

SereneScene

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to Get Help
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Forcing the Addict to Get Help

By Andrew T. Martin, MBA,
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Family members, friends, significant others, and concerned loved ones often have the same question of addiction professionals, "How do I force my loved one to get help?" Unfortunately, there is no simple answer to this question. Circumstances are different for every person that needs help as a result of their addiction or alcoholism. One story that comes to mind, as an exemplary depiction of how to help a loved one get in treatment, is that of Judith.

Judith was the younger of two girls being raised by a loving mother and father in a suburban town near Los Angeles California. When Judith was 12 years old her mother and father divorced. The divorce was incredibly painful as Judith and her older sister were used as pawns in a power and control game that her parents created. To make matters worse, Judith and her older sister were split apart as a result of the divorce, Judith to spending most of her time with her mother, and her older sister spending most of her time with her father. By the age of 13 Judith was angrily acting out and iso-

lating in her mother's home and at school.

Judith would dress provocatively to gain inappropriate attention from the boys in school. She would act out sexually and participate in drinking, smoking, and occasionally taking drugs. She would steal alcohol from the local markets in order to gain approval by her friends. She would steal clothing and jewelry from the local mall stores. She would sabotage relationships with friends in order to create dramatic disturbances in her life.

When not at school or with her friends, Judith would isolate in her room. She said little to her mother with the exception of asking for money or rides to locations to meet her friends. She would routinely sneak out of the house in the early morning hours to meet up with her friends. She became a master at deception and had her mother fooled into thinking she was okay. Judith barely made it through academics in order to graduate high school. By the age of 18 Judith was drinking alco-

hol every day in order to cope with the stresses of her out-of-control lifestyle. On the weekends she would binge with drugs and seek out casual sexual relations.



Judith became pregnant shortly after her 18th birthday. When her mother found out Judith became enraged and told her mother about the life she had been living. She blamed her mother for her poor life choices. When Judith's mother discovered the truth about her daughter's life, Judith was asked to leave the home unless she chose to change her lifestyle. The defiance within Judith prevented her from making the significant changes in her life that were necessary to keep her mother's support. She moved out of her home and began to create relationships with whoever would have her stay for a while. Some of those relationships were physically abusive, some were emotionally abusive, and all involved alcohol, drugs, and sex. Eventually, as she ran out of people that would allow her to stay with them, Judith turned to prostitution and burglary to support her drug use and lifestyle choices.

Periodically Judith would contact her mother, her father, and her older sister looking for money or shelter. Her mother and father were so distraught at the thought of Judith spending the night on the street that

they would often give her small sums of money to tide her over through the night. Judith's older sister pushed herself away from Judith and did not communicate, she wanted nothing to do with her younger sister while she was destroying her life.

When Judith was arrested for burglary, possession of narcotics, and assaulting a police officer, her mother and father became desperate to help her. They told Judith that they would not bail her out of jail unless she agreed to go to treatment and get help for her addiction. Judith promised to go to treatment, but as soon as she was released from jail she ran back to her old lifestyle.

When Judith was hospitalized after being beaten to near death as a result of one of her prostitution clients getting upset with her, she once again reached out to her parents for their help. Her mother and father said they would help her if she would go to treatment for her addiction and change her life for the better. Judith promised to go to treatment and moved back in with her mother while her body mended itself. However, as soon as Judith was feeling well enough, she once again ran back to her old lifestyle.

At their wits end, Judith's parents sought the help of a psychologist that specialized in addiction. Judith's parents learned that they were enabling their daughter's behavior by giving her money and shelter when Judith seemed so desperate. The parents learned that the only real help they can provide for Judith would be in the form of not accepting any of her unacceptable behaviors, and not supporting her in any way as long as she continues to exhibit those unacceptable behaviors. For parents in this situation, despite their differences and mistrust of one another, they must band together in a united effort to help their daughter save her own life.

It wasn't long until the next telephone call came for Judith's parents. Judith had been in a car accident. She was driving while under the influence of alcohol, opiates, and cocaine. She was carrying narcotics and an illegal firearm in her handbag. She was also driving without a valid driver license. Wanted for a bench warrant for failure to appear, Judith was once again

placed in jail after being treated for her injuries at the emergency room.

