

12 Principles of a Healthy Adult Relationships

Overview: In Lesson 9 we look at an adaption of the *12 Principles of a Sponsor* as it pertains to parents of an addicted loved one. We see that this is really about how to treat people as adults. Clearly this ties back in to Delayed Emotional Growth and Lessons 2-4 and 6 all of which help us realize we need to change our roles to that of treating our loved ones as adults. This is a great lesson to focus in on changes we need to make, acceptance of our loved ones and their choices, and realizing how important it is to form healthy relationships. This is another reminder from the AL-Anon saying, that we did not **Cause** this problem, we cannot **Control** this problem and we cannot **Cure** this problem; that is up to our loved one. You will notice that most of these principles are what *does not work* – until you get to number 11 and 12. This is where the focus should ultimately end up with this lesson.

Notes:

- Blanks, the first blank = I, c = control
- As noted in the overview, this is an adaption of the “12 Steps of a Sponsor.” You can ask, “Why would a Sponsor want to follow these principles?” (best answer: they want to have an healthy adult relationship)
- Emphasize the point that almost all of the principles start with the word “I.” Ask the group why they think this is the case. (Best answer: these are about what you are going to do, not the addict, since we are in control of ourselves *only*, then that is where our changes can be made. We cannot change others).
- All of the principles involve a “choice,” in how you relate to another person. They all involve boundaries and consequences.
- Another concept that you can use here is “letting go,” this goes along with acceptance and not trying to control the life of another. Learning to allow loved ones to be who they choose to be.

Driving points home:

- You can focus the group on the key issue of changing only themselves and their ways to relate to their loved one by asking very broad questions, for example, “What do you think an adult relationship looks like?” or “Why is it critical for us to learn to treat our sons and daughters like adults?” or “What is the overall theme of this lesson?”
- One way to drive home the idea of how we can have a healthy relationship with our loved one is to ask the group about sponsors. After reading the lesson, make a statement such as, “So in reading this, when a person calls their sponsor and says that they are feeling like doing drugs or going to get a drink, it’s pretty clear the sponsor will say to them, (sarcastic) *‘No that is a terrible idea, whatever you do don’t do it, that is dumb, what are you thinking, don’t throw away your dreams, just cheer up, all will be fine.’* “Is that what a sponsor is likely to say?” (best answer: no, good sponsors do not tell their sponsees what to do or how to live their lives, they are not lecturers, they do not force their values on others). Follow this with “Why do sponsors, simply listen and possibly ask questions, like, how do you think that will make you feel?” Or “what can I do for you right now?” (best answer: because they do not try to control others, they are there for the person if the person wants them for support and a person to talk things through)
- Focus in on the last principle, and ask, “Why is the word childishness used here? What is the point of using that phrasing?” (best answer: treating someone the opposite of the above

principles is treating them as a child). This again reinforces the issue of delayed emotional growth and how important it is for us to treat them like an adult.

- Ask the following question after making the statement, “All of our problems can be solved by boundaries and consequences. Why is this true in dealing with an addicted loved one?” This should spark a good conversation about the fact that we are no longer victims in this journey we are volunteers. Therefore, we have choices, we are not victims, the definition of a victim is someone who is powerless and without choices. You are neither powerless nor without choices, just like our loved ones, so if we just set boundaries and enforce consequences, then by definition, we solve the problem. Of course this is not easy; simple, but not easy.
- To drive home the idea of adult healthy relationships, ask, “What would life be like if you had a healthy relationship with your loved one?” Have the group provide as many ideas as possible, then ask, “What do you think is the key to building that kind of relationship?” (best answer: treat them like an adult and let them live the life they choose to live and bear the consequences of their actions)

*** Cross-reference material from Mike Speakman’s book, *The Four Seasons of Recovery***

- Page 164 (Letting Go)
- Page 167 (Letting Go Poem)

Cross-reference to *The Language of Letting Go*, Melody Beattie

- Page 218, “Gratitude”
- Page 351, “Letting Go”
- Page 168, “Surrender”