



# INTERVENTION WEBINAR

## Family Boundaries and Addiction

 Starting Soon



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Mike has an extensive history of helping families treat addiction. He is an authority in addiction treatment and remains dedicated to providing hands-on expertise at our clinic.

# Family Boundaries and Addiction

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# Boundaries and Consequences



Boundaries and consequences with an addict or alcoholic are essential for people to have in place to protect themselves from the substance user's manipulations, break the entitlement, and hold them accountable. When boundaries are not set, it allows the addict or alcoholic to feel more comfortable than they otherwise would be, and it allows them to expect things will continue as they are. Until the addict or alcoholic learns there are consequences to their actions, they may not learn there is any reason to do something different.

One of the first things a substance user requires to seek help is seeing the benefits of change over the benefits of staying the same. If nothing changes, then nothing changes. Rather than try to control the substance user, the family can control the comfort of the environment where the substance user thrives. If the environment remains the same, so will the substance user's behaviors and actions.

Lack of healthy boundaries may cause resentment among family members too. When certain family members have boundaries, and other family members do not, the addiction can affect both sides differently. While the family is fighting over who they believe is right and who is wrong, the substance user carries on.

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# Why Are Boundaries so Important in Addiction Recovery?



When an addict or alcoholic is involved, boundaries are important to protect the family from enabling and allow the substance user to feel the consequences of their actions while holding them accountable. People often operate in a comfort zone of routine. When a family member allows the substance user to continue taking advantage of them, it becomes expected. Many families who enable and choose not to set boundaries actually help the substance user build a belief of entitlement.

At first, the addict or alcoholic tests the boundaries. Once realized they are weak and can be broken with manipulation, or there are simply none at all, the substance user continues to return and starts to take over. The longer this continues, the more entitled the substance user becomes, making it harder for a family member to set healthy boundaries. The family members often become overwhelmed and overpowered, making them afraid to do or say anything different for fear of making the substance user mad or pushing them over the edge.

Boundaries and consequences for addiction are also very important to help the substance user move through the stages of change. For an addict or alcoholic to move from the second stage of change, the contemplation stage, they must see the need for change before moving to the following stages. The second stage of addiction requires something called ambivalence. Ambivalence is being able to see both sides of something. In the case of addiction, as long as the substance user sees less need to change and more reasons not to, they will most likely stay in their destructive patterns. A substance user can see the need for change by seeing the harmful effects of their substance use and behaviors. An addict or alcoholic seldom sees this need for change if they are comfortable with little to no accountability while surrounded by others who have weak, very few, or no boundaries.

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# Who Needs to Set Boundaries for Recovering Addicts and Alcoholics?



Those who need to set boundaries with addicts and alcoholics are anyone who could be potentially affected by the addiction or who may enable or comfort the addiction. Boundaries should also apply to recovering addicts and alcoholics too. One of the families' biggest mistakes is letting their guard down too soon. It is very common for families to call us wanting everything to change, and the minute their loved one enters treatment, they forget why they called us and what has happened. This occurs even more after treatment. Families often believe the substance user is now well simply because they entered or completed a treatment program.

As part of Family First Interventions S.A.F.E. Family Recovery Coaching, we keep families engaged during their loved one's treatment stay and after they have completed treatment. Where families often let their guard down more than any other time in regards to the discharge plan. Families can respect the discharge plan and do not have to agree with it. For example, you have a young adult living in your home, and the clinician at the facility believe they can return to your home after treatment. The family can say no to this and set a boundary by telling their loved ones and the clinician that they will support a sober living house until they find a job and can support themselves.

Recovering addicts and alcoholics often have relapse prevention plans. These plans include warning signs and triggers as well as an action plan of what to do in the event of a relapse. Families should also have a relapse prevention plan to benefit the substance user and themselves. The family's relapse prevention plan would most likely include healthy boundaries to protect themselves from returning to old behaviors that previously comforted the addiction. The quicker the substance user is held accountable with boundaries, the more likely they will see the need to follow their own relapse prevention plan and return to some form of treatment.

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# What Are the Four Components of Addiction?



There are four categories of Substance Use Disorder per the DSM 5:

- **Impaired Control** – Unable to control the amount and frequency of use; Use more often and in more quantities than intended.
- **Social Problems** – Prioritizing alcohol or drug use over relationships and responsibilities; Neglecting Family and children; No longer engaging in hobbies or activities that were once enjoyed; Procrastination, excuses, lack of motivation, and the inability to perform work or school responsibilities.
- **Risky Use** – Using drugs or alcohol despite the possible problems or consequences; These consequences can be legal, medical, social, financial, etc.
- **Physical Dependence** – Building a higher tolerance and requiring more drugs or alcohol to achieve the same effects; Needing substances in the morning to feel normal, often referred to as a straightener; Feeling the effects of withdrawal as the result of not having enough or the substance they are dependent on.

