same time. You become drained, resentful, and exhausted. You become short tempered with other family members and alienated from your friends.

You cannot control another person, even your own child. Detachment is not abandoning your legitimate responsibility for the other person. It is lovingly leaving responsibility for that person in his or her hands and letting the chips fall where they will. Detachment means identifying who is really responsible for the problem at hand and letting them take that responsibility for themselves. This mental "letting go" allows you to survive and focus on your responsibilities without guilt or fear that you have done something wrong.

Ultimately detachment means leaving the person or situation in God's hands and trusting Him to work in their life to accomplish His goal for that person. It honors God because it recognizes His power and love. *"Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."* Phillipians 4:6,7.

**Discussion questions** – Who or what are you preoccupied with and worried about?

How have you tried to change the behavior of this person?

Has it worked?

Pray the serenity prayer together: God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

**Journaling** – Write out in your journal exactly what is going on in your life in relationship to the person or situation that is bothering you. Note how your worry, obsessing, controlling or manipulation has worked so far. Let it all out honestly and prayerfully, knowing that God already understands the situation and cares for both you and your loved one who is in trouble. When you have written everything out, look at it from God's perspective and appreciate that our most powerful God is perfectly capable of dealing with your situation.

Re- read your description of your relationship with your problem person. Notice how it makes you feel to consider your problem relationship. Imagine what your life would be like if you *let go* of the problem person and his or her behavioral issues. How would you think and pray and live in spite of the unresolved issues related to that person. Having given it to God, picture in your mind God accepting your problem and dealing with it His way and in His time without any help from you.

Remember this is a process, not an event. You let go for just a few minutes at first and see what that feels like. As you work through this book gradually increase the time in which you “let go” until ultimately, your loved one’s problems are his or her problems, not yours.

## **Boundaries**

A healthy person is able to set and maintain boundaries, limits beyond which we will not go. This is a learned technique. It is not inborn and past abusive relationships, especially in childhood, can make it very hard to set and maintain healthy boundaries.

Alcoholics and drug addicts spend their spare time trying to tear down your boundaries. They will test you, to see how much they can get by with before you explode in anger and refuse to accept their behavior. They manipulate you and try to get you to change or renounce your boundaries. Sometimes they use the Bible to do that, “Honor your father and mother,” “Live in submission to your husband.”

You have the right and responsibility to set and maintain your own standards of behavior, what you will and will not accept from your addicted loved one. “Honor your mother and father” does not include accepting abuse from your mother or father. It includes honor for the parts of your parents’ personalities that are truly honorable.

As your loved one progresses in his or her disease, boundaries are gradually violated, first in small ways and as time goes on, major violations of basic human decency are violated on a routine basis. Your addicted daughter asks you to babysit for a few hours. Gradually she leaves her kids with you, without asking, for days at a time, or perhaps indefinitely, and you accept that reasoning, “someone has to take care of these children.” That is true, someone does need to take care of the children, but that is not necessarily your job.

Here are some examples of appropriate boundaries found in the book **Co-Dependent No More** by Melody Beattie.

I will not allow anyone to physically or verbally abuse me.

I will not knowingly believe or support lies.

I will not allow chemical abuse in my home.

I will not allow criminal behavior in my home.

I will not rescue people from the consequences of their alcohol or drug use or other irresponsible behavior.

I will not finance a person's drug or alcohol abuse or other irresponsible behavior.

I will not lie to protect anyone from the consequences of their addictive behavior.

I will not use my home as a detoxification center for recovering addicts.

If you want to act crazy that's your business, but you can't do it in front of me. Either you leave or I'll walk away.

You can spoil your fun, your day, your life – that's your business – but I won't let you spoil my fun, my day, or my life.

Set boundaries, but make sure they are your boundaries. The things you are sick of, can't stand, or make threats about, may be clues to what boundaries you need to set and enforce. Say what you mean and mean what you say.

Expect some push back from your addict. He or she will not like it when you cannot be manipulated anymore. They will challenge your boundaries to see if they are real. You will be tested at least once on every boundary you set. But the first time you call Child Protective Services on your daughter when she leaves her kids at your house all night, she will get the message that her behavior is unacceptable. If you cave in when your boundary is tested, you lose all credibility for all of your boundaries.

### **Discussion Questions:**

What boundaries do you need to establish and how do you intend to enforce them?

How has your addicted loved one violated your boundaries in the past? How will you respond the next time similar behavior occurs?

### **Journaling:**

Put down in writing your boundaries for each person in your life who is a challenge for you. Include non addicted people who use you for their own purposes. Practice saying "No" to these people.

## **Setting and Keeping Boundaries**

Setting firm and reasonable boundaries in your life is the key to avoiding over-involvement with your addict and learning to enjoy your life. If you are making yourself responsible for your addict's problems, you will quickly burn out with exhaustion and resentment. The addict has already learned what he or she can get by with, so you need to reset your boundaries - what is acceptable behavior and what is unacceptable; what is your responsibility and what is your addict's responsibility.

All behaviors have natural consequences. Good behaviors yield good consequences. If you go to work and do your job, you get a paycheck. Bad behaviors yield bad consequences. If you have a hangover and miss work, you lose your job. The problem comes when someone comes to the rescue of the addict and removes the bad consequences from his or her life. The addict misses out on a valuable lesson, "If I don't work I will lose my job." What he learned instead is, "I can get my mother / wife / friend to call my boss and tell them I am sick, and keep my job even though I am not doing a good job controlling myself."

Appropriately set boundaries allow you to avoid taking responsibility for your addict, and allow him or her to accept responsibility for their own conduct. To rescue an irresponsible person is ultimately destructive to that person. The natural law of conduct and consequences is broken and the addict learns to live a lie, "I can do what I want and mom will always bail me out of trouble."

The basic word in establishing boundaries is the word, "No." No, I will not pay your electric bill. No, you cannot have my car tonight. No, I will not give you money. No. When said firmly and without wavering, No is a very powerful word. It establishes what you will and will not do. It sets limits beyond which you will not go. You need boundaries with your addict in the areas of money, time, child care, behavior, etc.

Without a doubt, when you establish your boundaries, there will be some push-back from your addict. They will get angry, try to punish you, plead or cry, call you selfish, accuse you of abandoning them, claim that you are being "unchristian," and make you feel guilty in general. Addicts will avoid taking responsibility for their own lives, and instead attempt to control you and get what they want from you. When they find that their manipulation no longer works, they either straighten up, or leave the relationship looking for an easier target.

Grandparents are especially vulnerable to this type of emotional blackmail. They are typically very lonely, their children have moved on to lives of their own, and the attention of anyone, even a manipulative drug addict is better than no attention at all. They will tolerate abuses most other family members would not tolerate. And when they finally do stand up for themselves and refuse to hand over their social security check, they are much more vulnerable to violence. Even just a slap on the face can result in a dislocated jaw on an older person.

Addicts are usually very self centered people, seeing only their own needs and desires and mindless of the needs and desires of the people around them. They see other people as an opportunity to get something out of them, not as individuals with needs and desires of their own. They blame other people for their problems, and expect other people to take care of them. They won't take "No" for an answer.

Your job is to insist on appropriate "No" messages while your addict learns that he or she cannot control you. It seems difficult at first, but as you get stronger in your appropriate "No," your addict comes to realize that you have boundaries that may not be crossed. Angry outbursts are to be expected and prepared for. Have a plan for what you are going to say, for example: "I will not allow you to yell at me. I will go into the other room until you decide you can discuss this without attacking me. When you can do that I will talk to you."

Setting boundaries is much easier if you have supportive relationships, friends or a support group, to help you cope with the push-back from your addict. You will likely face some rejection in your relationship with your addict, and you cannot back down just to save that relationship. You owe it to yourself and to your addict to stay strong in your boundaries in the face of rejection.

### **Discussion Questions:**

Discuss times in your life when others allowed you to face the consequences of your decisions.

Consider how you can allow your addicted loved one to experience the consequences of his or her decisions.

What are you doing for your addicted loved one that he or she should be doing for themselves?

Practice saying “No” in your support group, use role playing in which one member of the group takes up the addict’s role and makes an unreasonable demand. Practice saying “No” to that unreasonable demand. Have your partner throw a temper tantrum in ways your addict typically does. Practice how you should respond to the temper tantrum.

### **Journaling:**

How have you been rescuing your addicted loved one from the consequences of his or her decisions? Write out a few of the most recent episodes. What could you have done or said differently in those situations that would have respected your choices and boundaries. Practice saying “No” to inappropriate demands in writing in your journal. By building appropriate boundaries, you learn to demand respect. You change yourself so that their manipulative ways no longer work on you.

How does your addict usually respond to your limits, your “No” to his or her demands. Can you predict his or her response? Can you prepare yourself and/ or protect yourself from the push-back you are expecting? Can you form an alliance with another family member so that you present a united front to unreasonable demands?

Be prepared to suggest other ways your addict can get what he genuinely needs – get a job, buy his own car, live with a sober friend, etc. Your adult addict is responsible for providing for his or her own needs. If you keep your boundaries, your addict will have to learn self control. When they no longer have control over you, they will have to control themselves. That will come as a shock to most addicts. They may just leave the relationship completely when they realize they can no longer control you. Accept that as a possible outcome.

## **The Blame Game**

As you set your limits and enforce them, your addict will strike back not only with his or her temper, but also with accusations that you have abandoned him or her, you are the one who caused their problems,

you are the bad guy. They are trying to motivate you with guilt to get what they want from you. They often put a Christian twist on it saying things like “Honor your mother and father.” Or “How can you call yourself a Christian?” “What kind of religion teaches you to abandon your own family?”

The Bible tells us to give and not be self-centered. It does not say we have to give whatever anyone wants from us. You are in control of your giving. You can choose not to give to any good cause for reasons of your own, and those reasons are no one’s business but your own. You do not have to be manipulated and controlled by anyone.

