

Reacting to Substance Abuse Behavior

Reacting by Enabling



- Most people are unaware they aren't enabling their loved one to help them; they are enabling their loved one for themselves.
 - Enabling is not about what it is providing the other person, it is about what comfort it is bringing you when you provide comfort to another person.
 - One of the biggest reasons that causes family members to continue enabling behaviors is the fear of letting go and the fear of no longer feeling needed in the relationship with the addict.
 - They are scared that if the other person gets better their purpose of being a caretaker may be taken away from them.
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Detach Without Enabling

There are ways to detach from a substance user and not enable them and still love them. Learning how to put your needs first and being able to detach can greatly increase one's ability to see why they were enabling. Enabling is never about helping them, it is about comforting you.

What is Enabling?

Ignoring Dangerous Behavior



- While this is hurting the substance user it is providing comfort to the enabler by avoiding confrontation.

Providing Resources

This does not hold the substance user accountable and provides the enabler with the belief they are needed as well as keeping the addict happy with them. This includes providing the substance abuser with:

- Housing
- Vehicles
- Attorneys
- Financial resources
- etc.



Making Excuses



This comforts the addict and in turn comforts the enabler. The enabler feels better because they have protected the addict. This includes:

- Lying
 - Covering behavior
 - Averting attention away from addict
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Resentment

Continued

- This may not sound like enabling; what is happening is the family member is allowing the addict to make them feel a certain way and as a result, the family member makes bad or ineffective decisions.
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What is Detachment?

Not creating or reacting to a crisis



- When they call you, you don't have to provide an immediate response. Fact check their comments and concerns. Run your responses past your treatment team. It is OK to say NO.
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Don't Prevent A Crisis

- The addict should be held accountable. Bad planning and decision making on their part should not constitute an emergency on your part.



Do Not Parallel your Emotions to Theirs



- If they feel better you feel better. If they feel worse you feel worse. [This is enmeshed codependency](#) and detaching from this rollercoaster is highly advised.
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Don't allow yourself to be the cause of their problems

The addict runs around with their blame thrower on full blast at all times. Allowing yourself to feel bad feeds their justification that everything and everyone else is the problem. This also fills you with guilt and shame. Detach from their blame throwing and take care of yourself.

Support Without Enabling

Learn About Addiction



- Understanding [what your loved one is up against in their addiction and their recovery](#) can help families better understand what they can do differently.
 - [Al-Anon groups for yourself](#) and attending Open Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous meetings can be very helpful too. Open AA and NA meetings are available to anyone and all are welcome. One does not need to be an alcoholic or addict to attend.
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Participate in Family Therapy



It is without question that a healthy family **increases the chances an addict can get better**. Even if they do not get better right away, the family can still change and improve their quality of life. Individual therapy, self-help groups, workshops, [Family Recovery Programs](#) are all helpful for families to learn the benefits of detachment and the destruction of enabling.

Set Boundaries and Learn Effective Communication



Boundaries are your way of saying I love you and I don't love your addiction or your current behaviors. Boundaries are another way of saying that you love yourself and other family members who are affected by your enabling and unhealthy behaviors. Learning how to effectively communicate with an addict still using substances or in early recovery helps both you and them.

If what you were doing wasn't working it is time to try something different.

When we start to protect the feelings of another individual, we often realize at some point we were trying to protect our own feelings. Being emotionally connected to the ups and downs of another can take away our identity, integrity, happiness, and individuality we once had.

Intervention Gives an Unbiased Professional Perspective

- If you've avoided confronting your loved one with a professional intervention about their addiction and the need for treatment, it could be a result of you protecting your own feelings and role in the family system. When you look at all of the trouble, heartache, and consequences drug and alcohol abuse brings to someone, you may often ask yourself why they do it. Although the reasons people abuse drugs and alcohol are endless, the question is what is it providing that is so great that they would allow it to continue even in the face of extreme consequences? After all, the drugs and alcohol are providing them with something so powerful that they are willing to sacrifice anything and everything to get it.
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