



NAVIGATING THE JOURNEY AS A CAREGIVER

Your **loved one** has a diagnosis of **Substance Use Disorder (SUD)**.

What's next?

Behaviors and Challenges You May Recognize

Substance Use Disorder is a mental illness characterized by a damaging or uncontrollable relationship with mind-altering substances. Just like anger is a secondary emotion, SUD is often a secondary effect of some other mental illness or trauma. It's well known that substance use disorders run in families, and a mix of interpersonal and genetic factors likely contribute to this. SUD is challenging for all parties involved and your loved one is going through a lot.

They may be experiencing:

- Deep, cyclic shame which sparks return to use
- Difficulty finding sober social support
- Co-morbidity with anxiety, mood disorders, or PTSD
- Lack of fluency in alternative coping mechanisms (use is the go-to)
- Escalating intensity of use to achieve the same result
- Income and housing insecurity as job prospects are damaged or destroyed
- Stereotype threat: being labeled increases likelihood of use
- Bodily effects such as tissue damage, metabolic problems, and withdrawal

This journey of navigating your loved one's SUD diagnosis may look daunting at first. Yet, it can help to shift that compass and look at this journey as an opportunity for GROWTH. On this journey, you can NURTURE your relationship with your loved one AND yourself.

Supporting Your Loved One

You and your loved one are embarking on a growth journey and will navigate their diagnosis TOGETHER. Be PATIENT with your loved one AND yourself as you learn which coping strategies are most helpful.

The greatest gift we can give our loved ones is ACCEPTANCE of what they are going through in the moment. To help them you can also practice boundary-setting, utilize outside help, and take care of YOU! It will empower you BOTH on this journey for you to give yourself love and rest. YOU will be more able to give the care they need and THEY will witness your self-care example.

You can also provide your loved with resources. *See the next page for ways to help manage SUD.*

If you are currently experiencing a crisis, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or contact the Crisis Text Line by texting TALK to 741-741.

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Resources for You and Your Loved One

- [The National Institute of Mental Health](#) on SUD
- [The National Alliance on Mental Health](#) on SUD
- [Mental Health America](#) on SUD
- [The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#) on SUD and recovery resources
- Affirming sobriety management from the [WEConnect](#) recovery app. For patients or families
- Kind words/ideas about ways to make changes from [HeretoHelp](#)
- Sobriety motivation and community support through the [I Am Sober](#) app
- [The Brave app](#) for connecting your loved ones with others to prevent overdose
- [Never Use Alone](#), another harm reduction organization with the goal of saving lives
- Free online community support for SUD via [In the Rooms](#)
- “Am I an alcoholic?” alcohol use breakdown by [American Addiction Centers](#)
- Alternatives to AA and NA via [Smart Recovery](#)
- [The National Harm Reduction Coalition](#) on the basics of harm reduction for loved ones of persons with SUD
- A directory of LGBTQ+-safe rehab centers from [Rehabs.com](#)
- Support for siblings of persons with SUD by [Siblings of Addicts](#)
- Judgment-free remote recovery support by [SeekHealing](#)
- SUD treatment directories by [SAMHSA](#)
- Group support for SUD caregivers by [Al-Anon](#) and [Nar-Anon](#)

Preventing Caregiver Burnout

We give our BEST care when we are also taking care of ourselves! Make time to recharge, even with a short moment that's just for YOU. Connecting with other caregivers is another powerful form of self-care. Learn more about our One-to-One Caregiver Peer Support program on [our website](#).

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