Guilt is a powerful motivator. People will go to extremes to avoid the pain of guilt. Some people give all of their money to their church or the television evangelist because they feel guilty. God does not want your money given under duress. He wants a cheerful giver who is giving what he or she can give, appropriate to the situation. Addicts want whatever they can get out of you.

If guilt works on you remember that this is your problem, not the addict’s. He recognizes your weakness and capitalizes on it, but it is your weakness, and you can grow stronger in that area and quit being manipulated by guilt. Other people don’t “make you feel guilty.” You make yourself feel guilty by assuming responsibility for whatever problem your addict assigns to you. His electricity got turned off; he blames you for not giving him money to pay the bill. His electricity is not your responsibility. You don’t have to accept the guilt he is throwing at you. Don’t make excuses or try to justify your decision. Just state your position clearly and let it stand. You don’t need an excuse to avoid responsibility that is not yours. As you get stronger at refusing responsibilities that are not yours, much of your guilty feeling will go away.

Guilt messages are usually based on anger. The addict cannot get what he wants by just asking for it, he knows the request is unreasonable and cannot be discussed rationally. So he uses your emotions against you to manipulate you. Understand what motivates your addict and avoid falling into his trap by simply stating the facts, “No, I cannot give you \$20 today.” And remind him of his responsibility to provide for himself, “You need a job, let’s see what jobs are listed in the newspaper today.”

Refuse to be drawn into the addict’s crisis. He thinks the world will come to an end if he does not get \$20 for gas right now. You know that the \$20 you give him will go for dope, not gas for his car. Give him your one gallon of gas that you keep in the garage against emergencies. He will quit asking for gas money when you offer him gas instead.

### **Discussion Questions:**

What guilt trips has your addict taken you on recently?

Did they get what they wanted from you using guilt?

### **Journaling:**

Spell out in your journal some of the common guilt inducing messages your addict sends to you. It doesn’t have to be verbal; sometimes just a heavy sigh will communicate guilt to you. What do you do

about those guilty feelings? What would be a more constructive way of handling those feelings? Is it really your fault that your addict does not accept responsibility for himself?

## **Self Image**

Most co-dependents suffer with a poor self image. You might be staying in an abusive relationship with your addict precisely because you do not think you could survive without him or her. You may feel incompetent and unlovable, you may be convinced that your needs are not important, that you are inferior or somehow defective. You may have been taught that as a child, and your addicted loved one just reinforces that lie with every abusive action or word he or she says.

You may be punishing yourself by staying in a relationship that is toxic to you and your children. You feel it is somehow wrong to look out for yourself and live in safe relationships. If your addicted loved one does not punish you, you punish yourself with self depreciating thoughts and words. Things like, "I don't matter, my feelings are not important, I shouldn't feel that way, no one could possibly love me." Often we live in a rescuer, caretaker roll with an addict convinced that we don't deserve anything better.

Such disordered thinking is a common cause of depression that affects every area of life including your relationship to your addicted loved one. Sometimes you get drawn into caretaking enabling rolls because you feel you are not worth anything if you fail to win the approval of your addicted loved one. You may feel the need to have a perfect life and so deny that your loved one is an addict because it would reflect badly on you. Your performance gets tied up with your loved one's performance and when he or she fails, you feel like a failure.

You must take the first step to dismantling this huge pile of lies. You do it by telling yourself the truth. Go back to your primary relationship, your relationship with God, and saturate yourself in His word, the Bible. All the wonderful promises in it are for you. "I will never leave you or forsake you" Joshua 1:5. "The Lord redeems the life of His servants; none of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned" Psalm 34:22. "The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that He has made" Psalm 145:9. "For the mountains may depart and the hills be moved, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you" Isaiah 54:10.

As your thinking becomes more realistic, you will value yourself more and take better care of yourself. You are not defective or second-class. You are a precious child of God and so also is your addicted loved one. God is not going to abandon either one of you. You can rest in the knowledge of His love for you and know that you are cared for and accepted by Him.

Honor yourself by meeting your own needs for acceptance and approval through an honest study of the Word of God. Accept yourself as a precious child of God, even with all your faults and failures. Do something that you enjoy just because you enjoy it, not to please anyone else. See what that feels like.

### **Discussion Questions**

What do you think God sees when He looks at you?

How could you be kinder and more loving towards yourself?

Who in your life treats you dis-respectfully? Do you have to tolerate that?

### **Journaling**

In your journal list all your positive attributes. Be honest and give yourself credit where credit is due. Then list all your faults and deficiencies. Which of the faults and deficiencies can you correct? Are there any that you can change for the better?

How have you been distorting yourself to live up to other people's expectations? Is it really necessary that you be accepted by everyone you know? Can you live with the acceptance of just God and yourself?

## **Fear and Anxiety**

Living in a state of crisis, waiting for the next outburst, focusing on our addicted loved one, anticipating his or her every whim, this is a destructive way to live. There is no love or honesty in such a state. You allow your addicted loved one to determine whether you are happy or sad, confident or scared. You allow your addicted loved one to control you using fear and anxiety.

The addict knows what buttons to push to get you to do what he or she wants. Threats and raised voices are all it takes for them to disrupt your life and make you do what they want you to do. They generate a crisis to force you to react. Being controlled like that leaves you feeling drained and abused. That is because emotional abuse is draining. It depletes your energy and weakens your will.

You don't have to be afraid of other people. You don't have to give up your peace in a confrontation. The solution is to insist on being treated with respect. Refuse to be manipulated by someone else's temper. If you habitually give in, they will habitually threaten you, because it works! They can control you because of your fear and anxiety.

Standing up to an addict takes courage and perseverance. In some cases you may have to turn to law enforcement for a restraining order to protect yourself from the threat of violence from your addicted loved one. You may have to kick them out of your house and change the locks, but you do not have to tolerate abusive behavior from anyone, including your spouse or adult child.

Each time you exercise your right to peace and quiet, you grow stronger. You have the right to choose how you think and feel and respond to your addicted loved one. When you refuse to be manipulated by your addicted loved one, he or she is likely to escalate the crisis and force you to do as they want. Stand firm in your demand for respect.

Make your environment comfortable for you. If necessary put some physical and/ or emotional space between you and your loved one. Go for a walk. Go to your room and pray. Watch TV. Clean a closet. Read the Bible. Find a way to separate yourself from the situation so you can regain control over



yourself and relieve your anxiety. Then from a place of calmness and security address the demands your loved one is making according to your needs and desires.

### **Discussion Questions**

Who or what do you allow to control you with fear and anxiety?

How can you protect yourself from this person?

What can you do to relieve your anxiety? A warm bath? A good book or movie? Prayer?

**Journaling** – Write out your answers to the discussion questions. Learn what works to help you calm down and respond to a situation with peace. How has your addicted loved one tried to control you? Has he or she been successful? How do you feel after being manipulated by your addicted loved one?

### **Thinking for Yourself**

Making decisions and thinking clearly are difficult tasks when your emotions are overloaded and fear is in control. It is hard to make even the tiniest decisions, and big decisions such as what to do with the children of your addicted loved one, are overwhelming and impossible. It is easier to abdicate and refuse to think about the hard choices and allow other people or circumstances to dictate what you will do.

No one can do your thinking for you, and you must make an environment for yourself in which you can think and make decisions. That may mean separating from your addicted loved one for a while to consider your options in a coherent way. If you have lost faith in your own ability to think, remember this passage: “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” (2 Timothy 1:7.)

Let’s look at ways you impair your own ability to think. First you believe lies – about yourself, about others and about God. You may have been told from childhood that you can’t do anything right. And now you believe you are incapable of working out your own problems and thinking clearly. You may be lying to yourself (Denial) pretending the situation is less serious than it really is. You may have low self esteem and devalue every thought you have. You may be dealing with a lot of repressed emotions that cloud your thinking. Ignoring your own wants and needs also impairs your thinking, limiting your options and influencing your decision making. Giving up and letting someone else make your decisions for you gives that person enormous power over you.

Next let us consider the ways other people, especially your addicted loved one, impairs your thinking. You may be living with someone who constantly criticizes every decision you make. You may have been raised by parents who made all the choices for you or told you that you were stupid and couldn’t make decisions, or non-verbally ignored your opinion, effectively telling you that your opinion didn’t matter. Even if that was in your past, in your early childhood, it could still be affecting you now in your current situation.

You may be currently living with someone who habitually puts you down and discounts your ideas, or tells you that you are crazy, stupid, or unimportant. Living in such an environment can actually make you question your own sanity or intelligence, wondering if you are the one with the problem, not your addicted loved one. Alcoholics are famous for making co-dependents think and feel this way.

If you are dealing with a controlling person who discounts your ability to think through a situation and make a decision, you can regain your self confidence by talking out the issue at hand with a friend or relative or support group where uninvolved people can make impartial observations and give you feedback on your ideas and thoughts.

You are powerful enough to make your own decisions and stick by them under criticism or conflict. You can make decisions about what you need and want, you can figure out problems and come to a solution all by yourself without any input from your addicted loved one. You can re-evaluate a decision and change your mind when conditions change. You can have your own opinion about the issue at hand, for example what should be done about the three year old grandchild who is being neglected by your drug abusing daughter. Get the information you need to make a wise decision, and then stick to your decision in the face of criticism from your addicted loved one.

Explore your thoughts without censoring them. You may have mentally attended your loved one's funeral many times. That is normal and should not be repressed or dismissed. Your thoughts are okay. Write them down or share them with someone you trust. Put yourself in a position of peace and calm when faced with a major decision. Wait until you are confident of yourself before announcing a major decision, such as what to do for the three year old grandchild being neglected by your loved one. Don't try to make a decision like that in an atmosphere of turmoil.

Ask God to help you think. "If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given to you. But ask in faith, nothing doubting..." (James 1:5) Ask God and keep an open mind for His answer. It may come to you while reading the scripture, or listening to a sermon at church. It may come to you while doing the dishes or driving your car. It may be in the words of child or a friend or counselor. Give God time to communicate with you by spending time with Him.

