

Encouragement

Step 12 -- Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

As we begin to walk more and more in healthy lifestyles, we are given many opportunities to pass on helpful information and supportive companionship to others attempting the same journey. God invites us to love others as we have been loved. Love goes beyond mere words. Love doesn't just tell someone what the problem is. Love helps them find and apply a solution. Love finds a way to support healthy change and healthy action. Sometimes it is spoken in silence, when we don't condemn someone who's looking for help.

When we love someone and want to encourage them we need to find out what is actually helpful to him or her in their journey. When we provide "a helping hand" it is good to check and see if help was actually experienced. Encouragement can be offered in a variety of ways: a word, a note, a prayer, a phone call, a visit, a challenge, a "random act of kindness", refraining from reacting, setting and holding to personal boundaries, providing meeting information, or even a challenge to look at some behavior. We can be a part of a support network for others in the same way that we have been supported in our recovery. We will experience encouragement ourselves as we offer it to others.

Share each other's troubles and problems and in this way obey the law of Christ. If you think you are too important to help someone in need, you are only fooling yourself. I am giving you a new commandment. Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. And here is how to measure love - the greatest love is shown when people lay down their lives for their friends. (Excepts from Galatians 6, John 13, and John 15)

Some Acts of Encouragement

1. Find a solution together
2. Offer a word of appreciation
3. Name observed growth
4. Write a note
5. Pray a prayer
6. Make a phone call
7. Visit
8. Listen. Listen. Listen
9. Perform a "random act of kindness"
10. Share useful information
11. Provide helpful service (dishes, chores, laundry, etc)
12. Smile
13. Sincerely say, "I love you". "I care about you" "I'm thinking of you."
14. Give a token or gift or card
15. Counter doubt with a sincere, "Yes you can".
16. Laugh together
17. Challenge to new honesty and hope
18. Name & rename God's gift of a future & a hope
19. Practice silence instead of condemnation
20. Ask a question; listen to the answer with genuine interest
21. Give a hug or a handshake

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. How does encouragement work?
2. What does it mean to lay down our lives for our friends in a way that does no jeopardize our own recovery?
3. What are some ways we encourage others by NOT doing certain things?
4. What are some things others have done for us that have encouraged us?
5. When is the last time this week we did something to encourage someone?
6. Who looks like they might need encouragement today? How might I respond?