

Good Choices for Good
Living: *For Families*

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- Substance use issues can be devastating, not only for the person using but also for the family. Therefore, for things to get better, as a person with a substance use issue is working on his or her life, the family also should be focusing on making some positive adjustments as well. Positive change involves a series of consistent positive choices that are not always easy and require patience and practice

Keep in mind...

- **There are no easy answers**
- **Positive change** is often a combination of insight, internal motivation and external motivation(support) – These factors change with time so you may need to adapt your approach
- **There is HOPE** – People do recovery – Its not always the way you think its going to go – Stay positive

Background



UNHEALTHY QUALITIES and TRAITS for FAMILIES

- **Nagging** - Repeating the same thing over and over again to someone and expecting the person to change NEVER works

HEALTHY QUALITIES and TRAITS for FAMILIES

- **Supporting** – Being supportive by definition means “providing encouragement or emotional help” both of which are extremely important.

UNHEALTHY QUALITIES and TRAITS for FAMILIES

- **Controlling:** Thinking that you, as a family member can control someone who has lost control of their substance use is like trying to control the weather – impossible

HEALTHY QUALITIES and TRAITS for FAMILIES

- **Boundaries** – This is very challenging. A family needs to know when things are negotiable but also when to draw the line. Communication is key for this

UNHEALTHY QUALITIES and TRAITS for FAMILIES

- **“Games”** – If you think you are going to outsmart someone who is using substances problematically, 99% of the time you will fail in the long run. Playing games and trickery usually does not bring about good results especially long term

HEALTHY QUALITIES and TRAITS for FAMILIES

- **Honesty** – Lying is a short term way to try to cheat an outcome. In the long term if you expect honesty, you have to give it. Being honest is essential in the family. It can be challenging but rewarding to practice being honest

UNHEALTHY QUALITIES and TRAITS for FAMILIES

- **“Hold then Overreact” Communication** – Waiting until something goes wrong then exploding after it happens is not an effective way to deal with the many problems associated with having someone abuse substances in the family

HEALTHY QUALITIES and TRAITS for FAMILIES

- **Direct and Assertive Communication** – Being proactive by discussing expectations up front in a clear and open manner can help prevent problems later. Being respectful is the key when it comes to assertive communication

UNHEALTHY QUALITIES and TRAITS for FAMILIES

- **Blaming** – When it comes to addiction in your family, blaming yourself, blaming them, blaming society, all lead to nowhere. Blaming generally is an exercise in futility as nothing positive comes out of it

HEALTHY QUALITIES and TRAITS for FAMILIES

- **Accepting** – “It is what it is” – Trying to find excuses why things are the way they are diverts valuable time and energy away from the problem at hand. Searching for the “root cause” can be a mystery. Better to search for answers and solutions

UNHEALTHY QUALITIES and TRAITS for FAMILIES

- **Rigidity** – Being rigid and refusing to bend will usually end up breaking the family. Of course there are times when it is important to stick with your principles but there are also times when it is just as important to “roll with” the situation and reevaluate your stance

HEALTHY QUALITIES and TRAITS for FAMILIES

- **Flexibility** – This can be one of the most challenging things on this list. It is important to communicate and be self-aware about issues that will “stick to your guns” with. There may be certain principles cannot be compromised. Quite often though there can be a lot of “gray area” situations where it is better to be flexible

UNHEALTHY QUALITIES and TRAITS for FAMILIES

- **Isolation and Ignorance** – Dealing with a problem in a family by ignoring it and failing to discuss it is a common yet devastating mistake often made. For example, if you ignored a family member's cancer would it simply go away? The same is true for addiction

HEALTHY QUALITIES and TRAITS for FAMILIES

- **Teamwork and Empathy** – When dealing with a problem as a family, working together as a team is so valuable. Trying to understand one another in the family, including the person who is struggling with substance use is a huge part of the solution.

UNHEALTHY QUALITIES and TRAITS for FAMILIES

- **Denial** – Similar to ignorance described above, when a family chooses to be in denial by refusing to accept the reality that is going on, then the problem will just continue to get worse. It is important to be mindful, self-aware and honest about the situation

HEALTHY QUALITIES and TRAITS for FAMILIES

- **Awareness** – Burying your head in the sand rarely works. When there is a problem in a family like substance use, then taking the time to acknowledge and recognize what is going on is at the core of knowing what to do next. Try to stay aware of your own thoughts, feelings, fears, biases and strengths

Thank You

