

The *Loved Ones Group* Newsletter

an educational resource for those who are concerned about a loved ones alcohol or drug use

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Are you concerned about a loved one's alcohol or drug use?

We want you to know, you are not alone. Loved Ones Group is a free, education-based service and supportive program that provides information about the brain disease of addiction, plus education on how you can help loved ones who may have an addiction problem. Each edition of this newsletter will offer information, support, testimonials and resources designed to help loved ones encourage the addicted person to seek treatment with a goal to embrace a long-term recovery lifestyle. For family resources or information about Loved Ones Groups contact Robin Looney, Director of Day One Admissions Center at 740-354-6878. Walk-ins are welcome at 816 Fourth St. Portsmouth between 8-4pm Monday through Friday to obtain literature.

A Healthy Recovery Environment

by Ed Hughes

As the loved one, we are usually focused on how to get someone into treatment for their addiction, and that first step of asking for and getting help is indeed daunting and complex. Equally, just as important as entry into treatment, is consideration for what a newly recovering person faces when returning home. There has been a general misconception among addicted people, family, friends, employers and others that patients are "cured" after a period of treatment, and that all can now return to "normal" in terms of the recovering person's lifestyle and living circumstances.

In truth, treatment is only the beginning of a process of personal development that may go on for a lifetime, and there may be numerous changes necessary for the person to maintain their sobriety. One of the most critical elements for a person in early recovery is to be around people who understand the nature of the addiction and the on-going activities necessary to maintain sobriety. Too often everyone wants to just get back to where they were before the addiction began and put the chaos behind them. This is a mistake with potential life-threatening consequences.

Here are some general guidelines for consideration for the recovering person and loved ones.

1. The person in recovery needs to have close relationships with people who understand addiction and the difficulties of continuing recovery. These people are easily found in the communities of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA), but it can also be very beneficial if a family member or friend can become an understanding supporter as well.
2. There is a continuing challenge for loved ones to understand addiction as a disease, not a moral weakness. There can be a frustration among loved ones when the person in recovery spends a great deal of time attending AA/NA meetings or with other recovering people. The time spent with these contacts is crucial to continuing sobriety.

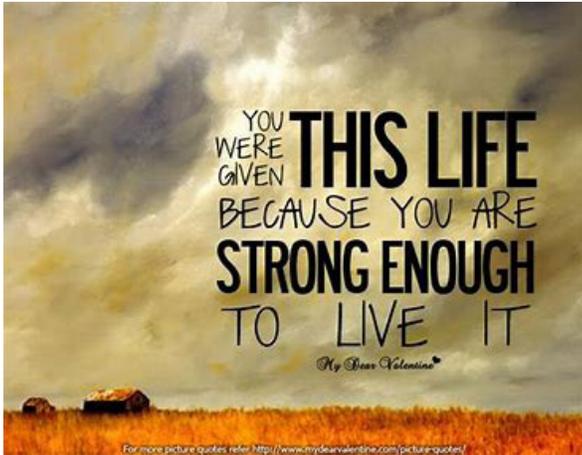
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Loved Ones Group

 THE counseling center, INC.
we believe in miracles



Ed Hughes is one of the originators of the Loved Ones Group. He is a licensed, Independent Chemical Dependency Counselor for the State of Ohio, and served as Executive Director of The Counseling Center, Inc., from 1989-2013. He is currently a contributing columnist for the Loved Ones Newsletters. Mr. Hughes earned a B.A. in Sociology from Ohio University and a Master's of Public Service Counseling from Western Kentucky University, and has written a companion book titled *Baffled by Addiction*.



A Healthy Recovery Environment continued....

3. The person in recovery needs to stand on his/her own two feet, so loved ones who are continuing to enable must be avoided. Creating these boundaries are the primary responsibility of the person in recovery, but the loved ones can help by constantly checking themselves to assure they are not doing for themselves.

4. There may be a strong benefit for the recovering person to avail themselves of on-going treatment that includes sober housing. Sober housing is usually a congregate living arrangement with other persons in recovery. This creates an environment of support from peers and professional staff that helps keep the person in recovery focused on the important activities of recovery.

5. Returning to work can also be a challenge, although work and self-support are critical to recovery. When possible it is very important for the person in recovery to be honest and open with their employer about their responsibilities to recovery activities. We are not asking for special considerations from the employer, but awareness can be helpful if a work issue does arise.

Family and friends who understand the challenges of recovery, but are also able to provide accountability can be immensely supportive to a person in recovery. Often loved ones are not prepared for this "new person" that is coming back into their lives, nor are they aware of the changes they may need to make in order to be supportive. Early recovery is usually a bumpy road, with everybody learning how to best manage their challenges and opportunities.

Family Story

Having more than one loved one in active addiction it was easy for me to see them as the ones who needed to change. While they certainly had their issues, I was in my own little bubble of denial about how my attitudes and actions contributed to the family sickness. At different points in time I tried lecturing, reasoning, providing support, withdrawing support, begging, bargaining, threatening, the silent treatment, and any other tactic I could think of to get my loved ones to change. I was so wrapped up in their sickness I didn't see how distorted my own thinking had become.

I had been exposed to recovery and knew it was possible, especially since I was sure they really wanted to change. A few of my friends had suggested I start going to Loved Ones Groups or Al-Anon and I dismissed the idea, thinking there was no reason, since I wasn't living with anyone actively drinking or using. Looking back I know they saw how broken and scattered I was, when I couldn't see it myself. In my mind, the problems would resolve themselves if those sick people would just get their lives together. I didn't realize one of those sick people was me. I was so sick, in fact, that I started giving serious thought to how I could keep my loved one at my house (even against his will) just long enough for him to get clean, because I just knew once he got sober he would be able to think clearly and make good decisions. Once I realized how sick that plan was (and that it is illegal), I gave a second thought to the meetings my friends had suggested.

I attended Loved Ones groups and learned more about addiction than I ever imagined. I saw the problems in a whole new light and even began to see how my actions and reactions fed the family disease. Listening to the questions and concerns of other family members showed me that I wasn't alone and that other people are just as confused and desperate as I was. It also helped me see there are real, tangible steps I can take to be part of the solution, rather than contributing to the problem. I learned about denial, boundaries and enabling, along with many other things I had been doing wrong.

Al-Anon taught me that I had things to work on within myself and that I was mistaking my goals for my loved ones as their goals. Working steps with a sponsor taught me about how self-centered and controlling I was being, all the while thinking I was doing it for my loved ones' own good. I learned how to focus on myself, which was a totally foreign concept to me. Because I have been willing to take a thorough look at myself, I have grown spiritually in ways I cannot describe, and for that I am eternally grateful.

Through the years I have learned many crucial things about addiction and its baffling nature. I have lost so many loved ones to this disease and seen many experience the miracle of recovery. My part in this deal is to keep working on me, with the guidance of my higher power and the help of others whenever I can. While my mind understands relapse is a possibility, my heart tells me there is always hope. Even for me. Whether my loved ones stay sober or not. - SE