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## Real Mom: Making Peace with Patterns

Real Mom  
MinnMoms Columnist

Even when faced with new situations, it amazes me how often we fall into familiar behavior patterns. Whenever change occurs, especially troubling changes, my pattern is to grab a black-and-white composition notebook and start jotting down dates, times, conversations, details and questions. It allows me to stay focused, not forget details and keep everything pertinent in one place at times when everything feels scattered.

This was my primary operating mode in the early years when our son was first showing signs of drug use. I could fill pages and pages within a matter of hours, days and weeks. Often it was predicated on a lie, such as telling us he was staying at a particular friend's house for the night or was working an evening shift when he wasn't.

## Patterns Change, New Ones Emerge

When I go back to these journals, it's interesting to note the patterns that emerged. It also seemed that once a pattern of phone calls and mileage reports became routine, it was just as likely to change to something entirely different. A whole new pattern would emerge, and we'd discover some new meaning or new aspect of what was going on in his life.



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Why the players or locations changed, I can only speculate. What I do know is there was always something to observe, something to track. And, I know that I have become quite attuned to the patterns, meaning my mom-intuition rarely fails.

## It Seems Like Another Shift

This pattern of observation and tracking continued, although less and less formally, until late January, when our son entered outpatient drug treatment. There's still plenty to observe and speculate upon, but the content is far less tangible than before and far more reliant on our son sharing things with us. That in and of itself is a whole new pattern with new meaning.

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Today, I put my finger on it: There has been a shift in our son's patterns, and I wish I could say it felt like a positive shift. But it feels like something is brewing, and I'm uncomfortable because the pattern doesn't feel right. It feels counter-therapeutic. It feels tedious. It feels like something is going to blow.

## Why is my Mom-intuition on Alert, Again?

On the surface, he's in a predictable - and to him, quite boring - routine. Three days a week he's at outpatient treatment. Two days a week, he's supposed to apply for jobs and take classes at the Work Force Center. Several evenings a week, he eats dinner with the family and watches TV at our house. On the weekends, he hangs out at our house or does something with his older sister, such as visiting his cousins or grandmother.

Though still following the routine, he is becoming less and less talkative, and if we try to engage him, he becomes more and more irritable. I think it's because he has too much time on his hands and either too much or not enough on his mind. He says he has nothing new to share with us but then bitterly alludes to thinking about or doing something he doesn't want to share with us. That he won't share it with us.

We know this pattern, but it's one we know has to shift in order for him to move forward. We also know that it's not up to us and that we can't make it happen. It's hard to watch and wonder what's going on, so my journals are getting lots of use these days, but the entries less data-driven and more ambiguous.

## Other Parents Know These Patterns

I reached out to my parenting-the-addict-child buddies the other day because they are a bit more experienced with the treatment and recovery routine. Many expressed familiarity with this sense of shifting and changing of patterns and the red flags that it raises - often because it underscores denial on the part of the addict.

Our son is going through the motions, but he's far from convinced that he wants to be sober, that he

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wants to change, that he wants to commit to recovery. His desire for privacy (not saying or sharing anything) seems more like not wanting to confront truth or work through it.

## Same Old, Same Old

When I asked him about his day, he said it was the same old, same old. And so it was. This pattern of him not having much to share continues, at least for now. I have faith that the next pattern will come, and because I can't imagine what it will be or whether it will be positive or negative, I'll embrace my own familiar pattern of making peace with today's pattern. It is a pattern I call wait and see ... and love.

 [Return to Top](#)

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