

Motivation for Change

John's Story—The Consequences of His Heavy Drinking and His Recovery

Cover Image

A man and a woman are looking to the side and smiling. The woman's hands are on the man's shoulder.

At the bottom of the page is the logo for the U.S Department of Health and Human Services and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

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Inside cover image

A photo of each of the characters is shown with their names.

Main characters include John Taylor, Mr. Williams, John's Mom and Dad, and Social Worker.

Other characters include Lucy and Matthew.

Motivation for Change (English Transcript)

A statement reads: “This publication contains graphic depictions of a traumatic event that may be unsuitable for children.”

Image 1

The image reads: “John was at a party drinking with his best friend, Matthew. Late at night, after hours of drinking, the two friends decide to head home and take their beers in the car.”

It is dark outside. John and Matthew are getting into a car drunk. They look careless.

Image 2

Top of the image reads: “On the way home, Matthew passes out at the wheel...”

Matthew is driving. John is sitting in the front seat. They are laughing and engaged in a conversation.

Image 3

Close up of Matthew, passed out at the wheel and John sleeping. The picture is blurry.

Image 4

The car is in fast motion. The lights are on. Matthew is losing control of the vehicle.

Image 5

The image reads: “Matthew’s car smashes into a tree and is badly damaged.”

The car has crashed into a tree. The front of the car is mangled and the windshield is shattered.

Image 6

The image reads: “John and Matthew are carried into an ambulance.”

The image shows the site of the car accident. Two medical persons are transporting John in a stretcher to an ambulance.

Image 7

The image reads: “Matthew dies in the accident.”

John is lying in the ambulance unconscious with casts on his left arm and neck. He has blood around his right eye. Next to him is Matthew dead, being covered with a sheet.

Image 8

The image reads: “John is hospitalized with bad cuts and bruises on his head. He’s about to be released from the hospital.”

John is in the hospital, lying in bed. His parents are standing next to him. John’s mother is touching his right arm.

Motivation for Change (English Transcript)

Dialogue:

John's Mom: John, the doctor said you can come home today, but first we have some very bad news: Matthew died in the accident.

John: Oh, no. That can't be true.

Image 9

John's mother sits on the edge of the bed and his father stands next to him. They look worried.

Dialogue:

John's Dad: The police said he was very drunk. Were you drunk too, John?

John: We only had a few beers at a party. Don't preach to me now, Dad. I'm feeling very bad. I don't want to talk about this.

Image 10

The image reads: "A social worker enters the room."

The social worker is entering the room. She is holding John's medical records. John's mother looks towards her.

Image 11

The social worker stands next to John's bed, talking to him and his father. John looks tired and pale.

Dialogue:

Social Worker: Hi, John. My name is Holly Smith, and I'm a social worker at this hospital. I'd like to talk to you.

John: Is it all right if my parents stay?

Social Worker: That's fine. John, when you came into the emergency room, you had a very high level of alcohol in your blood—much higher than the legal limit.

Image 12

A close up shows the social worker and John talking. John is listening to the social worker talk about his blood test and possible treatment.

Dialogue:

John: We only drank a few beers at a party.

Social Worker: Your blood test showed that you probably drank more than a few beers, so you may want to talk to a counselor about how much you drink.

Here is some information about treatment facilities in the area. They can help you evaluate your drinking habits.

Image 13

John's mother is standing next to the social worker trying to make John listen to her. He looks annoyed. John holds up the palm of his hand flat towards his mother, indicating that he disagrees with his mother and wants to cut her short.

Motivation for Change (English Transcript)

Dialogue:

John: I'm not an alcoholic if that's what you're saying! What happened was an accident! I know how to control my drinking. I don't need anybody's help.

John's Mom: John, look at what happened to Matthew because you guys drank so much! How can you say you don't need help?

Image 14

The image reads: "John returns home from the hospital and receives a call from his girlfriend, Lucy..."

The image shows the front of John's house.

Image 15

The image is split in half. On the left side is a close up of John. His forehead is wrapped in bandages. On the right side is an image of John's girlfriend, Lucy. They are talking on the phone. Lucy looks upset.

Dialogue:

John: Hey, my love! Why didn't you come to the hospital? I missed you. I've been hurt. Don't you care?

Lucy: John, I was waiting for you to come home to speak with you. This is it for me.

I told you that I'd give you another chance to quit drinking. Now, I'm through. It could have been me instead of Matthew

John: Lucy, it was an accident. I promise nothing more will happen.

