



Contact us directly for more information on Recovery Coaching or to order additional copies.

Visit us on the Web

www.motivate4success.com

Email: CC@motivate4success.com

Call us 949-375-2676

Motivate 4 Success

620 Camino De Los Mares
Suite E281
San Clemente, CA 92673

Phone (949) 375-2676

www.motivate4success.com

Living with addiction

5 Simple skills for friends of addicts and alcoholics



Motivate 4 Success

Vol 3

When Change is a Must

Helping individuals find solutions to living with addictive behavior, whether their own or someone they love. Regardless of the addiction, once you decide that change is a must, we help you to develop a lifestyle that brings you the changes you desire.

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<http://www.ndvh.org/> **National Domestic Violence Hotline** If you or someone you know is frightened about something in your relationship, please call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or TTY 1-800-787-3224.

The Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator
<http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/about.htm> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) provides this on-line resource for locating drug and alcohol abuse treatment programs.

These are only a few of the available resources. Your local Yellow Pages, the internet, your place of Worship, and friends/family, can all be additional resources you can and should use. There is help, but you need to take the first step and ask.

Additional Resources available:

Alcoholics Anonymous <http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org> Most (90%) of professional Certified treatment centers take residents to 12-step meetings and follow the 12 steps of AA or variations thereof in their in-house course work. AA has the longest proven successful track record of any program ever created. It requires no religious preference. It relies on a belief in something, anything greater than the individual.

Al-Anon <http://www.al-anon.alateen.org> Al-Anon (which includes Alateen for younger members) offers hope and help to families and friends of alcoholics. It is estimated that each alcoholic affects the lives of at least four other people...alcoholism is truly a family disease. No matter what relationship you have with an alcoholic, whether they are still drinking or not, all who have been affected by someone else's drinking can find solutions that lead to serenity in the Al-Anon/Alateen fellowship.

Nar-Anon <http://nar-anon.org/index.html> members are relatives and friends who are concerned about the addiction or drug problem of another. Na-Anon's program of recovery is adapted from Narcotics Anonymous and uses Nar-Anon's Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.

Adult Children of Alcoholics <http://adultchildren.org/ACA>. Adult Children of Alcoholics is a [Twelve Step, Twelve Tradition](#) program for women and men who grew up in alcoholic or otherwise dysfunctional homes.

The Purpose and Benefit of a Booklet

It is three o'clock in the morning. The phone or the doorbell rings. You know who it is. You pull the pillow back over your head in hopes that they will either run out of quarters for the phone or give up and find another door to pound.

In spite of your attempts to pretend that you are not home, they do not give up easily. The phone will continue to ring until sleep is all but gone. They will continue to make a scene at your front door until the neighbors call the police. This is not the first time that you have been called to the rescue. You even have a few new pairs of shoes to prove your devotion to your friend. But when does devotion turn into something else; something that is no longer helping?

You have no legal tie to them. It seems you only hear from them when they are in some kind of trouble; kicked out of their house, being released from jail or the hospital. They interrupt your life and you are compelled to help.

When you have finally reached the breaking point, your "bottom", healing can begin. "Bottom" simply means that an individual has reached a sufficient level of pain that they are willing to do whatever it takes to change. You are now willing to stop blaming the alcoholic or addict for disrupting your life and start looking at solutions.

For a lot of normal people, they cannot grasp the concept of addiction as a disease. An easy metaphor to use is an allergy. Some people break out in hives when they eat strawberries, others have no reaction. Some people can

drink and there is no compulsion to drink more. Others have one and will forever need or want more.

The addict or alcoholic may not have reached their bottom. Until they do, there is nothing that you or anyone else can do for them. They need to accept their problem and chose a method for dealing with it.

This booklet is devoted to helping you identify your predictable patterns that perpetuate the cycle of substance abuse and to develop coping strategies. This book is not about saving the addict or alcoholic. It is designed for the people who are impacted by and unknowingly supporting their disease. To truly help the addict or alcoholic, you need to educate yourself and take a new approach. When you stop enabling their behavior through your own, you help them see the road to recovery; not to mention get a lot more sleep at night.

1. A Change of Attitude

When you finally go from “I’ll just help him or her out this one last time” to “there has to be a solution”, things can finally turn around for you.

