

What to Do When Someone You Love Abuses Alcohol or Other Drugs

Often times when someone you love abuses alcohol or drugs, you feel isolated, responsible and agonize over what to do in order to help them. It is VERY common for individuals who love someone who abuses alcohol/drugs to work overtime trying to figure out strategies to control the person's use and behavior. It is not unusual to feel angry, emotionally drained and even victimized. Loved ones affected by another's drinking wonder, "Did I do something to make him/her drink?" Then, they try to figure out ways to change themselves in order to get the abuser to change.

Remember: You are not alone. Millions of people are affected by the alcohol/drug use of a loved one. There are some resources readily available to you. You can look in the Yellow Pages of your phone book for 24 Hour Hotlines to use. You can contact AA and Al-anon. Their numbers are listed in the White Pages of your phone book. Newspapers also list Al-Anon meeting places and times. Take advantage of the EAP benefit provided by your employer. It is completely confidential.

Take care of yourself: Recognize that by helping yourself, you will be better able to help your loved one. It is important to be aware that no one has the power to make someone use or to stop them from using. You are NOT responsible for their actions. What it is important to keep in mind however, is that if you work on yourself, then you'll be better prepared to attend to the person who is using.

Tell your loved one that you care about him or her.

Share examples of behaviors that trouble you.

Tell your loved one how you feel.

Tell your loved one what you need from him or her.

Restate to your loved one that you care about him or her.

Reminders:

- You do not have to fix the problem. Even if the behavior does not stop, by telling your loved one how you feel and what you want, you become a part of the solution because you are no longer DENYING the problem.
- Use "I" statements. It avoids defensiveness and helps him/her hear what you have to say
- Be courageous.

Do:

- find someone you can talk to about this; don't keep it bottled up
- find an outside interest and develop your own talents
- be honest with yourself and others
- have a phone number ready, if your loved
- one decides they want help

Don't:

- let the addiction become your #1 focus
- don't argue when someone is drunk or high
- don't hide or throw away alcohol/drugs, they'll just buy more
- don't expect to change anyone but yourself
- don't use alcohol/drugs yourself to escape

Call Mercy EAP for assistance at 319-398-6694 or 1-800-383-6694.