

What is the Johnson Model?



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What is the Johnson Model (Surprise Approach)? Dr. Vernon Johnson saw the value in family and loved ones participating in an intervention. During the 1970s, this was something new and very unconventional compared to other Intervention methods. Instead of family members "ganging up" on the addict and blaming them for hurtful feelings as well as memories, Dr. Johnson encouraged caring as the priority. He asked the family members to confront the addict with letters that focused on how much they care for the addict. He had the family members write letters to the addict giving them a list of consequences if sobriety or rehab was not sought out. The main purpose behind the Johnson Method is to confront the addict by motivating and encouraging them to change their lifestyle for the good of not only themselves but for the good of the family around them. Dr. Johnson wanted the addict to be confronted, but in a way that their defenses would low. He recognized that the addict's defenses are already raised when they are confronted surprisingly. To continue to throw blame and insult would only cause the addict to break down and ultimately stop listening. The idea of sobriety is no longer an option because their defenses are so high that nothing will convince them to change their mind. -Vernon Johnson, I'll Quit Tomorrow, 1973.