The Twenty-One

Lessons from one father's experience loving an adult child through addiction and recovery.

	THE LESSON	WHAT I DO NOW
1	You didn't cause it. You can't control it. You can't cure it.	I remember the Three C's.
2	Meet them before you meet the addiction.	I remember my son before his addiction.
3	Love and rescue are not the same thing.	I ask: Should I help? Then I decide.
4	You cannot spend someone into recovery.	Before I pay, I ask: What am I actually paying for, and why?
5	A safe place is not the same as recovery.	I accept that it's his life to live, and his consequences are his to face.
6	Fear is not evidence.	I ask myself: What do I actually know, and what am I imagining?
7	Stop breaking every fall.	I ask myself: Do I really need to be involved?
8	Support recovery, not addiction.	I pause and ask: Will this actually help his recovery?
9	A boundary is something you do.	I remember why I set the boundary, and I uphold it.
10	Pain is not a plan.	I pause, take a deep breath, and think before deciding.
11	You can change without waiting for them to change.	I ask: What would I be doing today if I knew my son was going to be okay?
12	Remember the people who are still there.	I make time for the others in my life.
13	People can love the same person differently.	I respect that others cope differently.
14	Privacy does not mean isolation.	I tell someone I trust how I'm really doing.
15	Learn from the past. Don't make them live there.	I don't use the past against him.
16	Conditions change. Value does not.	I let him know that my love will never change. Ever.
17	Trust and love are not the same thing.	I ask myself: Has he earned this trust back?
18	Hope does not require a contract.	I bank every good day for what it is.
19	Leave something for your own life.	I keep one thing that's mine and don't give it up.
20	Their journey is theirs. Yours is yours.	I respect that his choices are his to make.
21	Stay with the Moment. Let tomorrow arrive.	I say to myself: Stay with the Moment. Let tomorrow arrive.

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Scan for the story behind each lesson.