



# 7 Ways



## PARENTAL RECOVERY

WHEN YOUR CHILD IS ADDICTED

CATHY  
TAUGHINBAUGH



Substance abuse and addiction seem to be everywhere, and something that we cannot continue to ignore. It is an epidemic, not just in the inner cities but all over America. *Teens make decisions everyday on whether they are going to experiment with drugs or alcohol and start down this dark road.*

As parents, we try to stay on top of it all, but with work and other responsibilities, it can be a challenge. Many parents don't know where to go for help, or are too ashamed to ask, when their child is in trouble. If you are concerned about your child, know that you are not alone. There are many other parents out there who are up late, unable to sleep because they are worried about their child. This is an all too common problem.

Perhaps your child is not yet addicted. You might be a parent who is concerned about your child's experimentation and are trying to learn everything you can about substance abuse. Now is the best time to do all you can . . . before your child makes an unhealthy choice that leads them down the path to addiction.

I commend you for visiting my website and for learning as much as possible about the dangers of substance abuse to help prevent addiction from occurring in your family. Hopefully, this information will help guide you and give you direction and support during these trying times.

There are no guarantees with substance abuse. You can make the best choices possible for your family, and your child may still become dependent on drugs or alcohol. Their dependency may even continue on and become an addiction.

The more you communicate with your child, the greater chance that they will not use drugs or alcohol during their teen years. As we know, teen brains do not fully develop until age 24 or 25, so we need to give them every advantage by helping them make healthy choices. The more you know about the dangers of substance abuse, the more you will be able to help your teen make healthy choices.



**One of the first large organizations that you should check out is The Partnership at Drugfree.org.**



Quoted from their website, here are **six ways to help you reduce the chance that your teenage child will drink, use drugs or engage in other risky behavior.**

1. Build a warm and supportive relationship with your child
2. Be a good role model when it comes to drinking, taking medicine and handling stress
3. Know your child's risk level
4. Know your child's friends
5. Monitor, supervise and set boundaries
6. Have ongoing conversations and provide information about drugs and alcohol

If you are a parent who is concerned about your child's drug or alcohol use, know that others have walked this path before you. We have all learned many things, much of it by trial and error. Many families have had success, but others have not. It is imperative that you learn all you can so that you will be a positive support system to your teen or young adult.

### *Here is my story and what I've learned.*



I clearly remember the day when I discovered that my daughter was using drugs.



I was devastated.



I was also filled with shame and confusion.

My daughter started out life as a typical little girl growing up in a suburban neighborhood of northern California. She excelled in school, especially during her elementary years.

My daughter was a brownie, a girl scout, played soccer and softball, and performed in theater productions. She had many wonderful friends, a quick wit and fun sense of humor.

It was during middle school that I noticed her grades had started to slip. But the first two years of high school were smooth. She joined the water polo team, as well as the swim team and made



some close friends. I felt that I knew her friends' parents, since most of the girls had grown up together.

During the last two years of high school things started to get rocky. Not dramatically, but just enough to notice. She kept her curfew, and many of her friends remained the same. Although, there were a few news ones that made me curious and concerned.

Her father and I encouraged her to do better, monitored her whereabouts, and tried to be on top of all that was going on. Graduation came and went.

She was accepted to college in Colorado and I flew back with her that August, sending her off with the same hopes and dreams of any other parent.

Those hopes and dreams were dashed after her first semester, as she was soon on probation. After the second semester, she needed to attend the local junior college in order to return in the fall.

But after the dismal fall semester of her sophomore year, college was over. She took a part time job washing dogs, and even that soon fell apart.

I flew back to see what I could do.

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**We were on a mountain trail taking a walk when my daughter finally admitted she was addicted to drugs. I should have known, and wondered why I didn't.**

I was in denial.

I walked on for awhile not saying anything, trying desperately to gather my thoughts.

I felt that my world as I knew it would never be the same. I was speechless, at first not knowing what to say. I felt that I had suddenly sunk into the deepest dark hole, and I had no understanding of how to find my way out.

Both of us started crying, and I told her I was not leaving her alone to continue using drugs. But deep down I knew I had lost all control over my daughter and her drug use.

Like many parents, I couldn't face the fact that my child was using drugs. I knew nothing about how to solve a drug problem and did not know where to turn.

As you go along this journey, there are so many words that will become part of your new everyday vocabulary such as denial, enabling, letting go, detaching (with love) and setting boundaries. I've never talked about these subjects more than after my experience with addiction.

As parents, there are many things you can do to help. There are also many things parents can do that will make the situation worse.

