



Supporting Someone with Opioid Addiction

Opioid Use Disorder

Opioid addiction is a brain disease. Opioids- like morphine and heroin- change the way our brain works and how we think. One of the first brain changes that occurs is that these drugs hijack the part of our brain that controls our cravings.

People often start to misuse prescription opioids by taking them:

- more often
- in larger amounts
- for reasons they were not prescribed for

When someone's opioid misuse causes them to have health issues or problems at work, school, or home, they have an opioid use disorder.

Opioid use disorder is a common medical condition that people can recover from.



Supporting Someone with an Opioid Use Disorder

Recovering from opioid use disorder is often a life long journey. Walking the road to recovery can be a bumpy path with many ups and downs, but having a strong support system can help. Below are some ways you can support someone with an opioid use disorder.

Remember opioid use disorder is not a choice or moral failing. It is a brain disease.

Learn about opioid use disorder. Reading this fact sheet is a good start!

Talk to a counselor or another medical professional.

Use kind and respectful language.

Keep in mind that not everyone is able to recognize how much opioid use is impacting their life, so be gentle and share how you see opioids impacting them.

Stay positive encourage your loved one to get help...but try to not focus too much on detox and rehab.

Keep in mind some people are not ready to stop taking opioids completely. Helping someone develop strategies to protect their safety while they continue to take opioids may be where they are at now.



Definition:

Kind and respectful language includes using what is called person-first language to describe people with opioid use disorder. For example, saying "people who use drugs," instead of saying "drug users." Also try to avoid using stigmatizing language like "drug addict," "clean," or other terms that reduce a person to just one behavior.



Encourage your loved one to take part in healing practices and traditions. Culture is medicine.

Make sure to invite the person to join in on activities, just like you would anyone else. Feeling supported and loved is important for everyone during tough times.

Recognize that relapse is not a sign of failure. It is often part of the overall recovery process.

Get training on using naloxone - a safe drug that you can use to quickly reverse an opioid overdose.

Carry naloxone in case of an opioid overdose emergency. Acting quickly is important. It can save lives.

Embrace Self-care

Supporting someone with opioid use disorder can be difficult. It is important to care for yourself as well. Below are some ways you can embrace self-care while supporting someone with an opioid use disorder.

Talk it out

Loved ones of those with opioid use disorder need support too. Try finding a counselor who specializes in substance use counseling and get help.

Be supportive, but have realistic expectations

Recognize that opioid use disorder is a long-term condition that the person must learn to manage. No one can "make" someone with opioid use disorder change their behaviors.

Try a mind-body practice

Yoga, tai chi, meditation, beading, weaving and other cultural activities can help you decrease stress and re-energize.

Make eating well and getting quality sleep priorities

It's easy to forget about your own needs when trying to help others, but getting enough sleep and eating well are important.

Get Connected

Join a local support group for loved ones of people with opioid use disorder. Realizing that you're not alone and that others are going through similar experiences is healing. Your health care provider can tell you about groups in your community.

There is Hope

We can heal our communities through educating ourselves and others, supporting each other, and seeking help when we need it.



Text 'OPIOIDS' to 94449 to receive videos, quizzes, facts, and more to grow your knowledge about opioids.



Visit the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board's website at www.npaihb.org/opioid to learn more about treatments, reversing an overdose, and other important topics.

