

Why You Can't Stop Someone Else From Drinking or Drugging

By Chandler Scott McMillin

A couple of years ago I was visited by Mark and Dina, energetic, committed parents who had dedicated themselves to preventing their now-17 year old son from returning to alcohol and drugs. They'd most recently tried nailing shut the windows in his room to prevent escape, but he'd found a way around that, too. They wanted to know if I had any other ideas.

I told them I thought their efforts were in vain. They asked me to explain, and here's what I came up with:



1. Simple truth: Nobody can watch over another human being 100% of the time.
2. For example, you'd have to take bathroom breaks, and what's to prevent them from sneaking off?
3. Even if you invented a gadget so that you never had to visit the bathroom, the addict would devise some ingenious excuse that fooled you long enough so he could escape.
4. Even if you were superhumanly smart and didn't fall for any excuses, suppose he just took off and you weren't fast enough to catch him?
5. Even if you were a former Olympic sprinter and managed to run him down, what's to keep him from trying again tomorrow, and the next day, and the next day...
6. Even if you chained him to the breakfast table, what's to stop him from picking the lock or gnawing through the table leg?
7. Plus sooner or later you'd need to sleep.
8. And even if you had some neurological condition that made sleep unnecessary and you were able to successfully keep him confined and away from alcohol and drugs for a whole month -- what did you plan to do next month? And the month after? And the month after that?
9. OK, maybe you could arrange to have him locked up. But even then, they'd eventually release him.
10. And do you really think he couldn't get loaded while he was in jail?
11. And once he was released, wouldn't he just start using again?
12. At some point, it's bound to occur to you that you have no life.
13. And do you really think your kid is going to thank you for putting forth the effort?

Sure, there has to be a better way. And there is. Learning communications skills that work with addicts and alcoholics can help. So can understanding how to counter the defense mechanisms that keep them from changing.

Information, tools and resources for helping someone you love decide to make a positive change are available free on our website at www.recoverysi.com.

SNAPSHOT (continued)

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PATIENTS & FAMILIES