

**Twelve Do's and Don'ts For the Family  
While the Alcoholic Is In Rehab  
By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.**

Your significant other finally went to rehab. With all the events leading up to his agreeing to go to treatment, it may feel like a let-down. You may have breathed a big sigh of relief as you drove away from the airport or the treatment center after dropping him or her off. You may feel hope. You may still be waiting for the other shoe to drop. There may be a brief period where you don't feel anything before you start becoming concerned about what you are supposed to be doing now.

You may be asking yourself and others what you should be doing to support your significant other while they are in treatment. Here are some do's and don'ts for family members:

1. Call them if they are allowed phone calls. Keep it short and simple. Call him at the appropriate times. Don't sit by the phone waiting for him/her to call you. Live your life. Don't demand that he call you daily.
2. Send cards and letters.
3. When you do talk to him or her, don't take everything that he says at face value. Emotions are a roller coaster ride during treatment and one minute he may sound like he is in a major crisis and the next, everything is fine. Don't jump right in and tell him how to fix it. If you become concerned about his mental health, call the counselor.
4. When you talk to him on the phone and he tells you what he learned today in treatment, resist the urge to point out that you have been telling him that for ten years.
5. Reassure your addicted family member that you love him or her and that you are supportive of their recovery efforts. Let them be responsible for their own recovery. If they talk about cravings, don't panic, it comes with the territory and it is not something that you have to take care of for them.
6. Don't call the counselor to dictate the patient's treatment plan to the treatment team. They can handle that without your supervision. Do tell the counselor about concerns that you may have. Your counselor may be able to address some of your concerns and help you rest a little easier. Answer any questions that your counselor may have about the patient's history honestly.
7. If you have not already done so, problem solve with the alcoholic about what to tell significant others about where he is and what is going on. If your alcoholic/addict wants to do the telling, let him.
8. Handle as many of the logistical living issues by yourself as you can. But don't lie to protect the recovering person from any crisis that may be occurring at home.
9. Save the relationship problem solving until you can get to family week. You will learn new communication and problem solving skills while you are there. You will be more likely to begin to break through old destructive patterns that prevent you from actually resolving problems and issues.

10. Don't get too discouraged if they do not seem to be "getting it" as fast and as far as you would like for your own piece of mind. Keep your expectations realistic. Some behaviors and characteristics may take a long time to change.
11. When you get to family week, do not snoop through his recovery materials and written homework. He will share with you what he is comfortable with and in his own time.
12. Do start attending AlAnon and/or counseling.

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