

The purpose of getting children to talk is to help them, and you, get better. It's not to make you feel guilty about things you can't change. Giving them a chance to talk is more important than how you feel about what they're saying. Hear what they're saying. Apologize and move on.

WHY
COULDN'T
YOU QUIT?
IF YOU REALLY
LOVED ME YOU
WOULD HAVE
STOPPED.

YOU WERE
SELFISH AND
JUST THOUGHT
ABOUT YOURSELF.
EVERYTHING WENT
WRONG BECAUSE
OF DRUGS.

WAS IT
MY FAULT?
MAYBE IF I WAS
A BETTER KID
YOU WOULDN'T
HAVE USED
DRUGS.



Write some things
your children have
said to you about
your addiction
or recovery.

Searching and fearless

In an AA or NA fourth step, we take our inventory and find which shortcomings and defects of character affect our lives the most. We also discover strengths and assets that we can use in our recovery. Some of these same shortcomings and assets apply to our parenting.

My greatest strength as a parent is:

Actions I've taken to be strong in this area:

My greatest challenge as a parent is:

My plans for meeting this challenge are:



It works if you work it

First things first

Don't lose sight of what's important. Your focus must be on your recovery – make working your program your priority.

If you want what we have

Get to know parents who have warm and loving relationships with their children. Learn from them and ask for their thoughts on how to handle parenting situations. Join a parent support group or take a parenting class. Ask for help from your child's school or community group.



No more “stinkin’ thinkin’”

It's not only a threat to recovery, but a threat to parenting as well. When we have a long list of “should” and “must” things related to our kids, we often end up angry, resentful and depressed. Remember that you can control your thinking and, in turn, control your emotions and behavior.

Live and let live

When we live and let live, we accept ourselves and others; this includes our children. When we truly accept our children for who they are, we open the door for loving relationships. “Accepting” does not mean allowing behavior that is cruel, rude or destructive – it means we understand where a child is coming from and work with him to improve behavior.



Have an attitude of gratitude

No matter where you've been or how long you have been away from your children, you are clean and sober today, and you can be around to parent them for the rest of your life. Be grateful that you have a new chance to be a better parent and be part of your child's life!

This, too, shall pass

When parents are addicted, their children often have feelings of confusion, fear, anger, shame and sadness. Because they often lack words to tell adults how they feel, children can “act out” in response to these feelings. Here are some ways that children often react when their parents are using. Put a check mark beside any that you feel relate to your children:

- Blaming themselves for their parent using
- Trying to control their parent’s using. Some kids do this by getting good grades or doing well in sports; other children “act out” to get their parent’s attention away from drinking or drugging.
- Withdrawing so they don’t cause any trouble in the house
- Staying home from school to take care of the using parent
- Hoarding food, asking other adults for food
- Not trusting authority figures
- Difficulty making friends, not inviting friends to their home
- Being ashamed of the addiction, keeping it secret
- Lying about their parents, making excuses for their parent’s using/drinking
- Become depressed, become addicted to drugs/alcohol, develop eating disorders
- Stress-related physical problems such as migraines, gastrointestinal problems or asthma

List some ways your children reacted to your using: _____

Your children might have learned to adapt and survive as best they could when they were living with you. Sometimes the way they survive becomes a troubling or “bad” behavior. **It can take time for these “bad” behaviors to be replaced with more appropriate behaviors.**

Across the Years

Children have different needs as they grow and develop. Here are some things that children learn in each stage of development and some ways that you can help them at each stage. As you read them, think of some ways you have seen your child develop these skills and some ways you have found to support them.



BIRTH TO 1 YEAR:

Trust, bonding, attachment and security

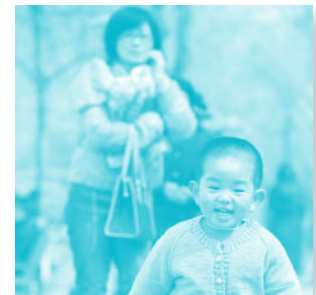
Parents can help by responding quickly to an infant's cries and sounds. Help your baby learn about his senses by talking, touching, singing, humming and placing colorful toys within his reach. It's important to be dependable and provide attention and safety at this age.

Even if you have not been in your child's life up to this point, you can develop a loving relationship by holding and cuddling your baby. Make sure to keep all of your child's medical appointments, especially if he was impacted by prenatal drug use. A pediatrician (doctor for children) can find problems early and help your child "catch up" if there have been delays in his development.

1 YEAR TO 3 YEARS:

Motor skills, exploration, independence

Help your child by giving her a chance to play outside, run and use her developing muscles. Avoid power struggles as she tries out her new independence; accept that his tantrums are not "being bad" but "being normal." Set firm limits and help your child use words to express her feelings.



Most parents in active addiction are not consistent with their children. Establish regular routines and patterns now and your child will respond. Bedtime and meal time are two areas where having routines and rituals are especially important.