



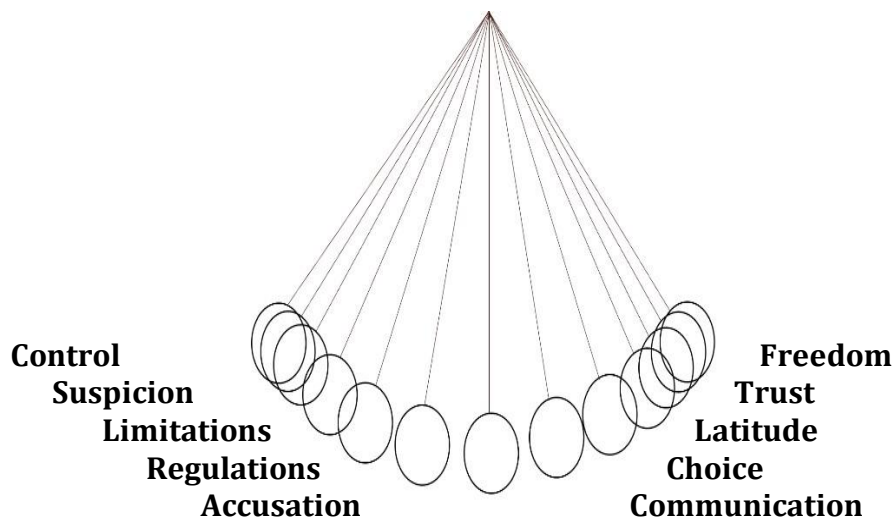
The Pendulum: Examining Common Family Issues in the Change Process

Background: When someone is working on the process of making positive changes related to a substance use issue, there are often many challenges that come up with family. Go through the following checklist and check off any of the following issues listed below that may be a concern for you right now:

- Trust
- Freedom
- Control
- Privileges
- Suspicion/Accusations
- Nagging/Questioning
- Restrictions
- Arguments
- Communication
- Schedule/Curfews
- Other? _____

Briefly discuss some of these concerns and how they apply specifically to you and your family

“The Pendulum”: Issues about trust, rules, freedom, etc. can be like a pendulum that swings back and forth as things improve or get worse. Generally speaking, if things are going the way they should be, and as progress is made, trust should increase, communication should improve, and suspicion should decrease. However in some families that does not always work out that way...



Exercise – On the following page, review the following chart and use the ratings scale in the middle to try to determine where you and your family currently are with each regard to each trust issue listed in the chart. Examples are provided for both sides as a guideline but keep in mind, often people are usually somewhere in the middle. If you are doing this exercise with a family member present, your family member should fill out his or her own chart so that you can compare them afterward:



Caution & Regulation



Trust & Freedom

<u>ISSUE:</u>	<u>EXAMPLES</u>	< RATINGS SCALE >	<u>EXAMPLES</u>
Money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have an “allowance” of cash only as needed. • Paycheck held by others • Submit receipts to account for spending • Must ask permission for bank access 	<p>Mark where you think your family is:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold your own cash • Cash and hold your paycheck • No regulations or restrictions on spending • Access to bank account and ATM card
Car	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keys held by others. Must ask for them to use car • Odometer mileage checks 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You hold the keys • You go where you want, when you want • No restrictions or regulations on driving
Schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permission needed: Must tell others where you are going and when you will come back • Must tell others where you were when you get home • Others free to check and make sure you are where you say you are 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open schedule: Go where you want, when you want – No questions asked • No check in calls or texts required • No curfew
Friends/ Dating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Others must approve of who you spend time with and talk too • Dating prohibited 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to and spend time with whomever you want • Date whoever you want
Suspicion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accusations allowed whenever substance use suspected • Sobriety checks (e.g. “Let me smell your breath”) and drug testing can be demanded at any time • Subject to having personal items searched at any time • Room checks allowed 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nagging, questioning and other accusing not allowed • No unannounced drug tests • Questioning sobriety not allowed • No room searches and no checking personal belongings
Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External: Family is pushing for change and progress more than you 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal – Your own desire for progress & change comes first



Process:

- If you compare your answers with a family member, what areas did you rate the same, and what areas did you disagree about? (If no family member present, compare your answers with how you think they would answer)
- Which areas in the chart are you and your family doing well with?
- What issues stood out to you the most, as needing improvement?

Discuss some of the following “Rules of Thumb” that pertain to improving family trust and communication:

1. ***The old saying is true: “Trust has to be earned”*** – Gaining trust is a lot like managing a bank account. As time goes by without lies or deceit, then that is like making “deposits” in the account so the amount of trust and freedom should increase. Episodes of lies, deception, and dishonesty are like making “withdrawals” from the account so the level of trust earned goes down with these incidents. This leads to rule #2 –
2. ***Honesty is required for things to improve*** – Even occasional lies can stifle progress. This applies to everyone including family. The best way for things to move forward is if everyone is up front and honest about what is going on instead of playing a game of “cat and mouse” which involves trying to deceive one another; Then everyone ends up losing in the long run
3. ***For family members: No one has ever been “nagged sober”*** – Nagging and controlling simply does not work. If someone is going to use, they are going to use and nagging, yelling, fighting, accusing, etc. usually only makes things worse. It is important to learn to resist the urge to nag and over-accuse
4. ***For family members – If someone is trying to fool you, they are only fooling themselves in the long run*** – If you are a family member of someone struggling with a substance use issue, your energy is better spent focusing on being supportive and understanding than wasting energy trying to be like an FBI agent trying to stay “one step ahead”. The truth almost always comes out with time if someone is not doing the right thing so it can be a waste of time and energy trying to constant focusing on “catching them in the act”
5. ***Behavior and attitude is a better measure of progress*** – If someone is really making progress, you will see the difference in how they think and act. Sometimes someone’s attitude can be a better indicator of progress than even a drug test. Keep in mind, however, attitude changes are gradual and take time so it is important to try to exercise patience where possible.
6. ***Motivation is critical*** – At first your family and other external sources like the legal system may be what starts the push for change but for things to last and sustained progress to be made, eventually the desire for change has to come from within. However, families have to be patient at times and allow this process to take place. Again, patience is required as change does not happen overnight. It is better to focus on being encouraging which improves motivation, rather than complaining and focusing on the negative. It is important to recognize and praise any progress that is made in this struggle
7. ***Consider family therapy*** – Having some family sessions with a counselor can be an excellent way to learn to improve trust and communication

Final Discuss Question – What specifically would help you and your family to improve in the areas you identified today?