Feed your mind with healthy thoughts that build you up, not self destructive thoughts that tear you down. Refuse to dwell on thought such as, "I am hopeless, it doesn't matter what I think, I can't do anything right." Fill your thoughts with the truth of God's word with thoughts like, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in all things by prayer and supplication make your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:4-7)

### **Discussion Questions**

List three or four ways in which you impair your own thinking.

Name two or three people who by words or actions make it difficult for you to think clearly about a problem.

Name two or three people you can talk to who help you clarify your thoughts and value your opinions.

### **Journaling**

Writing your thoughts and opinions in a journal also helps you clarify your thinking and make decisions. Use your journal to help you weigh the pro's and con's of a particular decision you are considering right now. Separate yourself from people you know are trying to control or manipulate you, so you can think for yourself. Value your thought and opinions and increase your confidence in your own ability to make decisions. Take responsibility for your own thoughts and decisions and let other people take responsibility for their thoughts and decisions.

### **Goal Setting – the Five Year Plan**

Everyone should have a plan, a goal for their lives. Your addict needs a five year plan, and you need a five year plan. Where do you want to be, and what do you want to be doing in five years? In one year? In six months? In four weeks? In eight hours? What do you want to accomplish? What problems do you want to solve? What needs do you want to meet? What will you fix for supper tonight? It is for you to decide. It is your right and responsibility to set your own goals without involving anybody else.

Each day make a little progress towards your main goal for your life. Mistakes and wrong turns are normal and should be forgiven immediately. Don't use your goals to condemn yourself if you fail to accomplish them. Be gracious to yourself and be realistic. Adjust your goals on a regular basis; reevaluate them at least once a year. Nothing is written in stone here. These are your goals for yourself and they belong to you.

Having goals and future plans energizes you, clarifies your thinking, sets your priorities, and focuses your actions. Set goals for yourself, not for your addicted loved one. You may want to retire in five years, get a degree, move up in your job, travel to Europe, or start a business. What are the things you need to do now that will make that goal a reality? Put them in your five year plan. Value your own goals and don't let someone else take charge of your life.

There is no magic wand here, just the daily decisions that take you closer or further away from your goal. Every time you give your addicted loved one \$100 you have moved away from your own goal of retiring in five years. Each time you make your addicted son responsible for his own electric bill, you move forward in your goal. Having that goal helps you keep the demands of your addicted loved one in perspective. He or she should be moving towards their own five year plan, and that should include being financially independent from you.

Make your goals a subject of discussion in your prayer life with God. He cares about your goals and He wants to be a part of your life in achieving those goals. Take each decision related to your goals to God and listen for His input, though scripture, through messages in church, from friends or circumstances,

that still small voice in your own heart. Respect your own goals and value them if and when they conflict with the desires and demands of your addicted loved one.

As you reach your goals, celebrate your progress in your journal or with a friend. Give God the glory for every success you have. Do not expect too much from reaching your goals. Thinking "Life will be perfect when I accomplish this..." will leave you with a letdown because such thinking is unrealistic. Just appreciate it for what it is, a goal achieved, and be grateful for it. Continue working on your other goals and enjoy life.

### **Discussion Questions**

Where would you like to be and what do you want to be doing five years from now?

Imagine what life might be like if you were to accomplish your five year goal.

### **Journaling**

Write down your five year plan. List the things you would like to be doing five years from now. Be realistic and specific. Assume that your addicted loved one is not going to change, but that you will go on without him or her if necessary to accomplish your goals. Commit your goals and desires to God with an attitude of "Thy Will be Done." Ask for God's help in setting and achieving those goals.

## **Communication**

Honesty in communication is a real challenge for people involved with an addict. The addict lies about everything, and you can get sucked into their false reality very easily. It is not easy to refuse their demands that you lie to their boss when they have a hangover. It is hard to communicate your need for money to buy groceries or any other legitimate need you have. It is easier to pretend everything is okay and go along with the addict and his agenda. It is hard to say what you mean and mean what you say. But it is not impossible. With a little help and encouragement from a friend or support group, you can learn honest communication techniques that work in your real life situation.

When you do make an honest attempt to communicate, your addicted loved one does not take you seriously. He or she has learned that it is just a matter of time before you will cave in and give them what they want. Your "no" does not really mean "no," it just means they need to make you feel guilty or afraid or weak and ineffective, and you will do whatever they ask.

In order to avoid being controlled by your addict, you must eventually learn to say what you mean and insist on your rights without feeling guilty or abused, without being talked into doing something you know is wrong or undesirable to you. Practice your technique with a trusted friend or support group. Role play your most recent bout with your addict and practice telling your friend, "No, I will not call your boss and tell him you are sick." Or "No, I will not give you another \$20." Say it like you mean it and be

prepared for the push back manipulation. Let your friend play the part of the addict and practice telling him or her “No.”

It will take some time for your addict to discover that you mean business and will not be bullied or intimidated into going along with his lies and irresponsibility. It will take some time for you to learn to be honest in your communications, saying exactly how you feel with no sugar coating. Conflict is bound to come up while you learn a new way of relating to your addict. Expect it, pray about it, look to God for guidance in how to establish boundaries and limits with your loved one.

### **Discussion Question**

Go around the room and ask everyone to describe how they have been manipulated by their addicted loved one. You will quickly see that you are not the only one.

### **Journaling**

Write out a typical scene with your addicted loved one, something that comes up often, and plan your next response to that specific issue. Write out a script for yourself, “I need you to deposit your entire paycheck in the checking account so I can pay bills.” Practice saying it aloud in your own words. Ask God for the strength and courage to actually say what you mean and mean what you say. Pray for His protection if you are afraid your addicted loved one will get angry and possibly violent.

## **Control Issues**

Let us discuss the ways in which you attempt to control your loved one. All co-dependents make some effort to influence the behavior of their addicted loved one. We are trying to protect them from the results of their bad decisions. We are trying to save their lives. We feel perfectly justified in any and all attempts to control their behavior when it is obvious that they cannot control themselves.

We threaten, we bribe, we beg, we lecture, we cry, we talk to, we scream at our loved one. We take the car keys away from them, we call around looking for them, we bail them out of jail or refuse to bail them out of jail, all in an effort to “get through to them” and change their behavior. The goal is to make them stop their self-destructive behavior and do what you want them to do. It doesn’t work. But that doesn’t stop you from trying.

Often the addict will turn your efforts to control him into an opportunity for him to control you. They may temporarily adapt to your demands, but return to their self destructive behavior as soon as your back is turned forcing you to be the cop. He may escalate your screaming fit into a violent encounter or otherwise “punish” you for intruding into his life. Real change has to come from within; you cannot force anyone to change.

God made each of us with a free will, with the power and responsibility of doing what we wish. He did that knowing full well how badly some of us would handle it. We can’t control other people and God knows better than to even try. He lets us make our own decisions and live with the consequences of

those decisions. No doubt it grieves Him to see us destroying our lives and the lives of others, but He gave us a free will and He will not take it back.

Assuming your loved one is of legal age, you have no right to control him or her even if they are destroying themselves. Only the law can hold someone against their will, a process called “arrest and incarceration”. You don’t have the power to control your loved one, even if he is killing himself with his bad decisions. You will wear yourself out trying to do the impossible. The only person you can control is yourself.

So stop trying. Let go and let God. He can’t get a word in edgewise as long as you are trying to control the situation. We can’t change other people, but God can and does when He is allowed free reign in the situation. You still love and pray and live your life; you don’t have to tolerate abuse. Do what you need to do to protect yourself, but don’t try to control anyone else. Allow God to work in the situation without any help from you.

That means hands off. Let the Holy Spirit have His way. Don’t sabotage what He is doing, don’t bail him out of jail, don’t lie to her boss, don’t give him \$50 for gas, don’t let her live in your spare room. Let God have His way in your loved one’s life. It might get ugly, but He knows what He is doing.

### **Discussion Questions.**

How have you tried to control your loved one?

Has it worked?

Do you believe God can do a better job?

### **Journaling**

Identify areas in which you have attempted to control your loved one in the past. How often has the addicted loved one turned your attempts to control him into an opportunity to control you?

Write out your prayer to God to intervene in this situation. Be alert for indications that He is moving in your loved one’s life. Discuss with God your role in His plan for your addicted loved one.

## **Guilt**

Family members of addicts often feel guilty about their loved one’s addiction. They feel that somehow they caused it, contributed to it, or somehow made that person drink or use drugs. This false guilt is especially common in the mothers of addicts. They feel that if only they had been a better mother this would not have happened.

Nonsense.

Unless you personally showed your child how to score a hit, put it in the pipe and smoke it, you did not cause your child’s addiction. Your responsible acts of discipline did not cause his addiction. Your marital

problems or divorce did not cause his addiction. Your working outside the home did not cause his addiction. He decided on his own to hang around with people who use drugs. He decided on his own to use drugs and fit in with his new friends.

He will blame you for all his problems, but you did not cause his problems. He did. Addicts are unlikely to take responsibility for their own actions. They blame you, they blame their friends, they blame their 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher, they blame the dog, anything to avoid taking responsibility for their own decisions. Addicts will bury you with false guilt. Don't accept it. Take your false guilt and throw it out the window. You are not responsible for every decision your child or other loved one has ever made.

But then underneath it all is generally some degree of true guilt. I know where I failed my children, and you know where you failed yours. If you were an alcoholic or addict yourself when you were raising your child, you likely had some adverse effect on your child. Your divorce may not have directly caused his addiction, but the loss of his intact family probably did do some harm, especially if he was very young, grade school years, when you divorced. If he witnessed a lot of fighting and did not feel safe in his home, that may have contributed to his problems today.

Take your real guilt to the foot of the cross of Jesus Christ. Parents, he died for you too. If you were selfish and lazy as a parent, He died for you. If you neglected your child's discipline, He died for you. If you fought and screamed at home when he was growing up, He died for you. It is not just parents who carry loads of guilt around. Siblings, spouses, and friends of addicts also get blamed or blame themselves for a loved one's addiction. The steps are the same. Go to the cross of Christ and let Him die for you too.

