

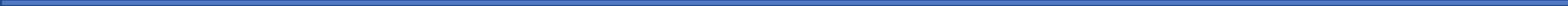
How to Talk to an Addict About Seeking Help

Communication



- Speeches and “the talk” rarely move the substance user through the stages of change. Talking to a substance user often only provides the family with hope things will change and the substance user with the feeling they have bought themselves some more time.
 - **Families and friends of drug addicts** and alcoholics would benefit much more if they were to focus on the feet of the substance user rather than their lips.
 - The drug addict and their family are the least qualified people to be discussing solutions and strategies. The substance user is often only in a position to manipulate, promise false hope and seek shortcut riddled solutions. The family is equally in the mindset of clinging to the false promises of the conversation.
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Addiction is a Medical Problem



Substance Use/ Alcohol Use Disorders



- Are a chronic, progressive, and potentially fatal problem.
 - It is common for substance use disorder clients to also have a dual diagnosis or co-occurring disorder.
 - This means there is a mental health diagnosis along with the substance use.
 - The goal for any clinician or physician is to best determine if and how substance use is contributing to the mental health symptoms and diagnosis.
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Addiction is a Progressive Disease



- It is not uncommon for a substance user to not know why they use drugs or alcohol. They often find it impossible to stop themselves from using substances and once they start, they find they can not stop on willpower or good judgment.
 - It is also very common for a substance user to explain that their lives and mental health have become progressively worse with continued substance use; things become worse and never better.
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Substance Abuse Disorders are Treatable



- Although there is no cure for guaranteed abstinence from drug or alcohol use, there are effective methods that help those in need achieve long term sobriety.
 - . Some of the most common are 12 Step Facilitation and Behavioral Couples Therapy (BCT).
 - Anytime the substance user can address their behaviors and their perception that lead to substance use, they are better equipped to remain abstinent and sober.
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Talking to a Loved One about Addiction or Substance Use Disorder

Respect their Decision and Ask them to Respect Yours



- Your loved one has a right to use substances. You have an equal right to not assist them. Families often enable and are codependent.
 - Other times families may feel they are helping their loved one and are ultimately hurting them by supporting their addiction and behaviors. Families are allowed to change their approach.
 - The substance user may be upset, and remember you're not telling them what to do, you're letting them know what you will be doing differently. If they would like to enter treatment then you help them.
 - If they do not want help then it would be beneficial to refrain from behaviors or actions that encourage continued substance use.
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Never Tell Them What they Need to Do



- Not many people like being told what to do; even more so a substance user. Many families make the mistake of telling their loved one what they should do or what they need to do.
 - As soon as you start the conversation off this way, you not only put the substance user on the defensive, you also shut off their ability to listen to anything else you say. It is not as easy as one would think to effectively communicate with a substance user.
 - This is one of many reasons why [DIY interventions](#) are unsuccessful.
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Set Boundaries and Hold Them Accountable



- This may not seem like conversation and yet it is the best form of communication.
 - By changing the family's actions you allow the substance user to look at things from a different perspective.
 - Setting boundaries and allowing the substance user to feel the results of their actions is an effective way to help them see the need for change.
 - If every negative decision they make is somehow made better by someone else how will they see the need to do something differently?
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Helping You and Your Loved-One Find a Path to Recovery

Addiction is Not A Victimless Crime



- It affects anyone and anything in its path. Substance users can have a far greater chance of achieving sobriety when they are held accountable.
 - Families who enter recovery and change their behaviors can have a positive impact on the substance user's recovery as well.
 - Any time only one side addresses the problems, it leaves vulnerabilities and unanswered questions and concerns that are often **breeding grounds for relapse**.
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Family Resentment



- The substance user has many resentments at their family that eventually need to be addressed.
 - The family equally has resentments and often engages in unhealthy behaviors that comfort the substance user.
 - Addressing the entire family system is an effective way to help all of those affected by addiction.
 - Because the family system is such a vital component of the overall recovery process, a DIY intervention that does not address this and only involves a talk with the substance user often only produces short term results if any at all.
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When we start to protect the feelings of another individual, we often realize at some point we were trying to protect our own feelings. Being emotionally connected to the ups and downs of another can take away our identity, integrity, happiness, and individuality we once had.

Intervention Gives an Unbiased Professional Perspective

- If you've avoided confronting your loved one with a professional intervention about their addiction and the need for treatment, it could be a result of you protecting your own feelings and role in the family system. When you look at all of the trouble, heartache, and consequences drug and alcohol abuse brings to someone, you may often ask yourself why they do it. Although the reasons people abuse drugs and alcohol are endless, the question is what is it providing that is so great that they would allow it to continue even in the face of extreme consequences? After all, the drugs and alcohol are providing them with something so powerful that they are willing to sacrifice anything and everything to get it.
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