

Helping a Loved One Manage an Addiction

Many people have a family member or loved one with a substance abuse or addiction issue. A 2017 survey found that nearly half of Americans has a friend or family member with a current or past addiction to drugs. In addition, an estimated one in five adults lived with an alcoholic relative while growing up.

When a family member or friend is abusing or addicted to drugs or alcohol, these steps may be helpful:

- ▶ **Be honest.** If you are worried about a friend or family member's alcohol or drug use, tell them that the behavior makes you uncomfortable. Be prepared for the person to react negatively or be defensive. Telling the person that their behavior is affecting your relationship is a necessary step in helping them move toward recovery.
- ▶ **Set boundaries.** It can be difficult to maintain a good relationship with a person who is abusing drugs or alcohol. Lying about substance use, being unreliable or not living up to commitments, or financial issues are common, and may affect family, friends, and colleagues. Avoid enabling the person's behavior or trying to fix their problems. Instead, encourage the loved one to seek treatment.
- ▶ **Become educated.** Learn about substance abuse and addiction, as well as its effects on both the user and his or her family and friends.



- ▶ **Respect the reactions of others.** Some friends or family members may want to help the person in any way possible, while others may advocate “tough love” or cutting the person off until they get sober. Understand that people are affected in different ways by the behavior of a person who is abusing or addicted to alcohol or drugs, and there is no right response. If children are involved, listen to their worries and concerns and answer questions as honestly as you can.
- ▶ **Seek support.** Having a loved one with a substance abuse or addiction issue is stressful, and could put your own health and emotional wellbeing at risk. It's not unusual to feel frustrated or disappointed by the loved one's behavior. Guilt, fear, and self-blame are common too. Talking to a counselor or joining a support group may help you cope with your own feelings and strengthen your ability to support your loved one during recovery.

LifeMatters can provide resources and support for addressing the impact of alcohol and drug abuse on you and your loved ones. Call 24/7/365.

Source: Life Advantages

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