



SUPPORTING SOMEONE YOU LOVE THROUGH ADDICTION

A Guide for Families and Loved Ones

INTRODUCTION

Watching someone you love struggle with addiction can be painful, confusing, and emotionally exhausting. Many family members experience a mix of fear, frustration, anger, and sadness as they try to understand what is happening and how to help.

Addiction can change the way people think and behave. Someone you care about may begin making choices that seem completely unlike them, damaging relationships, finances, and trust along the way. These changes can leave families feeling helpless and unsure of what to do next.

While you cannot control another person's addiction, your support can still play an important role. Learning about addiction, encouraging treatment, setting healthy boundaries, and taking care of your own wellbeing are all powerful ways to help.

This guide is designed to provide families with understanding, practical tools, and hope. Recovery is possible, and you do not have to navigate this journey alone.



**"THE OPPOSITE OF
ADDICTION IS NOT
SOBRIETY. THE
OPPOSITE OF
ADDICTION IS
CONNECTION."**

— JOHANN HARI

UNDERSTANDING ADDICTION AS A DISEASE



Addiction is not simply a matter of willpower or bad choices. Medical professionals recognize substance use disorder as a chronic disease that affects the brain and behavior. Drugs and alcohol change how the brain processes reward, stress, and decision making, making it extremely difficult for someone to stop using on their own.

These changes help explain why people may continue using substances even when it harms their health, relationships, or future. Recovery often requires medical care, counseling, and long-term support.

For families, recognizing addiction as a medical condition can shift the focus from blame to understanding. Instead of asking "Why won't they just stop?" it becomes more helpful to ask "What kind of support or treatment might help them recover?" This perspective can create space for compassion, healthier communication, and more effective support for your loved one.

THE IMPACT THAT ADDICTION HAS ON FAMILIES



Addiction does not only affect the person using substances. It often impacts the entire family. Loved ones may experience constant worry, stress, anger, or sadness as they watch someone they care about struggle. Trust can be damaged, relationships may become strained, and everyday life can begin to revolve around the addiction.

Family members often feel pressure to fix the situation or protect their loved one from consequences. This can lead to emotional exhaustion, financial strain, and feelings of helplessness.

Recognizing the impact addiction has on families is an important step toward healing. When families begin to seek support, learn about addiction, and focus on healthy boundaries, they can start to rebuild stability and hope for the future. Recovery is not only about the individual struggling with addiction. It is also about helping families heal and move forward together.

LETTING GO OF WHAT YOU CANNOT CONTROL



Loving someone who struggles with addiction can make you feel responsible for fixing the problem. Many family members spend a great deal of time trying to control their loved one's behavior, choices, or recovery. While this response comes from a place of care, it can also lead to frustration, stress, and emotional exhaustion.

One of the most important lessons is that you cannot control another person's addiction. You cannot force them to stop using or make them choose recovery. What you can control is how you respond, the boundaries you set, and how you take care of your own wellbeing.

Letting go of what you cannot control does not mean giving up on your loved one. It means recognizing that their recovery is ultimately their responsibility. By focusing on healthy boundaries and caring for yourself, you can offer support without losing your own stability and peace of mind.

AVOIDING BURNOUT AS A CAREGIVER



Supporting a loved one through addiction can take a heavy emotional toll. Many family members spend so much time worrying about the person they care about that they neglect their own needs. Over time, this constant stress can lead to burnout, leaving you feeling overwhelmed, exhausted, or hopeless.

Taking care of yourself is not selfish. It is an important part of being able to offer healthy and consistent support. Make time for your own wellbeing by maintaining routines, talking with trusted friends or support groups, and seeking professional guidance if needed.

Remember that you cannot pour from an empty cup. When you prioritize your own health and boundaries, you are better equipped to support your loved one while protecting your own stability and peace of mind. Caring for yourself also sets an important example of healthy behavior and balance.

BUILDING A SUPPORT NETWORK



Addiction and recovery can be difficult to navigate alone. Building a strong support network can help both individuals in recovery and their families feel less isolated and more supported. Having people you can talk to, learn from, and lean on during difficult times can make a meaningful difference.