Let Him forgive you. Forgive yourself. Easier said than done. But it is impossible to do the tough love we will discuss later if you do not forgive yourself. Hauling around 20 or 30 years of guilt will destroy you and render you ineffective in his life today. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you with this. Let Him help you regain your self-respect.

### **Discussion Questions**

Who or what does your addicted loved one blame for his or her addiction?

Do you feel any guilt about how you raised your child?

### **Journaling**

Parents: Write down some memories of your child growing up. Include both good and bad memories and consider their impact on your child.

Others: Consider the history of your relationship with your loved one. What would you have handled differently if you had it to do over?

Everyone: Write out your confession to God. Write out exactly where you think you went wrong in your relationship to your addicted loved one. Allow Him to forgive you. Forgive yourself- in writing, sign and date it. Don't let it bother you again. You have been forgiven.

If necessary or advisable go to your loved one and ask his or her forgiveness. Be specific and direct about it. Do it in writing if that is more comfortable than a face to face encounter.

## **Anger**

Family members of addicts have been hurt, lied to, cussed out and stolen from so many times that anger is always simmering in the background and often boils over into angry outbursts. Combine that with the generally angry disposition of the addict, and you have a recipe for conflict, even violence.

Children of addicts especially harbor a lot of anger. Basic needs were not met; there was no affection or attention for the growing child. This is appropriate anger. It is a rational response to an irrational situation. It was then, and is now, unsafe to express that anger directly for fear that the addict will blow up and become dangerous. So the anger builds up to resentment, grudges, and retribution.

Anger is a potent weapon we use to control our addict, and he or she uses to control us. It escalates into shouting matches and throwing things. Even after the loved one quits drinking or using, the anger is not magically resolved. It has to be dealt with or it will continue to deal with you.

First we need to acknowledge your anger, give yourself permission to feel it and deal openly with it. Recognize the underlying emotions like hurt or fear that continually feed the anger. Look at the thought patterns that are association with the anger, things like “anger is a sin and is not allowed.” Even Jesus felt angry and yet did not sin in His anger.

Express your anger constructively, with actions that go to the heart of the situation. Identify the action or words that triggered the anger and discuss them openly and honestly using “I” statements. “I get upset when you spend all the money on drugs and there is nothing left for me and the kids to live on.” Chose your timing carefully. Don’t talk to a drunk when he is drunk, or an addict when she is high. Remove yourself from the situation until you have calmed down enough to discuss the situation without displaying overt anger and then ask the person involved for the things that you need directly.

Talk to someone you trust. Talking and being heard are healing in themselves. Talk to a friend, a relative, a clergy person, or a professional counselor. Above all talk to God. He already knows how you feel and why you feel it. He will listen to you all night long if necessary. He will never tell you to shut up and get lost. Lay the situation out before Him and ask him to help you understand and deal with it.

### **Discussion Questions**

What does your addicted loved one do that makes you angry?

How do you usually respond?

How could you respond better to the situation?

### **Journaling**



Write a letter to your loved one with no intention of actually sending it to him or her. Let it all out. Tell them exactly what they do or fail to do that makes you angry. Once your anger is written down in black and white it has less power over you. You can address the issues more directly in actual conversation with your addicted loved one.

## **Forgiveness**

Anyone in a relationship with an addict has been hurt, lied to, stolen from, and yelled at by their addict. Carrying around all that anger and resentment is destructive to you and your relationship to your addicted loved one. Forgiveness is called for whenever you find yourself distracted by resentment or hurt feelings.

Forgiveness is not excusing bad behavior. It does not try to explain the bad behavior or blame it on someone else. Forgiveness accepts the fact that an offence has occurred and releases the person who did it from your anger and resentment.

Let me make a careful distinction here. You don't have to forgive the sin against you. God does not forgive sin. He throws sin into a lake of fire. God only forgives sinners – people, you, me, your father, your boyfriend, your addicted loved one – only people qualify for forgiveness.

And forgiveness does not always result in restoration of the relationship. You do not have to subject yourself to continued abuse to prove your forgiveness of that person. Reconciliation is nice when you can accomplish it, but is not always possible given the characteristics of the person you are forgiving.

Forgiveness is for you. It releases you from the chains of resentment that keep your mind centered on the offence instead of more creative things you could be thinking about. Mulling over the insult or lie or betrayal over and over again drains you of mental energy you could be using for something constructive. Don't let your addicted loved one have that much power over you. Forgive them and reclaim your mental and emotional energy for yourself.

### **Discussion Questions**

Who are you angry with? How long have you carried this resentment against this person?

What would happen if you just forgave them and let it go, and went on with your life?

Can you have reconciliation with this person, or is he or she too dangerous to be around?

### **Journaling**

Write in your journal a list of all the people who have hurt you in the past. Consider which of them is safe to be around and who you need to avoid in order not to get hurt again. One by one forgive each of them, let go of the resentment and anger and let each one of them go. Whenever resentful thoughts enter your head, refuse to engage them. Dismiss them and go on with your life.

## **Grief**

Every person involved in a relationship with an addict has experienced a loss. It may be the loss of a parent when you were a child, the loss of a husband you thought would always love you, the loss of a child to self destructive decisions. Great healing can take place when you acknowledge your loss, grieve for it properly, and accept it as a part of your life.

At the root of all grief is an alienation from God. After all, He allowed the loss to happen, the death of a loved one, the addiction of a daughter. Healing your grief is essentially healing your relationship with God, the same God who allowed your loss and longs to comfort you through it. Every human being experiences loss of something – loss of health, loss of a child, loss of a loved one, loss of a role in life that we thought would always be ours, Mom or Dad, Husband or Wife. Something has been taken from all of us at one time or another. That is the human condition.

It is our response to the grief of life that makes us who we are. Staying paralyzed in denial or anger or any of the emotional stages of grief is a choice we make. The process normally eventually ends in acceptance and a new reality that we adjust to; a scar on our souls, but one that no longer bleeds.

Healing of grief involves faith, faith in the love of God even though you can't see it right now. Faith that He knows what He is doing in creating and sustaining a universe that involves so much pain. Faith that you are not alone in going through this loss, that Someone cares and listens to your cries. Resolution of grief is the acceptance of the world as it is, not as we would have it to be.

### **Discussion Questions**

What have been the major losses in your life?

How has your loved one's addiction contributed to that loss?

### **Journaling**

List the losses in your life and the impact they have had on you. Include all losses, not just the ones that were caused by your loved one's addiction. Pray through the process of accepting those losses and the scars they have left. Ask God to reveal to you how those losses have strengthened you and developed character in you.

## **Tough Love**

### **Read Luke 15:11-32 The Prodigal Son**

The father in this story does not go out looking for the wayward son. He stays where he is and continues doing what he was doing, always on the lookout for his son returning home. In the same way we can't make our child come home and do right by nagging or following him around. We can only stay home, do

our jobs, and pray. Your addicted loved one has to make the decision to leave that lifestyle and return home on his own. He is an adult and has to take responsibility for his own decisions.

Tough love involves letting your loved one experience the results of his or her bad behavior. It may involve leaving him in jail when you could easily bail him out. It may mean calling the Child Welfare Agency in your community and getting her children removed from her. It nearly always involves refusing to give your addict money, pay his fines and bills, letting the electric company turn the power off, letting your own child go hungry at times. Tough love hurts. It hurts you even more than it hurts your addicted loved one.

Why does it have to be so bad and ugly? Because it hurts so bad to get clean. Getting clean is painful to your addict. The withdrawal symptoms are miserable and last for weeks, sometimes months. They include depression, loss of energy, nightmares and “using dreams,” irritability and anxiety. No addict is going to go through all that if he can avoid it. He will only put himself through withdrawal when it hurts even more to keep on using. That is your job, to make it hurt so bad to keep on using that your addicted loved one will be motivated to stay clean to avoid the pain of the consequences of his using – jail time, loss of his job, loss of his car, loss of his children.

When you ask an addict to get clean, you are asking him to quit using a drug that makes him feel fabulous. Methamphetamine and cocaine make the user feel powerful and confident, energetic and sexually aroused. Meth and cocaine are powerful aphrodisiacs. The let down they feel in withdrawal is painful and prolonged, lasting months and sometimes years. They are fragile in recovery for two or three years after getting clean. Relapse can happen in a moment of weakness even years after getting clean.

It often requires incarceration and legal problems to motivate an addict to quit using. Sometimes your job as a parent or spouse of an addict is to get him or her arrested so that the courts can motivate your addicted loved one to stay clean. This may be the only way you can save your loved one’s life. Don’t be afraid to press charges if he or she steals from you or assaults you. Tell law enforcement if you know where your loved one is using or making methamphetamine.

When you cut off the supply of money, allow your loved one to sit in jail for a while, or refuse to let them live in your home while actively using, your addict will push back by having a temper tantrum. He or she will try to manipulate you into changing your mind, using threats or actual violence against you. Be prepared for this. Have an escape plan by which you can avoid his or her hostility. Remember that it is the addict, not your son or daughter who is threatening you. Be ready to change the locks on your doors if necessary to protect yourself. Eventually your addict will learn that you won’t be pushed around anymore and they will quit trying to manipulate you.

You will likely be accused of abandoning your child or being a bad parent because you won’t let him or her have their way. As long as you are praying for your addicted loved one you have not abandoned him. Don’t let them make you feel guilty for letting their power get turned off etc. It doesn’t matter how much money you have or don’t have. They need to learn to stand on their own two feet. You have a retirement of unknown duration to provide for. You can be sure your addicted loved one will not be

contributing to your old age fund. You are doing your job when you pray for them and let them experience the consequences of their drug use.

### **Discussion Questions**

Describe situations where you have used tough love on your addict in the past. How has he or she reacted?

What did you have to do to protect yourself from retribution?

