

Parallel Recovery

Support for Families

Things to Consider if your Loved One has a Recurrence of Use

When our loved one is in treatment, we may find that we allow ourselves to become full of hope for the future. As the first level of treatment comes to a close and our person begins to re-engage with the world, including all of the stresses and triggers that started the process of substance use, our worry of a recurrence (a return to behavior) begins to bring worry and fear.

As a family member, it can feel like all of the support and love that we have provided has been in vain when they return to use.

There are things that you can do to help your person get back on track as well as manage your own involvement and dis-regulation in the process.

This journey is not "one size fits all". While a recurrence is not imminent, it can be a part of the recovery process.

Many times, working through this process helps our loved one build resilience in their recovery by strengthening their coping strategies.

How you Can Help?

Plan Ahead- This may seem counter intuitive to empowering recovery. Understanding that a recurrence is not always necessary but can be common in someone's recovery journey, can create space to plan ahead. Discussing ahead of time how your person wants support if this happens can be enlightening and helpful to everyone. Ask them how they would like you to respond in the case of a recurrence? What would be the best way for you to approach them if you start to see them struggle? Create an environment where you can have a healthy conversation free of judgement and the feeling of failure.

Practice Empathy- Offering empathy helps both you and your loved one get through this stumble. Empathy comes from a place of understanding that behaviors make sense and there is a reason behind the behavior. This understanding makes room for us to show empathy and diminishes the

opportunity for anger and sadness to take over. It also allows your loved one to find compassion for themselves through this process.

Be Supportive- If you approach the situation with judgement and anger, you will not create a safe and supportive space for growth and recovery. Instead, offer curiosity, compassion and acceptance of where someone is in the moment. This does not mean that you are free of anger, disappointment or frustration. Instead this means that you must take care of your immediate needs so that you can show up curious, compassionate and accepting. Knowing that this is not personal and a safe connection can help lead your person back to healthier choices quicker. Simply showing up for our loved one with understanding can sometimes be enough for them to hear their own desire to try again. Remember, understanding does not equal acceptance.

Empower Recovery- Sometimes our efforts to provide support can actually hinder recovery and empower addiction. Making excuses, covering for them, taking the blame and getting in the way of them experiencing consequences does not provide opportunities for growth and learning. Make sure that your own happiness is not attached to the recovery of your loved one.

Identify Triggers- You can rarely go wrong with genuine curiosity. Ask your loved one what was going on prior to their use as a way to gain insight into the triggers that could be prevented in the future. Ask them what was missing in their plan and how you could help with that in the future. Collaboration rather than problem solving will allow them to see their needs and allow you to see how to support, rather than solve.

Practice Self Compassion- Obsessive thinking about the "what if's" creates a fear of the future and robs you of living the life in front of you now. Plan preventatively by asking them ahead of time how best to approach this subject making it less mysterious and more approachable. Call someone you trust and lean into your support network. You too need support and recognizing that need and providing for it are a model to your person that taking care of yourself with a community of people is essential to recovery. Focus on things that you do have control over. Are you eating healthy and intentional meals? Are you moving your body and resting when you are tired? Take charge of small tasks in your day that allow you to feel accomplished and in control. Remain in the present moment—it is the only moment you have control over.

Even though a recurrence is not the outcome of us hope for, it does not have to mean the failure of long term recovery. Keeping a positive outlook and hope for the future is essential for both yourself and your loved one.

Helpful links

[SAMHSA National Helpline](#)

Begin Again—Begin Again is a weekly online support group of people looking for guidance and community on this journey with SUD in our families. 3 month subscription required.

Private Coaching—Schedule a consultation to discuss private coaching to meet the individual needs of your family's recovery.

[Begin Again Support Community](#)

[Coaching Consultation](#)

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