

# INTERVENTION

## 7 Life-Saving Steps



by Dr. Earl Henslin

Psychotherapist, Marriage and Family Counselor

**Intervention: Seven Life-Saving Steps!**

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**“You have to wait until they hit bottom...”**

**“They have to want help before you can help them.”**

There are many bits of advice and attempts at encouragement that are given to the family members of the alcoholic/addict. Unfortunately, the risk is that the person may die in their disease unless an intervention occurs and they are willing to receive help. Waiting for the bottom to come or the request for help is a high risk to take with someone who has a progressive disease that impacts their spirit, mind, and body.

What is intervention? Intervention is a systematic process that is carefully planned with the important people in the alcoholic/addict's life where he is lovingly confronted and given the opportunity to seek help. If the alcoholic/addict refuses help, then carefully selected consequences that the intervention team is willing to follow through on will be given to the alcoholic/addict.

Many times an intervention is as much for the family and friends of the alcoholic/addict as it is for the person with the terminal illness of addiction. Family members and friends can find some inner peace in that they have truly worked to provide every opportunity within their power to give to the alcoholic/addict.

I have personally conducted over 100 interventions during my now over 30+ years of experience in the field of addictions. This special report is

designed to help people understand what steps are necessary to take to lovingly help the alcoholic/addict.

### **You are intervening now....has it been effective?**

Life is crazy when there is an alcoholic/addict in your midst. As the disease progresses, family members, friends, fellow employees, business owners, and managers begin to “help” which is another word for “enable”. All helping or enabling accomplishes is to help the alcoholic/addict continue in their addictive behavior. Spouses find themselves picking up more and more responsibility as the alcoholic becomes progressively more negligent or unreliable (calling in sick for the alcoholic/addict so that they keep their job, starting to take over bill paying because the bills get unopened or ignored, and explaining away alcoholic behavior to friends and family that they are only under stress.)

Arguing, pleading, crying, controlling, or threatening are many of the interventions that people try with the inward hope that the alcoholic/addict will feel the pain that they cause by their actions/inaction and change their ways.

Psychotherapists enable by telling the alcoholic/addict that if they would only deal with their abuse issues, they would choose not to drink. Psychiatrists believe the alcoholic/addict will achieve control in their drinking if they are on the right medication. Physicians enable the alcoholic/addict who only treat symptoms such as panic, stomach upset, liver problems, and many others, rather than taking the time to find out if their patient is addicted. Well-meaning clergy enable by encouraging their

parishioner to become more devoted in prayer or in their commitment to Christ.

Whether they know it or not, the family member, friend, employer, or health care professional that enables has just helped the alcoholic/addict to continue in their own disease. Take a moment, and list some of the efforts you have made to stop your loved one's addiction:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

### **Why Intervene?**

Addictions are progressive illnesses. There are several indicators of progression:

1. Tolerance. The alcoholic/addict will use or drink more to get the same effect.

2. Blackouts. Blackouts are not the same as passing out. The alcoholic/addict may make promises while drinking, and then the next day will not remember clearly what they had promised the day before.
3. Personality changes. Personality changes can range from one who quickly becomes angry to one who retreats into silence.
4. Spiritual bankruptcy. The person with the addiction begins to say and behave in ways that are inconsistent with their values and beliefs.
5. Physical problems. Addictions impact every major system of the body:
  - Cardiovascular system: blood circulation with heart and blood vessels
  - Digestive system: processing food with mouth, stomach and intestines
  - Endocrine system: communicating within the body using hormones
  - Immune system: defending against disease-causing agents
  - Integumentary system: skin, hair, and nails
  - Lymphatic system: structures involved in the transfer of lymph between tissues and the bloodstream
  - Muscular system: moving the body

- Nervous system: collecting, transferring, and processing information with brain and nerves
- Reproductive system: the sex organs
- Respiratory system: the organs used for breathing, the lungs
- Skeletal system: structural support and protection through bones
- Urinary system: the kidneys and associated structures involved in the production and excretion of urine<sup>1</sup>