### **Journaling**

Write out a typical encounter with your addicted loved one. Consider ways your addict is using you or manipulating you to get what he or she wants. Write out some alternative responses you can use with your addict the next time a situation arises.

## **Tough Love on the Phone**

This section courtesy of Families Anonymous

People with addicts in the family learn to cringe whenever the phone rings. You know nothing good is going to come of this conversation with your addicted loved one. You see the caller ID and often you don't even want to answer the phone. Better to pretend you're not home. But with some practice, you can be more comfortable dealing with your addict on the phone, and in person, using some tools of communication.

To avoid being drawn into an argument or conflict, learn to just listen and not offer any suggestions or questions at first. Often all your addict really needs is someone to listen to him or her. They are quite capable of solving their own problems with little more than encouragement from you. Stay calm and be prepared by practicing your responses ahead of time since you already know from previous experience what your addict is likely to demand on the phone.

Avoid any hint of sarcasm, ridicule, disbelief or criticism in your responses. Instead offer encouraging replies and validate your addict in pursuing his or her own solutions to their problem. Comments like, "I know you are able to make this decision by yourself," or "You are an intelligent, thoughtful, capable person," or "I am so proud of you for the way you are making an effort to handle this situation," or "I know you can take care of this yourself, you are on top of this situation."

Share with your addicted loved one the progress you are making in your own support group with comments like, "My support group is helping me change myself instead of trying to change you, or anybody else for that matter." Or "My life became unmanageable when I was worrying about the people I was trying to control, including you. I've learned that you can handle your own problems without my involvement." Or "When I tell you I cannot help you, I am working on my own recovery." Or "Enabling is not healthy for either one of us." Or "I love you and encourage you to find a 12 Step program for yourself, it really does make a difference in your life."

When you are asked for money, the car, or a place to stay, and you want to say no, try responses like “I’m sorry, I can’t do that, it is not in my program for recovery.” Or “You are bright and creative, you are capable of solving this problem for yourself.” Or “I had a similar problem when you were little. I took on a second job to make ends meet. You may have to do the same.” Or “I’ll have to say no. It is not healthy for me if I solve your problems.” Or “I’m sorry to hear that. I know you will work it out.” Or “That must be really hard for you. But you are a smart person, and you’ll figure it out.” Or just plain “No.” Resist the urge to come to the rescue and solve the addict’s problems for him or her. Your addict needs the experience of being self sufficient and independent. Like a mother bird, you have to shove your loved one out of the nest in order for them to fly.

Continue to listen without coming to the rescue by responses that indicate you are listening, such as, “Oh dear, that’s terrible.” Or “I am so sorry to hear that.” Or “That sounds awful.” Or “What a shame.” Or “That must be very hard for you.” or “I think I hear you saying that .....” Or “I am praying for you and your problem...”

When the conversation is not going well, your addict is high or belligerent or demanding, it is time to hang up. Do not allow your addict to torture you on the phone. Hang up with polite determination with comments like, “This conversation is going nowhere right now. Call me back when you feel you can control yourself. Good Bye.” Hang up. Or “We both deserve to hear each other and right now that is not happening. I am hanging up now, Good bye.” Hang up. Or “I chose not to solve your problems for you. I know you can work this out for yourself. I am hanging up now. Good bye.” Hang up. “I am really sorry you feel this way, but that is not my responsibility. I am going now, Good bye.” Hang up.

It is important that when you say you are going to hang up, you actually do it! If you let the discussion continue, you are giving in on your properly positioned boundary and your addict gets the message, “None of her boundaries have any real power. I can get what I want if I just hang in there and keep demanding.” That is one message you do not want to convey to your addict. Let him or her know that you care, but that you will not make yourself responsible for their problems.

### **Discussion Questions:**

How have you handled phone calls with your addict in the past?

What can you do to make these encounters more pleasant and less out of control?

### **Journaling:**

Describe a recent phone conversation with your addicted loved one. What was he or she demanding from you? Did you want to do it or did you not want to do it? Did you cave in and do something you really did not want to do? How can you avoid falling in to this trap in the future? Do you really need to take other measures like reporting your addicted loved one to child protective services or local law enforcement?

# Prayer

## Communicating with God

Prayer is the most powerful thing you can do for your addicted loved one. The active addict can't hear a word you say to him, but he can hear the Holy Spirit. The Spirit witnesses to your spirit that you are a child of God. Remember that you are communicating with the God who created the universe and everything in it. He is all powerful. He is loving and faithful, He cares about your situation, and He knows what to do about it.

Pray daily, but do not let your prayer for your addicted loved one consume all of your time with God. Don't pray compulsively 6000 times each day for your addict. If God needs 6000 copies of your prayer, He has a large staff; He will make His own copies. Pray for your loved one once every day, pray well, and then go on with your praises and adoration of the God who spoke a universe into existence. God deserves your praise even when things are not going well for you.

Listen as you pray. Be aware of that still quiet voice of the Holy Spirit. He may impress something into your mind that He wants you to do. Be alert as you read your Bible. God speaks through His word and clarifies situations with you. Pray God's word back to Him, especially in the Psalms. The enemy is addiction; it is wicked and evil. The angry parts of the Psalms are in there for a reason. They are for you to express your feelings to God honestly, not sugar coating or denying a problem, but facing it straight on, in real life. God cherishes prayers that are honest and true.

Don't be surprised if when you start praying for your addicted loved one things get worse instead of better. The Holy Spirit is on the job bringing your addicted loved one to a place where he or she is forced to admit that methamphetamine is a problem, not the wonder drug he thought it was. Your addict may get thrown in jail. Don't bail him out. He might get in trouble in his job. Don't lie to his boss. He might get kicked out of his home or apartment. Don't take him in unless he agrees to regular random drug tests and stays clean. Let God have His way in your addict's life.

## Discussion questions

How have you seen God working in your addicted loved one's life in the past?

What do you think God wants for your loved one? Pray for that, it is His will.

Sometimes it takes years for God to work His will in your addicted loved ones life. How long are you prepared to keep praying?

## Journaling

Go through the Psalms and look for one that speaks directly to your circumstances. Pray it back to God and write it out in your journal, modifying it with your enemy (addiction) and your unique challenges. Watch for answers to your prayers and record them in your journal. Give thanks and praise to God for every answered prayer you receive, even if the problem is not yet completely resolved.

## Spiritual warfare

In your battle for your loved one's life, you will often feel as though you were under attack. You *are* under attack, from Satan and his demons. Spiritual warfare is real and it is a sign that you are really making progress in getting your loved one free from addiction. The addict is not the only one who pushes back. Satan will push back too.

Evil spirits will try to tell you many lies. They will likely target you at your weakest point. If you struggle with a negative self image, Satan will be right there telling you how stupid you are and making you feel inadequate. Counter his lies with the truth of the Word of God. Learn some key verses that help you resist Satan's lies and memorize them or keep them on a post-it note on your refrigerator, somewhere you see it every day. Resist the Devil and he will flee from you.

Take the spiritual authority that is yours as a parent or spouse of the addict. You can rebuke evil spirits in the name of Jesus and bind them, cast them at the feet of Jesus and let Him do as He will with them. Satan hates that and will avoid you and your family if he knows you will do that to him.

Put on the full armor of God as described in chapter 6 of Ephesians. **Read Ephesians 6: 10-18.** Take on the belt of truth. That means being honest with yourself, with God, and with your addicted loved one. Face the reality of your addict's problems, the impact he or she has on you and your life, as well as the effects of his addiction on other family members. Don't deny or minimize them.

The breastplate of righteousness is not *your* righteousness, it is the righteousness of Jesus Christ. He is your righteousness. Every day in prayer claim His perfect righteousness as the basis for your prayer. You would have no right to approach God apart from the righteousness of Jesus Christ, but in it you have the power of God against evil spirits.

The shoes you wear, the peace that comes from the gospel is your assurance of God's love and His power to work in your situation. Wear it like football cleats. Dig in and stand your ground. You are a child of the Most High God. Your faith is a shield against the lies and fear and discouragement that are like flaming arrows. You have a lot more faith than you think you have. Your faith is in Christ and His love and faithfulness. Faith is perfected by trials, and you are in a trial in your relationship to your addicted loved one. The helmet of salvation is your knowing, *knowing* that you and your addicted loved one are loved by God Most High. Lies cannot enter the head of one who wears the helmet of salvation.

Your offensive weapons are the Word of God and prayer. Be diligent in your reading and memorization of key helpful scriptures that you encounter in your study of the Bible. Write them on post-it notes and keep them around the house to remind you of the power of God every day. Pray for yourself and your addicted loved one, and everyone else in the family that is affected by the addict's drug use. And thank God for every victory you experience in your battle for your loved one's life.

### Discussion Questions

What lie is Satan using against you right now?

What is the truth of God's word concerning that topic?

### Journaling

Write in your journal the scriptures that help you the most when fighting off Satan's lies.

## The Twelve Steps for Family Members

Addicts of all kinds have benefited from the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. They have been applied to alcohol and drug addictions, over eating, gambling, sexual compulsions and others. The twelve steps are basically the same for both addict and family member of an addict. Both need deep healing in order to cast off old destructive thoughts and actions, and take on new positive thoughts and actions.

It may be humiliating for you to have to go through the same steps as your addicted loved one, but in reality, everyone needs these steps, even people with no connection to drugs or alcohol. They are a productive and honest way of life for everyone, and the healing they bring is available to everyone. This section may require more than one session to cover all the steps. Let you and your group progress through them at your own pace, even if that requires more than twelve meetings to discuss it all.

**These Twelve steps and programs are for you, the relative of an addict. Don't overlook this extremely valuable resource just because your addict has the problem, not you.** The use of a Twelve Step Bible may be helpful to you. We recommend the Life Recovery Bible, available at most Christian bookstore and on the Mothers Against Methamphetamine website, [www.mamasite.net](http://www.mamasite.net).

