



A guide to providing emotional support when it's needed most



If a loved one is living with a substance use disorder or mental health condition, your support may help make a difference in their journey toward healing.

Tips for supporting a loved one

Start a conversation with compassion

Express your concern in a nonjudgmental way and tell them you're there to help. To create a supportive environment to help foster an open conversation, you might begin by saying something like:

- "I've been worried about you. Can we talk?"
- "I care about you and am here to listen. Do you want to talk?"
- "If you're not comfortable talking to me, can I help you find someone else you're comfortable with?"
- "I see you're going through something. How can I best support you?"
- "I've noticed you haven't seemed like yourself lately. How can I help?"

Be open

Discuss your family history of mental health or substance use, if relevant. It may help them feel less alone.

Offer to help find support for your situation

Provide reassurance that their condition is treatable. Help them locate resources and connect to treatment services. Encourage them to get an assessment to explore what the next steps might be.

Be patient

Helping someone get on the path to recovery takes time. Continue reaching out with offers to listen and help.

Remember to take care of yourself, too

Being a caregiver may be stressful or emotionally draining. Take time for your own mental health and well-being.

Recognizing possible signs and symptoms

It's important to remember that substance use disorders and mental health conditions are not character flaws or signs of weakness. It's also important to remember that these health conditions are treatable.

Substance use disorder

Substance use disorder may involve excessive and compulsive use of alcohol, drugs or medications. Some common signs of concern may include:¹

- Changes in appearance, including a lack of hygiene
- Mood swings or unexplained personality changes
- Ignoring responsibilities
- Risk of financial loss or physical danger
- Sudden changes in friends
- Feelings of shame or regret

Mental health conditions

Mental health conditions describe a number of challenges that may affect someone's mental well-being—including stress, anxiety, depression, mood disorders or other psychological issues. Some signs may be easier to spot than others, including:

- Eating or sleeping too much or not enough
- Losing interest in people and activities
- Feeling hopeless, irritable or angry
- Drinking alcohol too much or using drugs
- Aches and pains
- Thoughts of harming oneself or others

A complete evaluation conducted by a qualified substance use disorder or mental health provider is important, as many different conditions can display similar signs or symptoms.



Hope and healing may be a phone call away

To connect with specialists trained in addressing substance use disorders, call the Substance Use Disorder Helpline at 1-855-780-5955. It's confidential and available 24/7.

If you or someone you know are experiencing thoughts of suicide or something else that is urgent or an emergency, call 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

Find a provider

Sign in to or register on myuhc.com[®] and go to **Find Care & Costs > Behavioral Health Directory**, or call the phone number on your health plan ID card

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¹ Mayo Clinic. Drug addiction: Risk factors. www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/drug-addiction/symptoms-causes/syc-20365112. Accessed August 2021.

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