“5 Things to do When a Loved One is Losing Control”

by Jim Burns, Ph.D.

The pressures of modern life can take a toll on anyone . . . regardless of your age, gender or socioeconomic background.

Dealing with the stress can be tough. But, often times, watching a loved one battle unsuccessfully with the same kinds of pressure can be even more difficult.

Many folks turn to “comfort foods” and other forms of self-medication to try to numb the pain. But these solutions are only temporary at best. They don’t address the real underlying issues, the true source of the conflict.

Now, I’m no psychologist. But, over the years, I have observed a number of families where one member has gone through an “emotional meltdown.” I’ve seen firsthand how the other family members tried to cope with the collapse. It hasn’t always been pretty.

When a loved one is losing control, the whole family feels it . . . especially if that person is Mom or Dad. Children need the security their parents can bring . . . and when that security is threatened or even taken away, an unhealthy home environment is the result.

If you’re feeling overwhelmed right now – or another member of your family is showing signs of a possible meltdown – here are “5 Things To Do When a Family Member is Losing Control . . . .”

1. **Pray** I realize that this might seem like a basic component in this equation, but you’d be amazed at the number of Christians who find themselves trying to solve major emotional or substance abuse problems *without* seeking guidance and comfort from the Creator of the universe. Before taking that first step, pray . . . and then keep praying!
2. **Identify Mistaken Attitudes That May Be Leading To This Type of Behavior** Doing so may not help you solve the problem, but it could provide valuable insight into why the potential meltdown is pending. For example, adults who were abused as children may develop a dependency on drugs or alcohol to “numb the pain” they’re still feeling from childhood. Maybe it’s a difficult situation at work – a feeling of powerlessness or hopelessness – that’s making Dad overly uptight at home. Do what you can to get as much information as you can about the problem before trying to make things better. Otherwise, you may wind up “solving the symptoms” but missing out on the real cure.

3. **Seek Godly Counsel** For yourself first – then the loved one in potential crisis. A counselor tells the story of a woman who came to his office because she suspected her husband was an alcoholic. After hearing her out for the bulk of the 45 minute session, she finally asked, "So, doctor – what should I do about my husband's drinking?" His response was sobering. He said, "The first thing I want you to do is to stop obsessing over it." Her constant worrying and nagging was only getting in the way. Only when she stopped doing so was she able to be of any real help to him.
4. **Be Sensitive to Anger Wounds** These wounds are the result of emotional or physical trauma. And if there's a loved one in your life who might be losing control because of them, you'll want to be careful as to how you treat them. Think of the pain that's involved in setting a broken bone in a cast or the wrapping of a sprained joint. While the ultimate healing will be of great benefit to all, the initial part of the healing process might seem more painful than the actual wound itself.
5. **Don't Try to Remove a "thorn in the flesh"** Three times the Apostle Paul asked God to remove the thorn in his side; three times the Father responded, "My grace is sufficient for you." Though our human nature is to want to remove all pain from our existence, such is not always the case in God's perfect will. He can use all things together for good for those who love Him. It's possible that the struggle your loved one is going through is part of a much greater master plan and needs to be endured rather than removed.

Whatever your situation, the key to enduring hardships is to not try to go through them alone. We are all brothers and sisters in Christ, born for adversity (and sometimes born *through* it).

We're here to bear one another's burdens . . . so let's be faithful to that calling!

(If you or someone you know needs someone to talk to about a difficult situation – or if a deeper level of crisis counseling is require -- click here to link to the homepage of New Life Treatment Centers.)

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