



National Recovery Month

How to Support a Loved One in Recovery

Nationally, an estimated 22 million Americans struggle with addiction. Another 100 million family members and friends share their pain. A solid support system is vital for a successful one's recovery journey.

Here are some helpful tips to keep in mind when supporting a loved one in recovery.

Tip #1 – Be a source of Encouragement

Your loved one has been through a lot—they're probably feeling a range of intense emotions such as shame and guilt. In many ways, your loved one starts from scratch and has to build an entirely new life. The process can be daunting and stressful, but you can help them by being supportive and understanding. Let them know that you will support them no matter what throughout their journey. When they go through rough patches, assure them that it's okay and that you will still be there to offer encouragement.

Tip #2 – Remain Judgement Free

Individuals recovering from substance use disorder often feel guilt and shame about their past. They might still be holding onto negative feelings about themselves. Instead of judging them, accept them, love them, and appreciate them for who they are. Addiction is a medical illness that can be addressed through medications, counseling, harm reduction, and multiple pathways. When you understand that abstinence might not be your loved one's goal, you'll meet them where they are in their recovery.

Tip #3 – Create a safe space

Creating a safe space for your loved ones to feel comfortable talking about their recovery journey is essential. Let your loved ones know that honesty and openness are vital to their recovery. If they think they cannot speak with you about everything, put them in contact with a person they can talk to. Set boundaries for yourself and stick to them to keep everyone safe.

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Tip #4 –Seek to educate yourself

It's challenging to support someone with addiction without having an understanding of addiction yourself. It's essential to learn as much as you can about substance use disorder, interventions, treatment methods, and recovery programs. You can educate yourself on the topic to gain a better perspective. And it's also crucial to realize that now is not the time to nag or lecture your loved one about past choices or choices you feel they need to make.

Tip #5 - Language matters

We often underestimate the power of the words we use. Words are like a double-edged sword. The language we use when talking about addiction can have a significant impact on how successful people are in overcoming their substance use disorder. Words that are supportive and nonjudgmental that treat people with respect and compassion are more likely to lead to successful outcomes.

Tip # 6- Self-care is essential

This is something that you need to internalize and live by if you have any hope of being supportive of your loved one in recovery. You can't just focus on them and ignore your own needs. It's essential to take care of yourself. When you're in a good place emotionally, physically, and spiritually, you can be truly present for someone else who is going through a tough time.

There isn't only one way to support a loved one in recovery, but if you adhere to some of the tips above, you will help. Most important is to keep showing up and be willing to connect with them. Remember that you will make mistakes, but don't give up. Keep supporting your loved one in recovery and you'll remain on the path of healing and love. With your support, a loved one can achieve their recovery goals.

For more information on Greenwich House's Methadone Maintenance Treatment Program, please visit: <https://www.greenwichhouse.org/health-services/mmtp/> or call (212) 677-3400.

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