



## Resources for Families Coping with Mental and Substance Use Disorders

Every family is unique, but all families share a bond that can be used to support one another during trying times.

While there is no one-size-fits-all solution for helping a family member who is drinking too much, using drugs, or dealing with a mental illness, research shows that family support can play a major role in helping a loved one with mental and substance use disorders.

When a family member is experiencing a mental or substance use disorder, it can affect more than just the person in need of recovery. Evidence has shown that some people have a genetic predisposition for developing mental and substance use disorders, and may be at greater risk based on environmental factors such as having grown up in a home affected by a family member's mental health or history of substance use. Families should be open to the options of support groups or family therapy and counseling, which can improve treatment effectiveness by supporting the whole family.

It is also important to remember that the unique challenges that come from helping a loved one with a mental or substance use disorder can be taxing, so caregivers should take steps to prioritize their own health as well.

Family members may be more likely to notice when their loved ones are experiencing changes in mood or behavior. Being able to offer support, family members can connect those in need with

treatment, resources, and services to begin and stay on their recovery journey.

Download [audio and video files, and other resources](#) for families.

Think A Family Member Has A Substance Us...



## Video: Family Drama

The *Family Drama* video encourage families to talk directly with their loved ones about concerns over substance use.

Watch the Family Drama video

Start the Conversation About Mental Illness :...



## HELPING A LOVED ONE DEALING WITH MENTAL AND/OR SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS

You may suspect or discover your loved one is dealing with a mental illness, drinking too much, or using drugs. As a family member, you can play a central role in getting them the help they need.

### REMEMBER MENTAL AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS ARE TREATABLE

People can, and do, recover. Family support can make all the difference. For more information, visit [www.SAMHSA.gov/families](http://www.SAMHSA.gov/families).

### TALK TO YOUR LOVED ONE

Express your concern and tell them that you're there to help. Create a judgement-free and loving environment to foster conversation and openness.

### SEEK SUPPORT

If you or a loved one needs help, call **1-800-662-HELP (4357)** for free and confidential information and treatment referral.

### BE OPEN

Discuss your family history of mental illness or drug and alcohol use, if relevant. It may help your loved one feel less alone.

### SHOW COMPASSION

Be patient as you help your loved one locate resources and treatment services.

**BE SURE TO CARE FOR YOURSELF TOO**  
Being a caregiver can be highly stressful and emotionally draining.



SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities. 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727) • 1-800-487-4889 (TDD) • [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

play a central role in getting them the help they need.

[Download \(PDF | 72 KB\)](#)

# SUPPORTING A LOVED ONE DEALING WITH MENTAL AND/OR SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS

## STARTING THE CONVERSATION

When a family member is drinking too much, using drugs or struggling with a mental disorder, your support can be key to getting them the treatment they need. Starting the conversation is the first step to getting help.

### How You Can Help

- 1 IDENTIFY AN APPROPRIATE TIME AND PLACE.** Consider a private setting with limited distractions, such as at home or on a walk.
- 2 EXPRESS CONCERN AND BE DIRECT.** Ask how they are feeling and describe the reasons for your concern.
- 3 ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR FEELINGS AND LISTEN.** Listen openly, actively, and without judgement.
- 4 OFFER TO HELP.** Provide reassurance that mental and/or substance use disorders are treatable. Help them locate and connect to treatment services.
- 5 BE PATIENT.** Recognize that helping your loved one doesn't happen overnight. Continue reaching out with offers to listen and help.

### What to Say

"I've been worried about you. Can we talk? If not, who are you comfortable talking to?"

"I see you're going through something. How can I best support you?"

"I care about you and am here to listen. Do you want to talk about what's been going on?"

"I've noticed you haven't seemed like yourself lately. How can I help?"

For more resources, visit  
[www.SAMHSA.gov/families](http://www.SAMHSA.gov/families).

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know how to support them and what to say.

[Download \(PDF | 98 KB\)](#)



Need Help?

If you, or a family member, needs help with a mental or substance use disorder, call [SAMHSA's National Helpline](#) at [1-800-662-HELP](tel:1-800-662-HELP) (4357) or TTY: [1-800-487-4889](tel:1-800-487-4889), or text your zip code to [435748](tel:435748) (HELP4U), or use [FindTreatment.gov](#) to get help.

## References and Relevant Resources

- [Early Serious Mental Illness Treatment Locator](#)
- [Parents and Families](#)
- [Talk. They Hear You.](#)
- [Stop Bullying](#)
- [Underserved Communities](#)
- [National Survey on Drug Use and Health | Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#)
- [Depression in Mothers: More than the Blues | Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(English\)](#)

- [Finding Quality Treatment for Substance Use Disorders | Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#)
- [Genetics and Epigenetics of Addiction | National Institute on Drug Abuse](#)
- [Qué es el tratamiento para el abuso de sustancias? Un folleto para las familias | Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Supporting Infants, Toddlers and Families Impacted by Caregiver Mental Health Problems, Substance Abuse, and Trauma - A Community Action Guide | Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#)
- [Technology Transfer Centers \(TTC\) Program | Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#)
- [TIP 39: Substance Abuse Treatment and Family Therapy | Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#)
- [What Is Substance Abuse Treatment? A Booklet for Families | Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(English\)](#)

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<https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/children-and-families/coping-resources>