Judith begged her parents to bail her out of jail once again. This time, her parents were able to find the strength to say no. Judith attempted to manipulate her parents into helping her. She told her mother that it was her fault that Judith was the way she was. She told her father that he was never there for her, and that now, when she needs him the most, he still isn't there to protect her. She called her older sister to tell her that she would kill herself if her older sister didn't bail her out. But none of these tactics worked as her family was no longer willing to enable Judith's addict behaviors.

It remains one of the hardest things that Judith's parents have ever done, but they did not bail her out, and they did not come to her rescue, and they allowed Judith to suffer the consequences of her choices.

Judith spent 14 months in jail. When released, she was released to an addiction treatment program while on probation. The terms of her probation stated that she must complete 12 months of treatment. Judith completed only three months of treatment before abandoning the treatment program and relapsing on alcohol, drugs, and sexual acting out. But this time was different, Judith realized that she no longer had any family or friends to bail her out of trouble. She further realized that her old lifestyle would lead nowhere but back to the type of trouble that would eventually kill her. So Judith had an epiphany, and it became very clear that the only way for her to live a quality life would be to get into recovery and leave her old lifestyle behind. So she turned herself in, and she went back to treatment, and she fully engaged in her recovery effort for the first time.

When she graduated the treatment program her parents and her older sister were there in the audience cheering her on. Judith was able to secure a job that

supported her well enough that she could reside in a nice sober living facility. She stayed away from romantic relationships, and she focused on developing strong friendships with others in recovery. Judith discovered that she could have a quality of life in recovery that was so much more enjoyable than her life drinking and drug-ging. However, this life was not without its problems; as Judith would discover that financial hardships, her lack of education, and her underdeveloped social skills would require her to make a considerable effort to continue to improve her life.

About three years into her recovery, after moving into her own apartment, Judith entered into a love relationship. The relationship went well for a while, but then

Judith felt the stresses of being relied on, and relying on another. It wasn't long before Judith turned to the alcohol and drugs to help her escape the anxiety and stress of the relationship. Soon, she ran short on money and could not make the rent payment or car payment.

Judith turned to her parents and her older sister for help. It had been several years, but the family remembered not to enable Judith in her unacceptable behavior. Judith was given an ultimatum, either she would once again seek treatment for her addiction, or she would lose the support and contact with her family. Judith agreed to seek help for her addiction reentered her recovery program swiftly.

That was Judith's last relapse. Today, many years later, Judith is married with children of her own. She enjoys a strong connection with her mother, her father, and her older sister. She is surrounded by supportive friends and family. She participates in life and feels that her



life experience is full of joy and that she is blessed. She attributes much of her blessed life experience to her family, who refused to allow her to continue on the destructive path of addiction.

Judith's parents know that their part in their daughter's recovery is insignificant compared to the effort and perseverance that it takes for Judith to maintain her recovery. They know that Judith's recovery is the result of one thing only, and that is their daughter's resolve. In their own recovery effort, both Judith's mother and father have discovered that their daughter's addiction is not their fault. They have learned that their enabling behavior allowed Judith to remain active in her addiction far longer than necessary. And they have also learned that they did the best that they could with what they had at the time. Judith's parents have made the choice to forgive themselves for not knowing what they did not know.

When asked the question that is the subject of this article, "how do I force my loved one to get help?" Judith's parents are very clear in their belief that it is not possible to force a loved one, or anyone, to get help for something when they do not want help. Instead, it is the job of the loved ones to be available and provide support for healthy action. The best help comes in the form of not accepting unacceptable behavior, and letting your loved one know that you love them but will not contribute in any way to their unacceptable lifestyle.