# 11 Criteria to Determine Substance Use Disorder Severity



1. Taking drugs or alcohol in larger amounts and for more extended periods of time than intended
  2. Inability to reduce the amount and frequency of use; unable to stop
  3. Spending increased amounts of time obtaining, ingesting, or recovering from drug and alcohol use
  4. Increased cravings and obsession with drugs or alcohol
  5. Life is increasingly becoming unmanageable in areas such as home, work, school, etc. because of the drug and alcohol use
  6. Using regardless of the potential consequences
  7. No longer caring about and giving up on work, families, or hobbies once enjoyed as the result of using drugs or alcohol
  8. Continuing to use drugs or alcohol even if it could cause potential danger to you and others
  9. Continuing to use drugs or alcohol even when faced with medical or mental problems and continuing to use knowing it could be or is making the condition worse
  10. Requiring more drugs or alcohol to achieve the same effects
  11. Having withdrawal symptoms from not using drugs or alcohol or using drugs or alcohol to avoid withdrawal symptoms
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# What is a Boundary in Recovery?



Boundaries are a way of drawing a line you will not cross under any circumstances. No matter how hard the substance user fights to break the family's boundaries, it is essential to have a plan on how to react and respond. For the substance user, boundaries in recovery help hold them accountable to themselves and their program to prevent a possible relapse. Boundaries in recovery can be learned both in the substance user's recovery plan and the family's recovery plan. Families must remember that when a substance user enters treatment, the family should too. Family recovery can be with therapists and their sponsors while attending self-help groups such as Al-Anon and ACOA meetings.

Boundaries in recovery should be set for both the substance user and the family of the substance user. So much emphasis goes on the family, setting boundaries for the substance user. It is just as important that the recovering substance user also set boundaries with toxic family members who are not in recovery themselves. It is not uncommon for the substance user to get well and the family to stay the same. When this happens, the unhealthy family can indirectly pull the substance user back into their addiction. For this reason, the addict or alcoholic must have boundaries to protect themselves from returning to a dysfunctional family system. [Unhealthy family members often indirectly sabotage their loved one's recovery](#), fueled by codependency, the fear of no longer having a purpose of being the substance user's caretaker, and the fear of no longer being needed in the substance user's life because they are now getting better on their own.

Other unhealthy family roles that go unaddressed can also contribute to the addict or alcoholic being pulled back out of recovery by the family.

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# 5 Examples of Healthy Family Boundaries for an addict or alcoholic?



- No longer allowing them to live in your home
- No longer providing them money or other financial resources
- No longer letting them be alone with children
- No longer allowing them at family functions
- No longer taking their phone calls unless it is to say they are ready for help.

Healthy Boundaries for a family member to have for an addict or alcoholic are important because it holds the substance user accountable, allowing them to feel the consequences. It also allows you to take your life back and no longer help them avoid accountability and consequences.

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# 5 Examples of Healthy Addict Boundaries for their family?



- Not letting the family pull you back into the chaotic, dysfunctional family system that exists as a result of the addiction
- Not engage with family members until they enter recovery
- No longer letting the family dictate or discourage your recovery, such as going to meetings, etc. (Example, prioritizing their need for you over your need to go to a meeting)
- No longer be around toxic family members
- Not letting family continue to throw the past in your face (It is acceptable to a point, and after a while, the substance user can set a boundary on that)

Healthy Boundaries for an addict or alcoholic to have for family members are important because they can distance themselves from toxic family members who do not engage in their own recovery and, as a result, pull the substance user away from their recovery and back into the chaotic family system. The healthy boundary also allows the family members time to heal and address their role in the addiction.

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# Family Recovery Coaching Program



Family First Intervention has built our S.A.F.E (Self Awareness Family Education) Family Recovery Coaching program to address both the addiction and the family. With the environment (including the family) being one of the number one predictors of successful outcomes in addiction treatment, we cannot see bypassing addressing the environment. Too many treatment centers and clinicians focus on one thing: the substance user and their problem.

Very few centers and clinicians look beyond what the substance user is telling them and don't ask the family for input and insight into the background. When discharging patients, very few treatment centers and very few clinicians run the discharge plan for those who will be directly affected by the discharge plan. Rather than call mom and dad or husband or wife, etc. and ask if it's reasonable, the clinician will almost always call the family and insist it's best. We believe this is *not okay*.

Understanding addiction, your family's role in the addiction, along with how to set healthy boundaries is part of what we do here at Family First Intervention. We encourage families to set boundaries with the substance user and understand why they need to be set. We help families engage in their own family recovery as much as we help the addict or alcoholic. In our experience, families who set boundaries and hold their loved ones accountable see far greater results for both themselves and the substance user than those families that do not.

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# *Stop Accepting Excuses and Start Getting Help*

Questions? The Floor Is Yours!

Prefer to talk in private? Get in touch below.

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Call Us: 1 (888) 291-8514

Chat with us: [family-intervention.com](https://family-intervention.com)

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