

UPPER PHASE SETBACKS

By Mom Bell 7/28/05

When our client FINALLY makes 4th phase, we parents think we can heave a sigh of relief that the worst is over. For many of us, that unfortunately won't be true. We will come to at least one screeching halt in the upper phases.

The toughest part is that an Upper phase setback comes at a time when we most want to be harvesting the benefits of our hard work. Also it comes at a time when we've had our client home with us, seen the difference in him or her, and we're finally moving on with our lives.

Bam! Our client gets that upper phase setback. Unfortunately, if we pull our client at this point- as SO many parents do- we run the risk that we've taken the cake out of the oven when it is only half-baked.

The upper phase setback(s) offer our clients the time & the last opportunity while at GT to really delve into how their "issues" get in their way out in the "real world". Just working the program while they are under the roof of GT hasn't given them a chance to truly internalize the program and see how to apply it outside GT. It is a huge leap especially in 5th and 6th phases to learn how to "work their program" in the freedom and temptations of the outside world.

There are the pressures from "regular people", for example the other kids they meet at outside school who encourage them to flirt/date/have sex with the opposite sex, "just have one beer", skip an AA meeting & go hang out, etc., etc. The biggest shock is that the outside support systems that our clients have begun to set up in AA & NA circles often encourage them to believe that they can make it without GT or that if they've messed up, it's wrong to drag them back into GT- since GT robs the client of his/her free will "to bottom out and come to recovery by their own choice." Add to this, the pressure put on our client by ex-clients that were pulled or who turned 18 and left GT! Ex-clients and even some ex-GT parents, sometimes have more of a vested interest than anyone else in believing that kids can make it without GT; otherwise there would be little hope for them!

The road out of GT can often be equally treacherous, but in completely different ways, from the road that led us into GT. The roadblocks exist for us

parents too. The hardest one can be that our "much healthier" client tries to seduce us into "pulling them", saying that they've gotten everything they can out of GT. If we give in, we teach our client that it's OK not to finish things- thus we teach giving up, giving in, and taking the easy route. We've all come too far to teach that!

If we get tempted to "pull", the same tools that help keep our client from picking up a drink are there for us: don't isolate yourself, call another parent & share, come to Parent Rap and share, call a GT staff member and talk openly about your frustrations. ASK FOR HELP! It can be a BUMMER to be back not having your client coming home and taking clients more nights a week. (Take heart that although our client may have to work his or her way through the phases again, each phase is usually much shorter than it was the first time; also it is at staff discretion as to whether or not they will skip some of the phases.)

We are truly a family. We all need and love each other. I have never felt that more than the night that our 6th phase client ran and we came to Friday night meeting. The love we got that night- from staff, parents and the clients, was absolutely astonishing. As parents, staff, and clients wept with us, it healed our broken hearts. It gave us the strength to "move the mountains" necessary to get Olga back in the program within 24 hours. When she 7 Steps, it will be a hard won victory for us all. Joel, Olga, and I look forward to sharing that victory with all the wonderful people who have helped on the long, rewarding road of recovery and self-discovery.