Ask yourself, “how many times has it been the last time”. Addiction happens slowly, and you need to look back at all the times that you or others have had to rescue them. If they are one of a group of friends, you probably have seen each member of the group wash his or her hands of the individual, and now it is down to you.

Try a visual exercise - if you have a photograph of this person from years ago, take a look at it. Think of how



A note about DUI's

Driving under the Influence is a common situation in the lives of alcoholics and addicts.

They are not caught by bad people out to get them, but rather good people trying to save their life and the lives of everyone else who might be in their way.

The bottom line is that normal people do not test the law. They do not get drunk if they are driving and if they do drink too much, they call a cab. Normal people take appropriate action. Unless there is some tangible consequence, a night in jail for instance, this individual may never fully accept that there are consequences until he kills someone.

Most courts understand driving while intoxicated as a sign of a more serious problem, which is why even a first-time offender is ordered into Alcoholics Anonymous. If someone you love is driving under the influence then you need not be suspicious that they might have a problem. They do. Take away their keys, disable their car or call the police on them. Go to whatever lengths it takes to get them off the road.

A note to parents: DO NOT PUT THE KIDS IN THE CAR. THEIR OWN CHILDREN WILL NOT KEEP A DRUNK DRIVER FROM DRIVING DRUNK!

your attachment to this individual? Family, friends, co-workers?

What are a few of the things that you have done for your friend in the past that you see differently now that you have set in place your action plan?

We cannot change the past, but we can learn from it. That is all that needs to happen here. Your experience can help. Use it to help create a future about which you will feel good.

they look now. Do they look better, more mature, happy? Or are they old, stressed, beaten up?

A little exercise:

Column 1 - Reflect back on 5-10 times you or the group have helped them out.

Column 2 – Put a check mark next to the times these were just “Bad Luck” or could have happened to anyone.

Column 3 – Put an X next to the times that you were paid back, helped out or saw a positive improvement that lasted more than 30 days. Be honest with yourself.

Help Given	Bad Luck	Result

What you may see is something such as this:

Gave money	✓	Still owes me
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Now think of the number of times that this scene has played out. Ask others who have known them. How many jobs? How much money? How many apartments, jails, institutions?

Lastly, think of how much time they have spent drinking or using. Try to think of every time that you have seen them, and what has been the result. Don't neglect the beer after work, it is part of the pattern.

Get honest with you.

Admitting that you may be responsible for **perpetuating** their actions is not an easy task. Alcoholics and addicts are adept manipulators and are in deep denial about their own addiction. The drink or the drug is the solution to their problems. Your **denial** of the overall impact of your actions is the impact of the disease on you. In your attempts to help your friend, you have been sucked into their disease. It happens to the best of us.

More than likely, you didn't know what was happening until it got very bad. Addiction is a slow progressive disease. It gets a little worse with each party. No one wakes up one day and says "I want to be an addict", or "I want to be an alcoholic and live in a dumpster". As they continue to give into their disease, they drag you along with them. You have to look deep within yourself to realize and accept that your chaos is a result of your actions or reactions to their disease.

You cannot control their behavior, but you **can** control your own. You can take this moment and make a choice. Change happens in the instant that you make a conscious DECISION. This is not wishing, hoping, praying and dreaming. This is making a **choice** and with that comes an **action plan**. You plan out other parts of your life. You figure out if you have enough money to buy a new car. You contemplate whether the longer drive to work is worth moving into the cheaper apartment, so why is this any different. It has just as much impact on your life, so it deserves just as much attention.

Separate the person from the disease. Realize that the person that you love and care about is not there when they are using. This is not the individual with whom you have laughed and loved. Think of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

Will you attend a meeting and listen to others who have found a solution?

What are your rules/ expectations?

What actions are you willing to set as a consequence?

How will you keep yourself focused? What are some pre-planned responses that you can use to bring the conversation back to your requirements?

Are there any apologies that you need to make because of

Past actions - Denials	How I will act now

Your action plan

Now it is time for you to honestly take a moment and put

Mtg Time	Phone# Location

together your action plan. What steps will you take to find information about your addict's disease, and what

others are doing to successfully live through it? In the reference section of this booklet are support groups.

