



WRITING AN IMPACT LETTER

*Addiction is a disease from
which no one recovers without help*

You are about to embark on an emotionally challenging task of intervening on a family member who is living with untreated alcoholism, drug addiction, mental illness or perhaps a mixture of all of these. As the intervention moves closer you may experience a variety of feelings ranging from hopefulness to guilt. At times you may even feel you are betraying your loved one's trust because you have kept them in the dark about the upcoming event.

I encourage families to think about the intervention process as doing what is medically necessary. If your best friend was diagnosed with a treatable form of cancer and refused medical attention, would hesitate to get them help - of course you wouldn't. You would do whatever is necessary to get them the proper medical assistance. Drug and alcohol addiction is no different.

The upcoming intervention will provide you with a setting to express your concern about your family member's chronic addiction and or mental health issues through compassionate and nonjudgmental communication. Sometimes participants feel anger and frustration towards the addicted individual, which is quite normal though it's important to remember the goal of this intervention is to get that person into treatment.

Despite having prepared for this moment and having rehearsed what you plan to say multiple times, you will be glad to have this letter in hand to guide you when the intervention convenes.

Sample Impact letter

Dear Michael,

It seems like only yesterday you graduated from high school and prepared for college with your whole life ahead of you and the world at your feet. Everybody looked up to you, especially me. When you graduated college with top honors, nobody was surprised at your success in academia, in fact, it's exactly what we expected from a superstar like you.

Right after college, you were offered a once in a lifetime opportunity to move to New York City and pursue your dream to become an architect at one of the city's most prestigious firms. Here again no one was surprised at your early success. We always assumed you would make great things happen.

As time went on we started hearing less from you; at first, we chalked it up to long hours in the office and hard work but then we started wondering if there was something else. You stopped returning telephone calls or coming home for the holidays. We wondered if you had become a big shot and wanted to leave the memories of small-town America behind you.

The truth was ultimately revealed when Jack went up to New York City to look in on you. He was surprised to learn about your drinking and daily use of prescription drugs. To be honest, we were angry when Jack reported all of this, but then our anger turned to hurt and many nights of lost sleep. We wondered if one day the police would call informing us our eldest son had died of a drug overdose or badly injured in an accident.

When you moved back home we thought things would be better, but then you were picked up by the police for driving while under the influence. Bailing you out of jail that night almost destroyed me. You were no longer the superstar you were only a few years earlier. Working odd jobs for little money and not being able to keep a relationship is not the man you were meant to be.

Your drug addiction and alcoholism has profoundly impacted my wellbeing. I am no longer sleeping at night because I am anxious about you getting into trouble and as a result my own career is suffering. My employer is frustrated with my inability to complete assignments on time and has confronted me more than once. I make up excuses for why I am so distracted and sooner or later I will be at risk of losing my job.

We prayed you would stop drinking and using drugs by yourself or you would meet a nice girl and get married and settled down but neither has happened in almost ten years. A couple of months ago our fear of losing you became too much for us to bear and we started looking for ways to help you.

We are here today to ask to accept help and go to treatment today.

If you don't go to treatment today, we have no other choice than to stop supporting you financially. Starting immediately you will have to leave this house and become solely responsible for your own living expenses, which means paying rent, car payments, and health insurance.

Michael - please accept this gift and go to treatment today.

This letter is an example for you to consider while writing your own personal appeal. Our goal is for your addicted family member to accept help and go to treatment immediately. Write this letter in your own voice and use this time to recall what he or she was like before addiction stole them away, and how his addiction has hurt you. We don't want to inflict guilt and shame, but we do want them to understand the consequences of their drinking and using.

I will be there during the intervention to help guide the process and will interject as needed. I look forward to seeing your letters prior to moving forward. I can be reached anytime at 202-390-2273 or via e-mail at marc@southfloridaintervention.com to answer your questions.

Here are two commonly used meditations in the twelve step programs. You may find it helpful to read them a couple of times before you begin writing or when you get stuck.

God, I offer myself to Thee – to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that

victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of Life.

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; Courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference.