

Identifying Your Attempts to Take Charge of Addiction in Your Family And The Consequences: Step One

By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.

Step One - We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable. Step One is AA is the same thing as Step One in AlAnon.

What does “powerless” mean?
List some other words/terms for
“powerless.”

What does “unmanageable” mean?
List some other words/terms for
“unmanageable.”

Part A. Give specific examples of the things that you did to try to have power over your significant other's substance use disorder. Identify some of the ways you tried to control specific conditions to assist your loved one or to take responsibility for their substance use disorder. Give specific examples.

1) I tried to control how much they drank or used (amount) by

2) I tried to control the kinds of chemicals they used by

3) I tried to control when they used (e.g., the times of day, week, month they drank or used) by

4) I tried to control the frequency of their use by

5) I tried to control the company they drank or used with, including time spent sober by

6) I tried to control their other habits (including self-care or lack of it) by

7) I tried to control their mood by

8) I tried to control the consequences of their using.

Specific examples of consequences that I tried to control:

- a. financial
- b. emotional
- c. relationship
- d. career or work
- e. physical
- f. spiritual

I used these techniques:

- ___ reason and logic
- ___ pleading
- ___ shaming
- ___ kids as leverage
- ___ threatening
- ___ withdrawing love

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- leaving as manipulation
- playing detective
- lying
- engaging in transactional bargaining (e.g., I will do this if you do that.)
- punishment
- not speaking to them
- withholding sex
- withholding money
- search and destroy the alcohol or other drugs
- teaching them how to drink or use drugs without consequences
- try to switch them from one drug to another less destructive
- make an enforce rules for their drinking/using
- be the drink/drug monitor, counting, measuring, and reminding them
- manipulating use of their time and energy so that they have little left to drink or use
- maintain control over money and other resources

List some examples of techniques that you tried, that are not listed here.

Which of these techniques seemd to work for a while?

Did any of these techniques consistently work to fix them or control their drinking or drug using?

Part B. Give specific examples of unmanageability in your own life. How have your attempts to fix your significant or take control over the substance use disorder create unmanageability in your own life?

1. List the physical symptoms of unmanaged stress you have experienced. See [How Addiction in the Family Impacts You: A Stress Symptoms Checklist](#) for a comprehensive list.

2. List the emotional or psychological impact of unmanaged stress you have experienced that are due to or related to trying to have power or control over your loved one's substance use disorder. See [How Addiction in the Family Impacts You: A Stress Symptoms Checklist](#) for a comprehensive list.

3. List examples of how the habitual interactions between you and your loved one with substance use disorder has impacted your identity, self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-efficacy.

4. List examples of how your unmanaged stress and focus on your loved one has affected your job and your career. How has it affected your ambition?

5. List examples of how your unmanaged stress, focus on your loved one, and destructive or painful interactions have impacted your relationships with your children or other significant relationships.

6. How has your attempts to control the financial consequences of your loved one's substance disorder impacted your financial security and standing?

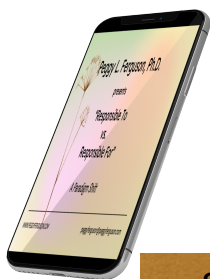
7. How has your unmanaged stress impacted your judgement and thinking?

8. How have the above attempts to take control of the addiction affected your own mental health?

As you look over what you have written in answering these questions, does “unmanageable” take on a new, personal meaning for you? What patterns do you see? Do these examples help you connect your own efforts to take control over the substance use disorder to unmanageability in your own life?

If you cannot see those connections, what questions remain unanswered for you?

How will you answer those questions for yourself to your own satisfaction?



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