Addiction is a chronic and progressive disease. This means that addiction does not get better on its own, but it can be arrested with treatment. This also means that addiction only gets worse over time unless it is arrested with treatment. So it is clear that treatment is necessary for the addict. Without treatment, the addict will eventually succumb to the disease. The longer the addict is able to actively drink, drug, and act out, the greater the odds are that they will die from their disease. Therefore, the most loving thing another human being can do for the addict is to provide them with absolutely no support while the addict is active in their addiction. No money, no shelter, no food unless the addict is engaged in treatment. Anything less is considered enabling.

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Andrew Martin began his entrepreneurial approach to business in 1982 at the age of fifteen. Throughout his career, Andrew has fulfilled his duties as a senior executive in viable business ventures in various industries including; health care, sound reinforcement and lighting, electrical safety equipment, commercial catering, specialty metal shapes manufacturing, and the

entertainment overhead suspension industry. Andrew's current business efforts are encompassed by Serene Recovery Network, a group of branded organizations with a common vision of helping people in early recovery to help themselves to a long-term rewarding quality of life without addiction. The individual businesses include Serene Connections, a publishing and professional educational conference production company catering to the field of addiction treatment: The Evolution of Addiction Treatment is the flagship conference. Serene Directory, an online directory of professionals and organizations affiliated with the treatment of addiction. Serene Foundation, a micro loan lender providing funding for the continuum of addiction care. Serene Scene Magazine, a publication promoting long-term healthy lifestyles of recovery. Andrew Serene Institute providing educational opportunities to professionals.

Andrew has authored many articles related to addiction treatment, health care agency productivity, industry specialties, as well as business approach and leadership and has been published in Serene Scene Magazine, Behavioral Health, Freedom Newspaper, Sound & Video Contractor, Western Wall and Ceiling Contractors Association Bulletin, Connections Magazine (Australia), dB Magazine, EQ, Lighting & Sound International (Canada), Sound & Communications, Live Sound International (UK), Recording-Engineering-Production. Additionally, many patents and trademarks have been awarded to Andrew Martin for various business related products, brand names, and service marks.

Andrew is also very active on boards related to the treatment of addiction. Andrew also keynotes for many organizations and speaks internationally on many topics relating to the treatment of addiction.

Healthy Early Recovery Program



By
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One of the most difficult points in the recovering alcoholic/addict's life is when they are newly sober and trying to stay that way. It often seems like the cards are stacked against them, and in some ways they are correct.

In early recovery, the alcoholic/addict will first experience acute withdrawal symptoms and then post acute withdrawal symptoms. The length of each of the symptom levels is dependent on, amongst other things, the length of use, type of chemical used, and the individual physiology of the alcoholic/addict.

Acute withdrawal happens during initial detoxification of the body: when the addictive chemical substances are purged and the body attempts to find homeostasis (balance). These symptoms can be severe and dangerous, that is why detoxification should only be performed in the care of a physician that understands the process.

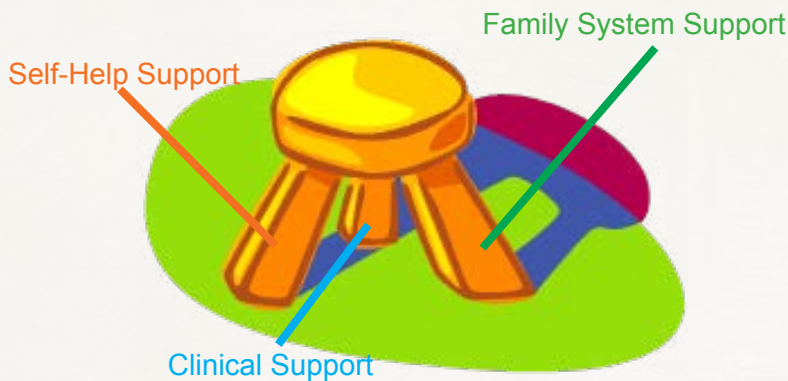
Post Acute Withdrawal Syndrome (PAWS) begins when acute withdrawal ends. Symptoms may come and go, and elevate or decline, over a period of many years, but are most pronounced in the first year of sobriety.

