

How can a person be convinced to go for rehabilitation treatment?

By Jacques H. Botes.

Treatment centres daily receive telephone calls where concerned family members or other significant others enquire how they can “confront” a loved one to go for substance abuse or dependence treatment. This is not always an easy task, but crucial step towards the affected person’s healing process. The significance of any intervention attempt would certainly be to do no further harm.

The first step would be when you are planning an intervention is to start with yourself. One should be aware that the substance dependent person’s brain is not functioning as you would expect, always keep in mind that chemical substances negatively affects the central nervous system and functions such as logical reasoning and insight will be affected. It would thus be important to state concerns that you observe of the person’s degrading well-being, mental and physical health, social implications and even conflict with the employer and law enforcement agencies. The second important aspect that should be cleared with you before intervening with a substance dependent person is to always be aware that **BEHIND THE BEHAVIOUR/ADDICTION REMAINS A PERSON**. Family members might be frustrated with the current situation and the substance dependent person, but confrontation of the person would rather lead to defence of the self and further conflict. The focus rather is your own concerns and observations with regards to the substance abuse and dependence. The point of departure would be one of love and concern for a human being and that you would want to see the person healthy and experiencing joy of living.

Scientifically we know today that a facilitative environment without any threat to the concept of self will enhance an environment conducive for change and growth. Recent research done at Stabilis Treatment Centre confirmed that change and growth of the person in totality can only be facilitated in an environment of unconditional positive regard, where the individual is respected, a person’s self-determination is empowered and no judgement of the person is present.

It is advised that you never enter into the intervening conversation with the affected person on your own. The “Three Wise Men” approach is suggested where at least three persons enter into the conversation with the person in need. These people should be significant others that the substance dependent person value and respect. The “Three Wise Men” could consist of family members, minister, colleague, medical doctor, social worker, teacher or business partner. As said earlier it is of importance to reflect on your own feelings and concerns before the conversation. “Clear your own deck” before entering into the conversation and examine your own fears, needs and concerns. Be aware of topics or behaviours that could create anger or conflict within yourself. Clarify that the conversation will not be about your own needs or negotiation skills, but rather to create a psychologically safe environment where there will be no emotional threat to the substance dependent person.

When entering in the conversation, the first rule would be to stay calm, at no stage in the conversation raise your voice and verbally attack the person. You certainly may set your limits with regards to insults or abusive behaviour within the context of the conversation and also be assertive: “I will not allow us to be swearing at each other”. Do not get involved in arguments, swearing, disagreements or jokes, state your point and be brief with short sentences – do not relate a story, remember that the brain is affected and the person would not be able to follow or comprehend timeously relations of information. If necessary you could repeat and sustain limits set for the conversation. Always be aware of the question and ask yourself: “Who needs to talk?” Allow the person to talk and explore his/her own feelings and thoughts if the need arise.

Gandhi stated that “You have to be the change you want to see in the world”, one should thus be the change you want to see for the substance dependent person. You then need to bring care and peace into the conversation if that is what you want to achieve through the intervention session. The process of chemical substance dependence does not just happen overnight. The route to addiction gradually develops over time and through phases. The same goes for the process of recovery and for this exact reason professional help should always be sought. The recovery process ought to be facilitated by the very special and unique conditions of the therapeutic relationship. Persons should be empowered and allowed complete freedom to explore every experience and part of the self in its totality. As human beings we further have the need to

explore our own freedom in experiences that might pose a threat to the self. All interventions should thus in particular provide a non-threatening environment in which un-symbolised experiences could be explored.

Always consult with a professional, seek medical help and be prepared to enter into a relationship where you will provide support and be the witness of the miracle where a person will change and grow according to their own self-determination and regain Joy of Living.

For assistance or further information contact Stabilis Treatment Centre at (012) 333 7702 / pro@stabilistc.co.za / www.stabilis.org.za