

Question: You've got some experience doing interventions on addicts and alcoholics. How about walking us through how to do that just to show people what that might look like.

Answer: After we get a profile of the client from the family, we'll go meet with the family and those closest to the client and sit down with those that are willing to contribute, willing to participate in this intervention, and we'll coach them for a day or two. We'll let them know exactly what the family members are up against. This is not a matter of will-power, it isn't because they are weak, it isn't because they are mean, and it isn't because they want to be out of control. They are up against a fatal illness that they have no power, choice, or control over. So there is some education for the family involved so they know what they are dealing with. I would then coach them on what the intervention is going to look like - a good scenario and what possibly could be a bad scenario. Also, there needs to be a bed ready in a detox so when the client says, "Yes, I am willing to get help," that we don't have a day or two delay because they may change their mind. So at the end of the intervention we are in a car headed toward the airport for them to go to a treatment center.

What the family will do is I always like to have them write out, so it's in front of them, what they would like to say to their loved one. What I like to stress with the family always is that we are coming from a place of love, we are here because we love the addict or alcoholic, "we don't want to see you slowly dying any more, and this is the effects of your addiction." We need to have the addict take a look at some of the things from the past when things were perhaps good and the detour this addiction has taken them on and now us on. So they will have something written that they will read to the client during the intervention. Not anything very long because the attention span of the addict may not be much. It should be what I call lovingly "a surprise attack" because if the client knows what is about to happen chances are they won't show up. So the addict would come over for whatever reason, baiting them into the situation, and the family will be there. The addict will usually be surprised and then I will facilitate the intervention.

First I will give an introduction and then the mother or father or husband or wife will go first and they will go around the room reading their letters to the addict. Somewhere in there, and sometimes it takes a while, somewhere in the structured loving discussion and reading of letters you see a shift in the client and it all comes to them and they are hopefully struck with this moment of clarity. When you see a family in front of you crying because they love you and they want to help you stop this, it has a very sobering effect on many clients. My job is to take that and work with it to get them off to a treatment facility.

But then again it could also blow up and sometimes the client says some ugly words, first to me and then to the family, and they try to storm out the door. The family is not to grab them when they do this. The only thing I recommend here is for someone from the family to stand at the door and the client would have to push them out of the way. I then would usually go out after them and try to talk to them to get them back in the room with the family. If this doesn't work then we will probably need to set up another intervention at some other time.

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