Symptoms include:

- Difficulty or inability to function socially
- Difficulty or inability to experience pleasure
- Depression
- Obsessive-compulsive behavior
- Feelings of guilt and shame
- Disturbances in automatic body functions
- Difficulty or inability to concentrate
- Lack of initiative
- Pessimistic thought
- Difficulty or inability to remember
- Emotional distortions
- Sleep disturbances
- Physical coordination problems
- Stress sensitivity
- Increased sensitivity to pain

Early Recovery Program

To effectively address these symptoms, the alcoholic/addict in early recovery should design a recovery program to provide the best support for their long-term fulfilling lifestyle of quality sobriety. That means designing a recovery program that includes three primary areas of support: self-help support, clinical support, and family system support. It may be helpful to view the early recovery program as a stool with three legs:



If one of the legs of the stool is weak, short, or missing – the whole stool may fall.

Self-Help Support

Many support networks exist for those with the disease of addiction. Regardless of the program, an individual in early recovery should be attending and participating in self-help groups regularly. Many will want to attend a group meeting daily for a few months, and then reduce their meeting schedule to three or four times a week for the first year. The most common types of self-help groups are:

- a. Alcoholics Anonymous (www.aa.org)
- b. Narcotics Anonymous (www.na.org)
- c. Al-Anon (www.al-anon.alateen.org)
- d. Other anonymous and self-help organizations
- e. Religious institutions
- f. Local community centers
- g. Local treatment facilities
- h. Local workshops

Clinical Support

Clinical support adds a very different dimension to the early recovery effort. As is apparent in the post acute withdrawal syndrome (PAWS) description, there are many symptoms of the syndrome that cannot be addressed without the help of a trained clinician. It can be dangerous to the alcoholic/addict to attempt to deal with psychological issues without the guidance of a clinician, particularly during the PAWS timeframe. It is likely that the clinical support component of an early recovery program will include weekly counseling sessions for a few months, and then begin to step down in frequency over the following year or so. The most common places to find clinical support are:

- a. Counseling for chemical dependency/codependency
 - i. Psychologist with addiction accreditation
 - ii. Local hospital chemical dependency programs
 - iii. Therapist counseling
- b. Psychiatrist with addiction accreditation
- c. Community mental health services

Family Support

The family system plays an extremely important role in the early recovery program. The family can be defined as any person that has a close connection by genealogy, friendship, or romanticism with the alcoholic/addict. It is common for the family system to be unhealthy when there is an alcoholic/addict involved, and that is why it is so important to include the family system in the early recovery effort. The family needs to understand their roles and responsibilities as well as the alcoholic/addict's roles and responsibilities. Sometimes certain family members are not cooperative with the recovery effort, and in these cases, the alcoholic/addict must make difficult choices as to changing the relationship with those family members. Because the family system has such a significant impact on relapse, it is critical to include the family component in the early recovery program. The most common places to find family system support are:

- a. Al-Anon (www.al-anon.alateen.org)

- b. CoDA (www.codependents.org)
- c. Counseling for codependency
- iv. Psychologist with addiction accreditation
- v. Local hospital chemical dependency programs
- vi. Therapist counseling
- d. Psychiatrist with addiction accreditation
- e. Community mental health services

Continued Action

In addition to the three legs of the stool (self-help support, clinical support, and family system support) there are also some strongly suggested activities for anyone in early recovery:

- Read recovery materials every day
- Pray to a higher power of your understanding every day
- Meditate every day
- Take a mental inventory of your thoughts and behaviors every evening
- Be tolerant: seek progress, not perfection
- Take care of your body: eat healthy, exercise
- Have intention in everything you do
- Choose the healthy course of action regardless of the additional work required
- Check your thinking with others in your support network
- Love yourself
- Seek out learning experiences
- Keep a journal
- Pay attention to your feelings and emotions
- Be kind to yourself and others
- Forgive
- Take things one day at a time

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SAP/SAE Services

Serene Recovery Network delivers Substance Abuse Professional (SAP) Services that help our clients maintain a drug-free work environment under Federal Department of Transportation (DOT) guidelines.

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Summary of SAP Services

- Initial Evaluation
- Referral
- Tracking
- Follow-Up Evaluation