



## Summary of “Driving Lessons”

Each chapter of *Parenting Through Your Adult Child’s Addiction* ends with “driving lessons.” These are key points we hope you’ll “take away” from each chapter, and we’ve summarized them here so you’ll have a “cheat sheet” for the future.

As a reminder:



“**Driving Lessons for an Adult Child with Addiction**” are offered to give you—the parent—language to convey key information to your son or daughter. Your adult child may not entirely grasp or agree, but at least you’ll have some brief statements to use as words of encouragement. Remember, brief statements work better than long lectures or extensive pleading. Make your point and encourage them to consider it, then let it go and see what happens.



“**Driving Lessons for Parents**” are offered to help you grasp the most important information from that chapter. If you remember nothing else, we hope you’ll hold onto those key points.

### Chapter One – How Did We Get Here?



**Driving Lesson for an Adult Child with Addiction:** Establishing recovery is easier when there is less wreckage and less progression of the disease.



**Driving Lesson for Parents:** Even if your son or daughter isn’t “action ready,” that doesn’t mean that there is nothing you can do. Conventional wisdom has told you to “wait until they hit bottom and go to Al-Anon.” New wisdom acknowledges that there can be many opportunities (or many “bottoms”) that can create willingness to accept help. In anticipation of willingness, there are many things you can do because you are action-ready.

### Chapter Two – Getting Help and Following Initial Recommendations



**Driving Lesson for an Adult Child with Addiction:** Alcohol and drug use starts off as fun but it begins to make changes in how your brain works over time. It doesn’t make you a bad person that bad things happened because of your using. But it does mean that you need professional help to get well.



**Driving Lesson for Parents:** Begin the treatment and recovery journey with the knowledge that 3 days of detox or 28 days of treatment will not “fix” this disease. It’s best to approach it like the beginning of a college experience. It’s a big investment that can yield great opportunities for your

child, but those opportunities will not be realized in a few days, weeks or even months. Plan for aftercare from Day One.

### Chapter Three – Residential Treatment is Like the Classroom Part of Driver’s Education



**Driving Lesson for an Adult Child with Addiction:** Treatment isn’t prison, even if some programs have lots of rules. The rules are there to keep you focused (which is hard for you to do these days) and to help you get as much as you can out of the experience. It may feel like a long time to be away, but in the grand scheme of your life, it is a very short time.



**Driving Lesson for Parents:** The time in treatment and sober living is an important respite opportunity for you. There are many people attending to your child to make sure he or she is safe, but that won’t last forever. This is a crucial opportunity to sleep without fear of “the phone call,” reconnect with the rest of your family and friends, and attend to things you postponed because you were hyper-focused. The time will be over before you know it.

### Chapter Four – Learning in the Classroom and Preparing for the Road



**Driving Lesson for an Adult Child with Addiction:** Consider a place that you might like to live that is away from home but in a location where you might genuinely want to build a life. Choosing such a place for aftercare can make it much easier to avoid outreach efforts from drug dealers or old using friends, feel less triggered by your parents, and more likely to cultivate true relationships with others in recovery. Find where you’d like to bloom and plant yourself there!



**Driving Lesson for Parents:** You can choose the best possible treatment resource but without a commitment to aftercare you could be throwing your money away. Remember, aftercare is the “behind the wheel practice with a professional instructor” to ensure that the lessons learned in the safety of the classroom are applied safely and consistently. Ideally that place is somewhat removed from your hometown, but remember that you can visit them in their new community with the appreciation that there is recovery support for them there.

### Chapter Five – Profiles to Illustrate



**Driving Lesson for an Adult Child with Addiction:** It really is true that not all people with this disease are the same. It is important that your treatment program take your needs and preferences into consideration. That means communicating what those are though so you have the best experience possible.



**Driving Lesson for Parents:** Fight the temptation to let your insurance company make this decision for you. Even if you need to use in-network benefits, carefully choosing a treatment program that is a good fit for your child is one part of this process over which you do have control. Get help from an independent addiction specialist who has no affiliation with a program for the most objective support.

### Chapter Six – Parent Profiles



**Driving Lesson for an Adult Child with Addiction:** There are books to help parents know how to parent through different stages of infancy, childhood, adolescence and even young adulthood. But there is no manual for parenting through addiction. Parents do the best they can and are strongly motivated by the desire to love you, teach you, and protect you.



**Driving Lesson for Parents:** Good parenting doesn't prevent addiction, any more than bad parenting causes it. Be kind with yourself and recognize that this is just not a part of parenting you anticipated. You can learn to navigate through addiction and recovery as a family with the help of professionals, your tribes and eventually from your own child.

## Chapter Seven – Support for Families



**Driving Lesson for an Adult Child with Addiction:** Your parents love you more than anyone, but they do need help from others to help you learn how to recover. Their insistence for you to get professional help is not to suggest that you are the only one who needs help. Treatment programs and recovery are for the whole family.



**Driving Lesson for Parents:** Fight the temptation to conclude that your son or daughter is the only person affected by addiction. You have developed your own symptoms of all-or-nothing thinking, avoidance of conflict or discomfort, disregard for your own needs, and neglect of your other relationships. Make a commitment to yourself and to your child that you will keep learning, stay connected to a tribe of support, and begin to reflect on how you can recover through individual therapy, stepwork or family therapy.