



Taking Action in a Mental Health Crisis

By Jane Mintz

A mental health or addiction issue is no one's fault and everyone's responsibility. For families facing significant concerns, though, intense feelings of sadness, fear, frustration, rage or resentment are quite common. Addictive illness and complex mental health matters bring unique challenges that often lead to intensely chaotic dynamics within families. This may be abject denial by certain factions of the family or frustrating relapses despite substantial investments of money and emotional capital. Or it may be enabling or rescuing within the family that has only resulted in more anguish, disappointment and entrenched behavior.

Addiction and complex mental health concerns place enormous strain on a family and the affected individual can serve as a barometer for the health of the entire family system. With highly persistent and clinically complex individuals, family fracturing often intensifies, and finding a way out of the chaos can feel impossible. Fortunately, enhanced treatment options to address complex disorders are becoming increasingly available if the correct assistance can be found and implemented.

In my decades of clinical experience, I have found that there are four important considerations that help families step out of the initial chaos and begin the journey towards sustainable wellness.

01 Find the Courage to Take Action

The first step is to find the courage to take action. Families often are too paralyzed by the confusing maze of mental health and recovery options. In the absence of a clear path forward, the default can be to wait it out and hope for the best. To delay simply prolongs the suffering and in some situations can pose enormous health and safety risks. Taking action begins the momentum, and with a correct first call, the dynamic changes from an "I" based plea for help to a "we" based strategic team approach that has a much higher likelihood of success.

It is not uncommon for my practice to receive intake calls from concerned family members at the end of their proverbial rope. Many strategies have been tried and nothing has worked. Mustering up a little courage and the last drops of energy, a call is made, a story is shared, and right there and then an army against the dysfunction has begun to be assembled.

That is the beginning of everything. If someone you care about is facing a mental health or life crisis, or an addiction, find the courage to reach out to trusted professionals in your universe for a referral. Concierge physicians, private wealth managers, attorneys or other advisors can often recommend competent mental health and recovery providers. There is no shame in seeking support. In fact, it is the courageous and correct option every time.

02 Find a Professional with the Exact Right Qualifications

Well educated, well-resourced, and well-intentioned families rarely have the necessary multi-factor skill sets needed to lead one of their own members through untangling and treating complex dysfunction. It takes a dedicated professional with the correct credentials and experience to navigate those choppy waters and guide a family safely to shore.

Sadly, the recovery and mental health field is filled with bad actors who prey on desperation and fear. And please let me be clear, the internet is not your friend when it comes to finding a professional resource in this arena. Instead, look to a reliable ally for a name and then do your research to ensure that the practitioner is licensed.

Request a consultation so you can share your story and listen for initial clinical impressions before committing to a longer-term engagement. Assess the clinician's demeanor and professionalism. Any hint of judgement or shaming is a red flag. Your questions should be answered with clarity and warmth. Avoid any clinician who promises a quick fix. The expectation should be measured improvement over time that will result in sustainable wellness.

03 Insist on Assessment and Data

Developing a comprehensive strategy to tackle mental health, addiction and substantial life concerns should be an assessment-based process with multiple data points. People's lives and relationships weigh in the balance, and frankly, there is no room for guessing. It is critically important to determine what has not worked in the past and why. Are there processing issues or physical health factors at play?

Is unresolved trauma part of the narrative? Are there dysfunctional family system issues around enabling, enmeshment, abuse or neglect? A good clinical steward will insist on comprehensive assessments to set the correct course for recovery and to ensure that resources are spent for results.



04 Build an Army Against the Dysfunction

Building an army against the dysfunction begins when the family teams up with a qualified clinical strategist. In complex cases, however, a larger team of professionals is required to achieve sustainable progress. This may include neuropsychologists, psychiatrists, physicians, residential treatment providers, specialized therapists, coaches, dieticians and/or trainers.

Regular family work, including coaching and psychoeducation, is also essential to build understanding about the disease(s) and to learn new ways of interacting. Your clinical strategist should act as the general of this army, making certain that all providers and the family work in concert together.

Conclusion

As difficult and chaotic as things may seem, working through an addiction, mental health or life crisis, can be truly transformational for both the affected individual and the family. It all begins by taking action and hiring a qualified strategist. From there, a correct plan is built around clinical assessment and data points so an effective strategy can be drafted and the right team of elite partners can be engaged. With these considerations in place, chaos within the family is diminished, wealth and resources are deployed for results, and most importantly, individuals and family systems have a real chance at restoring long-term wellness.

ABOUT JANE MINTZ

Jane Mintz, MA, LPC, is the CEO and chief clinical strategist of Realife Intervention Solutions, LLC, which offers strategic direction for addiction, mental health and life concerns. A veteran treatment provider and thought leader in the addiction and behavioral health industries, she authored, "The Field Model of Intervention," a clinical model of intervention now in use by practitioners and organizations across the United States and the United Kingdom. She is well known for her work as a concierge strategist, guiding clinically complex individuals and their families through crisis.

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