

13 Family Lessons About Recovery

Overview: In Lesson 5, we learned about the stages of recovery in order to understand what the addict needs regarding adult coping skills in order to become independent and healthy. This lesson builds on the last lesson by describing recovery from the standpoint of your relationship with your loved one during recovery. This lesson is essentially about boundary setting and understanding healthy and unhealthy ways in which you can interact with your loved one. This lesson was adapted from an article by the Hazelden Foundation, a well-known recovery resource. The lesson is very emphatic on do's and don'ts, so it is helpful to emphasize that these ideas come from a recovery center, and can be useful in looking at how we treat our loved one. It can be easy for people hearing this lesson to focus on what not to do and to see this as a long list of negatives, however, the focus can be easily shifted by looking at the last point in the lesson, and bringing it back to love, hope and faith.

Notes:

- Blanks, f = family, g = guilt, r = resentment, w = work, W = Words, h = hard, b = benefit
- This lesson which was adapted from another source, uses very emphatic terms, for example, number two states, "parents *cannot* control the behavior..." In item three it states, "If parents are to *survive*..." This theme runs throughout and is very helpful for discussion. (see driving it home below)
- This lesson in some ways summarizes other lessons, and or topics from other lessons such as enabling, pain as a motivator, parent's responsibilities etc. Review past lessons for common themes so that you can tie it to other lessons, such as lesson two where parents write a letter on how they will change in their response to a loved one who is abusing drugs or alcohol.
- This lesson has numerous words that are emphasized (bolded) and can be used for discussion. Note, every point has a practical application to it. Make clear to the group that our goal is to make changes we feel will help us and our loved one. That is why each item comes with a way to implement the topic above it.
- This lesson is also conducive to using the Al-Anon saying, when referring to our loved ones addiction that "We did not **Cause** it, we cannot **Control** it and we cannot **Cure** it."
- This lesson also lines up well with the book Smoke and Mirrors. You can read page 62 from Smoke and Mirrors regarding Extreme consequences which puts the responsibility for their actions on the addict and their motivation to change.

Driving points home:

- Key in on the emphatic nature of the statements. Ask, for example, "Why does number three state that if parents are to survive, they must set limits? The word *survive* seems dramatic, but you can take notice to see if people in the group relate to it. Then ask, "Do we just want to survive or do we also want to thrive?" Point out the last line of our PAL preamble, about finding joy in our lives regardless of what our loved one does.
- You can use this same approach above on several of the other of the 13 points in this lesson. Most of them are emphatic statements. For example number 5 states, "It is useless to try to rescue..." Ask, "Why do you think it states that it is useless, not 'that it might not work' or 'that it could be a problem', but useless!" This should lead to a good discussion on enabling and rescuing. Also, then point out the practical application noted on each point in the lesson, doing

this leads to “irresponsibility and resentment.” Notice that it says resentment in the children (even though we might resent them). This drives home the point that our children really do (deep down) want to be treated like adults, they want independence from their parents and every time we rescue we send the message they are not capable of doing this on their own.

- You can use the same approach as the above two points on almost all of the 13 lessons. Clearly you cannot do this all in one session, but you can choose what points to key in on based on your group and what you think is most helpful.
- Another way to drive home these very important principles is to ask the group, “What is the theme of this lesson?” You are looking for them to say things like “stop enabling,” “stop rescuing” etc. All are good answers, but you can drive it home, by stating, “Maybe the theme is if we don’t engage in those activities, we bring hope back into the equation.”
- This lesson is also conducive to asking the group, “How can you turn this around to be about you and me, and not about the addict?” In other words, “our recovery,” from codependence, enabling, over-helping etc.
- Consider changing the focus if the group seems like they see all of this as negative. You might point out lesson number 13 and the practical statement below it. Love, Hope and Faith are what we need. You can ask, “What happens if we lose any or all of these? What is our life like then?”
- Some good question to drive home how PAL helps, “Are there any other lessons you have learned from PAL that we should consider here? What has been the hardest lesson you have had to learn? Which one of these will be the most difficult for you to embrace?”

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

- Page 32 (Parental Guilt)
- Page 32-28 (True Guilt-False Guilt)
- Page 114 (Consequences)
- Page 97 (Refusing Responsibility for Adult Children)
- Page 186 (Minding Expectations – M.Y.E.)

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

- Page 351, “Letting Go”
- Page 167, “Competition between Martyrs”