



Other Resources

Narcotics Anonymous 12 Step Program:
<http://www.na.org>

Alcoholics Anonymous 12 Step Program:
www.aa.org

A directory of 12 step program websites:
www.dmoz.org/Society/Support_Groups/Twelve_Step/

Nar-anon, a group for friends and family of narcotic addicts: www.nar-anon.com

Al-anon and Alateen, a group for friends and family of alcoholics: www.al-anon.alateen.org/

Anonymous Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator:
<http://dasis3.samhsa.gov>

>IN
FOCUS
RECOVERY

SUPPORTING recovery



SAMPLE COPY

It's been hard.

You've likely dealt with cursing, name-calling, tantrums and even physical threats or abuse. You have been lied to, given false hope more times than you can count and been let down just as many. You may have feared for your own or your loved one's life. Caring for an addict is hard, and caring is important – But not at the cost of your own wellbeing.

Recovery can be just as hard. After being lied to, how can one believe that this time is different? After being disappointed, one can easily become guarded. After being hurt, one can become armored. It is important to show faith in the recovering addict. They may only have the faith in themselves that they get from you.

This brochure is for anyone who cares about an addict; especially a recovering addict. This brochure is also for an addiction sufferer who wants to understand the effect they are having on their loved ones. Loving or living with an addict can be harder than actually being one. Disappointment, anger, fear and misery can seem like constant companions. Trust becomes difficult or impossible. Manipulation may seem ever-present.

You may think, "my addict just needs my love and my help." This is an unhealthy impulse. Unless they are completely committed to recovery – and sometimes even then – an addict will use your well-intended charity as a way to manipulate you. This is not evil, cruelty or purposely hurtful; the addict is at the mercy of their illness. Denying an addict their vice of choice can be as traumatic to them as denying a healthy person food and water.

Imagine what you would do to stay alive: this is how an addict will act to support their addiction. There is no malicious intent, just selfishness.

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Support

Self-fulfilling prophecies are real. If you believe in someone they are more likely to succeed. If you doubt them, they are more likely to fail. Do not have blind, unquestioning faith in an addict and do not let your good intentions cause you harm, but give your loved one the support and understanding they require to heal.

An addict is always actively using, seeking or thinking about the subject of their addiction. To an addict, their vice is like air. They will do nearly anything to get it. This is not personal. Knowing that they have wronged someone because of their addiction can cause them guilt and sadness. Ironically, this may make them seek their drug as an escape from that guilt, thus perpetuating the cycle of abuse.

Balancing the addict’s need for understanding with your need to protect yourself can be difficult. Just remember: give them love, give them support but do not give them your safety or money. You are there for moral support. They are there to get better, and there is *nothing you can do to make them stop using*. That is up to them.

You are there to help *free* them: There is a reason it is called a “vice.”

To an addict, their vice is like air. To have it withheld is unthinkable and they will do nearly anything to get it.

The Recovery Process

The recovery process will be as difficult for you as for the addict. They may visit inpatient, residential or outpatient programs. They may elect to attend twelve-step programs, support groups or volunteer at a shelter or rehabilitation clinic. You will notice a change in their behavior, and that change may be for the better or worse. Understand that this is a very hard time for the addict. They are giving up what their life once revolved around, just as you might have done if you ever believed they were dying. They may be moody or aggressive. They may be in pain or depression. Remember that this is part of getting clean.

Treatment Options

Inpatient and residential programs take place away from the public. They may be in hospitals, clinics or resemble homes or campgrounds. If your loved one is in a program like this your contact may be limited to phone calls or occasional visits. They are sequestered away to focus on their life skills. They are learning how to get better. What you must prepare for is when they return. It may at first seem like everything has changed, but it is no miracle. Some addicts use drugs even in an inpatient facility. Most relapse at least once. All drug or behavior dependent people will need aftercare to stay well. It may be years if your loved one is ever the same person they were before they started using.

Outpatient programs are also comprehensive. They rely not on a physical location, but on the sufferer’s own mindfulness and discipline. Outpatient programs do not restrict the patient’s freedom, and many in these programs continue their personal and professional lives while undergoing treatment.

Support groups are where addiction sufferers share their experiences while offering one another moral and emotional strength in an environment of total acceptance. These are essential for continued success in recovery. They are often required by other programs. Be prepared for your loved one not to share their stories with you, but in these programs instead.

Your Role

You may have to adjust your lifestyle to help your loved one’s recovery along. If they live with you, eliminating medicines from the home, removing reminders of their addiction and providing healthy opportunities such as exercise or productive projects are good things to do, and may be necessary. If your loved one is in a program, contact their counselor for advice.

You might need to seriously ask yourself, “Am I good for my loved-one’s recovery?” If you use drugs or have them available, you may need to make the hard decision to sever ties.

Medication in the home is a special case. Your addict may have been taking it or using it. You may need it. They may be tempted by it. You must convince them that it is no longer within their grasp. Give the drugs to a friend to hide and give to you only in your recommended dose every day. Find a way to keep it available *only to you*.

The challenges facing you might seem overwhelming but the benefits of helping an addict to live in recovery far outweigh the cost for you, for them and for society:

You get your loved one back. Altered, but there, and with the potential of living a long, healthy life. Further, they have proven how strong they are – recovering addicts can be among the most driven people in the world and have gone on to become celebrities, professors, judges and political leaders.

You learn that you have contributed to the betterment of someone you love. Not everyone can say they have helped save a life, and few feelings are greater than knowing it’s true. You will learn more about yourself and your loved one than you thought possible. Each recovered addict is a new productive member of society. Many go on to become addiction counselors. Each one is another drug dealer potentially out of business, another crime of desperation avoided.



Relapses and You

Relapses occur. They are not rare; far from it. One popular mantra is that ‘relapses are part of recovery,’ and it is true: Do not lose faith in your loved one just because they use again. Support them, understand them and give them the direction they need.

You cannot stop anyone from using any more than you can force them to start using. Accept that and be there for them; it’s all you can do.

Your responsibility to yourself takes priority. You cannot help anyone if you are unable to take care of yourself. If you find yourself giving in to an addict’s selfishness you will need to take a step back and think about your own life. Make sure to control your own finances, schedule and property. You have to put yourself first, *no matter what*.

You Can Do It

Support groups for friends and family of addicts are very helpful. Look at the Other Resources section of this brochure. From these groups you can learn what others had to learn the hard way. The support can be invaluable.