

# Family and Friends

## **It's Hard to Be Worried About Someone You Love**

Everyone has an opinion about what should be done. Family and friends have been told to practice “tough love”, to withdraw support until the drinker or drug user “hits bottom” or goes to “rehab”. But that doesn't seem right to everyone. Family and friends may not want to go along with harmful drinking or drug use, but they don't want to abandon their loved one either.



We help families find alternatives to “tough love”. We avoid terms like “enabling” and “co-dependency” because so often they are used to criticize your efforts to help your loved one. We discourage confrontational “interventions” because they can cause a great deal of harm to your relationship and don't usually lead to lasting change.

But this does not mean that we turn a blind eye to harmful behaviors. Recognizing and reducing the harmful impacts of substance-related behaviors is a cornerstone of Harm Reduction Therapy.

We help families and friends bridge the gap between their despair and anger and their love and concern.

## **There Are No Rules Except the Ones *You* Make**

No one knows a family system better than the ones in it! We help each family member evaluate their own tolerance for stress, the values they hold about loyalty and altruism, their unique family history, and the special bonds they have. Then we help each one set limits, make rules, and take care of themselves in this long difficult process of trying to influence someone else to change their harmful behaviors.

*I was at the end of my rope. I had decided I had no choice but to cut off my son. But I was sleepless with worry about what would happen to him. I learned that I can actively help when I want to, decide when not to, and finally get some sleep. It was amazing how much clearer my boundaries became and how that improved our relationship. To my surprise, within a few months he started to change without my directly saying anything about his drug use!"*

## **Discover Your Options**

At the Center, we have a range of services for those who love a person with a substance abuse problem:

- Assess the immediate dangers or severity of the problem by in-person or phone consultations with one or many friends and family members
- Work with family members to help them set their own harm reduction goals and determine their own limits of tolerance and understanding
- Facilitate family meetings
- Help the family and friends negotiate actions that can be taken by all members
- Offer strategies and resources to help their loved one take action
- On-going family and couples therapy.