### Step One

**The first step** is to admit that there is a problem, one that you do not have control over. *"We admitted that we were powerless over alcohol, drugs, and controlling other people's lives – that our lives had become unmanageable."* This sounds like giving up, and in a way it is. It is giving up on trying to control another person. It is facing the fact that addiction is compulsive and habitual use of a substance despite negative consequences. Step one is a rational response to the irrational world of addiction, to quit trying to do the impossible – control your addicted loved one – and accept reality.

You may feel perfectly justified in trying to control your addict, after all he or she is certainly not capable of controlling himself. You are trying to save his or her life, protect their children, maintain his or her job, prevent a suicide, deal with a drug induced mental illness, keep him or her out of jail, avoid major serious consequences of continued drug use.

Consider the ways you have attempted to control your addict. Lecturing, nagging, pleading, bargaining, scolding, threatening, pleading, the silent treatment, passive aggressive, grounding, taking the keys away, locking him in (or out), throwing his dope away, and in spite of all this effort he or she has not



changed. You may have succeeded in getting him or her to use their dope elsewhere – other than your house, but you have not succeeded in getting him or her to quit using drugs or alcohol.

Not only that, but you have sacrificed your own freedom and peace of mind and lost your ability to control your own life. Everything you do is a response to your addict. You lie to his boss, you bail him out of jail, you keep her children sometimes for days at a time, or perhaps permanently, you give him money, you pay his electric bill, you hire attorneys, you worry when he does not come home, you worry when he *does* come home, you worry more or less continuously. You pray for him or her almost constantly; you pray for him to be kept safe, you pray he or she will quit using drugs, you pray she will find new friends, stay in school, get a job, etc. Your prayer life is totally consumed with prayer for your addicted loved one, with nothing left for just praising and loving God in your prayer time.

You slowly realize that your life is almost as much out of control as your addicted loved one's life. That is step one. Admitting to yourself that you cannot control another person's drinking and using drugs, lying, stealing, dropping out of school, losing her job, taking care of her children, paying his own bills, handling his own legal problems.

What price have you paid for your attempt to do the impossible? What has happened to your physical health – weight loss or gain, headaches, insomnia? How about your emotional health – depression, mood swings, anger, withdrawal, anxiety? What has been the social cost to you – loss of friends, alienation from family, isolation, neglect of other family members, strain in your marriage? How about the economic costs – expenses for attorneys, bail bonds, bad checks you had to cover, loss of income from missing work yourself to deal with the problems of your addicted loved one? What has been the spiritual cost to you – your relationship with God, your faith in His love and power, a feeling of being rejected by God, belief that you are being punished by God for some deficit on your part?

It is not your job to control another person, and you will certainly go crazy trying to do the impossible. Admit to the obvious insanity in your life and you have completed Step One. No matter what you do, no matter how much you struggle, and no matter how you pray and control and manipulate, you are ultimately powerless over drugs and other people's lives. The only life you have any real control over is your own. Step one is letting go of trying to do the impossible.

#### **Discussion questions:**

Take the first step and go around the room identifying the things you and your loved one have lost control over. Your loved one lost control over a substance; you lost control over yourself and your loved one.

Discuss the AA saying "One day at a time." What does that mean to you and your struggles with your loved one?

How have you tried to control the life of your addict?

Have you been successful in getting him or her to quit using drugs?

### **Journaling:**

Write in your journal all the problems in your addict's life. How many of those problems are your responsibility? It depends on the age of the addict, some of it may be your responsibility; most of it probably is not.

Write in your journal the ways in which you have attempted to control your addict. Have any of them worked? Do you find that instead of you controlling him or her, the addict actually controls you? Does your addict control how you spend your time, what you spend your money on, what you pray for?

## **Step Two**

**Step two** is, *"We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."* This step is also facing reality as it is, with the hope of resolution in the power of God. Family members of addicts are just as dependent on God as the addict himself. Spiritual healing in the love of Jesus Christ can restore us to sanity. You can regain self control – one of the fruits of the Spirit in the context of a real and authentic relationship with God is self control. Now the pressure that was suffocating you is removed. Only God is big enough to defeat addiction.

Sanity is realizing that you are the only person you can control, and learning to find peace in your own life despite the ongoing chaos in your addict's life. You can find peace of mind in spite of unsolved problems when you focus your thoughts on God and His power and love instead of focusing on the problems in your addict's life.

Read the psalms, particularly Psalm 86, 90, 107, 130 and 145. Look through the Psalms in general and find the ones that give voice to your feelings. Pray them back to God and let their meaning soak into your heart. God understands when you feel surrounded by evil and are about to fall apart. It is okay to be perfectly honest with God as you voice your pain and concern. He understands you perfectly and He loves you perfectly. No one else in this universe can do that. No one else can understand your feelings and conflicts, your heartache and fear, but God understands it all, even if you can't put it into words yourself.

The Holy Spirit intercedes for you with groanings and pleas that cannot be put into words. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control. Spend as much time in prayer as you need to experience these things. Return to your center regularly and especially after a conflict with your addicted loved one. Recharge your batteries in the presence of God. This center in your heart, where you meet with God and receive His love, is the center of your sanity in an insane situation.

### **Discussion Questions:**

With open Bibles let each person read a Psalm that has been especially encouraging to them.

Relate a recent experience in which you felt calm and secure in God's love even when there was chaos going on all around you.

### **Journaling:**

Write out passages in the Bible that give you hope and courage to face your problems. Keep some key verses on index cards in your car or workplace, memorize them so you have access to them in an emergency.

Write your own Psalm, your plea to God for peace and sanity in the midst of troubling circumstances. Be perfectly honest with Him, He can handle any feeling you are experiencing, even if you are angry with God for not fixing the situation the way you want Him to. Just be real with God and He will be real with you.

## **Step Three**

**Step three** is, *“We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand Him.”* Having an accurate idea of who God is and how He feels about you can only be obtained in a study of the Word of God, the Bible, and the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. When you turn your will over to God you are just admitting the reality that God cares, and that God is able and willing to restore your life, and the life of your addicted loved one. No one else can do that.

Examine your usual response to a crisis in your addict’s life. How do you try to impose your will on your addict? Do you scream and cry, reason and argue, give them the silent treatment, withdraw and deny the problem? What would it look like if you gave your will over to God? You can let God settle the score with your addicted loved one, let Him address the injustice of your addict’s demands.

When you turn your will and your life over to God, you agree to let Him handle the impossible situation, the anger and fear, and let Him move in any way He desires without “taking over” and controlling the situation yourself. That may involve letting your loved one spend a few weeks or months in jail if that is where God has put him or her. Don’t sabotage the work of God in your loved one’s life by rescuing him or her from the very situation that God has allowed.

You will likely find that you have to keep step three in the back of your mind all the time, praying in the midst of a conflict with your loved one and trusting God to help you respond appropriately. Give up your expectations as to what God can or will do in your situation. He has His own plan and it may or may not involve you. Keep a “listening” attitude toward God, in prayer and in Bible reading as you place your loved one in His hands.

It may be helpful if you consult with a clergy person as you are engaging in this step. You may have some serious misconceptions of God that color your ability to trust Him. If you think that He is punishing you for some defect in the way you raised your son or daughter, your guilt may be pushing you away from God. It is essential that you trust God to forgive you and restore you to His good favor. We will explore this issue more thoroughly in Step Four.

### **Discussion Questions:**

Relate an experience in which you had no choice but to trust in God for the life and safety of your addicted loved one.

How hard is it to leave aside your will for your addict and trust God to work out His will for your addict?

### **Journaling:**

What crisis has your addicted loved one faced recently? How have you been tempted to intervene and fix the problem? How could your addicted loved one have benefited from being left to his own devices to solve his problem? Can you trust God enough to let go of your expectations and desires and see what He has in store for your addict? Do you think your addicted loved one could “grow up” if he had to face the consequences of his drug use without any help from you?

## **Step Four**

**Step four** is, “*We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*” This step takes your eyes off of your addicted loved one and directs attention to your own needs, desires, and characteristics. You look at yourself as God looks and see your value and capability as well as your weakness and sin, without condemning yourself. You see how you have affected your loved one, and how your loved one’s drug problem has affected you. You examine your hurts and anger, selfishness and sin, false guilt and true guilt, and write it all down. This is self exploration and it is sometimes painful.

Step four differentiates between true guilt – things you really handled poorly in the past – from false guilt – unavoidable circumstances of your life that you may think “caused” your loved one to become an addict. Review your entire history with your addicted loved one, from birth if he or she is your child, from courtship if you are dealing with a spouse, and look for instances that make you *feel* guilty. Review those events and determine three things:

1. Did you have a choice in the matter? Did you live in poverty when your child was growing up? Did your spouse leave you for reasons you had nothing to do with?
2. What was your intent in your actions at the time? Were you trying to raise a responsible teenager? Were you punishing a slight infraction with out of control force?
3. What was the real effect of your actions? Were you yourself an alcoholic while raising your child? Did you use drugs in front of him or her?

Assess each incident in your mind. Was this a real area of sin in your life? Were you criticizing too much, demanding too much, disciplining too much or not enough? Did your action really cause harm to your loved one? If so, acknowledge this “true guilt” and assign it a penalty. Then consider the cross of Jesus Christ and see if that horrible death of Christ met the penalty for your actions toward your loved one. If the punishment Jesus took on your behalf was enough to pay for the sin you engaged in, allow yourself to be forgiven for that real sin. Don’t excuse it or deny it or blame it on someone else. Own it and allow it to be forgiven by God. Then forgive yourself and allow God to restore your dignity and self respect.

Even a child molester can find in Christ an adequate punishment for his or her sin and experience forgiveness at the foot of Jesus' cross.

If your guilt is really under examination found to be "False Guilt," dismiss it. You are not responsible for every decision your loved one has made. Your divorce may have been ugly and painful, but if it was unavoidable you cannot condemn yourself for it. You may have had to work outside the home and leave your child at daycare. If that was unavoidable you cannot condemn yourself for it. You may have disciplined your child excessively, but if your intent was to train your child, not hurt him or her, that is false guilt and you cannot condemn yourself for it. You were doing the best you could at the time.

