

Keeping What's Mine & Letting Go of What's Not

Substance use disorder is a family disease that has profound effects not just on our loved ones who have SUD but on others in our family as well.

As we struggle to “help” and “fix” our addicted loved ones, we can forget that they are unique human beings, separate from us, with their own feelings, problems and issues. Many of us allow ourselves to become so deeply entangled in their lives that we lose sight of what rightfully belongs to them and what truly belongs to us.

In recovery, we learn to differentiate between what is ours—both emotionally and spiritually—and what is not. Then, using what we learn, we can work on setting clear, fair, well-delineated rules and boundaries, with the intention of, first, keeping ourselves safe and sane and, second, getting out of the way of any recovery attempts our addicted loved ones might eventually choose for themselves.

Read on to discover how to recognize and keep what's ours and, just as importantly, how to acknowledge and let go of what's not:

1. RECOVERY

My recovery is my responsibility; my addicted loved one's recovery is not. My issues belong to me and are mine to deal with; other people's issues belong to them and are theirs to deal with. I cannot change the past, but I can take advantage of every minute of today as an opportunity to improve myself—and in this way I can change my future and move along on my personal path of recovery. My recovery is mine, for me to do.

2. FORGIVENESS

Learning how to forgive is an important part of my spiritual recovery and the foundation for letting go. My craving for perfection, and my desire to be right all the time, can make me unforgiving of myself and others. This can leave me stuck in the past and be a roadblock to my focusing on the present and moving forward in a positive way. The hard work of forgiving myself and others is mine, for me to do.

3. BOUNDARIES

My boundaries separate and protect me. They define the limits of what I can either give or accept without compromising my self-worth and dignity—and without setting myself up for being used, mistreated or manipulated. Establishing my boundaries is for me to do.

4. HOPING

If someone is immersed in negativity, manipulation or self-destruction, those attitudes belong to that person; they are not mine. I will nurture a positive vision of how things *could* be, rather than trying to make things the way I *want* them to be. When I confuse hopes with expectations, I invite disappointments and resentments. Creating a clear picture of what I might hope for—and not having any expectations of what might occur—is mine, for me to do.

5. CHANGE

Rather than reacting on “automatic pilot,” I can choose instead to act in a mindful and thoughtful manner. In this way I can change how I respond to chaotic or challenging situations. Myself I can change; others I can only love. The choice to change myself is mine, for me to do.

6. PEACE AND SERENITY

Learning when to detach and keep quiet is the key to finding a safe place within my soul. Turning things over to my Higher Power frees me from any self-imposed responsibility to take charge in times of chaos and confusion. This is a challenging undertaking, but its reward is a better way to live. As my serenity grows, so do my abilities to laugh and to be a better listener. These are behaviors I can nurture and celebrate. The goals of peace and serenity are mine, for me to work toward.

7. ATTITUDES

Changing how I perceive another person's actions, and no longer viewing them as being a threat to me, can help me disengage from my codependent, compulsive tendency to be involved in every decision my addicted loved one makes. Altering my attitudes about other people, about the disease of addiction, and about the realities in *my* life is mine, for me to do.

8. DIGNITY AND SELF-RESPECT

I have a responsibility to myself to meet my basic needs. So long as I am investing my energy and efforts in attempting to control other people, I am robbing them—and myself—of dignity and self-respect. Trying to control others is an endeavor that is destined to be futile. Preserving my own dignity and self-respect is mine, for me to do.

9. LOVING UNCONDITIONALLY

I will love and accept people for who they are, not for what they do or do not do. If someone has an impaired ability to love, care for, or nurture me, that is not my issue; I can let it go. So long as I can offer love and encouragement regardless of the circumstances, my potential and capacity for what is meaningful can expand. Loving unconditionally is mine, for me to do.

10. JOY

Joy is an emotion that arises from a prolonged sense of well-being, contentment and gratitude. It resides deep within us. Unlike happiness, which can be fleeting, joy can endure regardless of the circumstances surrounding us. It is directly tied to avoiding unrealistic expectations and to living in the here and now. Seeking joy, especially by living according to FA principles, is mine, for me to do.

11. LIMITATIONS

Some of my limitations are self-imposed. Others are real, such as my inability to fix others, no matter how determined or committed I am in my efforts to do so. My wisdom is limited, unlike my Higher Power's wisdom which is limitless. Recognizing and accepting my limitations is a part of my recovery that is mine, for me to do.

12. PURPOSE

I must find my own niche and no longer sacrifice my goals, my purposes or my happiness for someone else's goals, purposes or happiness. I must realize my potential, appreciate who I am, and pursue the opportunity for renewal that each day brings. This is mine, for me to do.



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