

HOW TO HELP SOMEONE WHO STRUGGLES WITH ADDICTION

A PHILOSOPHY FROM A FORMERLY ADDICTED PERSON

Do you know or suspect someone in your life struggles with addiction?

Is the person riding off the rails...saying/doing things that make little sense, getting in needless trouble, causing thoughtless drama?

Do you feel concern, confusion...challenged as to how best to help?

Perhaps your own life has been tossed into turmoil...you can't sleep, have trouble concentrating at work

You've stopped exercising, set aside your hobbies, picked up bad habits

Your once-pleasant conversations are now dominated by talk of the person in your life who struggles

Maybe that person is your family member—they burn through your trust, patience, and/or money like so much dry firewood

Maybe they're your close friend...who's stopped returning messages, breaks promises, doesn't reciprocate your friendship

Or your job colleague fails to perform proper work (or fails to show up for work at all)

If so, take heart

The family member/friend/co-worker described above?

They were me...I did all those things, and more

Many people who cared about me found themselves bewildered, harmed, and devastated

By my poor choices, hurtful words, and self-centered actions, during the course of my 20-year crippling addiction to drugs

My four-in-the-morning phone call from jail a cell, failure to pay back a huge sum of money, skipping

Thanksgiving Dinner after a night of partying

I was beyond help...

But they helped me

God put amazing people in my life—their help transformed me

From selfish to servant, addicted to attentive, hopeless to heart-centered

Today, the world has me as the best family member/friend/coworker I've ever been (while still very far from perfect, of course)

Perhaps in these pages you can learn what I learned from the exceptional people in my life

All I ask is, you consider: What you read here, are suggestions only

If anything you find here makes sense to you, great!

If not, discard what you find here in favor of what does make sense to you

Back to our story...

I'm a reader...of many wonderful books and articles on others' addictions and recoveries

I'm a writer...on the subject of my own addiction and recovery

Sometimes my readers reach out to me

Seeking solutions when someone in their life struggles

The tales they tell are tragic

Children abandoned like waifs from a Dickens fable, family savings burned through like so much kindling

They want to know how they can help

They want to know which approach I recommend...

Of the many rehabs, twelve-step programs, books, abstinence plans, medical interventions, court-mandated paths, faith-based systems, courses of therapy, coaches, careers, communities, meditation practices, diets, and/ or fitness routines

All approaches above—and many more—have, in many cases, proven to be effective, even excellent...they have saved lives, and turned lives around

Yet before you undertake one of those approaches, it's important you first adopt a certain philosophy

Consider: An addicted person is very much like a drowning person

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Being swallowed by the sea, lost in a lake

They thrash, gasp, desperately grab as panic blinds them...

The fact they're drowning, prevents them from preventing themselves from drowning

They're unable, because of their situation, to recognize the efforts of another human as efforts intended to help them

(Note: for our immediate purposes, it doesn't matter how the person came to be drowning...whether they took foolish risks, or a rogue wave swept them in, or they misguidedly swam in undertow...we must deal with the fact they are drowning, not whose fault/what circumstances led to their situation)

As addicted people, what we truly want, is, the same as what the drowning person wants...

We want to no longer be drowning

We want to be standing upon solid dry land, with our feet planted on firm footing

To get where we want to go, we need help from someone who is already there

To help a drowning person, don't jump in after them, if you can help it

Or you're at risk of them pulling you under

You can't help someone who's drowning, if you're drowning too

Instead, first focus on yourself...ask yourself:

How are you keeping your feet on that metaphorical firm footing?

How are you putting yourself in a place where the addicted person wants to be?

How are you pursuing what you want and deserve in your own life: Happiness, love, success?

(These are what the addicted person wants and deserves, too)

How are you taking care of yourself: Your physical health, emotional state, pursuit of your life's work?

(These are areas in which the addicted person wants to solve problems, too)

How are you standing upon a rock of spiritual beliefs?

(My best mentors shared and showed their faith in a form of God...a faith which solved their problems (for addicted people, drug use is often an attempt at problem-solving))

Whatever firm footing means to you, be standing square and solid upon it

From there, you can throw a lifeline

When and if the drowning/addicted person grabs hold, reel them to safety

What is meant by a "lifeline"?

A lifeline is one or more of your approaches above:

The many excellent rehabs, twelve-step programs, books, abstinence plans, medical interventions, court-mandated paths, faith-based systems, courses of therapy, coaches, careers, communities, meditation practices, diets, and/or fitness routines

Just remember...the best lifeline in the world, may not help much, if the person throwing it (you) isn't standing upon firm footing

You've already proven yourself a loving, caring person, dedicated to the welfare of others

If you weren't, you wouldn't be reading this

Now your challenge (and it's a stern challenge) is,

To rescue your own life from turmoil, even before the addicted person accepts your help

Return to your exercise routine, pleasant conversations, hobbies...set aside your bad habits

It may not be easy: You may have to undertake intense self-examination, a path of ceasing self-blame, a new nutritional plan, a meditation practice, rising before dawn to do yoga, participation in Al-Anon, a course of therapy, or all of the above (and more)

Yet as difficult as it may seem, the more you improve your own life, the better you'll be able to help someone who struggles

To summarize:

Your suggestion (and it's only a suggestion), is...

In order to help someone who struggles with addiction, adopt a philosophy

That their situation is like that of a drowning person

The best way to help others, is usually to first help ourselves

Have your feet planted on firm footing

Throw your lifeline

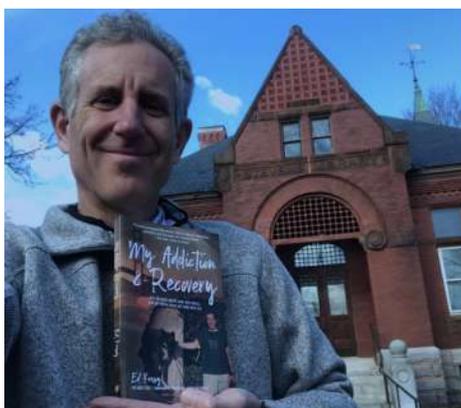
Let me know how it's going, and how/if I can help you

My thoughts and prayers are with you

God bless

Only the development of compassion and understanding for others can bring us the tranquility and happiness we all seek

—The Dalai Lama



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