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Counselor's Corner: How Do I Help My Loved One with an Addiction?



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Southern Wellness Services, Inc.

First things first. Addiction can happen to anyone, regardless of income, status, education, or age. The 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) indicated that 21.7 million people aged 12 or older needed help with an addiction in 2014. It is likely that at some point in your life, you will be acquainted with someone who is struggling with addiction. Here are some ways you can help:

- Stay positive. Asking for help is a major act of courage. It can be easy to focus on all the damage that comes with addiction, but now is not the time. Encouragement goes a long way on the road to change.
- Connect your loved one with a health care or mental health professional that specializes in addiction. Some people feel more comfortable speaking to a physician or counselor about their addiction; and this gives your loved one the opportunity to get answers to his/her questions in a safe and confidential environment. The American Society of Addiction Medicine website has a "Find a Physician" feature on its home page. There is also a provider directory on the Alabama Department of Mental Health website.
- Assist in finding treatment options. Scientific evidence proves that treatment does work, and that recovery is possible. However, identifying the right treatment can be overwhelming and scary. You can help by learning about the different treatment options, and offer your support as your loved one chooses the one that is right for him/her.
- Remember that, just like with other chronic diseases, it may take multiple treatment attempts to find the one that works. Encourage your loved one to keep at it, even when things get hard.
- Take care of yourself. An empty cup has nothing to pour into others. Keep in mind that your loved one's addiction is not your fault or your problem to control. Taking time to practice self-care and recharge can greatly impact how you handle your loved one's situation. The Al-Anon website has a list of local meeting times available for those needing support.

For more information on treatment options, call 256-284-7080 to schedule an appointment.

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