

Understanding the Concept of “Bottom Lines”

Intervention team members are encouraged to develop “bottom lines” that can create the critical leverage to help the person who is resistant choose to accept treatment. Bottom lines are:

- Your choice in response to your loved one’s choice to decline the opportunity for treatment. Even if they feel like threats, they are choices you make in response to his/her choice.
- Your choices are intended to both avoid further enabling AND to take care of yourself.
- Bottom lines should be strong enough to help motivate.
- Bottom lines MUST be things that you are certain that you are prepared and willing to act on if the person does not choose treatment.
- Different relationships warrant different kinds of bottom lines but are only to be carried out in the event that the person does not choose treatment and recovery.

Please note the inclusion of the word “recovery” in the previous statement. Remember:

- Treatment is not like a jail sentence with a clear start, clear end and option to resume “normal life” upon “release.”
- Treatment should be the beginning of a lifetime of recovery.
- The person you love/care about who is encouraged to accept help will not likely be able to see that right now, but that’s the treatment center counselor’s job to clarify.
- For now, you just need to know that your bottom lines are just as important AFTER treatment as during the intervention. The goal here is to make choices in the event that continued abstinence and recovery are not observable.

Below are some examples of bottom lines used by others in the past. Some are much more extreme than others. Please only consider those that you KNOW you’d be willing to implement. For family members and some friends, all bottom lines should be prefaced with the following words:

“I will never stop loving you, and because I love you and myself (and if applicable, “our/your children”), I will choose the following if you are not actively abstaining and working a program of recovery:

Examples of Bottom Lines for Adults

- If I believe that you have been drinking/using, I will share my observations and promptly insist that you leave my home and not return for 24 hours or until you are clean & sober, whichever comes LAST.
- I will no longer allow you to live in our home. I will arrange for your belongings to be stored/delivered, but effective immediately, you are not allowed inside. I have arranged for the locks to be changed immediately. That means you will either need to find somewhere else to stay tonight or plan to stay at the shelter.
- I will no longer allow you to live in our home. I will provide you a Microtel room for up to x-days to give you time to find another place to live.
- I will no longer choose to live with you. I have reservations at a hotel for the next few days and will find another place to live as soon as possible. I will not live in the same home with you until you are actively working a recovery program.
- I will file for “divorce from room & board,” a legal option that is not the same as dissolving the marriage, but allows me to have you legally required to leave our home on the grounds of your substance abuse.
- I will file for legal separation.
- I will file for legal separation. This does not mean that I will file for divorce, because it is my hope that you will one day choose to accept help and experience a full life in recovery. Since I do still love you, I would want very much for us to be a part of each other’s lives if you are actively recovering. I will remain hopeful even if I now accept that we must separate until that time.
- I will pursue full custody of our children in a court of law.
- I will support your spouse in seeking full custody of your children because I fear for their physical and/or emotional safety.
- I will not allow you to be alone with our children.
- I will not allow you to drive our children.
- I will not allow our children to stay overnight with you.
- Effective with the next set of payments, I will no longer pay for your personal expenses (ie. cell phone, utilities, car payment, car insurance, rent, groceries, etc.).
- I will no longer buy your groceries, but if you are hungry, I will agree to join you for breakfast and pay for a good hot meal at least twice a week if you make the request at least 24 hours in advance.
- I will no longer pay your expenses, but if you are hungry, you are always welcome in our home for dinner. You will need to call first and should not plan to stay overnight, but there will always be a seat for you at our table.
- Since you are a licensed professional (in law, medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, nursing, veterinary medicine, counseling/social work, finance, etc), I will notify the licensing board that I believe that you have a serious alcohol/drug problem. If you lose your license to practice, it will be because the board concluded that you are not fit to practice, not because I informed them.
- I will inform your employer that I believe that you have a serious alcohol/drug problem and that they should take precautions to protect the business, customers, other employees and you. (Depending on the nature of the job) I recognize that this could result in your termination, but I cannot take a chance that you or someone else could get hurt because of your addiction.
- As your employer, I will suspend you with/without pay for up to 90 days. In the event that you are medically diagnosed with a disease (such as alcoholism), I will agree to hold your job until you complete treatment and return to work. If you do not get a medical diagnosis and recommendations for treatment, I will terminate you from employment at my discretion. (protects against ADA violations but acknowledges “right to work” laws in NC)

- As your employer, if I have any reason to believe that you are intoxicated, under the influence of alcohol/drugs, selling drugs at work or unable to perform your responsibilities at work because you are hung over, you will be immediately terminated.
- As your employer, if I have reason to believe that you have illegal drugs on the premises of my business or while on duty, I will contact the police immediately.
- If you have a responsibility that you do not meet outside our home, I will not meet those responsibilities when you are unable to do so, even if I do not know for sure that your reasons are alcohol/drug related. If asked, I will share my suspicions that alcohol/drugs could be to blame.
- If you fail to meet your responsibilities inside our home, I will not do those for you if I believe that you have been drinking/using.
- I will no longer lie for you. If you don't show up for events or show up and behave in ways that suggest that you have been drinking, I will not cover for you anymore. I will tell people that you have the disease of alcoholism (or that you've had too much to drink).
- I will no longer invite you to family gatherings at my home.
- I will not include you in the planning for or participation in the key events in my life, including weddings, baptisms, birthdays, Christmas and other similar gatherings in which I cannot be confident of your sober/drug-free participation.
- I will need to protect myself from being around you at all until you are actively working a program of recovery. That means that I will choose to not attend events you are attending, will leave events if you show up, and will choose to avoid any situation in which you might be present.
- If we are invited to gatherings by others and I can tell that you've been drinking, I will leave.
- If I think you have been drinking, I will not ride in a car/truck with you.
- If you choose to drive after drinking, I will call the police and inform them.
- If you are arrested, I will not bail you out of jail. I will visit you but I will not get you out.
- If you steal from me, assault me or break other laws that affect me directly, I will file a police report and consider pressing charges).
- If you steal from me, assault me or break other laws that affect me directly, I will file criminal charges.
- If you sell drugs out of our home, I will notify the police.
- If you are in possession of a firearm and under the influence of alcohol or drugs, I will leave (and take our children) for at least 24 hours.