

If someone you love is struggling with a substance use disorder, keep these tips in mind as you support them on their recovery journey. Remember you aren't alone, but it is vital to get the resources and support you need. Groups like Al-Anon (<https://al-anon.org/>) can be a great tool to support you, so you can, in turn, offer the best support possible for your loved one.

**FIRST AND FOREMOST - TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF:**

Your loved one's substance use disorder not only affects them, but it affects everyone who loves them. Family and friends often place the needs of their loved one above their own. However, if you constantly neglect your own needs, wants and desires, you will have nothing left to give your loved one. Make sure you prioritize your own physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental needs.

**DIFFERENTIATE THE PERSON FROM THE DISEASE:**

Addiction is a disease and results in a distorted value system that desperately wants to support ongoing substance use. It is OK to get frustrated or angry with your loved one. It is OK to limit contact if your loved one is in active addiction. But try to remember, the disease is not the same as the human you love.

**BE CAREFUL TO NOT USE YOUR LOVE AS A WEAPON:**

You would likely do anything in your power to help your loved one. But, be careful to not leverage your love as a weapon. Saying things like, "If you loved me, you'd quit" is destructive behavior that almost always backfires. Rather, tell them that you want to see them live. Tell them you will support them in their recovery. However, it is also OK to set boundaries and prioritize protecting yourself through this process as well.

**DIFFERENTIATE "HELPING" FROM "ENABLING":**

The desire to help your loved one can be overwhelming sometimes. You might worry that without your help, your loved one will end up in a worse situation. When your help means you give them money, allow them to stay in your home, or drive them places - this might be rescuing behavior enabling their addiction. Sometimes the most loving thing you can do is stop shielding your loved one from the results of their behavior.

**BE PREPARED FOR LIFELONG SUPPORT:**

Remember that change is gradual - recovery will not happen overnight. Lifelong recovery has many ups and downs. A multi-year study researching people with substance use disorders showed two thirds of recovering addicts will relapse within the first year of sobriety. As time continues, the chances of relapse drops. Remember that relapses are not an indication of failure - it shows that they are human and they are trying.

