

Let's Talk: The Family Impact Of Substance Misuse

Presenter – Daphne Parker, Licensed Professional Counselor

Let's talk about substance use disorder and how that affects friends and family. Hi everyone, my name is Daphne. I'm a licensed professional counselor and I'm also a mother, a wife, a daughter, a sister. I have a lot of other roles besides just helping professional. We've all seen the statistics quoted on news broadcast and in the media, a lot of people are struggling with substance use disorder. This actually has been increasing in the last few years. We're seeing more and more people struggling with this disease. And so if you consider that increased number of people struggling with the disease, you also have to consider, there's a lot of friends and family members affiliated with these individuals who are also then left to struggle with and come to terms with this disorder and how it's impacting their family. There's not really a guide out there for how to handle it. When one of your close friends or family members begins to struggle with substance use disorder, we all kind of make it up as we go. We just cope the best we can.

How can you cope?

Some of the ways that we cope can be helpful, but there's some ways that we cope that could actually make the problem worse or cause us to suffer from some financial difficulties or stress, maybe even a longer term mental health issue for ourselves, if we're not coping well with this issue. Let's talk about what would be helpful as you're trying to help your family member. It may be counterintuitive, but actually ignoring the problem and kind of jumping in and taking care of everything yourself, not holding the person accountable, can really just make things worse in the long run. So you wanna definitely take some time to think about what's going on. Look for a good time when the person is sober and share how you're feeling, encourage them to get help. And also you're gonna need to set some healthy boundaries for yourself within this whole framework. Be sure to think of ways, not only to help the person, but how to help yourself in the process.

What are some constructive ways to handle the issue?

Let's talk about some constructive ways to deal with this issue. It may seem counterintuitive, but avoiding the problem and not talking about it with the individual can actually lead to longer-term increase of the problem and stress. So you would wanna find a time when the person is sober, talk to them about what you're noticing, what you're seeing and encourage them to get some help. You should also take care to set good boundaries so that your own wellbeing is not taken over by the problem.

Set good boundaries

Let's talk about what you can do. First of all, we can't fix another person. So don't try to focus on how to control or change the other person. Be sure and look for some ways that you can take care of yourself, including maybe reaching out for some help. There's some great support and organizations that can help you to navigate what you can control so that you can make things better for yourself, as you're also trying to help the other person. You need to avoid blaming yourself. You're not responsible for the other person's choices. Don't try to fix them, people can really only change themselves. Although it's tempting, don't argue with them, especially when they're intoxicated. And then be sure and ask for help for yourself. There's a lot of great support organizations and programs where you can get a framework for what you can do to take care of yourself. Remember addiction doesn't just affect the person with the addiction, it's called a family disease because it impacts anyone who cares about the person with the addiction. You can't control the addiction, but you can learn more about it, seek help and take good care of yourself.

Resources For Living

The EAP is administered by Resources For Living, LLC. This material is for informational purposes only. Information is not a substitute for professional health care and is not meant to replace the advice of health care professionals. Contact a health care professional with any questions or concerns about specific health care needs.

©2022 Resources For Living | 919012-01-01-2022-RFL (1/22)