

## The *Essence* of the Parent Support Program

These bulleted items are the things you will read about in this manual. They may be simple to understand, but they are not easy to do. It will take time to apply these to your life, but the rewards - especially reestablishing broken relationships within your family - are worth it.

- If you feel that your child is in trouble, follow your instincts but *reach out for help*
- Accept that addiction is a chronic, progressive brain disease with no known cure - only treatment. You can't cure them, but you can make things better or make them worse
- Accept that an active addict will walk all over you and your relationship to get to their drug. Neither anger nor pleading - not even love - will change an addict's behavior
- Distinguish addictive from normal behavior, and honestly judge your child's situation
- If warranted, say: "my child is an addict". Share that with others and make another decision: declare that you won't support addictive behavior or the addiction.
- Go to parent meetings and share your story. Experience shame reduction - there's no shame caring for a sick child. Find out that you are not alone in this.
- Listen to what worked and didn't work for others - and learn from their experiences. Build a support network of parents, therapists, and trusted friends in recovery.
- Learn to separate the child from the child's disease. Identify behaviors you are willing to change to support your child in recovery; then make those changes.
- Investigate what facilities and types of treatment may help - understand that treatment will only work if the addict is willing to do the "work" of recovery.
- Love the child enough to let them go through treatment even if it hurts. Develop a contract with specific consequences for non-compliance, and contingencies for relapse
- Commit to work and reinforce your own recovery program from fear, enabling, anger and overreacting. Follow the golden rule - do unto your sick child as you would be done unto you (if you were sick).
- Hope for the best, but plan for the worst. A storm will hit - be prepared. Even if you're frustrated and worn out, never give up and never lower your guard.
- Commit to be "all in" against drugs, resolved and unbending. Life will get better

This summarizes the essence of the parent program. You will read about each of these issues throughout the manual and exercises. It will take time to digest exactly what all this means and what it will require of you. Change takes time - but stick with it. Remember that every mountain is climbed one step at a time, and this is a mountain worth climbing.