What are you doing now that represents a *character defect* that affects your relationship with your addict and others?

Your character defect may be *enabling* a drug user to continue to use by over-protecting them from the consequences of their drug use. You do this because you have not set and maintained boundaries with the addict in your life.

Your character defect might be a *self-righteous attitude* that permeates all of your relationships. For example, you are convinced that your way is the best way and no other way of doing things is right or proper. Are you overly critical of other people, including your addict? Are you willing to give up always being right in every situation? Are you willing to admit it when you are wrong, and apologize?

You might have a habit of *preaching and moralizing*, sending manipulative and guilt producing messages like, "If you loved me, you would...." Or "You're living in sin if you ....." or "After all I've done for you....."

Your character defect might be a habit of *ordering people around* and threatening them. "You'd better not, or I'll ....." or "Don't talk back, Do it now."

You might communicate with a lot of *sarcasm* that might make other people feel unloved or useless, such as, "You really know how to make a person feel great, don't you?" or "Oh boy, don't you look fancy!"

You might be engaging in a lot of *self pity* by dramatically crying, acting sullen, giving the silent treatment, pouting, or slamming doors. Notice how often you say things like: "I'll get even with you..." or "No one cares about me." Or "I'll just leave and then you'll be sorry."

Do you habitually *break promises* that you have made, excusing it with, "I don't have time." or "You'll just have to understand."

Are you engaging in behavior that is *hypocritical*, such as criticizing your addict's substance abuse, when actually you may be taking too many tranquilizers, smoking tobacco, or using a *little* pot, or drinking too much, or eating too much food?

Do you *gossip* about other people – including your addicted loved one – discussing other people’s problems with those not directly involved in helping that person? This includes using intermediaries to communicate with someone, like using a child to tell your ex-husband something negative.

These character defects affect all of your relationships, including the one with your addict, and impair communication that is honest and truthful. People learn to tune you out if they hear a lot of comments from you that put them down or de-value them.

### **Discussion Questions:**

Give an example of true guilt and false guilt in your past life with your addicted loved one. Explore the situation and assess your responsibility for it. Assess whether it really contributed to your loved one’s addiction or not.

Discuss your current character defects that may be affecting your relationship with your addicted loved one.

### **Journaling:**

Write out two columns in your notebook, one labeled “True guilt,” the other labeled “False guilt.” Put every guilty feeling you have in one category or the other. Take your false guilt and discard it. You are not responsible for every decision your loved one has made.

Take your true guilt to the cross of Jesus Christ and allow Him to forgive you. Then forgive yourself. You cannot cope with your current reality of living with an addict if you are hauling 20 or 30 years of guilt around with you. Leave it at the cross.

## **Step Five**

**Step five** is, “*We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*” You refuse the fig leaf and dare to be real with someone and above all with God. Shame exposed loses its power over you. You tell someone how hurt and angry you are and someone listens. You admit to feeling guilty for the things you have done wrong and God forgives you. You don’t have to live in the shadows hiding your true self anymore. Step five is liberation.

Admitting your faults and failings to another person requires humility. Chose the person you reveal yourself to carefully. Make it a mutual exchange, you confess your faults and the other person confesses his or her faults in the same setting at the same time. Keep this exchange within your gender – do not confess to a man if you are a woman. Make it honest and real, so the healing goes deep and wide. By admitting the real sin in your life, you rob it of its sting. Healing begins with honest forgiveness.

Take your shame and guilt to the cross of Jesus Christ in a community of believers and experience God’s mercy. While you are there, take your anger and resentment against your addicted loved one to the

same cross. Jesus died for the sins of your addicted loved one, too. You can forgive him or her, release the pain and anger, and give up the resentment that simmers inside you at the cross of Jesus Christ. The penalty has truly been paid for the sins committed against you, as well as the one's you have committed.

When you admit to another person your shortcomings and sins, it may feel like you are walking around naked. These admissions of guilt can be instead liberating and life giving if they are handled properly in your group. If you feel you will be judged and condemned by your partner, you will not tell the whole truth, but if you can feel relieved to share your burdens with a caring person who also has imperfections, step five is a moment of freedom. Usually your sins and failures seem much smaller and less ugly when they are talked about honestly and openly with someone who cares. It takes great courage to do step five, and once you have done it, you can congratulate yourself for doing something that was very hard to do.

Living in shame, refusing to forgive yourself, is just as destructive as living in resentment, refusing to forgive someone else. It sucks the life out of you, disables you from dealing realistically with your addicted loved one. You can't make him or her pay their own light bill when you are consumed with shame and guilt. You can't do it in peace and calmness when you are consumed with anger and resentment. Clean all of that away and you will be free to let your loved one experience the consequences of his or her addiction with peace in your own heart. You have been forgiven, and you have forgiven others. That is peace. Even in the midst of turmoil.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

Pair off in your group with each member choosing a partner to accomplish mutual confession of real past and current sins. You may make an appointment to do this in a more private setting if you wish. Start with things that occurred a long time ago and watch to see how your partner responds to them. If he or she is sympathetic and understanding, you can feel free to open the barn door wide and let everything out. The thing that makes you feel guilty has power over you. You are freed from it when it is confessed out loud to a real person.

#### **Journaling:**

Write down the sins, shames, obsessions, perversions, omissions, and resentments you still carry around with you. Take each one to the cross of Jesus Christ and allow Him to forgive you. Now forgive yourself – sometimes this is the hardest part. You may need to re-train your mind to dismiss guilty feelings as they arise because they have been forgiven and no longer have any power over you.

## **Step Six**

**Step six** is, *“We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.”* You allow God to purge you of your lies and fill you with His truth – the truth about God, the truth about yourself, and the truth about your addicted loved one. You trust Him to forgive your sins and restore you to Himself. You

turn over to Him your desire to control your addicted loved one, and trust that He knows what He is doing both in your life and in theirs.

Your current struggle may be with your temper, for example. You become willing for God to help you control your temper, forgive your offender, restore peace *with* God and the peace *of* God in real life situations with your addicted loved one. Measure your success or failure to do that one day at a time.

If your defect in character includes carrying a grudge or resentment against other people, Jesus can help you to forgive those people and release them from your thought life. You don't have to rehash the offences of others over and over in your mind. First identify the source of resentment, for example, your addicted loved one who makes unreasonable demands on you and verbally abuses you when you refuse to give him or her what they want. Second, understand how the offence affects you, for example, you feel abused, you can't count on him or her to fulfill their responsibilities, and you keep trying to make that person get well. Third, acknowledge your part in this problem, for example, "I do not admit my powerlessness in this situation. I am still trying to control him or her instead of letting go and letting them face the consequences of their behavior, letting them learn the lessons they need to learn."

When you are really ready to give up your resentments and control your temper, Jesus will help you do it; in fact He will do it for you, *within* you, by the power of His Holy Spirit! Focusing your mind and heart on Jesus removes your mind and heart from your temptation or resentment. The fruit of His Holy Spirit living in your life is things like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control (Galatians 5:22-23). You have to make up your mind to give up the resentment, He makes it possible for you to actually do so, forgive the offender, and reclaim your heart and mind for more constructive things you could be thinking about.

All of the character defects we discussed in Step four are destructive to your relationship with your addicted loved one. The Holy Spirit of God is the only one who can rid you of these defects. You can't do it by will-power alone. Your character defects are just as destructive as the character defects of your addicted loved one; they enslave you and distort your personality. As you give each one up to God, you are liberated from a type of bondage that impairs your ability to be a healing and positive influence in your addicted loved one's life.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

What character defects or temptations or resentments do you struggle with every day?

How can you release them to God and allow Him to remove your shortcomings?

How would life be different if you did not have to carry those shortcomings around with you every day?

#### **Journaling:**

Write out in your journal all of your resentments in this four column inventory:

<b>I resent:</b>	<b>What he or she does</b>	<b>How it affects me</b>	<b>My part in this</b>
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My addict      She cusses me out      I feel abused      I allow her to do this instead of  
Hanging up the phone or leaving the room

Explore in your journal how your life would be different if you could surrender your resentments to God on an ongoing basis, even while your addict is busy abusing you. How would your forgiveness affect your response to the shouting match your addict is trying to stir up? How could things turn out different if your fuse were a little longer, less irritable, less resentful, etc.

What other character defects do you see in yourself that you are willing to let God take and remove from you? Write about your readiness or reluctance to allow God to remove these shortcomings in your life. Be open to the Holy Spirit pointing out additional defects of character that you may not have been aware of. He might just use your addicted loved one to reveal them to you!

## Step Seven

**Step seven** is, “*We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.*” We believe that He is both able and willing to cleanse us, restore us, and heal us. That requires faith and humility before God. We have a tendency to think that we are somehow superior to our addicted loved one, but the truth of the matter is that we are deceiving ourselves almost as much as the addict is.

When you honestly and humbly ask God to remove your shortcomings, He will do it, but not necessarily by using a magic wand. He will allow you to conquer your shortcoming – impatience for example – by letting people challenge you with lateness, slowness, etc. “ I asked God to give me patience, and instead I get all these slow pokes pulling out in front of me when I am driving.” God is giving you patience, His way, not by a magic trick.

Address your shortcomings and character defects one at a time, staying focused on the love of Jesus for both you and your addicted loved one. Start with the defect that causes you the most pain or shame, and let Jesus forgive you and heal you of that defect. One defect per day may be all you can handle at one time. Go slow and be thorough.

