

### **Introduction:**

To those of you who have never heard any of this before, this will be good for you to hear. For the others who may think this is good information but doesn't apply to them, it is still good for you to hear. This advice goes against everything you have ever known, thought or believed about being a parent, but it could one day help you save your kid's life. This is a complete flip on what you think you should do as a parent when it comes to having a kid with a substance problem.

One parent made this statement: "I struggled with detachment. It felt horrible, because I know this is a disease. Any other disease, you stand by your child and hold them up. My son has the disease of addiction, so I had to set boundaries and eventually kick him out of my house because the disease took over. Then a nightmare ensued!

"If our children had cancer, we'd hold them, support them, feed them and so would our friends."

"Addiction is so very different and so very cruel."

"The way we have to act to benefit our child goes against everything we've done as parents to date. I hate this disease!"

### **From Hazelden on Where Love and Person with Addiction Meet:**

"I cannot be there for my child in the way life intended, but my love will always be there whenever he reaches out-and even when he doesn't."

"I mean, it is the most impossible love . . . it's absolutely fine for me to teach you how to walk and talk, and then you grow up and you head off in the wrong direction toward a cliff. And I'm supposed to just stand there and wave."

The simplest way I have found to help parents understand when they are contributing (or mistakes they have made) to the addiction cycle is these 4 things to ask yourself (taken from Bill Anderson's, LCSW, presentation for families).

### **When they do something for the addict/alcoholic:**

1. That they haven't been asked to do.
2. That they really don't want to do.
3. Because they feel sorry for the addict.
4. That the addict/alcoholic could have done themselves.

## **Some Specific Examples of What Parents Have Said They Wished They Knew and Mistakes They Have Made:**

*Not seeking their own network for support or their own help. Not realizing parents may need more help than the person with addiction does.*

*Thinking that this is a sprint to a finish line not a marathon.*

*Telling family and friends too much that led later to judgement of their child with addiction.*

*Focusing too much on the addict and again not seeking their own recovery plan with how to deal with the affect the addiction was having on them too.*

*Waiting to intervene*

*Allowing their child with addiction to say "when" they would get help.*

*Thinking that things were like when they grew up and comparing their use with how they used.*

*Denial - simply not allowing self to acknowledge what is happening.*

*Not getting educated about the disease earlier on and not knowing about the resources before the crisis hit.*

*Going on trips to make sure he didn't use after getting out of rehab Taking his calls while he was in rehab*

*Believed his lies to give him money for pot so he would not use pills instead*

*Getting him a car after he wrecked the other car while using*

*Letting him stay in the house when knew he was using because of fear of him going to a worse place*

*Giving him money for food and really thinking he used it for that*

*Blaming myself as if I didn't parent well enough*

*Trying to babysit an addict as if I had control or power over his actions*

*Helped feed him or bought him clothes*

*Expecting him to tell me the truth when I asked him a question*

*Doing things out of guilt to help her*

*Not forgiving myself and carrying guilt and remorse which led back to me trying to fix, control or enable all over again*