

How You Can Prepare Your Addicted Child for Lasting Change

The late-night call told us our 18-year-old daughter, Renee, and another resident from the halfway house had been mugged by three masked men. Our hearts sank, and panic set in. The administrator quickly informed us Renee was going to be OK but had suffered injuries, physically and emotionally.

Our daughter entered her first treatment center for alcohol. She admitted she needed help and volunteered to go. After 90 days, she entered a halfway house to aid her transition back into life.

After that traumatic incident, the halfway house was no longer a safe place. We agreed to let her come home to heal, but not to connect with old friends or have an active social life, at least for a period of time. We were concerned about relapse, so we emphasized this. She agreed, and we brought her home.

After several days of rest, she asked for permission to go to a friend's birthday party. She was bored, felt OK and wanted a change of scenery. She explained it would be a safe place, just a small party with the friend's family.

Boundaries

Reluctantly, we let her go. We were nervous as the hours went by but went to bed. A few minutes after turning off the lights, our phone rang. Experience had trained us to react badly to that sound late at night. A call after 11 p.m. was rarely good.

It was Renee. "Can I spend the night at my girlfriend's house?"

With a nervous feeling in the pit of my stomach, I asked a direct question, "Do you want to stay because you're having a good time or because you're drinking?"

Her response confirmed my fears, "It's because I'm drinking."

As calmly as I could I said, "OK, but you know what that means?"

"Yes." And we both hung up.

Months before, when Renee was dabbling in alcohol and drugs, we told her, "Our home will always be here for you, but as a *home*, not a crash pad to sleep things off then go out and repeat the process. If you choose to drink, you choose to live somewhere else."

I rolled over to tell Dena, who was awake, praying, "She's drinking again. She'll come home tomorrow." We knew our clear boundary would have to be enforced when she returned. We dreaded having to follow through, but we knew we had to.

Neither of us slept much that night. Late the next afternoon Renee arrived to pick up her things. There wasn't much conversation at first, but, before she left, we had one of the most difficult, yet honest, adult conversations we'd ever had.

Hard Words to Hear

The three of us sat outside on our front porch. We listened to Renee explain her relapse began at the halfway house. Then she followed this deeply disappointing news with an insight and a more shocking statement, "All the old-timers at the treatment center who were successful in recovery said they knew when they were *done*." She paused briefly then added, "I don't think I'm done."

This was terribly hard to hear, yet we kept our composure, at least on the outside.

"But, Renee, you don't control what being *done* means," I said as calmly as possible.

"Done can mean dead. Done can mean disabled. Done can mean jail. You don't control *done*."

With the same calmness I had used, she said, "I know, Daddy, but I don't think I'm done."

The three of us stood and embraced in a group hug. We held each other tightly. Tears filled all our eyes as her ride pulled up to the house. She walked off the porch, got into the car and rode into the night.

Dena and I looked at each other with deep sadness. We wondered, *What will happen next to our daughter? What will the future hold?* We spoke truth in love to her, and she spoke truth in love back to us. Respect was exchanged without arguing, raising voices or trying to control. The conversation was powerful and meaningful, but the content was never what we wanted.

A Recovery Principle

In recovery, a principle is reinforced repeatedly: Until the pain of staying the same is greater than the pain of changing, effective and lasting change will not take place. People have to be "done" before they're ready to embrace something better.

Other often used recovery phrases that express this are "hitting rock bottom," "coming to their senses" or "having a moment of clarity."

The addict must want change more than what they're currently doing.

Sadly, the way this comes about is different for each person. Some may not need to experience severe pain before they're ready to change, others will go through unimaginable consequences before they're ready. And, as hard as it is to

say, some may never choose to change.

Dear God, with all our hearts we plead with You that our prodigal children will discover they're done, sooner than later. Amen.

What About You?

In your desire to help your child, is it possible you're shielding them from the natural consequences they would have experienced? Are you ready to be done with old patterns of behavior that don't work? Are you ready for new and better ways to cope?

What meaningful changes would you like to make in your own life?

Recommended books:

Courage to Change, Al-Anon literature (available at Al-Anon meetings or from our Books tab)

Setting Boundaries with Your Adult Children by Allison Bottke {[eo](#)}

Tom and Dena Yohe are the authors of *You Are Not Alone: Hope for Hurting Parents of Troubled Kids* (2017) and co-founders of *Hope for Hurting Parents*. Former CRU staffers, they have been guests on "Family Talk With Dr. James Dobson," "Family Life" with Dennis Rainey" and "Focus on the Family" with Jim Daly. Find out more at [.](#)

This article originally appeared at [.](#)