

SUPPORTING A LOVED ONE

WITH SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER



Substance Use Disorder (SUD) affects roughly **1 in 6** Americans or **48.4 million people**.¹



SUD is a chronic medical condition like diabetes or heart disease. It can be life-threatening if ignored, but can be treated effectively.



Returning to use is a **common** part of recovery, it is not a failure.



On average, sustained recovery happens after **3 to 4 treatment** episodes over several years.²

SELF-CHECK:

Recognizing Coping Habits

Out of fear and anxiety, families can adopt unhealthy patterns. Reflect honestly on if these behaviors sound familiar:



Playing Detective: Constantly monitoring or checking up on your loved one.



Excusing or Blaming: Making excuses for your loved one's absences, behavior, or neglected responsibilities.



Preoccupation and Denial: Keeping secrets from others, ignoring issues, or being constantly hyper-vigilant.

HEALTHY COMMUNICATION

Consider the following '**Do's** and **Don'ts**' to support healthy communication with loved ones:

DO

- Bring up issues when the person is clear-headed.
- Express your concern in an honest, caring, and non-judgmental way.
- Talk about the effect the substance use has on what they care about (e.g., their career, children, physical health).
- Write down what you want to say ahead of time.
- Have a support person available.

DON'T

- Bring up issues or argue while the person is under the influence.
- Nag, blame, lecture, or compare to others.
- Immediately offer solutions
- Try to force behavior change or expect it to happen quickly.
- Attempt to walk this difficult path alone.

ESTABLISH COMPASSIONATE BOUNDARIES

- Make note of the **Three Cs**: You didn't **CAUSE** it. You can't **CONTROL** it. You can't **CURE** it.
- Set clear, loving boundaries using actionable logic: "When I see you do X, I will do Y."
- Remember that addiction doesn't reflect poorly on you or your family. It is a disease that is processed and managed as a family, without judgment or stigma.
- Remember that the choice to change behavior rests with the person with the SUD.



SUPPORT NETWORKS AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Families Anonymous: A mutual support community for relatives and friends of those struggling with addiction.

Al-Anon Family Groups: Al-Anon is a mutual support program for people whose lives have been affected by someone else's drinking.

Overdose Prevention: Secure naloxone (Narcan) kits and attend local overdose response training to reduce risk of a loved one's overdose.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Family to Family Recovery Resource Guide](#)
- [Busting 4 Myths About Supporting a Family Member in Addiction Recovery](#)
- [Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation](#)
- [Beyond the Due Date: Being a supportive partner through substance use recovery, pregnancy, and postpartum](#)

¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration National Survey on Drug Use and Health. <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/data-we-collect/nsduh-national-survey-drug-use-and-health/national-releases#annual-national-report>

² Dennis M, Scott CK. Managing addiction as a chronic condition. *Addict Sci Clin Pract.* 2007 Dec;4(1):45-55. doi: 10.1151/ascp074145. PMID: 18292710; PMCID: PMC2797101.



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