A support network may include trusted friends, family members, healthcare providers, counselors, or support groups. Many families find encouragement and understanding by connecting with others who have experienced similar challenges. These connections can provide guidance, reassurance, and practical advice.

Recovery is often stronger when people are surrounded by support. By building a network of understanding and reliable resources, families and their loved ones can create a foundation that encourages healing, stability, and long term recovery.

HOW TO TALK TO A LOVED ONE ABOUT THEIR SUBSTANCE ABUSE



Talking to a loved one about their substance use can feel uncomfortable and emotional, but open and honest communication is often an important first step. Choose a time when they are calm and sober, and approach the conversation with care rather than anger or blame. Express your concern using supportive language such as “I’m worried about you”.

Try to focus on how their substance use is affecting their health, safety, and relationships. Listening is just as important as speaking. Your loved one may feel defensive, ashamed, or afraid, so giving them space to talk can help keep the conversation productive.

While one conversation may not immediately lead to change, expressing concern can plant an important seed. Let your loved one know that help is available and that you are willing to support them if they decide to seek treatment. Patience, compassion, and consistency often make these conversations more effective over time.

HOW FAMILIES CAN SUPPORT RECOVERY WITHOUT ENABLING



Supporting someone with addiction can be challenging. Families naturally want to help and protect their loved one, but sometimes these efforts can unintentionally make it easier for the addiction to continue. This is known as enabling and may include giving money, covering up harmful behavior, or repeatedly rescuing someone from the consequences of their actions.

Supporting recovery means showing care and encouragement while maintaining healthy boundaries. Families can help by encouraging treatment, recognizing positive progress, and refusing to participate in behaviors that support substance use. Allowing natural consequences while offering consistent support can create an environment that encourages change and long-term recovery. When families focus on their own wellbeing, seek support, and learn about addiction, they are better equipped to offer steady, compassionate support while protecting their own health and stability.

HELPING THEM TAKE THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS RECOVERY



Taking the first step toward recovery can feel overwhelming for someone struggling with addiction. Fear, denial, shame, or uncertainty about treatment can make it difficult for them to ask for help. Family members can play an important role by offering encouragement, patience, and support during this time.

You can help by talking openly about treatment options and reminding your loved one that recovery is possible. Offering to help research programs, schedule appointments, or attend their first visit can make the process feel less intimidating. Even small gestures of support can make a difference.

While you cannot force someone to change, your encouragement and willingness to support healthy choices may help them feel more confident about seeking help. Recovery often begins with a single step, and knowing they are not alone can make that step easier to take.

UNDERSTANDING TREATMENT OPTIONS



Because addiction affects both the brain and behavior, effective treatment often includes a combination of medical care, counseling, and long term support. The right approach can vary depending on the individual's needs, history of substance use, and overall health.

Some people benefit from outpatient treatment, which allows them to receive care while continuing their daily responsibilities. Others may need more structured programs such as residential treatment or intensive outpatient programs. In many cases, medications may also be used to help reduce cravings and withdrawal symptoms while supporting long term recovery.

Learning about these options can help families encourage their loved one to seek the type of care that best fits their situation. Treatment and recovery are not one size fits all, but with the right support and resources, many people are able to begin rebuilding their lives.

