

## AN OPEN LETTER TO MY FAMILY\*

I am a user. I need help.

Don't allow me to lie to you and accept it for the truth, for in so doing, you encourage me to lie. The truth may be painful but get at it.

Don't let me outsmart you. This only teaches me to avoid responsibility and to lose respect for you at the same time.

Don't let me exploit you or take advantage of you. In so doing, you become an accomplice to my evasion of responsibility.

Don't lecture me, moralize, scold, praise, blame, or argue when I'm drunk or high. You may feel better at the time, but the situation will be worse.

Don't lend me money, it will just tempt me to drink/use/gamble it away. I need to be accountable for my actions if I can't afford to pay my bills.

Don't accept my promises. This is just my method of postponing pain. And don't keep switching agreements. If an agreement is made, stick to it.

Don't lose your temper with me. It will destroy you and any possibility of helping me.

Don't allow your anxiety for me to compel you to do what I must do for myself.

Don't cover up or abort the consequences of my substance use/gambling. It reduces the crisis but perpetuates the illness.

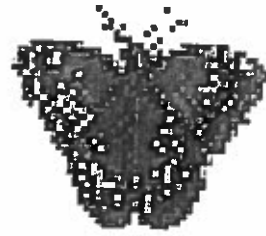
Above all, don't run away from reality as I do. Substance use/gambling is my problem and it gets worse as my using continues. Start now to learn, to understand, and to plan for my recovery. I need help from a doctor, a counsellor, or a psychologist, someone in recovery, or from God. I need help in order to help myself.

I hate myself in my addiction, but I love you. To do nothing is the worst choice you can make for me. Please help me.

Love,

\*Made popular by AA and NA

## *The Butterfly*



A man found a cocoon of a butterfly. One day a small opening appeared. He sat and watched the butterfly for several hours as it struggled to force its body through that little hole. Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared as if it had gotten as far as it could, and it could go no further.

So the man decided to help the butterfly. He took a pair of scissors and snipped off the remaining bit of the cocoon. The butterfly then emerged easily. But it had a swollen body and small, shriveled wings. The man continued to watch the butterfly because he expected that, at any moment, the wings would enlarge and expand to be able to support the body, which would contract in time. Neither happened! In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and shriveled wings. It never was able to fly.

What the man, in his kindness and haste, did not understand was that the restricting cocoon and the struggle required for the butterfly to get through the tiny opening was nature's way of forcing fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings so that it would be ready for flight once it achieved its freedom from the cocoon.

Sometimes struggles are exactly what we need in our lives. If we lived our lives without any obstacles, it would cripple us. We would not be as strong as what we could have been. We could never fly!

As parents, family and friends it is often difficult to see our loved ones struggle or experience discomfort. Our response may be to rescue rather than support them. Our good intentions may prevent them from developing skills that their struggles could have taught them.

- Difficulties can increase strength.
- Solving problems can increase wisdom.
- Overcoming danger can increase courage.
- Managing life's obstacles can increase self-esteem.