

When someone you care about struggles with an alcohol or drug addiction, it can be difficult to know which steps you can (and should) take to provide help. Substance use disorders often change our loved ones in complex ways. Alcohol and drug use affects the user's personality, behavior, and overall health in many ways. These changes directly impact the user, but they may not realize the depth of harm. Additionally, many who use substances do not understand (or notice) the harmful effects addiction has on their loved ones.

If your loved one has an addiction, it is not uncommon to want to help them get sober. Many people do not know where to begin or how to provide support and guidance without worsening their problems. Known as enabling, this is a prevalent challenge for those with an addicted loved one.

What Does it Mean to Enable an Addict?

The term enabling describes someone helping another (usually a loved one) to continue making unhealthy choices. Enabling occurs in several ways, including relationships where one person is sober and the other struggles with addiction. When you enable an addict, you typically achieve an outcome that is the opposite of what you desire. While your goal is to help your loved one get better, feel better, and stay healthy, enabling behaviors typically achieve the opposite effect. When you enable an addict, you encourage and often promote destructive behaviors even though you may not intentionally do so.

Enabling behavior is often mistaken for helping behavior. This usually occurs because in trying to help a loved one, someone who acts as an enabler does not understand the distinction between enabling and helping. Common examples of enabling behavior may include:

- Providing financial support.
- Minimizing harmful behaviors.
- Making excuses for your loved ones' substance use.
- Covering up for their behaviors.
- Blaming yourself for their substance use.
- Putting their needs above your own.

What are the Signs of Enabling a Drug Addict?

Addiction is a disease that affects all members of the family. For this reason, many medical and mental health professionals refer to addiction as a family disease. Although the addict experiences the direct physical and psychological impacts of drugs and alcohol, their family members struggle with different types of emotional harm. For this reason, family members desperately want to help their addicted loved one in any way they can. Unfortunately, the desire to help, provide support, and minimize the behaviors of an addicted loved one leads to enabling.

A couple of signs of enabling a drug addict are listed above. These include blaming yourself, putting their needs before your own, actively covering up their behaviors, and making excuses for their substance abuse. Other common signs of enabling may include:

- Lying for your loved one.
- Providing money so they can purchase substances when they do not have money of their own.
- Providing care and support at home rather than encouraging help at a rehab center.
- Feeling stressed or depressed because you cannot "fix" the problem.

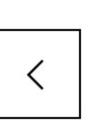
How to Get a Loved One to Seek Addiction **Treatment**

The best way to help your loved one seek addiction treatment is to be encouraging but not enabling. This may be difficult, especially if you are worried that your loved ones will not get the help they need without your help. However, it is crucial to remember that in some cases, your "support" is the crutch your addicted loved one continues to lean on to avoid getting sober once and for all. Although it is essential to ensure your loved one knows you are there to help them get to appointments, learn more about rehab, or even take them to an addiction treatment center, they must understand there are limits to your support.

It is crucial to set boundaries and stick to them. Although doing so may seem harsh and the opposite of supportive, setting boundaries creates a safety zone for you to avoid engaging in enabling behavior. It is OK to remain supportive; however, it is crucial to avoid covering up for or making excuses for your loved ones' harmful behaviors. These actions allow someone struggling with addiction to avoid taking accountability for their actions and, in some ways, may allow them to believe their behaviors do not require change.

If your loved one has an unhealthy relationship with drugs or alcohol, or you struggle with providing support in a safe and healthy way, contact Grand Falls Recovery today to learn more about the ways a comprehensive, evidence-based addiction treatment program can help your loved one find freedom from drugs and alcohol. Our individual and family support programs can help all members of the family address addictive behaviors in a way that encourages lifelong sobriety and recovery.

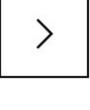
Grand Falls Recovery is a Missouri rehab center that offers addiction treatment programs in Joplin, MO.



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5615 W. 32nd Street Joplin, MO 64804 1-855-904-5910 info@grandfallsrecovery.com