

Does someone you care about use DRUGS?

FAMILIES ANONYMOUS OFFERS YOU HELP

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ABOUT FAMILIES ANONYMOUS

What exactly is FA?

Families Anonymous is a fellowship of relatives and friends of people involved in the abuse of mind-altering substances, or with related behavioural problems. FA has groups, spread throughout the country, which meet regularly. Any concerned person is encouraged to attend the meetings, even if there is only a suspicion of a problem. The fellowship is a self-help organisation with a programme based on the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions first formulated by Alcoholics Anonymous.

FA was founded in 1971 by a group of families in America. The first group in this country started in London in 1980 and there are now some 60 groups in various parts of the country.

How can it help?

The aim of the group is to help the family and friends of people with a current, suspected or former drug problem by providing mutual support; and to offer a forum where experiences and anxieties can be shared. In the group members learn to come to terms with the problem that is disrupting their lives. Attending meetings helps members adopt an honest and consistent approach towards the addict. This in turn often brings him/her to realise that he/she needs help to live without drugs. Experience has shown that help for the family and friends means important help for the drug-dependent person.

Are there any dues or fees?

No. FA does not solicit or accept any funding from outside bodies. The office is staffed by volunteers and is funded by voluntary contributions given at meetings and by the sale of FA literature.

Is it religious, political?

FA is open to all, regardless of our various beliefs or lack of belief. The FA programme is spiritual, not religious. FA is not affiliated to any institution, religious or political party.

Is FA as anonymous as the name suggests?

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all the work of the fellowship and members make a promise to each other to respect anonymity and confidentiality. Consequently, only first names are used and what is said at meetings is not to be repeated elsewhere.

How to find out more about FA

Call the helpline and talk to a volunteer FA member. Calls to the helpline are usually answered daily from 1-4pm and 6-9pm.

Visit the discussion forum linked to the FA website.

TO THE CONCERNED FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND

from some people who've been through it

If you have found evidence – or have even a vague suspicion that someone close to you may have a drug problem, we know how you feel. We know well what it is like to be alone with this problem. We remember the feelings of panic and frustration that resulted from this discovery. We in Families Anonymous have shared this experience too.

For a while some of us tried to ignore our suspicions. We were too afraid to examine the situation more closely because – what would we do if we found that what we feared was really true? As the drug user's problems became worse, our frantic attempts to help only led to them becoming more hostile and rebellious – which left us still more upset and desperate. At times we felt resentful and depressed at the degree to which our own lives were being affected by another person's problems.

In the FA programme, we learned that the drug user's illness affects the lives of everyone close to them – and that we too needed help. We discovered many of our efforts to control or change the situation were often unintentionally enabling or encouraging this person to continue a self-destructive pattern. It has been a great relief to learn more effective ways of coping with this situation, while at the same time gaining some peace of mind, hope and help for a better way to live.

Often the drug user is simply not ready or willing to stop 'using', but we have learned there is much we can do to avoid standing in the way of their recovery. For the user seeking help, drug recovery programmes are available. However, Families Anonymous is designed for us – the parent, spouse, partner, child or other emotionally involved friend or relative.

We use first names only, as this is an anonymous programme. No dues or fees are required. The weekly meetings are held regularly throughout the year, and attendance is welcome without prior arrangements. You

will not be urged to participate in the group discussions, but may join in and ask questions if you wish. We do understand how you feel.

DOs and DON'Ts

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|--------------|---|
| DO | Focus on your own reactions and attitudes |
| DO | Allow others to accept their own responsibility |
| DO | Manage your anxieties one day at a time |
| DO | Invest time reading helpful literature |
| DO | Learn to be open and honest |
| DO | Involve yourself in Families Anonymous |
| DO | Encourage all attempts to seek help |
| DO | Seek the good in others – and in yourself |
| | |
| DON'T | Accept guilt for another person's acts |
| DON'T | Nag, argue, lecture or recall past mistakes |
| DON'T | Overprotect or rescue from consequences |
| DON'T | Neglect yourself or be a doormat |
| DON'T | Yearn for perfection |
| DON'T | Manipulate or make idle threats |
| DON'T | Overlook the growth opportunities of a crisis |
| DON'T | Underestimate the importance of 'release with love' |
| DON'T | Sit at home when you could be attending an FA meeting and helping yourself and others |

AN OPEN LETTER TO MY FAMILY

I am a drug abuser. I need help.

Don't solve my problem for me. This only makes me lose respect for you and for myself.

Don't lecture, moralise, scold, blame or argue whether I'm stoned or sober. It may make you feel better, but it makes the situation worse.

Don't accept my promises. The nature of my illness prevents my keeping them, even though I mean them at the time. Promises are only my way of postponing pain. And don't keep switching agreements; if an agreement is made, stick to it.

Don't lose your temper with me. It will destroy you and any possibility of helping me.

Don't let your anxiety for me make you do what I should do for myself.

Don't believe everything I tell you. Often I don't even know the truth – let alone tell it.

Don't cover up or try to spare me the consequences of my using. It may reduce the crisis but it will make my illness worse.

Above all, don't run away from reality as I do. Drug dependence, my illness, gets worse as my using continues.

Start now to learn, to understand, to plan for recovery. Find Families Anonymous, a group which exists to help families in just your situation.

I need help – from a doctor, a psychologist, a counsellor, from some people in a self-help programme who've recovered from a drug problem themselves, and from a Power greater than myself.

HELPING

My role as helper is not to do things for the person I am trying to help, but to be things. Not to try to control and change their actions, but through understanding and awareness, to change my reactions. I will change my negatives to positives; fear to faith; contempt for what they do to respect for the potential within them; hostility to understanding and manipulation or over-protectiveness to release with love, not trying to make them fit a standard or image but giving them an opportunity to pursue their own destiny, regardless of what their choice may be. I will change my dominance to encouragement; panic to serenity; the inertia of despair to the energy of my own personal growth and self-justification to self understanding.

SELF PITY BLOCKS EFFECTIVE ACTION. The more I indulge in it the more I fear the answer to my problems is a change in others and in society, not in myself. Thus I become a hopeless case.

EXHAUSTION IS THE RESULT when I use my energy in mulling over the past with regret, or in trying to figure ways to escape a future that has yet to arrive. Projecting an image of the future and anxiously hovering over it, for fear that it will or it won't come true, uses all of my energy and leaves me unable to live today. Yet living today is the only way to have a life.

I WILL HAVE NO THOUGHT FOR THE FUTURE ACTIONS OF OTHERS - neither expecting them to be better or worse as time goes on, for in such expectations I am really trying to create or control. I will love and let be.

ALL PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS CHANGING. If I try to judge them, I do so only on what I *think* I know of them, failing to realise there is much I do not know. I will give others credit for attempts at progress and for having had many victories which are unknown. I too am always changing and I can make that change a constructive one if I am willing. I CAN CHANGE MYSELF – others I can only love.