

FAMILIES ANONYMOUS

Families Anonymous is a fellowship of people whose lives have been affected by the use of mind-altering substances or related behavioral problems of a relative or friend. Any concerned person is encouraged to attend our meetings—even if there is only a suspicion of a problem.

Many recovery programs are available for our addicted loved ones, when they are ready to seek help and recovery. However, Families Anonymous is for us: the parent, spouse, brother, sister, or other emotionally involved relative or friend.

In the beginning we seem to be most helped by listening to those who have shared similar experiences and found some answers. By attending meetings, studying the literature, talking to other members, and working the Twelve Steps of this program, suddenly or gradually our situation begins to look different to us and our reactions to it begin to change. What is happening? We are learning to face reality with comfort, and our emotional growth is being encouraged. These changes in ourselves can create an atmosphere in the family that promotes recovery.

Our authority in Families Anonymous is a Power greater than ourselves, as we understand this concept. Our groups are self-directed; leadership is rotated among our members, who assume various responsibilities that keep the group functioning. No dues or fees are required for membership. We use first names only in order to uphold FA's tradition of anonymity that helps protect the privacy of everyone concerned.

Our program is open to all, regardless of our various beliefs—or lack of belief. A member's acceptance of a "Power greater than ourselves" is strictly a personal, private choice. We are not affiliated with any religion, sect, political entity, or institution. Our primary purpose is to practice the principles of Families Anonymous so we may help ourselves by helping others with similar problems.

We have found that working on ourselves is the most important single thing we can do to help those we care about. In this process, many find that they learn a better way to live. There are no rules or "musts" in our program, except perhaps one: "Keep coming back!"

FA's DO's and DON'Ts

- DO** Focus on your own reactions and attitudes
- DO** Allow other people to accept their own responsibilities
- DO** Manage your anxieties *one day at a time*
- DO** Invest time reading helpful literature
- DO** Learn to be open and honest
- DO** Involve yourself in Families Anonymous
- DO** Encourage all attempts to seek help
- DO** Seek the good in others *and* in yourself

- DON'T** Accept guilt for another person's acts
- DON'T** Nag, argue, lecture, or recall past mistakes
- DON'T** Overprotect, cover up, or rescue from consequences
- DON'T** Neglect yourself or be a doormat
- DON'T** Yearn for perfection
- DON'T** Manipulate or make idle threats
- DON'T** Overlook the growth opportunities of a crisis
- DON'T** Underestimate the importance of "release with love"
- DON'T** Sit at home feeling depressed, when you could be attending a Families Anonymous meeting, helping yourself and others

HELPING

My role as helper is not to **do** things for the people I am trying to help, but to **be** things; not to try to control and change their actions, but through understanding and awareness, to change my reactions. I will change my negatives to positives; fear to faith; contempt for what they do to respect for the potential within them; hostility to understanding; and manipulation or overprotectiveness to release with love, not trying to make them fit a standard or image, but giving them an opportunity to pursue their own destiny, regardless of what their choice may be.

I will change my dominance to encouragement; panic to serenity; the inertia of despair to the energy of my own personal growth; and self-justification to self-understanding.

Self-pity blocks effective action. The more I indulge in it, the more I feel that the answer to my problems is a change in others and in society, not in myself. Thus, I become a hopeless case.

Exhaustion is the result when I use my energy in mulling over the past with regret or in trying to figure ways to escape a future that has yet to arrive. Projecting an image of the future—and anxiously hovering over it for fear that it will or it won't come true—uses all my energy and leaves me unable to live today. Yet living **today** is the only way to have a life.

I will have no thought for the future actions of others, neither expecting them to be better or worse as time goes on, for in such expectations I am really trying to create or control. I will love and let be.

All people are always changing. If I try to judge them, I do so only on what I **think** I know of them, failing to realize that there is much I do not know. I will give others credit for attempts at progress and for having had many victories that are unknown.

I, too, am always changing, and I can make that change a constructive one, if I am willing. I CAN CHANGE MYSELF. Others I can only love.

DO YOU NEED FAMILIES ANONYMOUS?

For Concerned Family Members and Friends

Ask yourself the following questions, and answer them as honestly as you can. Fill in each blank with the name of the person who is causing you concern.

1. Do you lie awake worrying about ____?
2. Do you feel frustrated in your attempts to control ____?
3. Do you disapprove of ____'s lifestyle?
4. Do you argue with ____ about his or her friends?
5. Do you find it increasingly difficult to communicate with ____?
6. Does ____'s behavior have you "climbing the walls"?
7. Do you often ask, "Where have I failed?"
8. Do you feel it is necessary to protect ____ because he or she is unusually sensitive?
9. Are you trying to compensate for some family misfortune, such as divorce, death or illness?
10. Are you embarrassed about discussing your situation with a friend or relative?
11. Do you find yourself lying or covering up for ____?
12. Do you feel resentful or hostile toward ____?
13. Do you find it increasingly difficult to trust ____?
14. Do you worry about ____'s behavior affecting other members of the family?
15. Do you blame others for ____'s problems?
16. Do you blame yourself?
17. Are ____'s problems starting to undermine your marriage?
18. Do you find yourself playing detective, fearful of what you may find?
19. Do you go from place to place seeking help for ____?
20. Is concern for ____ giving you headaches, stomachaches, or heartache?

Three YES answers: This is an early-warning sign.

Four YES answers: Chances are, you could use some help.

Five or more YES answers: You are definitely in need of help.

Local meeting information:

To order additional copies of this or other FA literature, to find a local group or an online meeting, or to obtain information about starting a new group in your community, please contact:

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*Are you
at your
wits' end?*

*Is someone
you love
destroying
family
harmony?*



*Families
Anonymous
can help!*