



Attention Family Members, Parents, Relationship Partners and other Concerned Individuals!

You can't nag someone sober...

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Repeat: YOU CANNOT NAG SOMEONE SOBER!

Nag: *verb:* annoy or irritate (a person) with persistent fault-finding or continuous urging.

God bless those few among us who never nag. When another person is doing the same negative thing over and over the urge to nag, badger, reprimand, chastise, condemn, denounce, etc. can be irresistible even for some of the most strong-willed individuals. One's appetite for nagging can increase even further when the person who is doing wrong is someone we care about, especially when that person's actions are repeatedly hurtful. Addiction falls right into this category because it can be so devastating to all involved either directly or indirectly. Any loved one of someone who is addicted can verify the pain involved with watching someone hurt themselves and others over and over through the destructive addiction process. Addiction itself is synonymous with negative behaviors that directly hurt those who love the most, repeatedly often for years and years on end. Therefore, when a family member cares, the temptation to nag is understandable, and may even seem justifiable. However, there is one unavoidable and indisputable truth about nagging: *It is extremely ineffective.* In many cases, nagging may even have the opposite effect than what is desired. Nagging can make things worse instead of better.

In life providing guidance, direction, advice, instruction, etc. can be highly effective, particularly when this is being shared with someone who is new or inexperienced such as a child or other beginner. In fact, new and inexperienced individuals need guidance and direction to learn and grow. When it comes to addiction however, there can be a very fine line between guidance and nagging. When a person's well-intentioned "helpful reminders" become increasingly repetitive, negative and critical, these suggestions have moved out of the domain of helping into the unfavorable realm of nagging.

"I finally woke up and got sober because I just wanted all the nagging to finally stop" – These words have rarely if ever been uttered by a person who overcame an addiction. To the contrary, excessive nagging can trigger someone to want to get high to escape, so in that sense, nagging can help perpetuate the very behavior it is focused on changing. This is not to say it is a valid excuse for someone with an addiction to blame their use or relapse on the nagging of loved ones. Nevertheless, the point is that nagging is more harmful than it is beneficial. Nagging is also more discouraging than motivational. Nagging does not help.

Logically speaking if someone repeats the same directions over and over again and these directions are deliberately ignored then how many more times does it make sense to repeat the same thing? It is true that people often initially learn through repetition but that in itself has its limits. As stated earlier, repeating the same admonition or advice dozens, hundreds, even thousands of times with little or no impact crosses from over from teaching to nagging once it is clear that the person in question is no longer even listening. People in general just tune out nagging from an early age on.



Then why do some people continue to nag even though it can be clear that it falls on deaf ears? As nagging becomes more and more repetitive, angry and critical it can quickly devolve into a form of accusation rather than a sincere attempt to be helpful or concerned. A person prone to nagging often is trying to control a situation that is out of their control. Accusing someone repetitively may feel like it is helpful in a bad situation but in reality very little if anything is ever really accomplished. In fact, most people with a problem with addiction will state that being nagged and accused often results in more frustration and resentment as well as increased efforts at avoidance rather than an increased focus on positive behavior change. Nagging simply does not evoke, encourage or motivate positive results. Nagging really can be just a form of monotonous and pointless venting or “letting off steam” that breaks down relationships instead of increasing the understanding, listening and cooperation needed to build damaged relationships back up. When someone who is addicted keeps on using there may sadly be very little that a loved one can do to repair the divide. Addiction can be just too powerful when in its active more destructive phases. Nagging when there is active addiction taking place is similar to someone trying to stop a tank from driving forward by throwing a thousand pebbles at it. You simply cannot nag someone sober.

So if nagging is useless and ineffective, then what can truly concerned family members and others do when faced with a loved one *seeking help* with overcoming an addiction? Some basic suggestions include:

Patience over Surveillance – Accept the fact that there will be times that you may be tricked, fooled, deceived, etc. With that in mind however, if you can remain patient *the truth will come out in time!* Extensive efforts to act like the FBI and “catch them in the act” or other clever tactics can be wasted energy that leads to a game of “cat and mouse” that is usually unproductive. Of course, don’t turn a blind eye to all suspicion either, but when in doubt just be patient and calm and let go of idea that you can be in complete control of the situation, because you can’t. Due to the prevalence of lying and sneaking with addiction even during early recovery, it is normal to have doubts and lack trust. Still, focus on remaining reasonable, calm and patient about suspicions. Repeated interrogations can be just another form of nagging. Be firm, composed and prepared over being controlling, argumentative and antagonistic

