

Actions to take for those with an addicted loved one

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A mentor of mine always says that one of the most powerful forces on earth is inertia. That objects in motion tend to stay in motion, while still objects tend to stay still. As a family member, it is incredibly difficult to move yourself and your loved one towards recovery, and it is often unclear what the correct action is. I would suggest that starting to move is the most important action. These recommendations are stated in no particular order, but I hope will give you some ideas on ways that you can get the momentum going towards recovery.

1. Get Educated - Two books to start with

- Get Your Loved One Sober- Robert Myers
- Love First – Jeff Jay and Deborah Jay

Don't like reading? Take a course or watch videos

- Pleasure Unwoven & Memo to Self are great places to start. Both are available on www.vimeo.com
- Take a course on Community Reinforcement And Family Training (CRAFT)- www.cadenceonline.com

Attend the Family Education Program

- Meets every Thursday Night at 6:30 PM at 563 Southlake Blvd., Richmond, VA. Different Addiction and Recovery focused topic weekly. The group is free, email recovery@vcu.edu to get on our mailing list

Read up on Recovery & Change:

- RecoveryAnswers.org – Dr. John Kelly is a Harvard researcher who studies recovery. The site has great science but is geared towards readability.
- Williamwhitepapers.com – Wonderful history and writings about the modern recovery movement.
- Center for Motivation and Change Blog- <http://motivationandchange.com/cmcs-blog-for-individuals-and-families/>

2. Get Support

- Individual counseling is often very helpful for families as they navigate very difficult circumstances.
- 12 step groups such as Al-Anon (<http://www.alanonrichmondva.org/scheduleTrifold.pdf>), Nar-Anon(nar-

anon.org), and Families Anonymous (<https://sites.google.com/site/familiesanonymousrichmond/>) offer mutual aid support to families.

- Additionally, SMART Recovery offers online family meetings: <http://www.smartrecovery.org/resources/family.htm>
- Northstar Community is a Christian community that focuses on recovery. It is an open and accepting, un-churchy church.
- Celebrate Recovery is a Christian based recovery program, which is used by many faith communities of different denominations.

3. Arm yourself with resources – Unfortunately, there are insufficient resources in our community to treat all the people who need treatment. Families who can educate themselves on the most effective resources have the greatest chance of getting their loved one into effective treatment. While this post will not include suggestions about individual facilities or providers, it is worth finding several people who have “no skin in the game” to get some recommendations from or find an interventionist whose job it is to know these resources. I am happy to provide individual lists on a case by case basis, email recovery@vcu.edu.

- Get to know treatment options – Resources to explore include:
 - Inpatient Detox
 - Intensive Outpatient
 - Short-Term Inpatient Treatment (Less than 30 days)
 - Long Term Inpatient Treatment (60 days or more)
 - Recovery Housing
 - Continuing Care Support
- Know what you can afford
 - If inpatient treatment is needed, find out what if anything is covered by insurance.
 - Always ask, what is the maximum out of pocket expense? Try to get as much as you can in writing.
 - Talk to your insurance company, try to get treatment preapproved. Find out what they cover.
- Grill the Inpatient Facilities – You are spending a lot of money on treatment, ask questions.
 - What is the average length of stay?
 - What do you do to connect them with follow up support?
 - Do you provide continuing care support? What are your outcomes?
 - Do most clients step down into recovery houses?
 - How is the family involved in treatment? Do you have a family program?
 - What is your facility’s particular strength? Why is my loved one a good fit?
 - What other facilities would you suggest that I look at for my loved one?

- Listen – A few things to look for
 - Do they really treat addiction as a chronic illness? This means long-term treatment. If they are a 30 day provider, what do they do to match the patient with long term support. What do they suggest if there is relapse?
 - Clinical Humility- If they say they do everything, chances are they are not particularly good at anything. If they are able to identify the things that they do particularly well (Ie. We are really good with young adults, or professionals, or trauma etc.), and it matches the need for your loved one that is good. If they don't have contacts at other facilities, beware.
 - They should offer support to families and it should be free.
 - They should have clear and meaningful outcomes, and if they don't they should admit it. They should be able to send you a document that outlines their outcomes and their methods of measuring them. Treatment providers are finally moving in this direction but they are not there yet. Asking this question of all providers is a way of advocating for better treatment in the future.

4. Buckle up for the long haul

- Addiction is a chronic disease that must be managed. Your loved one will need to learn to manage his or her disease over the long term. The majority of people will not find recovery the first time they seek help. This does not mean that treatment was a failure.
- Recovery is not binary – People tend to think of addiction in very black and white terms, Not drinking using=success, drinking/using=failure. This can be problematic as it leads to the oversimplification “He can just not use and he'll be fine.” Recovery is about a life style change, and happens slowly over a long period of time. Often people have a slip or a lapse during that time. Family member's ability to respond compassionately, yet firmly during these lapses can make all the difference in recovery.
- 30 days of recovery is barely a start. The vast majority of people need a number of long term recovery supports to be successful with long-term recovery. For many people, Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous SMART Recovery or Celebrate Recovery serves this purpose, but other supports can be critical to augmenting this support. Length of engagement is incredibly important in predicting recovery outcomes. This can include:
 - Recovery Housing
 - Employment support (Through EAP Programs, Lawyers Helping Lawyers, Physicians Help Programs)
 - Recovery Coaching
 - Medication
 - Individual Therapy

- Intensive Outpatient
 - Group Therapy
 - SMART Recovery
 - Alcoholics Anonymous
 - Narcotics Anonymous
 - Celebrate Recovery
 - Refuge Recovery
- Look at crisis as an opportunity – With your loved one's next crisis, look for opportunities to get them into treatment. Most people are ambivalent about change most of the time. Looking for windows of opportunity to engage people in positive change helps get people into treatment and start the road to recovery.