

How to Support a Loved One in Addiction Recovery

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When people think of the [addiction recovery](#) journey, they usually focus on [detox](#) and rehab. However, breaking the chemical hold on the body is just the first step. If someone you care about is going through this process, you can help by motivating them in the next steps to a life free of substance addiction.

What are the Characteristics of a Successful Recovering Addict?

Detoxing from a drug is a very brave first step, but maintaining sobriety over the long term requires development of healthy skills and coping strategies. [SAMHSA](#) suggests that rehab ends and true recovery begins when a person:

- Deals with stress and life problems without turning to alcohol or [drugs](#).
- Develops healthy boundaries that allow them to focus on their problems, not other people's.
- Has someone in their life that they are comfortable being honest with.
- Practices physical and emotional self-care when they're tired.

No one can do the work of recovery for another person; that burden is on the addict. However, ***friends and family can support their loved one on the journey in several ways:***

- Educate yourself about addiction, rehab, and recovery.
- Support your loved one through their challenges and successes. Mark each milestone that passes.
- Keep in mind that the addict's body, mind, and emotions all need to recover, and may recover at different rates. For example, a now-sober [alcoholic](#) may look physically much healthier, but they may still struggle with cravings and habits that tempt them to drink again. According to research, it can take two years or more for the mind to heal.

Encourage Your Loved One in Healthy Habits

This includes physical, mental, and emotional health. Suggest they learn to cook nutritious food, take up a sport they

enjoy, or play games with the family. These will boost their health and mood without turning to their addiction.

Practice Loving, Judgement-free Support

Many recovering addicts feel that their friends and family are judging them, which can stall their progress. Try to make it clear to your loved one that you care about them and respect their fight to stay sober.

However, over the long recovery process, people do make mistakes. They backslide. It's okay to feel disappointed, but it's also important that you emphasize that you still love and support them as they get back on track.

Urge them to Participate in Treatment

Depending on what your loved one was addicted to and the degree of their addiction, they may require intensive treatment over a long period. It's common for people to drop out of treatment when they start physically feeling better, but before they have truly recovered.

You can support their treatment by:

- Offering to drive them to meetings.
- Attending family nights with your loved one at the rehab facility.
- Scheduling family counseling sessions to heal the family dynamic, which may have been damaged by addiction.
- Attending support groups for family and friends of addicts to learn how to care for yourself during this time. You can also learn strategies to stop enabling addictive behavior.

[Click Here to Read How to Help an Addict Seek Treatment](#)

Create an Ideal Environment to Foster Recovery

You can tailor your home environment to encourage your loved one's sobriety. This includes:

- Keeping trigger items such as alcohol out of the house.
- Inviting the loved one's sober support person to celebrations that may include liquor.
- Having non-alcoholic beverages and sober, fun activities available so the addict can participate in the party without standing out.
- Going over graceful 'escape strategies' in case the person feels in danger of relapsing and needs to leave.

Self-Care for Friends and Family of a Recovering Addict

Caring for and supporting a person in recovery can be draining, and no one has infinite reserves. You need to be at your best to offer the best support possible. Try:

- Attending support groups.
- Scheduling individual counseling to work through negative emotions in a productive way.
- Eating regular healthy meals.
- Exercising to increase your wellness and reduce stress.



- Taking time off for favorite activities like a hot bath, manicure, or seeing a ball game.
- Reconnecting with friends and family.

Beware of Relapse

Unfortunately, people can relapse at any point in the challenging journey to recovery. Since you have seen addiction first-hand and educated yourself about it, you may spot warning signs even before the relapse occurs. Don't wait until you're sure they are using again; take steps to create a safe environment and talk to them now.

Some of the most common warning signs of a relapse are:

- Nostalgia about past drug use.
- Reconnecting with the old circle of drug-abusing friends.
- Sudden shifts in their personality.
- Secretive behavior and unexpectedly dropping out of communication at times.
- Disinterest in their new, sober activities or hobbies.
- Signs of intoxication or withdrawal.

If you see this, it's time to approach your loved one. You may want to do this with other supportive people, or you may feel that the person at risk will respond better to a one-on-one discussion. However, make sure the talk has the right tone.

[Click Here to Read 7 Drug and Alcohol Relapse Prevention Tips](#)

It is natural to be disappointed, frightened, or even angry that they are considering turning back to those destructive, life-threatening habits. However, approaching them from a place of judgment and blame won't convince them to try rehab and recovery again. Instead, talk to them honestly about both your concerns and your hopes for their future. Emphasize that you will support them every step of the way to recovery. Ask if they will talk to their sober support, therapist, or recovery group. On the other hand, they may be more comfortable with an intensive outpatient program to get back into recovery.

At Pathway Real Life Recovery, you can contact our admissions coordinators 24 hours a day. We can help you create an encouraging environment for your loved one's long-term recovery. Call us today at 801.895.3006 for instant support.