**Addicted Families**

By Bethany Winkel - March 19th 2010



The new TLC show “Addicted” is striving to take a new focus on drug addiction and recovery. While it is following in the steps of “Celebrity Rehab” and “Intervention”, this show looks to offer real advice and help to viewers that are being controlled by addiction. More than simply showcasing people’s struggles, these shows can be used as inspiration for everyday people that need help.

Substance Abuse Affects the Entire Family

When a person in a family is addicted to something, the whole family is addicted. The nature of family units is that when one member suffers, they all suffer in some way or another. Family members suffer consequences such as poverty, physical abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect when a member is caught up with substance abuse or alcoholism. Therefore, when one person in a family needs treatment for an addiction, the entire family will likely need some kind of treatment for the repercussions from the addiction.

Shame Among Families

Family members are also sometimes consumed with guilt because of the addiction, and often shame accompanies their everyday life. Parents may make excuses for their child’s drug problem. Children may try to cover up for their alcoholic parent or are maybe made fun of at school for their dysfunctional family. Spouses may feel isolated, not only from their addicted loved one, but also from friends because of shame.

For these reasons, many families become detrimental to each other when one member has an addiction. The shame that the entire family feels can lead to covering up the addiction, and instead of getting help for a problem everyone tries to deny it exists. Shows like “Addicted” help create awareness of addiction and the struggles that many families go through. The only way to heal an addiction is to acknowledge it, and get the help of a trained professional. When

families try to hide the problem because it makes them feel like a bad family, everyone suffers.

Families Working Together

But families that learn how to cope with an addict among them can be the most beneficial resources for each other. Shows like “Addicted”, which take a family approach to treatment, help us see the value in family therapy. Families can be deeply involved with steps such as intervention, choosing the right facility, counseling, and life style modifications. An addict whose family has learned how to be supportive can encourage their loved one through treatment. Families do not always know how to be productive, and need to learn how to effectively interact with a drug addict or alcoholic in their midst.

The good thing about family counseling and treatment is that it helps the addict in the long run. Relapse is always a temptation, and many sober patients will turn back to their addiction sometime after treatment. But with a family behind them that cares and has been to treatment also, a recovering addict can look toward a brighter future. Families working together can help avoid relapse.