Lucy: I'm sorry, John, but I don't trust you anymore. We're through.

Image 16

John is sitting in his bed with his phone in his left hand and his right hand supporting his head. He looks disturbed.

Image 17

The image reads: "That same night, John's mother finds him drinking in his room."

John is lying in bed with a blanket on top. He looks like he is hiding something underneath. His mother is standing by his bed trying to talk to him.

Dialogue:

John: Mom, get out! Leave me alone! I don't want to talk to anybody right now.

John's Mom: John, are you drinking? Son, we're worried about you. You need help for your drinking. Think about what's happened. You were almost killed in that car accident. Your best friend died, and Lucy left you!

Image 18

A close up shows John and his mother arguing. John is looking away. He is defiant.

Dialogue:

John: I don't need any help.

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John's Mom: I'm begging you, John. If you don't want to do it for yourself, then do it for us, your parents. We can't take this worry and suffering anymore!

Image 19

Close up of John. His right hand is supporting his head. He looks very worried.

Image 20

The image reads: "Days later, after wandering the streets and staring at the names of the referrals in the information he received from the social worker, John goes to the HELP Center, a substance abuse treatment facility."

John is standing by a door with the sign "Help Center." He has a brochure in his hand.

Image 21

John is opening the door to the counselor's office. He looks indecisive. Mr. Williams welcomes him with a smile and invites him to come in.

Dialogue:

John: Umm, I'm here to talk with Mr. Williams.

Mr. Williams: I'm Mr. Williams, a counselor here. Why don't you come in and close the door so we can talk in private?

Image 22

Mr. Williams and John are standing in the counselor's office. They are looking up towards a bookshelf with books and souvenirs.

Dialogue:

John: You have some nice decorations in here.

Image 23

The image shows a close up of Mr. Williams and John talking in front of the bookshelf displaying souvenirs of different shapes and sizes.

Dialogue:

Mr. Williams: They're souvenirs. I bought them while travelling. They bring back nice memories.

John: Yeah, I would like to travel some day, and go to college, but things don't seem headed that way...

Image 24

Mr. Williams' hands are on John's shoulder and arm. The counselor has a friendly smile on his face.

Dialogue:

Mr. Williams: So, tell me what's going on—why you came here today.

Motivation for Change (English Transcript)

John: My family, well, my mother and my... ex-girlfriend... think I have a problem with alcohol. A week ago my friend and I had a few drinks, and on the way home, we crashed the car. It was late. We were both really tired, and yes, we had been drinking at a party, but no more than usual.

It was an accident. I think Matthew fell asleep at the wheel for a second... Then, I heard the brakes screech, and the next thing I remember is being rushed off in an ambulance to the hospital...

Image 25

Mr. Williams and John sit in the office talking. Mr. Williams continues to listen to John's story.

Dialogue:

John: I have to say, I'm a little numb. I still can't believe all that has happened to me! Matthew is dead, my girlfriend left me, and my family thinks I'm an alcoholic!

Mr. Williams: I'm so sorry to hear you lost your friend—what a terrible ordeal for you.

Image 26

A close up of John rubbing his head and looking down.

Dialogue:

Mr. Williams: So what do you think about what's happened?

John: What really upsets me is the guilt I feel about what happened to Matthew... At the same time, I feel relieved because I wasn't the one who died. We had talked about who was going to drive us back... I could have been the one who caused the accident and the one to die.

Mr. Williams: Yes, you could have.

Image 27

John sits in a chair across from Mr. Williams while they are conversing.

Dialogue:

Mr. Williams: You mentioned your family thinks you're an alcoholic. Can you tell me why your parents are so concerned about your drinking?

John: My uncle died of liver problems from alcohol, so I guess they're worried about my health.

Image 28

A close up of Mr. Williams with a concerned look.

Dialogue:

Mr. Williams: John, it sounds like your parents are concerned about you. Do you think you have a drinking problem?

John: I don't think so. I'm sure I can stop whenever I want to.

Mr. Williams: You say you can stop drinking if you want to. I wonder, though, do you think the fact that you're here might mean that at least some small part of you might be worried about your drinking?

John: Well...maybe just a little.

Motivation for Change (English Transcript)

Image 29

Mr. Williams and John keep talking about John's drinking problem.

Dialogue:

Mr. Williams: Since you're here, would it be OK with you if we talked about that a little... about what might worry you?

