

## Family Disease

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Alcoholism and drug addiction affects the whole family - young, teenage, or grown-up children; wives or husbands; brothers or sisters; parents or other relatives and friends. One family member addicted to alcohol and drugs means the whole family suffers. Addiction is a family disease that stresses the family to the breaking point, impacts the stability of the home, the family's unity, mental health, physical health, finances, and overall family dynamics.

Without help, active addiction can totally disrupt family life and cause harmful effects that can last a lifetime.

Regrettably, no family is born with the knowledge of how to deal effectively with addiction. It is a skill that must be learned and practiced daily.

But, with the proper help and support, **family recovery has become a reality for millions!**

### **Roadblock to Recovery: Why Do I Need Help? She's the problem!**

One of the biggest challenges to family recovery is the belief that everything will be ok if they can just 'fix' their loved one who is addicted to alcohol or drugs. After all, "she's the one who needs help, not me!"

Helping families understand that just as the addict is responsible for their own recovery, they too are responsible for their own recovery. The whole family is in this together, including the children. Addiction in the family strains relationships and people become anxious, mistrustful, tired and an overwhelming sense of hopelessness can set in. Because addiction hurts the whole family, it is absolutely essential that solutions are designed to restore the whole family.

For information about Al-Anon, Nar-Anon, Adult Children of Alcoholics - [Mutual Aid/Support](#).

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### Recovery From Addiction is a Family Affair



As a family disease, those who have been affected by addiction may take years to recover, as they rebuild and stabilize their lives, independent of what the alcohol and drug addicted family member does. Without question, it can seem overwhelming, but it helps to keep in mind that commitment to the recovery process is also a commitment to the overall well being of the whole family.

Constructive and active family engagement in the recovery process is essential if the family is to heal from the destructive impact of addiction. To move on in hope, families need a variety of supports, information and skills including the following:

- 1. End the Isolation and Connect:** By joining an education or support group.
- 2. Education on Addiction and the Family:** Understanding how addiction affects both the addicted person and the family is an essential foundation to moving on.
- 3. Learn Communication Skills:** Active addiction destroys family communication. Developing these skills is essential to family recovery.
- 4. Detachment and Responsibility for Self:** Learning to detach with love and focus on assuming responsibility for our own behavior.
- 5. Stop Old Behaviors:** Many of our old ways of coping are ineffective and contribute to the problem not the solution: enabling, denial, blaming and minimizing the problem.
- 6. Engage the Children:** As a parent, depending on ages, you play a critically important role in providing support and protection for the children. But, engaging them in their own recovery is very important.

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**7. Build on Resilience:** Surviving active addiction to alcohol and drugs is never easy. Use the recovery process as a means of building on your personal and family strengths.

**8. Engage in Personal and Family Activities:** working alone and together to find activities that serve as a source of personal and family fulfillment (ex. volunteering)

**9. Understand and Prepare for Relapse:** Relapse into old behaviors is as real for family members as it is for those addicted to alcohol and drugs. Family members need to develop strategies for dealing with their own relapse issues and other challenges.

People recovering from alcoholism and drug addiction, their families, and their children can and often do achieve optimum levels of health and functioning, but this achievement is best measured in years rather than days, weeks, or months. In the process of recovery, families are strengthened through increased levels of genuine intimacy and families are better able to cope with life's challenges. Over time, the discipline of recovery can bring the family together to be the healthiest it has ever been!

Today, **family recovery is a reality for millions** of Americans today, and the hope, help, and healing of family recovery has become the most powerful way to break the intergenerational cycle of alcoholism and addiction in the family.

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[Alcohol and Drug Addiction Happens in the Best of Families and It Hurts](#)

It doesn't have to be that way.