



STEP
Discovery
#2

Hope vs. Expectations

*Expectation brings
frustration.*

*Hope
leads to education.*

*Education
promotes understanding.*

*Understanding
allows acceptance.*

*Acceptance
opens the soul to peace.*

CHOOSE HOPE

“I’ve learned that it’s best to have limited expectations, but I still hold on to hope.”

“The first time my husband went into rehab, I knew our problems were over. On Monday afternoon he checked himself in. The next morning I called everyone with the news. His folks. My prayer group. Our neighbor. He’d be out of contact during the first 30 days but there would be a family orientation on Thursday. I asked my in-laws & daughter to come.

My husband sent a message through a counselor that it was always cold. He wanted me to buy a new hoodie and bring it down to the center. I packaged up the hoodie and decided I would also include some socks, family photos, gum and Mountain Dew.

The next evening, my in-laws came by to pick me up. As we backed out the driveway, a taxi pulled up. I was shocked to see my husband get out. We sat dumbfounded as he walked past us saying, “That’s just not the place for me. Lousy food. No privacy. One of the guys I met told me about a good place in San Diego. Maybe we can fly down there and check it out next month.”

Hope is focused on the good work accomplished by God. We can have hope because we have a good, good God - our Abba who acts in our behalf. On the other hand, expectations target a loved one who struggles with behaviors of delayed emotional growth compounded by urgent cravings for alcohol or drugs. Hear this - it’s natural to have expectations. But it’s important to manage them with observation and adjustments to keep them realistic. High expectations set everyone up for heartache. Unchecked, expectations skyrocket and easily lead to disappointment, resentment, or discouragement - ***for both parties.***

Expectations can be defined as future resentments.

~ Alcoholics Anonymous ~

While some who battle substance abuse wander from one treatment to the next, others may go AWOL. They slip into the world of addiction while living with acquaintances or in drop houses or on the streets. It’s tough for families to have loved ones actively using in our homes. Yet it’s equally tough having those we love leave family and choose to live on the streets in order to continue their use. Listen - it’s important that we stop interpreting our loved one’s behavior as personal rejection: *“He loves heroin more than he loves his family.”* Recognize the power of the drug. It takes our loved one captive. Over time chemicals change the function of the brain. They hijack the person we knew. Soon we’re left with someone gasping for hope yet strangled by deception: ***“Drugs are my only means of survival.”***

So, we work through our own recovery. With education, support groups and counseling, we gain better understanding. With this understanding comes the acceptance that this is a spiritual battle. We did not cause this. We can’t change it. We can’t control it. Yet - ***we do play a powerful role! We pray. We love. We encourage. We yield all to God.*** We pursue significance in life to model a healthy, balanced existence. Regardless of our loved one’s choices, this acceptance brings peace into life.

Excerpt from The Four Seasons of Recovery

The circumstances we ask God to change are often the circumstances God is using to change us.

~ Max Lucado ~

“I still have had no contact with my son, who has been living out of state,” she said. *“It’s been over three years, but I’m sleeping at night now for the first time in a long time. I’ve come to know a new peace, even though I’m not in contact with my son.”*

When other parents asked her how that was possible, she answered, *“Through what I’ve learned in these meetings and my faith in God.”*

Because some parents still looked puzzled, I (the counselor) added, ***“In my experience, education leads to understanding, understanding can lead to acceptance of things I do not have the power to change, and acceptance leads to peace.”*** Acceptance does not mean something is right or good. It means I may not be able to change it - no matter how bad I feel about it.

Even though being at peace and not in pain may look selfish to those who are ignorant about such things, you have realized that keeping yourself healthy and moving forward in your life is one of the best things you can do for your adult loved one and the rest of your family.

The Four Seasons of Recovery for Parents of Alcoholics and Addicts by Mike Speakman. 2014. Page 190