John: Yeah, I guess.

Mr. Williams: So, if you had to come up with something about your drinking that is less than great, what might that be?

John: Well, I know I feel bad—even guilty—the next day. Sometimes I don't remember what I did, and that scares me a little.

Image 30

John is touching his head. He looks confused.

Dialogue:

Mr. Williams: Not remembering?

John: Yeah, that was weird.

Mr. Williams: Anything else?

John: Well, like I said before, my girlfriend broke up with me after the accident. She said she didn't trust me anymore. She complained about my drinking before, but I never thought she'd leave me. We'd been together 2 years!

Image 31

Mr. Williams keeps asking John questions about his drinking and its consequences.

Dialogue:

Mr. Williams: It really surprised you that she broke up with you...that she was that upset about your drinking, didn't it?

John: Yeah, it did.

Mr. Williams: So, it sounds like you do have some concerns.

John: I guess so.

Image 32

John is looking down.

Dialogue:

Mr. Williams: Can I ask you some questions about your drinking? It might help both of us to better understand what is going on.

John: Sure, I guess.

Motivation for Change (English Transcript)

Image 33

The image reads: “Mr. Williams asks John questions to determine the quantity and frequency of John’s alcohol use. Mr. Williams will use this information to give objective feedback about his alcohol use. During any follow-up sessions that John agrees to attend, Mr. Williams will use more formal questionnaires and screening tools to better evaluate John and to determine, with his input, the best treatment.”

Mr. Williams is taking notes while listening and evaluating the seriousness of John’s drinking problem.

Image 34

Mr. Williams prepares to announce his medical conclusion.

Dialogue:

Mr. Williams: Well, John, you mentioned that you normally have seven or more drinks at one time—every Saturday and Sunday—and sometimes during the week. I can tell you that is well above the level of social drinking. Also, you mentioned earlier that there have been times when you couldn’t remember what happened when you were drinking. That’s called a “blackout.” Blackouts only happen with very heavy drinking. Most people who drink never experience blackouts. Then, you said that drinking is causing you serious problems with your family and with the young woman you were dating. Finally, there’s the car accident and the death of your friend.

Image 35

John is listening carefully. He understands the seriousness of his drinking problem.

Dialogue:

John: When you put it that way, it sounds pretty serious.

Image 36

A close up of Mr. Williams trying to convince John to come back to the office.

Dialogue:

Mr. Williams: Well, John, I also get the impression that this is very serious. I’d really like to talk to you more. Would you be willing to come here again?

Image 37

The image reads: “John and Mr. Williams stand up and walk toward the door.”

Mr. Williams has his hand on John’s shoulder. He has a friendly facial expression.

Dialogue:

John: I might as well. Maybe I do have some things to think about.

Image 38

John and Mr. Williams are shaking their hands. They are both smiling warmly.

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Dialogue:

Mr. Williams: Great! I'm really glad you came in today. It took a lot of guts. I look forward to seeing you next week.

Image 39

The image reads: "A few weeks later..."

Mr. Williams is knocking on the door of John's house.

"Mr. Williams knows that the support of John's parents is crucial. After some weeks of counseling John, Mr. Williams visits Mr. and Mrs. Taylor."

Image 40

Mr. Williams has entered John's house. He is shaking hands with John's father. John's mother is standing next to John's father. John is coming from a different room.

Dialogue:

Mr. Williams: Thank you for allowing me to visit your home, Mr. and Mrs. Taylor. It is an honor to be here. I believe John told you that I wanted to meet with you. Is that right?

John's Dad: Yes, he told us. Thank you for coming, Mr. Williams. John seems to be making an effort to change, which is good. I want you to know that we appreciate your help.

John's Mom: Mr. Williams, thank you. What can we do to help?

Image 41

Mr. Williams and John's family are sitting around the coffee table in the living room. John's mother is offering coffee to the guest. John has his legs crossed sitting on a piano bench. Everybody looks relaxed.

Dialogue:

Mr. Williams: Well, I'm glad to see that you are open to getting information that will help John and, ultimately, your family. Remember, though, John is the one who has to make the biggest effort.

John's Dad: It hasn't been easy lately. We have had a very hard time with John. Now, he seems to be trying to help himself. He is thinking about taking college classes at night, and he has been playing sports most weekends. We only want the best for our son.

