

Family Addiction Recovery: My Loved One with Addiction Went to Rehab, Now What?

By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.

You've got them checked in. Now, what happens? The level of time and energy you put into finding your loved one a treatment center bed after such a long time in active addiction is finally worth it. All the fears, tears, and not knowing how much more you can take before you simply collapse may finally have a happy ending. Yet, you may be cautiously optimistic.

You may expect the counselor to call you for advice on handling your loved one. The treatment center staff probably won't call you to consult about the goals for the treatment plan. You may not even hear from the treatment center staff for a while. But in the meantime, probably within 72 hours, there's a good chance you'll hear from your loved one saying, "Get me out of here." The person you worked so hard to get into treatment may have a host of complaints, ranging from having a roommate, not being allowed to keep cell phones or computers, lousy food, and incompetent staff to not having a "real" alcohol or drug problem like the others in treatment.

Despite any pleading, protestations, and promises to stay abstinent without treatment, one of the worst things you can do in most circumstances is to "rescue" them from treatment. If you leave them there and let the process work, chances are that they will be sad to leave by the end of their treatment stay.

When the staff or your loved one calls to ask you to participate in treatment, don't hesitate. The treatment center staff is not going to blame you for the person's addiction, not even if the person with an alcohol or drug problem is your child. After living in "survivor mode" for so long, you

owe it to yourself to participate in a treatment experience that can truly change your life—for the better. If you need to see it participating for the sake of your loved one, look at it that way, but go and participate. Please do whatever you have to do to make it happen. Go with willingness, open-mindedness, and honesty.

While you are there, listen for what pertains to you. When you wonder if your loved one has heard what you just learned, don't worry about that. Acquire knowledge for yourself, and don't worry about "spoon-feeding" it to the person in recovery. Resign from being in charge of their recovery and approach the family program from the perspective, "What can I get out of this week?" Note: This article has been revised and edited from its original version, which was previously published in 2009 on this site. The content has been updated for contemporary language and concepts, clarity and accuracy.

Thanks for letting us be a part of your recovery journey.

Peggy

