

LAWYERS Assistance

By J.E. (Buddy) Stockwell

INTERVENTION SAVES LIVES

It's often been said that "alcoholics and addicts simply will not accept help until they hit bottom *on their own* and finally decide themselves to get help." That common belief is incorrect, dangerous and potentially deadly. In truth, a professional intervention can be very effective in *raising* an alcoholic's "bottom" and helping the person into life-saving treatment before serious consequences accumulate.

The art and science of intervention began to evolve in the 1960s with the legendary efforts of Dr. Vernon E. Johnson, an Episcopal priest. He devoted much of his life to helping alcoholics into early recovery. Dr. Johnson's famous book, *I'll Quit Tomorrow: A Practical Guide to Alcoholism Treatment* (Harper & Row, 1973, with seven subsequent editions), declares that it is pointless and dangerous to sit by and wait to help alcoholics until they have hit bottom on their own.

The "Johnson Model" for intervention deems that each and every crisis that an alcoholic or addict encounters along the way represents an opportunity to break through the alcoholic's denial and convince him/her to accept help. A DWI arrest, loss of a job or any other glaring consequence of ongoing substance abuse may provide the catalyst for conducting a successful intervention.

Intervention techniques continue to improve and experts Jeff and Debra Jay, both former clinicians at the Hazelden Foundation, have been recognized as national leaders in the field of intervention. The Jays' work has been noted by CNN, PBS, *Forbes*, *The Washington Post*, *Parade* magazine and *USA Today*. They have appeared frequently on the "The Jane Pauley Show" and "The Oprah Winfrey Show." In 2000, Hazelden published the Jays' definitive book, *Love First: A Family's Guide to Intervention*, and a second edition was released in 2008. Since then, the Jays have authored and co-authored additional books, all of which are authoritative texts on the subjects of

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intervention and addiction treatment.

One of the most identifiable advances in the Jays' intervention design is their commitment to carefully structured and comprehensive support to the family before, during and after the intervention. Research over the years has revealed that quick "hit-and-run" interventions may very well get an alcoholic into a treatment facility, but those efforts alone do not provide the family with what it needs to heal and support the alcoholic's or addict's long-term recovery after treatment.

Recovery from addiction is indeed a family mission, and it is a marathon, not a sprint. There will be rough patches in every person's recovery and there also will be challenges for the family members, too. Families must be on guard not to default to their old *status quo* of coping behaviors that often unwittingly supported the disease of addiction and hurt rather than helped. To be successful in supporting the alcoholic or addict in recovery, a family must "stick to its guns" and render support as a well-trained team. A professional intervention provides that training.

An intervention offers needed relief to the family irrespective of whether the alcoholic or addict agrees to treatment or is successful in recovery. The Jays describe addiction as "a destructive force that runs through families like a freight train." By confronting the alcoholic or addict, the family can end its enabling and return to core family values that have been compromised by alcoholism and addiction. If an addict or alcoholic refuses help during the interven-

tion, the participating family members will have perfected their individual "bottom lines" and can be steadfast in articulating the changes they will make in their behavior toward the alcoholic or addict — no more money to support an addictive lifestyle and no more help in cleaning up alcohol- and drug-related disasters. Instead, the family's efforts will be openly focused on treatment and recovery.

The message to the alcoholic or addict is crystal clear: We love you and our family will do anything in the world to support your treatment and recovery but the family will never again do anything whatsoever that will support, even obliquely, the disease of addiction. This liberates families from further enabling the alcoholic or addict and allows the family to restore its integrity and heal as a unit notwithstanding the alcoholic's or addict's eventual prognosis.

In June 2014, the Lawyers Assistance Program's (LAP) executive director and clinical director both completed an intensive, week-long intervention certification course conducted personally by Jeff and Debra Jay at the Betty Ford Center. This nationally acclaimed course is offered by the Jays only once a year and is limited to 20 select professionals in the field. If you have any questions or think that someone you know could benefit from an intervention, LAP is now exceptionally qualified to help. Call LAP at (985)778-0571 or email LAP@louisianalap.com. As a matter of law, all calls are confidential and you do not even have to give your name.

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