

# DELUSION

Delusion: n. 1. Being misled; deceived; 2. A false belief, specifically one that persists psychotically

This is a very tough definition of a word that applies to many of us who are struggling with family members' active addictions, treatments, behaviors, and circumstances. It is even more insidious than "denial" because it literally substitutes fantasy for fact. At least with denial, we recognize the reality around us but choose to deny its application to our current circumstances. With delusion, we don't even see the reality, let alone attempt to constructively deal with it.

When is the line crossed from denial to delusion? This is a very difficult question to answer, but let's think about some scenarios and whether or not delusion has set in.

## SCENARIO I

Your family member has been to numerous rehabilitation facilities, has had implants, methadone treatments, and psychological help from numerous sources. Several days of clean time pass, but the signs of active addiction return, including the loss of valuables and money from your home. You request input from your support group, health care professionals, and others but ignore all of their suggestions. Despite the fact that it has never worked in the past, you exact harsh consequences, but you agree to allow the family member to live in your home rent-free, accept their apology, and decide that everything is "ok" now.

## SCENARIO II

Your family member's addiction to heroin is well established. In providing rehabilitation for him/her, you have exhausted your insurance, savings and other assets, all to no avail. You discover a methadone treatment program that will have an opening in two weeks. Your addicted family member convinces you to purchase his daily fix for two weeks until he can get "treatment." You agree to a daily trip to the drug dealer, pay the price, and convince yourself that everything will be fine once the "treatments" start.

## SCENARIO III

Your family member's addiction has been ongoing for more than a few years. Your whole life has been centered on "helping" your addict find a path to recovery, at the expense of your health, happiness and a life of your own. You have reached a point where it is obvious that your life will be destroyed unless the addict is forced to "make it on his own" and you have made the decision to evict him from your home. Even though he is making no effort to change either his or your circumstances, he begs you to reconsider. You agree to allow him to continue living in your home because he promised that things will be different from now on.

#### SCENARIO IV

Your recovering addict has found a job. Within days, he “calls off” choosing to sleep all day rather than going to work. The calling off habit becomes frequent, and within a few weeks he loses the job. He blames it on the boss who “just didn’t like me.” In this process, the commitments he had made to pay for car insurance, cell phone bill, food, clothing, maybe even rent, can’t be kept. Further, he procrastinates looking for a new job, choosing instead to lie on the sofa and watch your television all day. Since he is apparently not using drugs, you accept this set of circumstances believing that everything will eventually work out ok.

#### SCENARIO V

You receive a call from a close friend who reluctantly informs you that “rumors are” that your addicted family member is again actively using after a lengthy period of clean time. Not only do you not appreciate the “heads up,” but you become angry at your friend and say things that ruin a long-time friendship. You dismiss the call from your mind, make no attempt to confirm the story and do not confront your addicted family member.

**Denial** can be a useful coping tool from time to time; however, **delusion**, the escalation of denial, can never be useful. It can only aggravate an already bad situation and will, in the end, be very destructive to everyone involved in it. We must constantly remind ourselves that we cannot live our family member’s life; that we can only provide support, direction and love....even if it’s **tough** love. Recovery is, at the bottom line, an option that can **only** be chosen by the addict.