

Parallel Recovery

Support for Families

7 Stages of Recovery

When our person agrees to seek treatment, a sense of relief fills our hearts. Hope begins to creep back into our minds, and we allow ourselves to see a path forward out of this messy journey. For some, this is the first time in a long while that we can fully rest at night.

What does recovery actually mean? Does recovery begin upon stopping the use of substances or engaging in a meaningful life. Everyone gets to define recovery on their own terms but there are some guidelines for what we, as family members might be able to see in this process.

- Stage 1 - Generally lasting the first 30-45 days. This is a time of resolve for someone in treatment. They are actively engaging in programming or support and they start to feel good physically. It can also be difficult as some of the consequences of past behaviors or use are being faced.
- Stage 2 - 1-3 months. The honeymoon phase is wearing off and the desires to go back to substances may creep back in. The realization that stopping substances does not equal happiness is a reality and other less than healthy behaviors can take the place of drugs or alcohol. Social media, sex, food or other coping skills may be replacing the use of substances.
- Stage 3 - 6-9 months. Complacency begins to creep in and people find themselves letting go of their supports and getting back to life. This is a frequent time to see a recurrence of use. Other mental health needs may be more apparent now that substances are out of the body and it is a good time to address any underlying mental health needs. PAWS-post acute withdrawal syndrome can also be seen during this time period.
- Stage 4 - 1 year! A milestone of celebration. This is where people feel like they are fully starting to live their life again. Continuing to understand what triggers are challenging and the supports that are helpful continues.
- Stage 5 - 18 months. The brain has healed and is now producing its own Serotonin and Dopamine. Most cases of PAWS have subsided.

- Stage 6 - 5 years. This is the time where many people realize that they have been living in recovery longer than they were mis-using substances and that can be very powerful.
- Stage 7- 10 years. and beyond. A new life has been fully developed and people can now look back on their struggle to recovery and appreciate what is now in front of them.

While the relief felt at the initial agreement to seek treatment is real for family members, understanding that the journey is long and can be bumpy at times helps us to be able to support our person in a way that helps them move through these stages rather than freeze or feel like they are not experiencing recovery in a normal way.

[Here is a link](#) to an article that more fully describes these stages in relation to Opioid Use Disorder, but recovery from all substances follows this same map.

Helpful links

[SAMHSA Substance Use Treatment Locator](#)

[SAMHSA Mental Health Treatment Locator](#)

[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 families recovery.

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