

Book Review - Taking Charge: How Families Can Climb Out of the Chaos of Addiction; By Stephen E. Schlesinger and Lawrence K. Horberg, New York, Simon and Schuster, Inc. 1988, 283 pages, \$9.95.

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Article:

Schlesinger and Horberg provide a clear and systematic process to help families cope with the pain, disruption, and trauma caused by addiction. The text is based, appropriately, on the premise that families can recover from the effects of an addict's drug use or drinking and from the family's chaotic entanglement with an addict. This message of promise for the families of the addicted is woven throughout the text.

The authors believe that for families to succeed in coping with addictions, and ultimately flourish, a five-step process for recovery should be considered. These steps are: an understanding that the family can flourish, the identification of immediate actions that can be taken to deal with problems, a willingness to assume credit for steps taken in the direction of your goal, a willingness to join with others for support when appropriate, and the ability to learn to take care of yourself. The authors believe that how families address and achieve these steps will vary at different points in the recovery process, and that the need for the family to embrace all five points is constant.

The authors believe that the route to coping with addiction for the family consists of three stages: exasperation, effort, and empowerment. Exasperation is typified by the feelings of chaos and hopelessness that characterize everyday life. Effort begins when family members begin to take specific actions that are more socially acceptable, without a clear notion of where these actions might lead. And, in empowerment, activities of family members have a clear sense of purpose both in order to cope with problems of addiction and to put meaning and purpose in family life.

The text is organized in four parts. Part I provides a concise introduction and strategies to help families work through a four-step process to define the problem. Part II addresses strategies to strengthen the family, which include strategies to improve both the physical and mental health of families, ideas to develop and maintain support for the family, and techniques for families to maintain values and live full lives. Part III deals with strategies to confront addiction. Finally, Part IV provides guidelines for the family to move forward. Information on how to get treatment and about self-help groups is included.

The text embraces a holistic approach to the problem of addiction. The authors do not blame the victim, but rather, provide an excellent series of guidelines, supportive examples, case studies, self-care activities, and coping strategies to help families progress through a systematic recovery process and to maintain recovery.