Healthy Strategies for Family Members to Cope and Even Thrive Through Addiction

Margaret Swift Thompson

Family Addiction Specialist

EmbraceFamilyRecovery.com

You are resilient, courageous and deeply committed to the wellbeing of your loved ones. You strive every day to help them find or stay in recovery.

You've lived in the role of crisis intervention manager, peacemaker, problem solver and fortune teller putting everyone else's needs ahead of your own. And you believed that your love was strong enough to change another person's addictive behavior.

Maybe you are like I was … having reached the point of exhaustion where you had tried every tool you had, and no consistent change was happening.

That's where I come in.

I am a woman in long-term recovery who counseled addicts and their families at Hazelden Betty Ford for over 20 years. I know addiction intimately and professionally.

That's why I launched *Embrace Family Recovery* to come along side you. Together we'll move forward in a hopeful and attainable way.

Is it too much to ask for freedom from paralyzing fear and worry? To be able to breathe deeply and have a sense of peace and confidence? No, its not!

I've developed a 4-step process for families of addicts to establish healthier strategies to cope and even thrive!

1. Separate Yourself from the Addiction
2. Build Your Community of Support
3. Role Model Your Own Recovery
4. Reintegrate Your Family

Are you ready to prioritize your wellbeing and support your addict in a healthy way rather than be the collateral wreckage of the disease? Read on …

© Embrace Family Recovery, LLC. All rights in media reserved.
EmbraceFamilyRecovery.com

Separate Yourself from the Addiction

No doubt you've heard this definition of insanity … doing the same thing over and over while expecting a different outcome.

The journey of addiction runs parallel between family members and addicts. What THEY do around their addiction is similar to what YOU do around them – deny, rationalize, control, lie for, excuse, isolate, manipulate. Your drug of no choice is your loved one!

My belief was if I could get him into recovery then I would be fine. It's another lie of this disease. I could not heal my sabotaging behaviors *until I faced my part in the dance* with this cunning, baffling, and powerful disease that could outwit me every time.

What mask have you been wearing? Mine was "I'm fine" though inside I was barely holding it together. I was hyper-vigilant with my addict waiting for the next shoe to drop. Exhausting to maintain yet rarely did people outside my family know anything was wrong. Sound familiar?

Though this journey has felt so lonely I assure you, you are not alone.

Each story has unique elements however all family members of addicts experience similar changes within themselves. We understand each other.

The reality is this: you cannot make any other human being relapse or recover. Once you can internalize that you'll feel better.

Now let's find your people …

Do you know what **FINE** really means?

F'd Up

Insecure

Neurotic

Emotional

© Embrace Family Recovery, LLC. All rights in media reserved.
EmbraceFamilyRecovery.com

Build Your Community of Support

Have you ever felt alone, barely able to tread water? Imagine having people around you to hold you up when you grow weary. Could hearing another person share their story help you better understand your own situation?

Community is a feeling of fellowship with others as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests and goals. Connecting with people who care about you and have experienced the impact of addiction in their lives can empower you.

My former colleague, Delia Jurek's creation simply explains the power of community support:

ILLNESS = *the situation you're living in without support*

WELLNESS = *the quality life you crave*

You can get there by shifting from I to a WE. **Are you willing?**

When I found my tribe, they were the first example of *positive unconditional regard* I had experienced. They shared their stories, offered me suggestions when I asked, and listened when I was ready to share.

1. Think of one person you know who has addiction in their family.
2. Imagine how it would feel to share honestly with them because they understand.
3. Reaching out to them will not be burdensome — sharing stories is healing.

Also consider joining a support group for family members of addicts. While it can feel embarrassing at first, know this … **recovery fellowship is a judgement-free zone.**

As you build your support network and let go one day at a time you demonstrate recovery for others. I'll explain more about this now …

© Embrace Family Recovery, LLC. All rights in media reserved.
EmbraceFamilyRecovery.com

Role Model Your Own Recovery

The disease of addiction has the characteristics of rebellion. In order to protect their active addiction, an addict must keep the truth furthest from the people who love them the most. This dynamic mixed with the desperate attempts of family members to manage and control them, creates a debilitating cat and mouse game.

Let's be honest, how much do you like being told what to do?

One of the biggest mistakes I've seen family members make is telling their addict what to do. It allows your addict to avoid self-responsibility. You'll have a far greater influence over your loved one if instead you live your own recovery out loud.

It is okay if your motivation for engaging in your own healing is to get your addict to recover. Your exposure to the strategies of recovery will afford you hope and an action plan that begins to feel vital.

