

HEART TO HEART

The Honorable Approach to
Motivational Intervention

by Ed Storti

This book is being republished in 2001 based on public and professional demand. The original edition of this book appeared in 1995.

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Foreward

Readers of this book probably fall into one of two categories. You may be a professional looking for a better way to intervene on your clients. For you, a traditional intervention -- telling the family members and friends they cannot associate with the patient unless he or she accepts help -- is a leap many of your clients and even yourself often cannot make.

Or you may be reading this book because a loved one is at risk -- they cannot seem to stop their addictive use and are blind to the destruction they are causing themselves and their loved ones. You worry they could hurt themselves -- they might even die. Maybe you think you've tried everything, with no results.

If you're in this group, you probably have wept and prayed, and prayed and wept some more. I fell into category number two with a loved one of mine.

The intervention we conducted was one of the most anticipated moments of my life. We knew little of the intricacies of the process. We had no professional guidance -- in fact, we didn't know that professional help was available.

Still, the intervention was a special moment. It was as if we were going behind enemy lines to rescue our loved one. Our only weapon was love.

They say that courage isn't the absence of fear but the ability to act in the face of fear. That day we had courage because we were afraid and our family came together in a magnificent manner we had never experienced.

I met Ed Storti two years ago. I was opening my own treatment facility and people told me this was a man I must meet. They talked of Ed almost reverently -- of his wisdom, his grace, and mostly of his integrity. They told me he was a loving, professional interventionist. I couldn't wait!

Ed came to speak to our staff about his model of motivational intervention which involves treating people with dignity and respect. He spoke of giving them the gift of life.

Ed told of a man that he was intervening on a few years ago. When the gentleman walked into the room and saw all the people, he realized it was an intervention. The man said, "Okay, enough. I'll go." It was Ed's response that was so magical. He said that it is rare indeed when everyone you care about gathers to tell you how much they love you. Ed said, "Please sit and savor the moment."

As you read this book know you are in my prayers. This book will guide you through the process. As wonderful as love was as our weapon, the knowledge contained herein would have been a welcome shield. Recovery is more than just a possibility -- people are recovering every day. An intervention from the heart is often that first step. May God bless you and keep you.

Richard Losee
Founder
Cirque Lodge

The following Statement of Purpose was sent to participants of a particular intervention in 1983 including myself. I share it here because its poignant sentiment is one that I've found applies to all interventions.

There's an old John Wayne movie in which he portrays an over-the-hill airplane pilot who has crashed in the wilds of Alaska. When his comrades of WWII hear about it, they pass the word, "Dooley's down." It is high drama—and very touching when each comrade responds to the call.

Well, our "Dooley" is down. Those who cannot be physically present at the intervention will be present in spirit, heart and soul. That's what's important. This is for "Dooley." May the warm spirit of brotherhood that has been omnipresent in this effort prevail through the intervention and the critical days ahead. You know, "Ol' Dooley" is just flat worth giving it our best shot.

You guessed it; John Wayne was rescued.

Ed Storti

Acknowledgments

When you write a book, it crosses your mind how many colleagues, family and friends you've relied on. So it is with me. I've encountered and been blessed with so many people throughout the years who've become important to me and who've helped me grow.

To my wife, Jo Ann, for her love, support and unconditional giving in our thirty-five years of marriage.

To my children, Karianne and Kristopher. I applaud you for following your dreams. You are both an inspiration to me each day.

To Raphael Sbarge for your friendship, loyalty and kindness over the years. Thank you.

To Paul Ward. Thanks for your dedication of hours and expertise in building my web site, helping with editing this book and continued support.

To the many dedicated and kind colleagues who have been there for me over the years. I thank you and wish you well.

And to you, the reader, I thank you for your trust and faith in me. I hope this book brings you insight, hope, awareness and relief.

*Dedicated to my brother-in-law,
Mr. John Car, who passed away in
September 1999.
I can still hear the bells toll.*

Introduction

I can think of nothing more painful than the tragic plight of a fellow human being, and nothing more gratifying than being a part of the solution for that person. In a nutshell, that's why I became an intervention specialist.

I started "intervening" over twenty-six years ago when I was working with probationary youth in the San Pedro area of Los Angeles. That was before I had any labels for my methods, or any official procedures. My first intervention case in the field of addictive disease presented itself when a weary father approached me in Palos Verdes, California and asked for help with his twenty-three-year-old, alcoholic daughter. The man was clearly at the end of his rope; it showed in his tired posture, his cracked voice, and most of all, in his sad, evasive eyes. He had come to me as a last resort, having exhausted every other method he'd heard about to help get his daughter on the road to recovery. He wasn't angry or disgusted with her. Quite the contrary—he was afraid to lose her, afraid it wouldn't be long before she died of the chronic, progressive disease of alcoholism.