The story involves a middle-aged scientist who experiments with different potions until he transforms into a completely different person. Hyde takes more and more control over Jekyll. All efforts to help Dr. Jekyll end in failure. Jekyll pulls in a short list of friends. Living in fear of Hyde, they all try to help out their friend Dr. Jekyll. It's a tale of self-deceit, friendship, paranoia, addiction. Is this not what is happening to your friend? The difference is that you can decide to change how you are reacting to each incident.



2. You are not responsible and have no control or power over another individual.

Alcoholism and drug addiction are diseases. Heredity plays a large part as well as environment and biology. Wives, fathers, mothers, lovers and friends do not cause an individual to become an addict or alcoholic.

Accepting the blame (guilt) for another's addiction **absolves** the addict of their own responsibility. Until they are required to take responsibility for their own actions,

they will not change. As long as you are taking up that responsibility for them, neither of you will change. Did you ever get in trouble as a kid for something that one of your siblings did? Did they try the same thing again after such an incident figuring that you would get blamed for it, just like last time? Do you think the alcoholic is any different?

“You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink.”

You are the only one that needs to accept that it is his or

her choice to find and accept a solution. What you do or do not do may be a very strong reassurance to them that it is okay to continue. Whether we are dealing with our children, spouses, parents or friends, you cannot control their actions. Educating yourself as to how addiction manifests is your strongest weapon. Nothing that you do can make them ingest their drug of choice just like nothing you can do can make them seek help. Recovery **is** possible and millions have found it, but what you will hear from each of them is that **they had to be the one to decide** to do it.

Many well-meaning friends and family may impress upon you that you have to do something about the addict's problem. The only thing that you need to do is something about **your** problem. Many old phrases come to mind, such as "you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink." That truly sums up your ability to make someone clean and sober. Start with educating yourself and finding solutions that have worked for others. There is no sense in reinventing the wheel. There are many resources available to help you start to take back your own life.

Take a minute and answer this question, what can I do to educate myself about addiction?

Internet sites	Professionals

It is up to you to lay out a new pattern if you want to help your friend and to get back your own life.

Calmly but clearly let them know that their drinking or using is something that you cannot and **will not** accept. Remind them that you stated this would be the consequence. Calmly tell them that this is a direct result of their drinking or using. Consequences are something that most will not understand until they are faced with them and have to live with them. "I didn't know" is an honest statement. Childish, but honest. That is the point of you holding your boundaries to the letter. Just as a child will suddenly listen up, for the addict or alcoholic, this is the start on the road to recovery.

Remember, this is not an emotional moment. Imagine yourself as a lawyer simply stating the case, simply reiterating the facts. Facts rarely are emotionally charged, your greatest defense is your detachment from your emotions

About **Intervention** and **Rehab**

Think before you react: Try not to blow up at them, nag, cajole or anything else. Tell them either to get something done or you are not going to continue to carry on this conversation. Remember that you are dealing with a child in many ways. Sometimes they need to have their focus re-directed. You have not abandoned them, but you have let them know that they need to do for themselves. A child does not grow up until the parent stops taking care of everything for them.

The most important action that you can take is not to fall prey to the manipulations of the past and to stay focused on your plan of action. You have a decision, and an action plan. Remind them as often as they call what you have decided in a calm, emotionless manner.

Self-run programs - If they try to stay clean and sober all by themselves, their sobriety could last days, weeks or months, but they will return to their old ways. They require help. What this is called is a **dry drunk**. The addict or alcoholic behavior is still there; just the drink or the drug is not.

When they come home drunk or stoned, again your first thoughts will be:

Obviously they did not listen to me, again.

Obviously they did not respect me, again.

Rather than say, "See there is nothing I can do", remember what you **DECIDED** to do. Begin taking the actions that you said you would. Begin taking back your life. When they have sobered up, you can remind them of your rules and that they have broken them. They already know, but more than likely they believed you really did not mean it. You never meant it before, so why would you mean it now? This is the pattern into which you both have fallen.

You may clearly see the need for it, but few who are not ready to accept it will agree. A few simple guidelines:

Interventions can go both ways. When it fails, it is a long time before it can be tried again. An individual who does not grasp the impact that they are having on themselves and on the family or who denies that anything is wrong with what they are doing or how they are living will not see a reason to go to rehab.



If you are planning an intervention, your best choice is to work with a professional interventionist. If you are working with a Recovery Coach, they will help you to get the best information on how to create a successful Intervention and move into a Rehabilitation Center. Your telephone is the first resource. There is help available to you, but you need to take the action.