Go through the following defect check list and check off the one’s you feel apply to you:

Critical

Resentful

Rejecting

Expecting too much, too soon

Self pity

Fearful

Emotionally uncontrolled

Angry

Interfering

Possessive (esp. of a person)

Overly permissive

Self-indulgent

Domineering, controlling

Self-righteous

Manipulating

Self-deceiving

Stubborn

Enabler

Dramatic

Hopeless

Intolerant

Impatient

Full of false pride

Withdrawn, depressed

Opinionated

Procrastinating

Gossipy

Obsessed with another's problems

Ungrateful

Disrespectful

Dishonest

Grouchy

Promiscuous

Substance abusing

Lazy

Sarcastic

Jealous

Aggressive (verbally or physically)

Irresponsible with money

Whiney, cry a lot

Denial – peace at any price

Rescuer

Complainer

Self centered

Judgmental

Talk too much (don't listen enough)

Argumentative

Give each of your defects to God and let Him correct and heal you in each area of your life

**Discussion Questions:**

Were you surprised to find you had so many defects in your character?

Do you think any of them make you hard to live with, even for a sober person, but especially for an addict to live with you?

Do you think you will feel better when God has removed some of these things from your character?

**Journaling:**

Write your list of character defects in your journal and take them to God in prayer. Tell Him exactly how you feel about each one.

Make a notation as you give away each one of your defects. Be grateful that God loves you in spite of them, and so does your family.

## Step Eight

**Step eight** is, *“We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.”* Don’t forget yourself on this list. You have done more harm to yourself than anyone else, and you must quit that and treat yourself with dignity and respect. Start treating yourself better, taking a break from over-work, exercising regularly, eating better, allowing yourself some down time to do what you enjoy just because you enjoy it.

This step also requires humility as you admit to harming other people, including your addicted loved one. The addict has harmed you without doubt, but you have also harmed your addicted loved one, perhaps by enabling him or her to keep on using drugs or alcohol. Making amends may involve setting firm consistent boundaries with your addict and loving them enough to enforce those boundaries. Who have you harmed by rescuing them from every bad situation they have gotten themselves in? Who have you done things for that really could have done for themselves, and increased their self confidence by solving their own problems?

Who have you nagged and scolded and followed and manipulated in your efforts to make them get clean? Can you build a more respectful relationship with that person by letting them deal with the consequences of their own behavior? Is there any way you can make a positive encounter with your addicted loved one, perhaps taking them out to McDonalds and having a milkshake together with no strings attached?

Other sections of this book, on communication and boundary setting, will help you to make amends by changing your behavior, and changing your response to your addicted loved one’s behavior. Pray for each person on your list. You will feel freedom and an internal relaxation as you release each person you have harmed into the arms of Jesus.

### Discussion Questions:

Review your list with your group and pray together for each person on your list.

How can you make amends, how can you treat each person on your list differently now that you have seen the truth about your relationship with them?

### Journaling:

Keep your list of people you have harmed in your journal with notes and dates. Keep track of who you are willing to make amends with, and why you cannot make amends with the others.

Take each person on your list to Jesus in prayer on a regular basis.

## Step Nine

**Step Nine** is, *“We make direct amends to such people wherever possible except when to do so would injure them or others.”* This process heals many hurts and restores many relationships, but does not

work for everybody. Sometimes the person you hurt would be further injured by a rehash of old sins. An example would be a resentful incest victim who cannot approach her attacker without being victimized all over again.

Sometimes a formal apology is in order, but usually just a change in your behavior towards that person is sufficient to make amends, and that is often far more meaningful than an awkward apology. These are called "living amends." For example, in the past you frequently gave money to an addicted loved one, indirectly contributing to her addiction. A living amend is to change your behavior with a brief explanation, such as, "I am sorry I always gave you money in the past and now you expect it of me, but today I am working my own twelve step program and have promised myself not to enable your addiction anymore."

Perhaps you can write a letter to the one you harmed explaining how and why you harmed them and asking their forgiveness. Sometimes you can express yourself better in writing than you can in a personal conversation. Emphasize how you have changed as a result of your realization of the harm you caused, perhaps noting that you no longer blow up with anger before a person has finished what they are saying, you have changed your behavior in a positive way. Tell them you have become less sarcastic and less critical as you have grown in understanding of them and yourself.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

Relate to your group how things have gone when you have attempted to make amends in the past. How could you do it better in the future?

Practice in your group how you plan to approach your addicted loved one with your amends. Get their feedback on how your planned approach is likely to be received by your addicted loved one.

Has anyone ever made amends with you after hurting you in some way? Write about the incident and how you felt when the person apologized. How did that event affect your relationship with that person?

#### **Journaling:**

Write about the way in which you have made or plan to make amends to all the people on your list from step eight. Consider each person prayerfully and assess whether they would benefit most from a sincere apology, or a type of living amends in your daily behavior with them.

Write about how you feel after each direct and indirect amend you make.

Write about the reactions of the people to whom you have made amends. How has this healed your relationships with those people?

## **Step Ten**

**Step ten** is, "*We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.*" Continuing honesty and humility are required to remain in a right relationship with your addicted loved

one and with God. Keep your eyes on yourself. The only person you can change is you. You take an honest look at what you have done right and thank God for it. You also take an honest look at what you are doing wrong and fix the problem without condemning yourself. Everyone has room to improve in communication, motivation, selfishness, truthfulness and self control . The idea here is to minimize guilt. You can't let it pile up and destroy you. Get it out in the open and it loses its power over you.

Step ten is an ongoing process that examines your current attitudes and actions, feelings and thoughts. With God's help, this step becomes an ongoing way of life. A daily quiet time in which you reach for your journal, by now your journal is an old friend, and rehash the previous day looking for feelings of anger, harsh words, resentment, or anything that has caused you or your loved one discomfort. Some questions to consider:

Which emotions do I need to acknowledge honestly, right now?

What did I do right today? What were my victories?

Did I offer anyone encouragement today? How did that happen?

In what ways did I improve some of my shortcomings today?

What did I do wrong today? Did I harm anyone directly or indirectly? Consider this prayerfully with the Holy Spirit.

Am I being hard on myself, or fair to myself as I look at this event or situation?

### **Discussion Questions:**

Ask each member of your group to describe a positive development with your addicted loved ones.

Allow each member of the group to describe how they handled a difficult situation. Be open to suggestions for how you could have handled it differently.

### **Journaling:**

Write about your daily progress in any problem area for you, such as controlling your temper or enabling an addict. What do you wish you had handled differently?

How are you communicating more honestly with the people around you? Do you feel some bonds strengthening in your family life?

How would the "old you" have handled the problems you faced today? Appreciate the progress you have made. Remember that no one is perfect, including you.

## **Step Eleven**

**Step eleven** is, *"We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."* This is

the step where you gain spiritual intimacy with God. Find a quiet place where you will have some privacy. Center your thoughts on God and his mercy, love, and power. When distracting thoughts come along, dismiss them and return to your meditation on God. Understand and meditate on His incredible unconditional love for both you and your addicted loved one. Ask him for wisdom to know what to do in difficult circumstances. He gives wisdom to anyone who asks for it. Ask Him for the power to carry out His will. The let go and see what happens as He answers your prayer. It might amaze you.

Examine your prayer time and see if you are spending most of your time ordering from the Butler – God give me this, God give me that. See if you are mostly complaining to God about someone else. Examine what you really expect from God. Compare your prayers with those in the Bible, recorded in Psalms. These are all certified “safe” prayers since they appear in God’s word. Notice the patterns and approaches to God taken by the psalmist. Most of them are pretty direct in how they address God.

Avoid making your addicted loved one the exclusive content of your prayers. At least 50% of your time with God should be devoted to God – praising Him and adoring Him, thanking Him for each victory of the day. Learn to be aware of His presence with you throughout the day – a process called “practicing the presence of God.” You may be able to do this only for a few minutes at first. Gradually extend your time of awareness of God to the point that you are in conscious contact with Him all day, in every thought. Your “self talk,” thinking to yourself, becomes “prayer talk,” thinking with God.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

What is your current level of communication with God? Are you mostly ordering from the Butler?

How do your prayers compare with the Psalms?

#### **Journaling:**

Write out your prayers as you pray – like they are in Psalms. Write out exactly what you are thinking without editing it for propriety. You don’t have to sound like a preacher in order to pray. Use your own words and express exactly how you feel.

Make a habit of keeping a prayer journal so that you can see how God is working in your life and in the life of your addict.

## **Step Twelve**

**Step twelve** is, *“Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.”* The lights have come on. You see yourself and your addicted loved one clearly. You have learned to take care of yourself and become an influence for change in your loved one, not by nagging, but by living the truth before him or her. If you

quit buying the lies and start telling the truth about how you feel, your loved one will learn to quit lying and tell his or her truth. As you learn to love yourself and treat yourself with compassion and fairness, your loved one will see that and perhaps learn to control themselves.

In any event, you have assigned responsibility for your addict right where it belongs, to your addict. He or she is responsible for their own problems, expenses, legal problems, and children. You have learned to not come riding to the rescue every time your addicted loved one gets into trouble. You have extended him or her the dignity of being an adult, responsible for themselves. They may be handling that well or not so well, but it is no longer your problem.

The tension in your life should be markedly less now that you no longer bear the entire weight of yourself and your addict. You should have an overall sense of peace with yourself and peace with God that transcends your daily reality with your addict. You should be calmer, more relaxed, and more trusting of God to accomplish His will in your life and in the life of your addicted loved one.

Now you are ready to pass what you have experienced on to others. You may have noticed that some of the people in your group are not there because *they* need it, but because *you* need it! They are giving of themselves to help you cope with the reality of living with an addicted loved one. I wasn't easy for them and it wasn't easy for you. Working the process again as a mentor or teacher just solidifies what you have learned and lets it permeate your life more thoroughly. Your life is enriched by contributing to the growth of someone else.

**Discussion Questions:**

How has the group contributed to your growth while you have been meeting together?

Do you think you have something to offer new people coming in that are still trapped in the old thought patterns you used to labor under?

**Journaling:**

Write in your journal the episode in your group that has helped you the most. Express gratitude to God for placing you in that group and leading you to those people. Be alert to opportunities for God to use you to reach someone else with His peace and love.