

Feeling stuck

Worried about a loved one's drinking or drug use?
Here are some signs to look for.
And it's never too early to ask for help.

Trust your intuition.

Something is going on with your loved one and you suspect alcohol, drugs or mental illness may be the cause. Are you making a big deal out of nothing? Or is there real cause for concern? Here are some red flags to watch for:

Your loved one has stopped being relational.

Often, one of the first things family members notice about a loved one who is struggling with addiction or mental illness is that he or she stops relating to them in a healthy manner—or relating to them at all.



Your loved one is trying to convince you that you're crazy.

Addicts and alcoholics have a vested interest in shifting attention away from them and onto you. It's common that you'll try to talk to your loved one about their drug or alcohol use and find yourself in the defensive position over something completely unrelated.

Your loved one is exhibiting classic symptoms of addiction or mental illness.

These could include the following:

- Neglecting work, school or other obligations
- Ignoring grooming or hygiene
- Inability to account for money or time
- Declining health
- Legal consequences

Control is not possible. Influence is.

If your loved one does have addiction or mental illness, it's important to wrap your mind around the idea of "powerlessness." It can be hard to accept, but your loved one is powerless over their addiction. That's why their behavior is so insane and hurtful. And if they're powerless over their own addiction or mental illness, how could you possibly have power over it?

It's common for family members trying to control their loved one's behavior to "help" them or save them from themselves. Unfortunately, it doesn't work—and it can actually enable the harmful behavior. Watch for these tendencies in yourself:



-Hiding or throwing out their drugs or alcohol.

-Trying to control the money so they can't buy drugs or alcohol.

-Bargaining with them to stop or slow down. For example, using sex as a negotiation tool.

-Drinking or using drugs to excess to match them or teach them a lesson.



The good news is, you can positively influence your loved one by focusing your energy on what you have control over: yourself. The best way to influence a loved one is by getting yourself healthy.

Family-focused recovery starts with the family.

For family members concerned about a loved one's behavioral health, the idea of caretaking themselves can seem laughable. But the truth is, addiction and mental illness are family diseases.

So while your loved one might be the one exhibiting concerning behavior, it's critical to take care of yourself so you don't reach your own crisis. Here are some signs to watch out for in yourself:



Preoccupation

How much time are you spending thinking about the issues affecting your loved one? Are you so distracted that you're having trouble concentrating at work? If you're the parent of a child you're concerned about, are you focusing on that one child over your other children?

Attempts to control

Do you spend time, money and energy solving problems for your loved one that they created for themselves? Are you trying to control your loved one's problem behaviors? Do you try to "fix" your loved one?

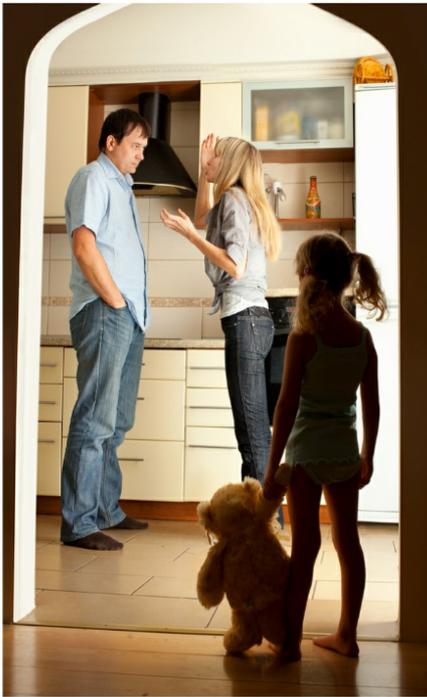
Physical symptoms

Are your worries about your loved one affecting your physical health? Do you have symptoms of anxiety related to your loved one, such as elevated heart rate, chest pain, agitation, irritability or insomnia?

It can feel counterintuitive to shift the focus from your loved one onto yourself. Healing has to take place across the whole system. And sometimes family members are in a better position to start their own healing process than their loved one is.

Why is this happening to us?

It's a question almost everyone who's been touched by addiction asks:
Why? Why is this happening to my loved one?



There's no shortage of theories, including genetic predisposition, spiritual malady, psychosocial issues, brain chemistry and more. Many of these theories were groundbreaking when they first came out.

However, the most groundbreaking work points toward "developmental trauma" as being behind addiction and other behavioral issues.

When most of us think about trauma, we think about big events, like a car accident or a house burning down or being the victim of a violent crime.

But trauma can result from patterns of less than nurturing experiences, and it's not always at the hand of the primary caregiver.

The potential for healing and recovery from trauma-informed treatment modalities is exciting, particularly when it's paired with a 12-step program like Alcoholics Anonymous.

Concerned that a loved one is building to a crisis with addictive behavior or mental health issues?



We highly recommend seeking help that has its eye on the underlying issues as part of its treatment modality.

You're not alone.

You might have been trying to deal with your loved one's drug or alcohol use or behavioral issues by yourself for a long time. The truth is, it's very rare for someone with mental illness or drug or alcohol problems to get better on their own.



If you're experiencing any of the issues we've addressed in this ebook, it can't hurt to reach out to a mental health professional to talk through your concerns. We can often provide communication tools or community resources that can help start the process of family healing.

**Get in touch with us today for a consultation.
We're compassionate and experienced behavioral health
specialists who help families find the right solution for them.**

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