In many ways, you are dealing with a child-like individual and you need to be the adult/parent.

Remember:

You are the adult

You are the one that can make quality decisions

You need quality information from a trusted source

At the back of this booklet are additional resources that can give you information regarding Rehab centers, intervention, and self-help groups. An excellent place to start is with a Recovery Coach who is familiar with long-term sobriety. Most will offer a frank and no-charge introductory session that will get you started on the road to your

own recovery and for the person that you care about.

Previously, you listed some actions that you can take to educate yourself. Now schedule with yourself when you can and will take the action.

Day	Time	Action

Now that you have a schedule, go about the rest of your life. Do not put this individual before your business, family, hobbies and friends. Take the time to make sure that you are not obsessing about him or her. Make yourself move on. Think about what it was like to have a life before you made yourself responsible for this person. Now, live that life again.



3. Predictability – They Act and You React

If you are enmeshed with someone who is suffering from addiction, you know the pattern of events. If he or she shows remorse over the last episode, it will not last long. They may have a few weeks clean and sober, but all too soon they are right back where they were. And it all starts over again.

Definition of insanity:
Doing the same thing
over and over expecting
a different out come.

Perhaps you have decided that you will not help anymore. This decision could be tearing you up inside. Rather than turning your back on them or never speaking to them again, set a clear action for them that they must achieve.

- They must get clean and sober
- They must participate in a program
- They must get a job
- They must find a way to be of service to others in the community

Each call they make, ask them about the above requirements. If they have done any of them, you can have a conversation. If not, then you have nothing to talk about. These boundaries or rules are for you as much as for them. Every time a sympathetic ear is lent, it perpetuates the “woe is me” syndrome. Set your mind to your intended action and stick to it. Turn the conversation back to your list of conditions. Remind them of the list. Honestly tell them that until they have done something for themselves, you will not listen to them.

The word **But** - But is an over-used word for the addict or alcoholic. It may be true that a job would help the situation, BUT, they do not seem to be able to find the right one. Or, yes they agree that they may need to find a suitable program, but they need to find a job first. But is not a solution. The conditions you listed are yes or no questions. Keep them to those responses. Question: Did you find a program? Yes, I am meeting with them tomorrow. Or no, I didn’t call anyone. The answer is not I have been looking, but I haven’t made any calls. Looking is not doing. How would they react if you were looking into giving them the needed ride, but had not yet done anything about it?

5. Your boundaries

Detachment only has impact and value as far as your boundaries are maintained. If you draw a line in the sand and tell someone not to cross it, but erase it and re-draw it when they violate your request, the line doesn't do you much good, does it?

You are the one that needs to respect your boundaries.

You are the one that keeps changing them. Empty threats are worthless.

Set your boundaries, and stick to them.

In many ways you are dealing with a child, unacceptable behavior is just that – Unacceptable. If an individual cannot accept your boundaries and your rules, then they need to find another way or place to live. Determine what your boundaries are and hold the line. Make sure that there is no misunderstanding of what you meant.

Our example above: They are drunk again. What is the consequence for them? Was their behavior acceptable to you? It has happened more than once and will continue until you decide what the consequence will be for their actions and follow through with what you say.

Before you voice your decision, clearly understand yourself and what the action will be. Whatever you decide, be prepared to hold firm to your decision.

It is not a matter of if;
It is a matter of WHEN

If they are the type to get arrested – they will break out in hand-cuffs.

If they are the type to go to the hospital – they will end up in the ER.

If they are a black-out drinker – they will black out.

If they are violent – they will get in a fight.

Whatever is their pattern, it will happen again and again. This time will be no different than any time previous. This is the definition of insanity.

For example, you hear that they got drunk the night before:

You know where to find them.

You are not surprised to find them there.

You probably are waiting for the inevitable phone call.

The point is that just as they are predictable, so are you. They know exactly what you are going to do. Perhaps you pick them up, lend them money and drive them where they need to be. Whatever your pattern, they know you will do it and be there for them. Even if it is just to yell at them.

If you were to think back, you probably tried one of the below methods or all three:

Rescuer: you came in to save the individual, lie for them, cover up for his or her mistakes and to protect them from the world, taking on more and more of his or her responsibility.

