

How To Support a Loved One Struggling with Addiction

Statistics for drug and alcohol abuse are grim- in 2020 alone, more than 37.5 million Americans struggled with drug and alcohol abuse, according to NCDIS, the National Center for Drug Abuse Statistics. What does this mean? It's likely that you know and love someone who has struggled with addiction in the past or is currently experiencing active addiction. With such high numbers that have grown since the pandemic, Ulliance is here to support you if you're one of the 46% of people in this country who know someone struggling with addiction. Addiction impacts not just the addict, but the family as well. It's often referred to as "The Family Disease" because it has the power to create negativity, financial strife, enabling, codependency, and inconsistency within family and other relationships. The problem can feel overwhelming, but there are many resources to help you and your loved one find support through this difficult time.

Know The Signs

Are you wondering whether someone you love has a problem with substance use? The following behaviors are signs frequently seen in individuals who have a drug or alcohol problem:

- Unsuccessful attempts to limit alcohol or drug consumption.
- Physical health issues, neglected appearance and changes in behavior.
- Inability to control the amount of drugs or alcohol consumed.
- Unable to discontinue the use of substances, despite physical, social, or work problems.
- Going to work or other events under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Arguing or becoming violent under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Making excuses or blaming others for drinking or using in excess.
- Preoccupation with thoughts of obtaining or consuming substances.
- Isolating from family and friends who don't drink or use drugs.
- Lying about their drinking alcohol or use of drugs.

These signs are not a one-size-fits all; you may find that your loved one fits all the signs or fits just one or two. There may also be other signs and symptoms that aren't listed here. It's important to ask yourself honestly what signs you see beginning to affect your loved one and therefore may be affecting you.

Where do I begin?

You may be wondering where to start asking for help. It can certainly feel overwhelming to know someone you love is struggling. Addiction impacts many people surrounding the addict and can cause a person to develop poor coping mechanisms to deal with the situation. Consider these steps moving forward when dealing with a loved one who struggles with addiction:

1. **Put on your own "oxygen mask" first.** Getting yourself help to enhance your well-being and your coping skills is necessary when dealing with a loved one struggling with any type of addiction. It's true that you cannot pour from an empty cup. When a loved one is struggling with drug or alcohol addiction, you might find your well of empathy or compassion has run dry. This is a sign that you need to increase your self-care, begin attending therapy, or take a step back from the situation to reassess.
2. **Begin to understand the disease of addiction.** Education and understanding can help us grow our empathy. If you have seen your loved one display some symptoms listed above, you might find that attending Al-Anon or Nar-Anon meetings helps grow your understanding of the cycle of addiction and how to begin to help your loved one break that cycle. Al-Anon and Nar-Anon meetings are specifically for those in the support system of an addict, so you may find like-minded individuals who have similar struggles. For a list of meetings in your area, visit al-anon.org or nar-anon.org. You can also find a list of resources on substance abuse on LifeAdvisor.com through the well-being portal.
3. **Know That It Takes a Village.** During this time, it is important to remember that isolation is a key factor in addiction- both with the addict and their loved ones. It's easy to feel like you want to hide away and keep to yourself when someone you love is struggling with addiction. Isolation creates a bubble around us that forces us to go through the struggle alone, but it's important to remember that it takes a village to support a family or relationship that is affected by addiction. Reach out to your family, friends or others who can help support you, and be sure to check in with a counselor or a therapist. Find someone you can be honest with that you trust, and you can confide in.
4. **Reach Out for Help from Ulliance.** Whether it's an employee, a family member, a friend or a close loved one who is struggling with addiction, counselors at Ulliance can help you find your way through this difficult time. If you feel like you have been affected by someone's drug or alcohol use, reach out for support and speak with a licensed counselor. Visit the portal for more resources at LifeAdvisor.com or call 1-800-448-8326 and one of our Life Advisor Consultants can help you. Your Life Advisor Consultant can be an invaluable resource for you during this time.



It's important to remember that a loved one will most likely reach out for help before the person struggling with substance use will. Doing so can demonstrate to you and the dependent person how choices and changes can be made to deal with the pain, fear and confusion and get back to a healthy, serene life.

**For more information, tools, resources, or app information, call your
Life Advisor Employee Assistance Program!**



**Ulliance provides no cost, confidential, short term counseling
for you & your family.**

Call us- we're here to help **800.448.8326**