

What is an intervention? What is it's objective?

An intervention is a deliberate process by which change is introduced into peoples' thoughts, feelings and behaviors.

A formal intervention, like we are discussing here, usually involves several people preparing themselves, approaching a person involved in some self-destructive behavior, and talking to the person in a clear and respectful way about the behavior in question with the immediate objectives being for the person to listen and to accept help.

Although the intervention process has been formalized, the idea is not new. Thinking back, most of us can remember a time when someone or something - a teacher, friend, or set of circumstances impressed us in a seminal way which altered how we understood ourselves and changed our perspective. Moments like these constitute turning points where new vistas open allowing us to see things differently and to recognize opportunities we did not know existed before.

The overall objective of an intervention is to begin to relieve the suffering caused by a self-destructive behavior - the suffering of the person engaged in it and the suffering of family and friends.

How do you determine which intervention approach to use?

Of the several things that need to be considered, the first is always the issue of urgency and safety. If you are responding to a crisis, the intervention approach you choose will reflect that urgency. Immediately address the crisis and ensure everyone safety. Family education and future plans can come later.

However, if you are dealing with a chronic problem the classic, the family systems, or a blend of these approaches are available. Your decision on how to proceed will depend on several factors including what your family members are prepared to do, on their geographic dispersion and to a great extent on the orientation of the interventionist you find to help you.

Discuss with the interventionist the most realistic and practical approach to take given the thoughts, feelings and location of the family members.

Remember, an intervention is often a highly charged emotional experience and the family needs to be working with someone they trust. In theory all of the intervention orientations work. However, most interventionists have developed a personalized approach that leans to one form or the other. Look for someone whose approach makes sense to you. Choose someone you can trust and then let them help you.