

The Letter Guidelines

The purpose of writing a letter prior to the intervention is to focus your emotions and help with self control during this stressful process. It will also help to avoid spontaneous anger or stage fright. In general, we are trying to be non-judgmental and in control of our anger and disappointment. We want to table our personal issues and hurt during the actual intervention process as it will detract from our purpose of helping the person get the help they need. Read the letter slowly, take your time and make a lot of eye contact with your loved one. For the best results, the letter should be no shorter than one half page and no longer than two and a half pages.

Part One

Begin the letter with a message of love. Speak from your heart sharing positive memories. Use a journalistic approach and include who, what, where, why, when and how. Discuss where you were when the events happened and how you felt. Tell the person being intervened on about all the qualities and strengths they have that you admire and those things that you miss about them. Tell them why you love them. If they have ever helped you in the past, tell them how much it meant to you.

Part Two

This part addresses the problems and the addiction and you will want to be as specific as possible. If possible, use at least three events and be specific as to time periods. You may use this suggested format.

“When you _____ (fill in) _____; I felt _____ (fill in) _____ and it impacted our relationship by _____ (fill in) _____.”

For Example:

" Last Xmas when you were drunk and fell into and knocked over the Xmas tree I was very angry and embarrassed and it made me no longer trust you and it put distance in our relationship."

While we are trying not to be blaming or judgmental we can use words to describe feelings such as:

hurt	lonely	insecure
anxious	sad	guilty
angry	ashamed	embarrassed
worried	rejected	bewildered
confused	miserable	insignificant
afraid	discouraged	apathetic

Part Three

Close with a general comment such as,
"I hope that you will get help and get well."

If you are the last one to present, after you have read your letter, you will immediately discuss the treatment plan and arrangements and tell the person

**"every thing has been taken care of - we are ready to go now!" and
"we all want you to go now!"**

Part Four – Separate page

On a separate page, write out your bottom line or consequence. You will read this to the person if they adamantly refuse to go to treatment.

Do not read until asked! This should be your position and how you will take care of yourself and your family if the addict refuses treatment. Explain that you will not enable the person in the future if they refuse to go to treatment. If you want you can qualify the statements by using words like

"until you get into recovery I..."

or, you can end with

"If you ever get into recovery I may rethink my position."

Please remember this is your bottom line after the person has looked you in the eye and said they will not get well and will continue in the progressive decline of their addiction.

When reviewing your letter look for anger or judgments creeping into the narrative and practice at least once out loud (remember eye contact) before the role play dress rehearsal of the intervention.

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