



Family Recovery: Begin with Yourself

Family recovery allows parents to engage in a structured program of self insight. Begin with yourself by learning all you can about substance use and the influences in your child's life. Next, put what you learn into practice, not just into words. Last, work together with your whole family to regain your ability to function well as a unit.

Learn Everything You Can

Family recovery begins with the notion that all help starts with you (the parent). By starting here, parents no longer blame or shame themselves or their teens. They become open to learning all the facts and putting what they learn into practice. This process helps parents accept the power of their influence on their children. Additionally, it allows parents to reduce the anger and guilt that are often associated with Substance Use Disorders.

Attend [mutual support](#) groups like Al-Anon, Nar-Anon and/or Smart Recovery for Family and Friends. If your child is in a [treatment program](#), attend the family recovery or parent groups. Meeting with other parents can change your attitudes and approaches to parenting, especially as it relates to your child's substance use.

Read [blogs](#) and books that focus on parenting skills and substance abuse. The [National Institute on](#)

[Drug Abuse](#) created a great handbook that focuses on parenting skills. This [ASAP blog](#) includes links to each of these skills.

Parents are emotionally involved and cannot be truly objective. Sometimes parents must consider outside help for their teen.

Practice What You Learn

When you begin with yourself, you regain your self esteem and discover a new power in your parenting. You stop sermonizing and accusing, strategies that temporarily make you feel better, but have been proven to make things worse. Denial and enabling behaviors have also not been effective strategies to help your teen. Coaxing, blaming, and guiltning don't work either.

Don't permit your children to lie to you and pretend it's the truth. While calling them on the truth is painful at times, it will bring a new honest reality to your family. This new behavior also tells your children they can't take advantage of your love or naiveté. You will no longer be an unwitting accomplice to their further denial of a serious problem.

You can no longer cover up the consequences of drinking or using once you have learned that the cover up perpetuates the illness. You must act in your teenager's best interest because your fear no longer compels you to enable destructive behaviors. When teens avoid taking responsibility for their actions, it encourages of a lifetime of this behavior.

Counseling and support groups help achieve these goals. Once you feel more confident, it is time to work with your child to solve the problem. Learning new parenting strategies and practicing these new skills will be far more effective than anything you have previously attempted.

Work Together With Your Teen

It is now time to work together with your adolescent to overcome the substance use. Begin with the three R's of family recovery:

- *Remember* what you wanted your family experience to be like.
- *Review* which rules are tied directly to behavior not hopes and promises.
- *Renew* the family dialog.

THE 3 RS

Remembering involves a personal review. To work with your teen, you must recall your values, hopes, and dreams from when your child was young. Examine what was unrealistic, what needs to

be reestablished, and what needs to be revamped. For example: 'I wanted to have a time to share our day with each other.' To implement this you may need to negotiate on issues like timing and location. It's unlikely you will go into your 17 year old daughter's bedroom and sit on her bed and chat before her bedtime, but a morning coffee routine might work out great.

Reviewing focuses on understanding what has worked (or not worked) for your family. Then, you can begin to develop a new set of expectations. What hopes do you have for your child? What is realistic to expect from them? What expectations might they have of you? Are their expectations reasonable? Answers to these and other questions can be included here.

Renew begins by sitting down with your child as you would with someone you are mentoring. You are facing the reality that your child has a progressive illness, but by working together s/he can move into recovery. In this meeting you want some level of buy-in for the process that you are starting. Ideally, your child will be in treatment for the substance use disorder which will encourage this family dialog. You can elicit help from the counselors in this part of the process.

A 4TH R: RESISTANCE

There is a fourth R that you should be expect: *Resistance*. Change is hard – especially when it means letting go of substances that have 'helped' you avoid stress and the reality of consequences. Your choice is to embrace the resistance and realize that it will eventually lessen or to do nothing and hope the problem will go away.

Family Recovery Empowers Parents

Family recovery can empower you by beginning with yourself and evolving to a new level of parenting. Embrace the three R process. Become the parent you know you can be and help your child in recovery.