

# ADDRESSING ADDICTION IN THE FAMILY

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Does someone you love seem to be self-destructing from an addictive behavior? Are you watching a spouse, son or daughter abandon everything once important to them because of drugs, alcohol, sex or some other stimulant? An addiction or dependence is commonly defined as *"a recurring compulsion to do the same thing over and over, despite harmful consequences to his health, mental state or social life."* Are you seeing that trade-off in someone you care about – a compulsive pursuit regardless of the effects it has, especially on your relationship?

If you aren't seeing clear signs of addiction, are you noticing a gulf growing between you and this family member as their thoughts, time and energy are consumed by some dominating activity?

## What can you do to help?

### Assess the Willingness to Change

Has your loved one admitted a problem and shown interest in getting help? If they've given you any sign of wanting to deal with their problem, take that opportunity to get the best of Christian counsel and direction from those most familiar with the specific addiction he or she is indulging.

If instead you're dealing with denial, you might need to organize a professionally guided intervention – which is an orchestrated attempt by family and friends to motivate someone to get help for their problem. An intervention is especially necessary to help stabilize the situation – to begin shielding your home from the emotional, physical and spiritual vulnerability of an out-of-control problem.

### Treat Body, Mind, and Spirit

Sex addictions counselor Rob Jackson tells families that the addictive behaviors they see are just the tip of the iceberg. Efforts to modify behavior might seem effective in the short-term, but can re-appear or show up in a different sort of compulsion if underlying issues are not addressed.

Deuteronomy 6:5 says, *"Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind."* Those struggling with addiction need to treat problems of the body, mind and spirit – to go beneath the surface and deal with the thoughts, emotions and spiritual conflicts driving those behaviors.

James 1:14 describes how dependence progresses from desire to enticement to sin and, ultimately, to death. The most effective approach to recovery is to reverse that progression - to restore a right relationship with God (Romans 8:1-15), to have a clean heart (Psalm 51), to have a renewed mind (Romans 12:2) and then as a result, to bear good fruits in behavior (Romans 6:7).

### Find Hope in Perseverance

God is able to redeem anyone and restore them to a life characterized by self-control (Titus 2:11-14). There is hope in persevering as a family through the struggles of recovery. Romans 5:3-4 says, *"We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope."*

Pray that God's best will win out for this family member, remembering Jesus' words: *"The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy, but I have come that they may have life and have it to the full"* (John 10:10). Ask the Lord for wisdom, grace and courage to set boundaries that will move your loved-one away from his or her destructive patterns and protect your family from the pain and damage caused by addiction.

## Encourage Responsibility

Family members express a wide range of reactions when they are confronted with a loved one who has an addiction. Some are overwhelmed and distance themselves not knowing how to handle it, and others may enable their loved one's addictive behavior as a way to maintain some semblance of peace, to ensure their safety, or to feel in control of an out-of-control situation.

The enabler is frequently in denial about the severity of the addict's problem. They make excuses to protect their loved one's image and assume the role of taking care of all of the things the addict leaves undone; taking care of finances, ensuring children get to school and activities; housekeeping... But in reality, enabling only sustains their destructive habits.

It's vital that family members control their emotions and provide consistent encouragement, while helping their addicted loved one get some form of professional help and treatment.

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## GOING FURTHER

### RESOURCES

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*A Hunger for Healing* by J. Keith Miller

Shows Christians how the twelve steps are for them as well as for everyone in search of wholeness and peace.

*Beyond Codependency: And Getting Better All the Time*  
by Melody Beattie

Beattie takes you into the territory beyond codependency, into the realm of recovery and relapse, family-of-origin work and relationships, surrender and spirituality.

*Surfing for God: Discovering the Divine Desire Beneath Sexual Struggle* by Michael John Cusick

Cusick shows us how the pursuit of empty pleasure is really a search for our heart's deepest desire—and the real key to resistance is discovering and embracing the joy we truly want.

*Breathing Under Water: Spirituality and the 12 Steps*  
by Richard Rohr O.F.M.

Makes a case that the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous relates well to Christian teaching and can rescue people who are drowning in addiction.

*The Game Plan: The Men's 30-Day Strategy for Attaining Sexual Integrity*  
by Joe Dallas

A powerful five-point strategy designed specifically for men to help overcome sexual snares.

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