

FAMILIES ANONYMOUS

WORDS CHANGE LIVES

When I came into the Families Anonymous Twelve Step Programme, I had feelings of GUILT, FEAR, ANGER, RESENTMENT, HURT, LONELINESS and other feelings of a mainly negative nature. I saw myself as a failure. I had struggled for years to find that one formula which would unlock the secret of being a successful parent. Both of my boys were battling their way through adolescence with behaviour that was totally unacceptable to me and to society. As I watched them skipping school, breaking the law and tumbling deeper and deeper into a drugged existence, I did everything I could think of to control their behaviour. I was helpless and their situation was hopeless.

My Higher Power guided me to the Twelve Step Programme and I began the process of setting aside the microscope I used to examine the lives of my children and others and I picked up a mirror I use to reflect on my life, my needs, my feelings. It has been through this process of self-examination that I have begun to change my negatives to positives.

I have found a formula. In fact, I have found several. I believe the FA Twelve Step Programme alone is one of the most successful formulas for life that anyone could possess. But, for me, there are other formulas that can complement, enhance and strengthen the Twelve Steps. One such formula goes like this:

THINKING + BEHAVIOUR = FEELINGS

Upon entering the Programme I was aware that my feelings were mainly negative. I wanted, with all my being, to have positive feelings. I soon found, however, that I could not change my feelings just through will power or brute force. I found the formula above offered me a clear and simple way to change my negative feelings to positive ones. It is necessary to consider this formula as an algebraic equation. The statements on either side of the equation must balance exactly in order to be true. Thus, if I change my thinking or my behaviour, my feelings **MUST** change in order to have a balanced equation. It works!

The way in which it works is most obvious to me when I examine the change in behaviour and thinking that took place when I simply changed the words I use. I am making a conscious effort to eliminate global words from my vocabulary. Words like ALWAYS, NEVER and FOREVER limit my view of the world and of others. I am trying to replace them with words like SOMETIMES and OFTEN. I also know that the word SHOULD is frequently a part of my vocabulary. When I use SHOULD in respect of my own actions, I am limiting myself and usually producing guilt as well. I do not mean to eliminate SHOULD entirely from my

vocabulary but to be aware enough to improve its quality, check its appropriateness. I can often replace SHOULD with MAY or MIGHT.

While trying to eliminate the use of global words and SHOULD, I am also trying to add some words to my vocabulary that will help me face reality. I cannot cause or force another person to take an action that I desire. I can only invite them to do so. When I issue such an invitation, I must be prepared to allow that person to accept or reject it.

And so now, when a chance encounter brings me in touch with a person experiencing the despair and helplessness of living with an abuser of alcohol or drugs, I am better equipped to make a connection, to be non-judgemental, to INVITE them into the Twelve Step Programme, without the use of global words or the word SHOULD. I can now relate to them from my own positive feelings of love, care and understanding.

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