Not having intervened on a situation like this before, I consulted my peers in the therapy field. "Don't do it," they said. "There's no use until the girl bottoms out and comes crawling to you." My colleagues also warned me against going to the

person's home, but when I spoke to the father again, I was too moved by his despair to say that I could not help. I offered to speak with his daughter, believing she was unable to decide she needed help.

"You'd do that for me?" her father asked incredulously. He had gotten used to being told his daughter would have to make the first move. "I'll give it a shot," I said. "I cannot guarantee any results, but I'll come and talk to her."

The next night, as I trembled on her doorstep and tried to swallow with a throat as dry as the Sahara, I wondered what I was doing there. I did not have a clue as to what to say. Who was I to buck a system of intervention and counseling I hadn't even tried yet? Was I crazy or arrogant or what? Then I looked at her father's face and melted inside. That's why I had come.

The door opened, I introduced myself, and I asked if I could speak to her for a few minutes. She let me in and talked to her as if we'd been friends for years—no accusations, no threats. I simply spoke from my heart, told her how much her father loved her, and presented hope to her in the form of finding a treatment center. She agreed and I was stunned and grateful. So this is what it's all about, I thought. One person helping another. No titles, no labels, no should's or shouldn'ts. Just plain, sincere talk.

In 1988, I became a published author with *Crisis Intervention*, a book about my intervention experiences over the past fifteen years. But even as I read the galley proofs for the manuscript, I felt a gnawing in my gut that something was missing. Even though the interventions had been successful and the true-life people stories were inspiring, I did not have the process and dynamics of an intervention clearly spelled out. I wasn't as crystallized in my thinking or in the procedure as I am today. I guess I've grown, and that's where this book comes in.

Heart to Heart: The Honorable Approach to Motivational Intervention is primarily a cookbook for those who desire a thorough understanding of the intervention process. The book describes intervention as a tool to help the lay public, paraprofessionals, and established professionals. It is a quick read, intended to acquaint the reader to my method of intervention. It's sort of a bird's-eye view of the Storti Intervention process.

I say, "Heart to Heart" because that's the bottom line. That's what makes my method work for me. Only you can describe how it might work for you. There are many methods of intervening; I call my method the "honorable approach," because it is designed as a gift for the guest of honor who is addicted to one kind of substance or another.

I was never instructed in the how-to of a chemical dependency intervention. Instead, my method has developed from the questions, responses, and needs of those to whom I've attended. What is an intervention? How does it work? What are the risks? Do I have to be prepared to get a divorce? These questions and many similar ones were put to me over and over again by patients and family audiences. Most of the answers are given in the initial assessment to determine if an intervention is the best course of action to take. This book has been prepared as a preliminary guide. That way, once a person investigates the possibility of an intervention with a specialist, the overall procedures, goals, and risks will already be identified.

For the sake of simplicity and meaning no bias, I have used the pronoun, "he," throughout the book. The reality is that men and women are equally vulnerable to a progressive, addictive lifestyle.

One of the strengths of an intervention is the gathering of loved ones to surround the dependent person. Each loved one tries to bring home to the chemical dependent the reality of his addiction and spur him to take action immediately by accepting

treatment. As humans, we are predisposed to listen selectively, one reason interventions are so successful. Each participant who speaks to the dependent may say the same thing (“We love you and want you to get help”), but each loved one does so in their own words, the key to reaching the addicted person. It’s somewhat like the good advice you got about life insurance. “Buy it now while you’re still young—it will grow bigger and faster, and the premiums will be cheaper.” But if you’re like most people, you put it off until you’re approaching forty. Then, you start to see the value in it and the wisdom of buying it early. By the time you’re sixty, the truth hits you right between the eyes. It finally sinks in—you just needed to hear it at different times and in different ways. That’s the way it is with the intervention process; you may find some of the information repeated at various points and in different ways throughout the book. I feel it’s necessary to get the message across and to give you a sense of the whole picture. So please trust the process.

As my good friend Gerry Mc once said, “You tell ‘em what you’re going to tell ‘em, and then you tell ‘em, and then you tell ‘em what you just told ‘em.”

I invite you to read this to get an overview of the intervention procedure, to see the risks and benefits of an intervention, and to consider how an intervention might be the most powerful gift you could give to someone you love.