Provoker: scolds, ridicules, nags, screams, insults, trying to belittle the addict into feeling bad for their actions.

Martyr: lets the addict or alcoholic know with your actions that you are hurt and ashamed, quietly making them feel guilty for their behavior; pouting, crying,

whining to anyone that will listen, suffering and choosing to continue to suffer for their actions; asking God why you have been so burdened.

Parent or Policemen: you start making all the decisions for them, making appointments with doctors and clergy; laying out the next step because they obviously cannot do it themselves.

Just as they did not become an addict or alcoholic overnight, you did not learn your behaviors overnight. You probably started by helping them when they came home inebriated, but now it is expected that you will help them or put up with their actions all of the time.

Ask yourself these questions and see how you react to them:

1. Have you ever called in sick for them, lied about their symptoms? Do they often have a flu?
2. Have you accepted part of the blame for his or her behavior? I should have....
3. Do you avoid talking about their problem out of fear of the response? Or do they refuse to talk to you?
4. Have you bailed them out of jail or paid for his or her legal fees?
5. Have you paid bills that they were supposed to have paid themselves?
6. Have you loaned him or her money? Do they take money from you without asking?
7. Have you given him or her "one more chance" and then another and another?
8. Have you threatened to leave and didn't?
9. Have you finished a job or project that they failed to complete? Homework?

If you answer yes to a few of these questions, you have at

very calmly reply, "Thanks, but I don't accept it". **End** the conversation here. Drop them off at their destination and go home. **Leave** them to ponder your lack of reaction.

Take no more heed of what they are saying than if they were reporting the weather. Yes, it is a sunny day!

Don't ask what the plan is or if they need money. You are there to drive the car. That is it. Try to resist the temptation to pound some sense into them. The drink or drugs

tends to make them immune to pain anyway. You'll only hurt your hand.

Oddly enough, the less you react, the more that they will try to draw you in with more promises, more apologies and more plans to get help. Wish them luck, and **walk away**. Your business and focus is to let them do for themselves. Although you may be screaming on the inside, **do not let it out**. Take no more heed of what they are saying than if they were reporting the weather. "Yes, it is a sunny day!" Think about the next time they will call you and you help them. Consider how you will react, what is your comment?



4. “Detach with Love”

"Detachment is neither kind nor unkind. It does not imply judgment or condemnation of the person or situation from which we are detaching. It is simply a means that allows us to **separate ourselves from the adverse effects that another person's alcoholism can have upon our lives.**"

When we take the emotions out of our actions, we have a greater impact. It sounds cold, but when we take an objective look at a situation and simply decide not to get overly emotional, we can state our decision calmly and walk away.

Getting drawn into their emotionalism is equivalent in many ways as getting drawn into the temper tantrum of a small child whose balloon has flown away. The fact is you are dealing with an adult; they have the ability to make their own decisions and handle their own responsibilities. You need to let them.



One example: Your friend is in jail and needs you to pick him up at midnight when he gets released. What is your normal reaction? Take a moment and really think of what you would do. Think about how you will feel, what role you will choose to take on.

If public transportation is available, let them take it. If not, and for their safety you feel obligated to get them, by all means do. This is about you and if you will feel awful for leaving them, then get up and go get them. The caveat is what you will do above and beyond driving them from point A to point B. If you are a nagger, don't nag. If you are a rescuer, don't plan their rescue. Perhaps you will get the immediate apology. If you do, your best reaction is to

some point enabled him or her. If you can answer yes more than a few times you are actually helping them to progress in their disease. You can consider yourself to be a contributor. That is a hard concept to swallow, which is why you want to look only at yourself, not at the addict or alcoholic. What have you done to help him or her along? It is time to stop your predictable pattern. Besides, variety is the spice of life. Why have the same old boring thing every day when you can have something different?

Decide today to embrace the following ideas:

- Not to suffer because of the actions or reactions of other people;
- Not to allow ourselves to be used or abused by others in the interest of another's recovery;
- Not to do for others what they could do for themselves;
- Not to manipulate situations so others will eat, go to bed, get up, pay bills, not drink;
- Not to cover up for anyone's mistakes or misdeeds;
- Not to create a crisis;
- Not to prevent a crisis if it is in the natural course of events

Quoted from Al-anon literature



Take a minute and note how your actions may have enabled this person.