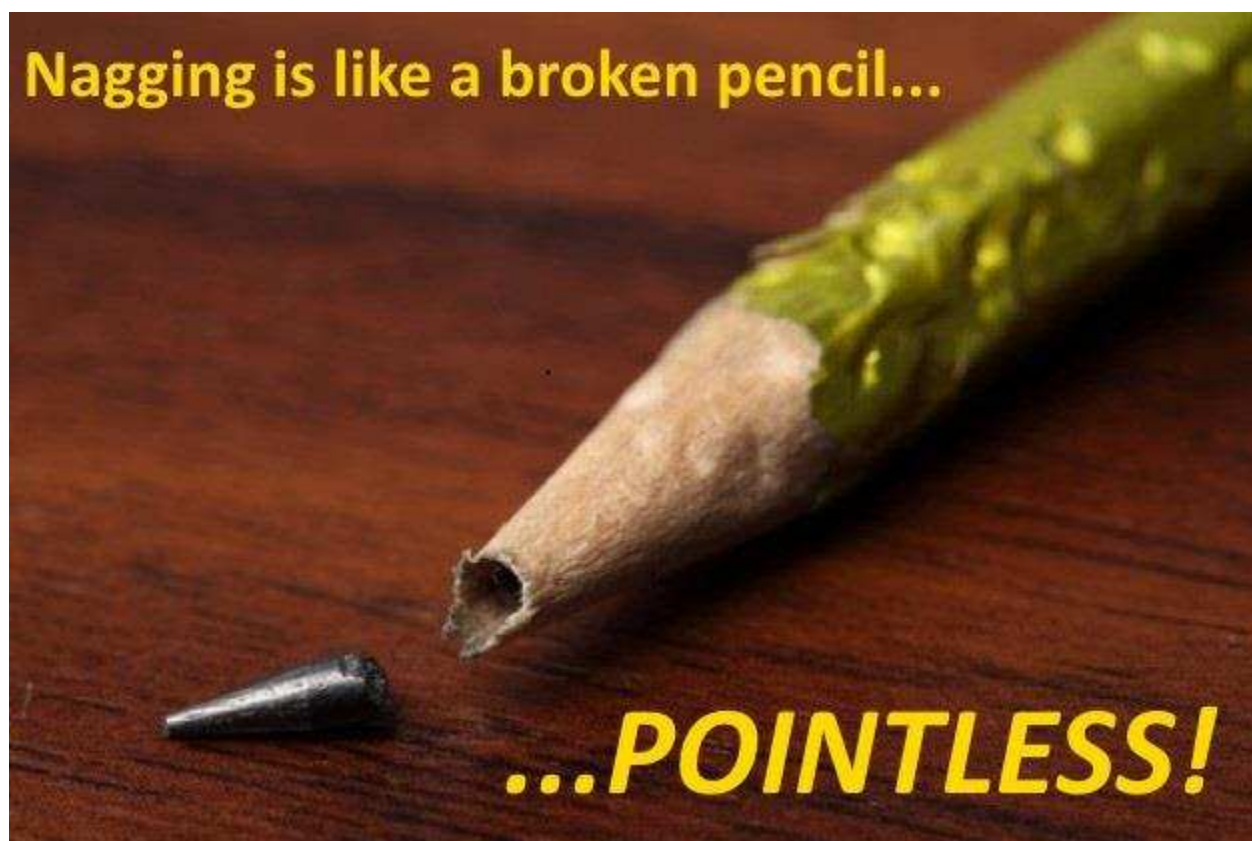
Be Positive – Yes of course addiction rips families apart and puts everyone on edge, but someone has to be the voice of reason and someone must try to bring some positive energy to an otherwise stressful negative situation. If you find yourself being prone to nagging, try instead to focus on:

- **Encouragement** – Acknowledge and praise any efforts toward change even if they seem small. Believe it or not even a little bit of sincere encouragement can go a long way over time. Heaping criticism on someone who is already struggling is like tossing another shovel full of sand into the desert, whereas even a little bit of encouragement at the right time can be the cool drink of water needed for someone struggling to carry on a just a few steps further.
- **Support** – Fight the urge to nag by focusing more on listening and supporting no matter how frustrated and angry you may feel. Just about anyone struggling with addiction who ends up recovering will likely attest to the critical role that family support played in their overall success.



Provide clear warnings once or twice, no more – A statement such as *“If I catch you getting high again, you are out on the street!”* does not need to be repeated over and over or it just becomes another form of nagging. If you mean it and the person you are speaking with knows you really mean it, then a warning does not need to be an irritating “in your face” threat on a repeated basis. You are better off providing clear, realistic and reasonable warnings in a calm manner than making repeated idle threats that end up falling on deaf ears. Don’t threaten something that you are not willing to follow through on. There may be a time to apply “tough love” but don’t let your emotions or fears make that hasty decision for you. (For more information read [“Can Tough Love Sometimes Be Too Tough?”](#))

Self-Care and Care for Each Other – Addiction is tough on you as a family member too so do not neglect to care for yourself and for each other as a family. Use what tools you have as a family for self-care and for maintaining strength through this difficult time (For example exercise, prayer, relaxation, “down time”, getting your own therapy/family therapy if needed, etc.) Nagging is a waste of your valuable energy which is better utilized caring for yourself and others in your life.



www.takingtheescalator.com

WATCH VIDEO- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KkSynHO_9c8