



## **LEARNING MODULE I**

### **Seminar # 10**

Issue # One: Enabling vs. Consequences

#### **Learning Objectives**

1. What is the issue
2. How can it impact the family
3. What are the options

## The 12 Key Issues a Family Faces

#1 **Enabling vs Consequences**

#2 **Addiction Behavior**

#3 **Family Intervention**

#4 **The Police**

#5 **Emergency Medical Services**

#6 **Legal Court System**

#7 **Treatment Centers**

#8 **Support Agencies**

#9 **The Relapse**

#10 **Successful Lifelong Recovery**

#11



**Bereavement** (Learning how to move forward)

#12 **Faith, Spiritual Practices** (It's His will first and in all ways)

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## *What is the issue*

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The desire to help others, especially those who mean the most to us, is one of the noblest of human instincts. Parents want to help their children succeed in school. Spouses want to help each other solve the problems that life throws at them. Friends want to help each other at work or in their personal relationships. Unfortunately, though, this well-meaning impulse can backfire tragically when addiction is part of the equation.

In one sense, “enabling” has the same meaning as “empowering.” It means lending a hand to help people accomplish things they could not do by themselves. More recently, however, it has developed the specialized meaning of offering help that perpetuates rather than solves a problem. A parent who allows a child to stay home from school because he has not studied for a test is enabling irresponsibility. The spouse who makes excuses for his hung-over partner is enabling alcohol abuse. The friend who lends money to a drug addict “so he won’t be forced to steal” is enabling that addiction.

Allowing someone to suffer logical consequences is another way of getting them to realize their need for grace. Ideally, we can do that by confronting them, have a difficult conversation and hope they have a willingness to face reality. But sometimes people cannot (or do not) hear the truth of confrontation, and they remain stuck. At those times we often must allow reality to touch their lives.

Too often in our lives, we protect people from the harsh realities of logical consequences that would force them to see their need for grace and what it can provide. Either we feel sorry for them and bail them out, or we fear them and try to appease them. No matter what the person’s plight, we must help him face the truth. And sometimes that means letting him deal with harsh realities.

This is not necessarily about discipline and correction, but how it is important to see that sometimes our “helping” may keep others from experiencing the tough realities that will ultimately lead them to the grace they need. It is the old idea of letting people “hit bottom.” It may mean letting them lose a job, or lose a relationship, or lose a membership in a group or a fellowship.

Reality consequences are used in our lives to get us to see our need for grace and to help us learn what is available for us to help ourselves. Those of us in positions of helping others grow must have the courage to allow people to experience those consequences or else we may be keeping them from grace.

By Loving the family and the one with a substance use disorder, we need to face when we are serving our own needs for emotional support and not truly the needs of one who needs our help.

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## *How can it impact the family?*

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There are 10 types of enabling behaviors and knowing them is important if you want to see them stop or change. Each type has a unique description. Our responsibility is to identify which one is being used and seek assistance from a professional in how to best address this type of enabling.

### **1. Denial**

Denial is one of the primary behaviors that families adopt when they learn that their loved one is addicted to drugs. They refuse to accept the reality that their family member has a substance use problem. They convince themselves that treatment is not necessary, and the addict will know how to control their drug or alcohol use.

### **2. Justification**

Justification and denial work hand in hand. Families often reject the problem, making up reasons to justify their loved one's addiction. For example, a family member may feel that it is fine for a loved one to use alcohol or drugs to cope after a stressful day at work. Parents may also believe the substance use is only temporary and will stop after a change in lifestyle such as college graduation.

### **3. Allowing Substance Use**

Family members may think that they are controlling the situation if they allow their loved one to use drugs at home. They may even consume drugs or alcohol with the addict to manage their intake level and to make sure they gravitate toward home when using instead of more dangerous locations.

### **4. Suppressing Feelings**

Not expressing your concerns about addiction to a person you love gives them a reason to keep using. In some cases, substance users dismiss their families' fears by reassuring them that they will not consume drugs or alcohol. When an addict dismisses these fears and concerns, it may encourage family members to keep their feelings to themselves.

### **5. Avoiding the Problem**

By ignoring the problem and not confronting the substance user, family members may feel that they are keeping the peace in their home. Instead of getting their loved one proper treatment, the family focuses on keeping up appearances to look normal.

### **6. Protecting the Family's Image**

The stigma of substance use is ever present. People may be ashamed of their substance-using family member, leading them to portray the person in a falsely positive light to friends, co-workers, and acquaintances.

## **7. Minimizing the Situation**

People surrounding the addict may lighten the issue by convincing themselves that the substance user could be in worse situations. They treat the addiction as a phase that will improve on its own with time and patience.

## **8. Playing the Blame Game**

Adopting negative attitudes toward substance users only pushes those struggling with addiction away. Blaming or punishing individuals for their substance use alienates them from their family, which may result in destructive

## **9. Assuming Responsibilities**

Family members may be inclined to take over the regular tasks and responsibilities of the addict to prevent their life from falling apart. Instead, assuming responsibilities and providing money to the substance user removes accountability and allows them to fully indulge in their addiction.

## **10. Controlling Behaviors**

Exerting control on a substance user may worsen their addiction. Constantly treating the addict as an inferior or placing numerous restrictions on their lifestyle may drive them further from the family unit.

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### *What are the options?*

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Enabling vs. Consequences is the factor to consider when looking at options. It is a matter of what the enabling is creating as an outcome, which draws our attention to this as an issue.

We should first consider the following:

1. Define the Issue, this can be completed in “The Substance Use Disorder, It’s Time to get Organized” Workbook”.
2. Develop a decision, this can be completed in “The Substance Use Disorder, It’s Time to get Organized” Workbook”
3. Develop a family plan of action, this can be completed in “The Substance Use Disorder, It’s Time to get Organized” Workbook”

By taking these steps you have identified the consequences of allowing the enabling to continue. There is little purpose to take time and talk about consequences that are not yours. What is the point? A consequence is only real when it impacts you, the person. So, the best way to talk about and learn about consequences is to make them real to your life and talk about how it came to become a consequence. Therefore, we asked you to consider the three questions above. Take the time to do this for yourself and bring light to the consequences of your enabling type. Which of the ten types do you own?

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*Things to consider*

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The family member who is using a style of enabling is doing so based on their own interpretation of something within themselves. If this is not addressed in a professional session, it is likely to come back in some other ways. Therefore, it may be helpful to see if there is an underlying reason for enabling, in order to properly make a change that will be more significant than to just stop using a particular type of enabling, thinking then things will be better.

Again, this is best addressed in a session between that person and a professional counselor who understands these issues and how to best approach them for a lasting success.