

Intervention Introduction

INTERVENTION

Because you really care ...

What is an intervention?

An intervention is a structured process designed to help the alcoholic (or other drug abuser) abandon their denial system (I "don't have a problem" or I may have a problem, but I don't need any help with it . . . can handle it by myself"). The intervention consists of an education and training for the concerned family and friends of the chemically dependent person.

How does Intervention work?

First, family and concerned others are given detailed information about the disease of chemical dependency. This is followed by a thorough assessment of the family issues and of the appropriateness for intervention. If intervention is not appropriate, other referrals or treatment arrangements will be made. Family education is an integral part of the process to help each member understand the impact of chemical use on family life. Intervention training and practice allow the family and concerned others to form a supportive team. The intervention is culminated in a meeting with the chemically dependent person, in which family and concerned others present their feelings in a loving and caring manner.

Why does Intervention work?

- The process is carefully planned and guided by highly trained professionals.
- Key people in a chemically dependent person's life present their concerns in a loving and caring manner. This is a very powerful motivating force for the substance abuser.
- The sources of anger and resentment, not the anger and resentment themselves, are expressed.
- The groups combined knowledge of the abuser's problem behaviors (specific data, not judgments, opinions or accusations), make denial or manipulation difficult.
- Plans are made by family/friends to anticipate all excuses.
- A clear, structured treatment plan is articulated to the chemically dependent person.

Why can't the abuser see what they are doing to themselves and others?

According to Dr. Vernon Johnson, founder of the intervention process, "Because of the denial system addicts are incapable of comprehending what their drug is doing to them. If they are to receive the insight they must have, that insight must come from those around them through conscious, planned, and caring acts of intervention."

But isn't it necessary for the alcoholic/addict to "hit bottom" and ask for help?

We agree entirely! But to wait for an irrational person with irrational behavior to make a rational decision is irrational within itself. Most alcoholics/addicts will 'hit several bottoms' in the developing course of their disease. Few will ask for help and instead, crash right on through their bottom, and for many, to a premature death. The intervention process is designed to take the crises that have already occurred, and in a caring, but firm way, 'raise the bottom up' to the alcoholic/addict.

What if the intervention fails?

The intervention is a process, not a single event. No intervention 'fails'; there are just varying degrees of success. Even if the person walks out without agreeing to do anything differently, the other persons concerned are forever changed. They know they are not alone and help and support are available for them. They have also learned where they have been "enabling" the alcoholic/addict, and how to change their behaviors.

How long does the intervention process take?

While the time will vary with each case, the range is from six to ten hour's total time including the preparation of the participants through the actual intervention.

What if some of the family or close friends live too far away to come to the sessions, but would be important to the success of the process?

There are several ways to handle "missing persons" without losing their power. Letters, tape recordings, and even actual phone calls at the time of the intervention have been used. The intervention specialists can help in deciding how to handle such situations, or any other special circumstances.

To discuss your particular situation, or to schedule the beginning of the intervention process, call the free 24-hour helpline:

(1-800-996-5522)