Mr. Williams: Well, Mr. Taylor, these situations are never easy. But I see proud and loving parents, and you both seem willing to help your son. This will take a lot of hard work, but John has managed to take the first step. John, do you want to say anything?

Image 42

A close up image shows John and his father talking to each other. They look understanding.

Dialogue:

John: Well, I'm beginning to see the negative effects of alcohol on my life. Drinking has affected my behavior at home, with my friends... everywhere. Mr. Williams explained that drinking so much affects the way I make decisions. It changes my personality, and it really messes up my relationship with my

Motivation for Change (English Transcript)

family. I also learned that using alcohol can be addictive and that addiction is a disease. Even though a lot has happened, I know that, if I change, I can have a better future.

John's Dad: We worry so much about you! We're always thinking that you'll get arrested or be killed in a car accident. We don't want you to end up like Matthew.

John: I know, Dad. It's just that sometimes I get carried away, especially when everybody else is drinking and having a good time. Now I know that I can't handle it as well as I thought I could. I'm sorry for the trouble I caused.

Image 43

Mr. Williams has his glasses in his right hand. He talks to John's father.

Dialogue:

Mr. Williams: It's hard enough growing up these days, but he is beginning to understand there are other ways to cope with problems that don't involve drinking. Many parents decide to quit drinking to serve as role models for their children. Does anyone in the family drink?

John's Dad: My brother died from liver problems related to drinking. Me, I have a beer once in a while, but only on special occasions. I'm willing to give that up if it will help John.

Image 44

John's father and mother are sitting on a couch and each is holding a cup of coffee. Mr. Williams is sitting in a chair facing them. John has his legs crossed at his ankles and his hands folded. He has a slight smile on his face.

Dialogue:

John's Dad: John, we want the best for you. We want you to be happy and successful, and alcohol won't help. I think you're beginning to see that.

Image 45

Mr. Williams looks content as he speaks to John.

Dialogue:

Mr. Williams: It's common for young people to imitate the family leader. Continue to be a positive role model for your son. John really needs your support. Changing any behavior is a long process that takes time. People often start off thinking they don't need to change at all, so they stay in a cycle of trouble and pain. Then they reach a stage where they begin to think they may need to change their behavior, because it's causing them lots of problems. After that happens, they move into a stage of figuring out how to start making changes in their lives. John, where do you see yourself in this process?

Image 46

A close up shows John responding to Mr. Williams. Mr. Williams is smiling broadly.

Dialogue:

John: I'm still not really sure, but I think I'm ready to take a look at making changes in my life. I don't want to get into any more trouble. I want to change for my family, and I also want to change for myself. I learned a hard lesson when Matthew died, and I don't want anyone else to get hurt.

Motivation for Change (English Transcript)

Mr. Williams: Sounds like you're ready to begin making some changes. I'll work with you every step of the way. It takes a lot of courage to take charge of your life.

Image 47

The image reads: "John continues to go for counseling over the next several months."

John joins his father and mother on the couch and is now sitting next to his mother. She is holding his hand as they continue their conversation with Mr. Williams.

Image 48

The image reads: "Two Years Later..."

"John graduates! He has a job, and he and his family are much happier. His girlfriend is back and supporting him every step of the way!"

John is wearing a graduation cap and gown with a big smile on his face. Lucy is next to him smiling and touching his cap. His parents are standing next to him proudly. Everybody looks happy.

Resources

The U.S. Government's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has an online "treatment finder" for drugs and alcohol programs nearby (see link below). Type your town or zip code into the space on the screen to find alcohol and drug abuse treatment facilities and programs around the country.

<http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/TreatmentLocator/faces/quickSearch.jspx>

For mental health facility locations see:

<http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/MHTreatmentLocator/faces/quickSearch.jspx>

You can also call the toll-free national referral helpline at 1-800-662-4357 to learn about local treatment centers for substance abuse and mental health issues.

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Other Resources

Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc.

To find a meeting, call 1-888-4AL-ANON (1-888-425-2666)

Monday thru Friday, 8 a.m.- 6 p.m. ET

Find an e-meeting: <http://www.al-anon.alateen.org/electronic-meetings>

Alcoholics Anonymous

<http://www.aa.org>

<http://www.al-anon.alateen.org/>

Narcotics Anonymous

<http://www.na.org>

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Marijuana Anonymous

<https://www.marijuana-anonymous.org/>

Nar-Anon Family Groups

<http://www.nar-anon.org/naranon/>

Logo of the U.S Department of Health and Human Services and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

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