WHAT TO DO IN AN OVERDOSE EMERGENCY

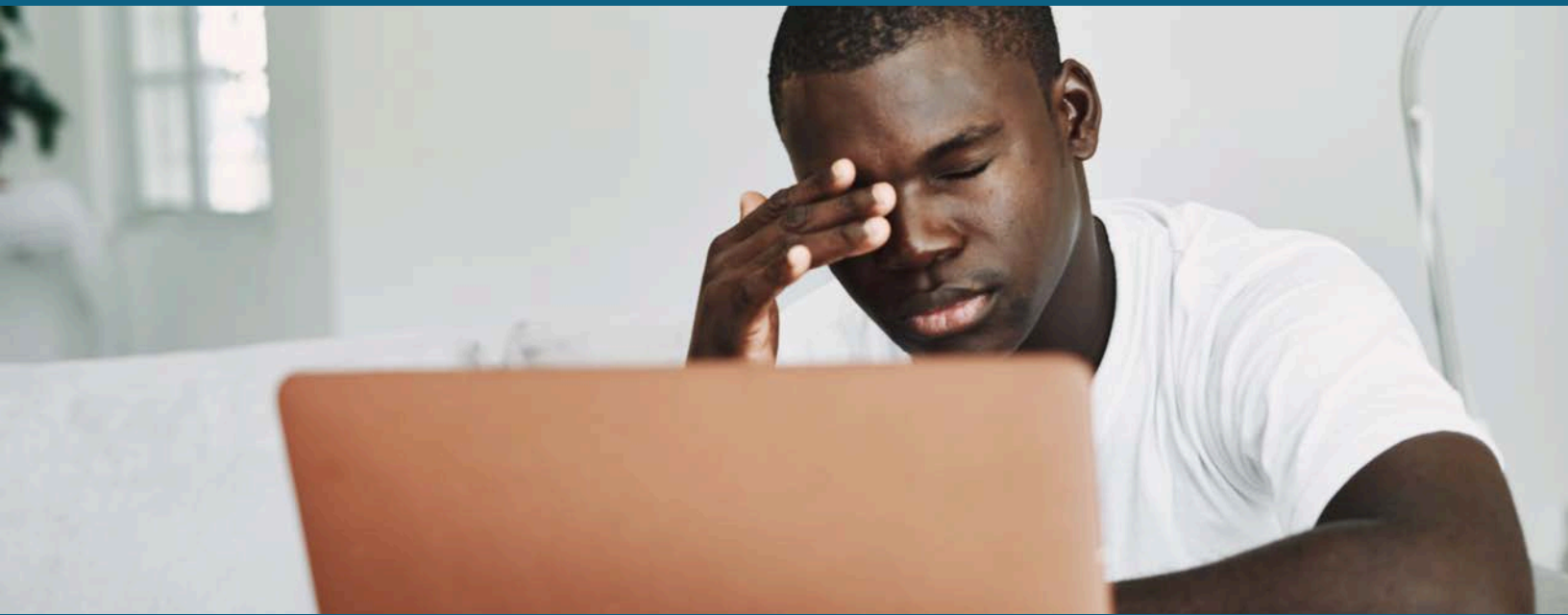


An overdose is a medical emergency and requires immediate action.. If you think someone is overdosing, call 911 immediately. Quick medical attention can save a life. Stay with the person and provide as much information as possible to emergency responders.

Signs of an opioid overdose may include slow or stopped breathing, blue lips or fingertips, unconsciousness, or an inability to wake the person. If you have naloxone (Narcan) available. Naloxone can temporarily restore breathing while waiting for emergency medical help to arrive.

Stay with the person until help arrives. If they are breathing but unconscious, place them on their side to help prevent choking. Knowing how to recognize and respond to an overdose can save a life. Families and caregivers are encouraged to learn about naloxone and keep it available if they have a loved one at risk of opioid overdose.

HOW TO RESPOND TO RELAPSE



Relapse can be discouraging for both the person in recovery and their loved ones. It is important to remember that relapse can happen during the recovery process and does not mean that treatment has failed. Many people experience setbacks before achieving long term recovery.

When a relapse occurs, try to respond with concern rather than anger or blame. Shaming or criticizing your loved one can increase feelings of guilt and make it harder for them to return to treatment. Instead, encourage them to reconnect with their support system, speak with a healthcare provider, or return to treatment if needed.

At the same time, it is important to maintain the healthy boundaries you have set. Supporting someone after a relapse means encouraging them to seek help while continuing to protect your own wellbeing. With the right support and treatment, many people are able to get back on track and continue their recovery journey.

RENEW HEALTH

Renew Health is dedicated to helping individuals and families affected by substance use disorders find hope, healing, and long term recovery. Our team provides compassionate, evidence based care designed to meet people where they are and support them throughout every stage of the recovery journey.

We offer a range of services, including medication assisted treatment, behavioral health support, and recovery resources to help patients stabilize and rebuild their lives. Our approach focuses on treating the whole person by addressing both the physical and emotional aspects of addiction.

At Renew Health, we believe recovery is possible for everyone. Whether someone is taking their first step toward treatment or continuing their recovery journey, our team is committed to providing support, understanding, and quality care for both patients and their families.