Vernon Johnson, who pioneered the process of intervention, exclaimed in his book, “ I’ll Quit Tomorrow”,” The reasons alcoholics are unable to perceive what is happening to them is understandable... for many reasons they are progressively unable to keep track of their own behavior and begin to lose contact with their emotions...Alcoholics don’t know what is happening inside of them.”<sup>2</sup> Daniel Amen, M.D. through the technology of Single Photon Emission Computerized Tomography reveals the science behind Vernon Johnson’s observations of alcoholics and their brain function. Below you will see pictures of the normal brain as compared to the alcoholic brain<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human\\_anatomy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_anatomy)

<sup>2</sup> Johnson, Vernon, “ I’ll Quit Tomorrow: A Practical Guide to Alcoholism Treatment”, Harper Collins: New York, 1980.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.amenclinic.com/bp/atlas/ch2.php>

Normal Brain	Alcoholic Brain (17 years of weekend use)
	

Through SPECT brain imaging, we are able to see damage that has been done to the brain. The prefrontal cortex plays a significant role in attention, concentration, judgment, forethought, impulse control, connecting with feelings, and awareness of self and conscience. The progression of the disease of alcoholism means progressive changes in the brain. The longer a person waits to intervene for the alcoholic/addict, the chances of long-term survival lessen.

Sobriety is not only essential for recovery; but now we know that by looking at the brain, we know what medications, supplements, and nutritional changes are needed for ongoing sobriety. How can a person work

a strong recovery program if they have a toxic brain? That is why it is destructive to...

**“You have to wait to until they hit bottom...”**

**“They have to want help before you can help them.”**

To wait for the moment to happen without intervening is enabling. The longer a person is in their disease they are losing their capacity for choice and reason. The impact on the brain is so significant that ten years of alcoholism or drug addiction gives that person a **4 times greater chance of developing early Alzheimer’s or dementia.**<sup>4</sup> Understanding the brain, and looking at what an addiction is doing to the brain, makes it real that too wait for that magical bottom maybe waiting too long!

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<sup>4</sup> Shankle, William Rodman, M.S., M.D and Amen, Daniel, M.D., “ Preventing Alzheimer’s : Ways to prevent, diagnose, detect, treat, and even halt Alzheimer’s,” Penguin: New York, 2004.

## About the Author



**Learn more about  
Earl R. Henslin Psy.D.**

<http://DrHenslin.com>

Dr. Earl R. Henslin is a licensed marriage, family, and child therapist. His Brea, California practice through Henslin and Associates focuses on marriage, family, and child counseling, and he conducts training sessions and seminars for professionals such as pastors, physicians, and therapists who work in these areas. He holds the doctor of clinical psychology degree from Rosemead Graduate School of Biola University, where he is a part-time instructor. He is a member of the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists and the Christian Association of Psychological Studies. Dr. Henslin is one of the founders of Overcomers Outreach, a nonprofit ministry that assists local churches in establishing twelve-step support groups. Dr. Henslin networks closely with the Amen Clinic of Behavioral Medicine. He and his staff do assessments and evaluations for SPECT Brain Imaging Scans and follow-up care.

Henslin and Associates provides outpatient treatment and networks with different inpatient treatment facilities for the treatment of adults concerned with codependency, incest, alcoholism, drug addiction, eating disorders, sexual addiction, men's issues, and other issues of dysfunctional families. A nationally acclaimed speaker, Dr. Henslin conducts seminars on these issues for churches, Christian Organizations, counseling

centers, and businesses.

**For information concerning treatment programs or seminars, please contact:**

Earl R. Henslin, Psy.D., M.F.C.C.

745 S. Brea Blvd., Suite 23

Brea, California 92821

Phone: 714-256-2807

Web Site: <http://DrHenslin.com>

***Other Books by Dr. Earl R. Henslin:***

**Forgiven and Free: Learn How Bible Heros with Feet of Clay Are Models for Your Recovery**

**Man to Man: Helping Fathers Relate to Sons and Sons Relate to Fathers**

**The Cliff's Edge: 10 Principles to Restore Hope and Rebuild Family**

**Intervention: 7 Life Saving Steps**

**Inside A Cutter's Mind: Understanding and Helping Those Who Self-Injure  
(co-author: Jerusha Clark and Dr. Earl Henslin)**

*Secrets of Your Family Tree*

*(co-author: Dave Carder, Dr. Earl Henslin, Dr. John Townsend, Dr. Henry Cloud, Alice Brawand, M.A.)*