What recovering family members have told me:

- *"I learned I could love him. Beyond that it was his journey to take."*
- *"It's not my fault. It's mom's disease."*
- *"It's taken a long time to understand the disease and recovery are lifelong."*
- *"I wish mom had told me. Once I knew, dad's anger made more sense."*
- *"I thought I had to be in control of her recovery because I was not in control of her using."*

One of the most challenging recovery strategies is living one day at a time. We are conditioned to be future-focused — the next degree, promotion or vacation. There is relief in only having to do something for one day.

I will come along side you and together we will strategize on healing the whole family …

For today …

Consider that YOU didn't cause the addiction. YOU can't control it or cure it.

Focus on doing one thing to take care of yourself and communicate your feelings.

© Embrace Family Recovery, LLC. All rights in media reserved.
EmbraceFamilyRecovery.com

Reintegrate Your Family

Have you ever driven down the highway consumed with mental obsession about your addict and realized you've passed your exit? Have you sat at a family dinner where people are talking but you're not present because you're wondering whether you addict is using?

I refer to this constant mental anguish as **Monkey Chatter** — the family preoccupation with their addict.

When consumed with this there's little room for care of self or other family members. Through your own recovery you will be more present with each person you love.

How will your family mend relationships? Some family members go their own way to figure the situation out for themselves. But they wish they had a person who could help them navigate boundaries and remind them this is the disease. That is exactly what I do.

5 family healing strategies I use with clients …

1. **Name the problem —** addiction is a no-fault disease that impacts each family member.
2. **Educate everyone —** attend a family program together.
3. **Take a break —** set times where there is no discussion about the disease.
4. **Manage expectations —** recovery is an up and down process.
5. **Relax —** take time to do things that fulfill you.

Each person has a valid story and perspective about addiction. Because their perspective is unique, their healing will be too. Afford your family members the dignity of their recovery journey and recognize that it may look very different than yours.

Let
Others
Voluntarily
Evolve

© Embrace Family Recovery, LLC. All rights in media reserved.
EmbraceFamilyRecovery.com

The family disease of addiction is like no other chronic, progressive and potentially fatal disease. Every intuitive action for support feeds the disease rather than helping your loved one.

The concepts of recovery for family members are counter intuitive and challenging to implement.
I am here to simplify that for you.

Do you feel overwhelmed and alone in the mental gymnastics of Monkey Chatter? Ready to stop just holding your breath in the hopes that “they” get better?

Are you ready to prioritize yourself? Willing to trust that relationships can be enhanced, and healthier strategies will be developed.

It’s time to empower yourself by engaging in a co-creative relationship with me to problem solve the next step no matter where your addict is on their journey.

Let’s talk!

To get started, tell me a little more about yourself HERE.

I’ll soon be in touch with you to schedule your complimentary 45-minute Discovery Call where we will get to know each other. You can share your victories and struggles, and I’ll share how I help families with addiction.

I can’t wait to meet you!

Margaret Swift Thompson
Family Addiction Specialist

© Embrace Family Recovery, LLC. All rights in media reserved.
EmbraceFamilyRecovery.com

Meet Margaret Swift Thompson

I crawled into recovery in 1997, having run out of options and full of despair. My addicted partner had left me, I was consumed with hurt and anger I denied, while still obsessed with him. I needed others to show me how to focus on myself which, in all honesty, terrified me.

Not only do I have a history of long-term recovery, I enjoyed a rewarding counseling career, spanning decades where I was privileged to work with thousands of people impacted by addiction. I was mentored by incredible professionals in the field of addiction throughout my 20 + years at Hazelden Betty Ford.

And now, in my company **Embracing Family Recovery**, I help family members like you develop healthier strategies to cope and even thrive through addiction. You deserve a thinking partner to support you on this path. I am ready to become that partner for you.



Margaret's Education

Coach Training Certification - Coach Training Alliance (CTA)

Compassionate Bereavement Care Certified Provider – MISS Foundation

Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor – Minnesota Department of Health

Master of Science in Rehabilitation Counselling – Northeastern University

Bachelor of Science in Human Services – Northeastern University

© Embrace Family Recovery, LLC. All rights in media reserved.
EmbraceFamilyRecovery.com



When I am not coaching, I am spending time with my family, my husband and I enjoy cycling together. He loves a good comedy and I always pick the drama! Our daughters have been the greatest teachers of living in the moment and continue to give me opportunities to practice acceptance and detachment as they become adults. Living in Wisconsin I greatly miss my home island of Bermuda, especially in January! I love volunteering with our beautiful therapy dog, Mila.

© Embrace Family Recovery, LLC. All rights in media reserved.
EmbraceFamilyRecovery.com