

Careletter

Preparing for the HIOP: Wisdom & Encouragement for Wives

Verse of the Week

I will never forget this awful time, as I grieve over my loss. Yet I still dare to hope when I remember this: The faithful love of the LORD never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning.

Lamentations 3:20-23 NLT

Because we know that investing in a 12-week treatment program is a great sacrifice for families emotionally, we want to offer some suggestions to make the transition go as smoothly as possible. Your husband's behavior has most likely created incredible pain and chaos for you that is very disorienting. To help you prepare for your husband's absence, we've created a checklist for you to complete so that you can plan for potential stressors.

Care of Home, Lawn, Vehicles, & Tasks of Life

Many spouses under-estimate how stressful it will be to care for their home, lawn, and vehicles with reduced help from their husband while he is away. Also, getting kids to and from school, sporting events, and church is often a two-person job. Make sure the two of you talk about the tasks he normally does and decide who will do them while he is in treatment. While under normal conditions you might be able to take up the slack and do his jobs around the house, these are not normal conditions. You are hurting, angry, overwhelmed, and scared. It will be all you can do to take care of your normal responsibilities, much less add his.

- ❑ Gather the names and numbers of people or services you can call if something breaks or needs repairing should your husband be unable to address these issues while he is away.
- ❑ Arrange for lawn care service or ask a family friend or neighbor to take care of it for you while your husband is in treatment if he is unable to complete this task.

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- ❑ Make a list of the roles/jobs your husband normally does in your home or for the children and enlist the help of others to do those tasks so that you are not attempting to do his jobs and yours while he is in treatment.
- ❑ Ask for help from your church family with meals, childcare, and transportation logistics. Most churches have a pastoral care ministry that exists to help families in crisis.



Friends and Family

Another significant stressor wives encounter is navigating relationships with friends and family members. Knowing what to say or not to say, facing people when you feel confused and ashamed, worrying about your husband's reputation in the community, and trying to hold it together for the kids' sake all take a toll on your mental health. Before your husband leaves for treatment, make some decisions together so that some of these challenges can be managed.

- ❑ Decide together which family members you will tell and what you will tell them that feels safe for both of you. Consider which stress is greater-keeping secrets from family members or telling them what is going on. As much as possible, let your husband disclose to others what is happening and where he is going.
- ❑ Disclose more of the story to close friends and less of the story to others.
- ❑ Talk to your children (in age-appropriate ways) about what has happened and where dad is going. (We suggest these conversations happen face-to-face, with you and your husband sitting down with your children to talk with them. For young children you might say, "Dad made some hurtful choices and he's going to school/camp/training to learn how to be a better husband and dad." Teenagers and adult children can hear that dad is struggling with addiction and is going away to treatment. Take time to answer your children's questions and validate their feelings.)

Your Mental Health



Many wives experience betrayal trauma when they learn about their husband's addictive behaviors. It is very common for spouses to engage in safety seeking behaviors like searching through internet history, looking at credit card statements, reading through text messages, and searching his phone for evidence of lying or betrayal. Unfortunately, you cannot unsee what you see, so wives unwittingly often traumatize themselves more when they find evidence of betrayal and begin to struggle with intrusive images, nightmares, and panic attacks. Make your mental health a priority by doing the following things:

- ❑ Share the full story with 3-5 trusted friends who will be your support people while your husband is in treatment.
- ❑ Make an appointment with a licensed counselor or therapist who understands addiction and betrayal trauma.
- ❑ If possible, join a support group for spouses/family members of addicts. **(Celebrate Recovery, S-Anon, Al-Anon, etc.)**
- ❑ Limit your private detective work. (Most men in the program go through a therapeutic disclosure process with their wives to disclose the extent of their acting out behaviors. If you can limit your investigations now to prevent you from traumatizing yourself, the disclosure process will help you get the information you need to make an informed decision about your marriage.)

Once your husband arrives at the HIOP Program, you will receive a weekly careletter for wives and also be invited to participate in a weekly support group for the HIOP and IOP Program wives. Know that we are praying for your recovery and healing during this challenging time.

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