Supporting Families Through The Trauma of Recovery

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Family Intervention Now &

The Center For Family Recovery
Co-Addiction...

- Pain
- Abandonment
- Anger
- Rage
- Frustration - mistrust
- Shame

B. Maher - interventioncenter.com
Family recovery can be influenced by:

- Nature of specific circumstances past/present
- Level of exposure to addictive and recovery environments.
- Prior hx. Of trauma/generational stress
- Past/present family functioning
- Family/individual coping resources
- Availability/utilization of appropriate support
- Motivation and courage to change
Stages of Recovery

• Stage One: Drinking / Using

• Stage Two: Transition Stage - from drinking/using to abstinence

• Stage Three: Early recovery

• Stage Four: Ongoing recovery

Brown/lewis
Family Recovery Stage 1 (addiction)

• **Family Environment:** Anxious, unsafe, chronic/acute trauma, tension, shame, chaos, emphasis on control (denial!), inconsistent and unpredictable

• **Family System:** Isolated, chaotic, reactive/defensive inconsistent boundaries, unhealthy communication patterns, rules and roles subordinate to addiction-struggle for control and stability

• **Individual:** Maintains unhealthy beliefs, behavior and emotions to support the system, sacrifices individual development to preserve the family system

*Individual and family energy directed at maintaining denial & unhealthy core beliefs:*

e.g. there is no problem. Members must invent rationalizations/explanations for addicted reality and to cover up and protect family secret(s)
### Stage 1: Drinking/Using

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<th>Support</th>
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<td><strong>Family Member(s)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Supporting professional</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Break denial</td>
<td>Support therapeutic alliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>“This is addiction (or co-addiction)”</td>
<td>Support challenge of denial by acknowledging realities of addiction.</td>
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<td>“It is out of control”</td>
<td>Provide appropriate referrals</td>
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<td>“I/we are out of control”</td>
<td>Patience</td>
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*Brown/Lewis- FIN*
Family Recovery stage 2
(Transition - abstinence)

• **Environment:** anxious, chaotic, “feels” unsafe, chronic and acute trauma- beginning of “trauma of recovery”

• **System:** in a state of collapse, chaotic, may be highly defensive - shift towards external support (therapy, 12 step, family programs etc.)

• **Individual:** shift from family focus to individual focus. Confusion, depression, fear, anger and abandonment. Intense feelings of loss of control. Dominated by impulses to seek “relief”.

• *Family Intervention Now*
*Stephanie Brown*
Treatment in Transition

Stage

Impatient treatment allows for the family and addict to break from the addictive environment. Focus shifts from preserving the addictive system toward family/individual recovery.

Personal growth is now possible as the family is detached from addict and has a chance to focus on themselves.

Little or no contact during treatment until clinically indicated.

Process of self discovery.
Tasks for transition

• Break through denial
• Realize family life is out of control
• Begin and continue to challenge core beliefs
• Allow addicted system to collapse
• Shift focus from family to individual
• Begin detachment and recovery for individuals
• Enlist outside support
• Education on addiction, codependency, enabling, healthy communication and boundaries
• Learn new abstinent thinking and behaviors
**Transition Stage support:**

- Assess family Hx. /dynamics
- Education on addiction/co-addiction and it’s impact on family
- Education on recovery and what family can expect-realistic expectations. Encourage *patience* – internalizing reality of transition takes time....
- Emphasize individual reliance on outside supports (AA, NA, Ala/Nar anon, family/children’s programs, therapy, workshops, tx. centers etc.)
Supporting families in the transition stage

• Supporting professional needs to have a clear understanding of addictive system dynamics and the challenges individual family members face when making the transition to recovery.

• A “vacuum” is created as the addicted system collapses - the trauma of addiction is replaced by the trauma of recovery.

• External support can provide a systematic process for healthy growth and an anchor for the individuals in this traumatic period.
Transition Support

• Continue to support in the challenge of denial and self-defeating core-beliefs/behaviors

• Collaborate on strategies to redirect impulses and reframe anxiety

• Help to identify triggers/explore choices & balanced responses to problem solving

• Utilize and reinforce the “language of recovery”

• Encourage working on “self” vs. “relationship(s)” and support creation of individual boundaries to support self-focus
Stage 3: Early Recovery

- **Environment**: hope mixed with tension and some anxiety, depression/confusion, moving from unsafe to safe

- **System**: still chaotic, but moving toward stability and health. Recovery organizes the system; less dominated by impulses; Parallel recovery*/lives focused on external support (AA, Alanon, CODA, ACOA, family programs/workshops, aftercare group, therapy)

- **Individual**: New recovery identity, sense of self development and sense of recovery values, intense self-examination. May still experience periodic depression/anxiety.
Tasks for early recovery...

Steady abstinence, new attitudes, behaviors and thinking becoming integrated – focus on individual development takes precedence over family system......

• Cont. detachment/reduced focus on family
• Maintain close contact with external supports
• Cont. to learn and practice recovery language/
  abstinent behaviors and thinking
• Stabilize individual identities: “I am addict/co-addict and I cannot control my using/the addict”
• Break denial over the past
• Maintain parenting responsibilities

• Brown/Lewis
Early Recovery

Not typically as traumatic as the transition stage but......
Fear of relapse of addict/co-addict is common,
Emerging emotions can cause feelings of loss of control
“surrendering” feels superficial at first-can provoke anxiety, once internalized it allows recovery to take it’s coarse......
Old system still collapsed/collapsing-reliance on external support crucial......
Early Recovery Support

• assist in exploring long term solutions/strategies over short term “fixes”

• Communication/Boundaries and experiential workshops*

• Help explore realities of drinking/transition stage (system, environment, thought, attitudes and behaviors)*

• Explore realities of new recovering identity*

• Reinforce use of recovery language/principals

• Challenge attitudes/defenses/behaviors that threaten relapse
Stage 4: Ongoing Recovery

- **Environment**: stable, predictable and consistent. **Not** organized or dominated by crisis or trauma. Supports abstinence; comfortable, secure and safe.

- **System**: stable/healthy new system organized by recovery principals. Capacity for self and system focus - “I” and “we” without sacrificing either.

- **Individual**: stable individual recovery-behavior/identity secure. Capacity for interpersonal focus, combine “I” and “we”. Spiritual development; shift from external control to internal (higher power). Intensive self examination and development.

*Stephanie Brown*
**Ongoing Recovery Tasks**

- Continue abstinent behavior
- Continue and expand addict/co-addict identities
- Maintain individual recovery program/12 steps – internalize 12 step principals - deepen spirituality
- Work through consequences of addiction/
  Co-addiction to self and family
- Add focus on couple, parenting and family issue’s
- Balance/integrate combined individual and family recoveries
  
  Brown/Lewis
Ongoing Recovery support

While the need for professional ongoing recovery support may be minimal/unnecessary at this stage, family members experiencing ongoing problems with past or present issue’s/trauma’s may need:

Referrals to professional support when appropriate
Support in challenging defenses-self defeating or unhealthy behaviors
Encouragement to deepen self-exploration
Monitoring for signs of relapse and re-evaluation of personal recovery program
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