

Helping, Unhealthy vs. Healthy

Overview: This lesson sets the stage for the bigger topic of “Enabling.” Once we begin to break down our attempts to “fix,” our loved one to our motivation which is to “help,” then we see the difference between what is healthy and what is unhealthy helping. This is a good exercise to help see our motivation for helping and see if we fall under “care-taking,” vs. “care-giving.” Care-taking is something we do for young children (or possibly the elderly or someone with a disability because they cannot take care of themselves). However, using addiction as the excuse for care-taking is not helpful and in the addict’s case they can take care of themselves if they chose to – so we need to figure out how we can move to care-giving, which is a healthy response.

Notes:

- Blanks: first blank = for, f = fear, next blank = to, a = adult, a = adult
- Care-taking is how you raise a child
- Care-giving is how we help an adult
- Note the “feeling,” words and emphasize how most people report feeling this way when they are care-taking for an adult where it is not appropriate. A good question when discussing care-taking and after reading the “feeling words,” is to ask - “Do any of you feel this way?” followed by, “What if I told you that you could feel like the other side of the equation (Care-giving) by simply making a shift in our helping?” But, “Why is it so hard for us to shift from the left to right side?” (reminder of lesson one about delayed emotional growth- they act like a child therefore I feel I have to treat them like one)
- Reference the left side: In Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), expectations are considered “future resentments.”
- On the right side (care-giving) – sometimes we have to believe in them more than they believe in themselves. “Can you do this, if you knew it might save their life?”
- *Setting Boundaries with your Adult Children* by Allison Bottke is an excellent resource on this topic. The book is written by a Christian author who is dealing with an addicted son. Another good resource is the book *Don’t Let Your Kids Kill You*, by Charles Rubin, a man dealing with his two addicted sons.
- We want to start becoming their role model and not consider ourselves their life coach.

Driving points home:

- To drive home the idea of care-taking vs. care-giving, focus on the emotions / feelings – look at the ones on the care-taking side and compare to the ones on the care-giving side, and ask, “Would you prefer to feel tired, anxious, fearful, liable and negative or relaxed, free, aware, and positive?” (Of course people should say the later, but then ask, “Do you believe that you can experience those positive emotions even if your loved one does not get better? Follow with stating “that is a goal of PAL,” and remind them of the last line in the PAL preamble, we can find “joy,” regardless of the choices of our loved one.
- Ask, “Which side of this line would you prefer to be on?” followed by “What is keeping you from moving to that side?” followed by, “Has anyone here been able to hang out on the right side of this? (and) How is it when you are on the right side?”

- Consider stating, “When they are over 18, when you decide to “help,” them it is a good time to ask if you doing it for their best interest or yours.” Followed by, “If you are doing it for you, then realize and be aware of that and consider how it is affecting you in the long run.”
- Ask if they have ever heard anyone say, “When things settle down,” Then follow with “What if things never, settle down?” It is a reality that we have no guarantee of positive life circumstances. The phrase, “We need to learn to dance in the rain rather than wait for the storms of life to pass,” can be helpful to remind us that “bad things happen to everyone, no one goes through life without problems, but your response to the problems is really the key.

Cross-reference material from Mike Speakman’s book, *The Four Seasons of Recovery*

- Page 12-13 (The Tennis Court Analogy)
- Page 42-44 (When Helping Isn’t Helping)

Cross-reference to *The Language of Letting Go*, Melody Beattie

- Page 254 (Detaching with Love with Children)
- Page 133 (Property Lines)
- Page 125 (Control)