

# DANGERS

What are the dangers of not doing or delaying an intervention?

Working as an interventionist, calls from families and friends are a common daily event. Many of the calls that I have received are from parents who are reaching out for help. These calls are a cry of desperation and require immediate action. In my travels throughout the United States and Canada, I have come across people from all walks of life and have heard many stories of addiction and recovery. For example, when speaking briefly with a father in central Canada, the topic of intervention arose. I told him that I was a certified interventionist and an addiction specialist. This father went on to tell me that his son had committed suicide two years ago. The grief-stricken father shared that the family had reached out to access help from an interventionist, but instead of hiring that person, they decided to facilitate a family intervention on their own. This ended up going very badly. The son was very angry, became violent, and overdosed on drugs later that night. The lesson to be learned from this story is that families should never try and facilitate an intervention meeting without professional help.

Delaying an intervention for a loved one is another way for families to convince themselves that they have some power and control over getting the untreated person to stop using drugs and/or alcohol. Denying the problem or its inevitable outcome is much like hiding something in the back of a closet, away from others. Addiction to drugs and alcohol is a progressive disease, and the only way for it to be arrested is through abstinence. Only then can professionals work with the individual in order to provide treatment and tools for recovery.

Most often, the feelings of anxiety and fear of betraying a loved one at an intervention stem from a family member's own denial. Many family members who are requesting information, on the first call, about interventions are ready to move forward to committing to accept help and support from a professional interventionist. It is a common occurrence that when an interventionist does a second follow-up call, the family and/or friend has changed their mind because there is a family member that does not wish to follow through with the process. This is because their denial is as great as or greater than that of the untreated addicted person.

In this type of scenario, it is far better to hire an interventionist so that your family and friends can be represented professionally by a specialist in the field of addiction and/or mental health, such as a certified interventionist. Interventionists are not only there to help the addicted person. They are there to assist the entire family. Even when you have a family member that is not committed to the process, do not delay an intervention that could save someone life. It is important to move forward and let the interventionist figure out the best approach in how to best deal with conflicts and complex family issues, and to break the cycle of denial.

Holding back on committing to a full intervention for your loved one is letting one more hour, one more day go by, not knowing if your loved one will die from drug and/or alcohol abuse. This will most likely result in negative consequences. I tell families that, at the end of the day, addiction will not stop for your loved one. It may change faces, and addiction may even seem better on some days than others, but the bottom line is that addiction is progressive, fatal, and can only be arrested through abstinence and professional support.