If your child is starting down this road of substance abuse or addiction, learn all you can so that you are prepared and know your best course of action. You will have a better chance of saving yourself and giving your child the chance to get their life back on track.



## 7 Things You Need to Know

Here are seven things you need to know if you are a parent of a teen or young adult who is experimenting or abusing drugs or alcohol. These are things that helped me as I started down the journey of trying to save my daughter and our family.



### Educate yourself



*"Education is one of our best weapons in the battle against addiction."*  
~Dr. Adi Jaffe

We all have looked for some kind of therapy, magic pill or miracle cure which could fix our child's problem, but the reality is that there is no quick fix for addiction.

Learning all you can about the disease of addiction is the first step toward helping yourself and your child. There are many books, videos and online sources of information that can explain the disease of addiction, and what you can do if your child becomes addicted.

Workshops, support groups, addiction counselors, and family therapists can be found in every city in America. There is a wealth of information available, so take advantage of whatever you find in your area and online to learn about substance abuse and addiction.

I've read books on the topic, watched videos, attended support groups and met with an addiction counselor. I have learned something each time and continue to learn more as I expand my knowledge of substance abuse and addiction.

For someone just learning about their child's substance abuse, the wealth of information can be overwhelming and can almost paralyze you because it is difficult to know who to believe or what is going to be the most helpful to your situation.

Ask friends, other parents that have experienced substance abuse with their children, counselors, addiction coaches, your doctor and/or a member of the clergy to give you local resources that they recommend. That is the beauty of an Al-Anon, Naranon or a Family support group. Parents that attend have a wealth of information and are willing to pass along what has helped them.

At the end of this book, you'll find a list of resources that helped me start to understand what I was dealing with.



## Be Supportive, but don't Enable



*We'd rather do something familiar and ineffective than something new that might actually work." ~Steve Hauptman*

No one loves our children like we do. We see them suffering. Do you often wonder how can you make the problem go away? All parents in this situation want to know how to fix the problem.

**Here's the thing:** we're parents and our job in life is to help our children through whatever crisis comes their way. When our child becomes addicted to drugs or alcohol, we are being told not to enable, not to help. It's confusing, and frustrating because it goes against the grain of what a parent does. Our priority is to remain in our comfort zone. We want to fix the problem, and we will continue to do what is familiar, hoping that it will make our children's addiction go away.

So what is the difference between being supportive and enabling? Some questions you might ask yourself are:

**"Is what I'm doing for my child something that he should be doing for himself?"**

**"Am I helping my child reach and stay in long term recovery?"**

One that I follow up with and ask all of my coaching clients is **"How well is this working for you?"** When we give money, provide food, housing and all the comforts of life in the hopes that our children will change their bad habits, often they are using whatever we provide as a way to buy more drugs or alcohol.

I would love to say that there is an easy answer to this problem, but there isn't. The answer lies in allowing your child to take responsibility for their life. In other words as painful as it may be to watch, our children need to live with their choices.

As one mother said, **"Each time I tried to fix their problem by paying off their debt, providing food or transportation, rescuing them from their latest crisis, things only became worse."**

There are ways to be supportive without enabling. For starters, criticizing, rejecting and making our children feel shame does not help them with recovery.

Encourage them to seek treatment, let them know that you love them unconditionally, but that their addiction is harmful and you will not allow it to interfere with your life.

Remember enabling is not love! It is crucial that we set boundaries and let our children be accountable for their lives. It may be difficult, but it is the best way to ensure that our children will become responsible adults.



## Let Go

Letting go can be one of the most challenging pieces of this puzzle, but here are some examples of how it can help you.



## Let go of Denial

*"The truth most families eventually discover is that no one can cure another person's addiction. Only addicts can do that for themselves."*  
**~Beverly Conyers**

Being in denial is just one of many traps that parents fall into when faced with the substance abuse of their child. As parents, it is easier to continue the status quo. We can deny our children have a problem, until our denial is no longer working and we are forced to face the situation. Time can be lost when parents are not willing or ready to face the truth.

The problem for many parents is that we often put blinders on and refuse to acknowledge a problem that is right in front of us. Some may even take the attitude that if they do not see it, it is not happening. Outsiders often have a clear understanding of a problem that we live with, yet refuse to acknowledge.

With two working parents, many of us are tired, overworked and stressed. Parents may choose the path of least resistance, without considering how this negative pattern will harm their child long term.

They may let questionable situations with their children go and hope that it is just a phase because they don't want to deal with it. Let me tell you from experience, a smaller problem that can be handled when your teen is just starting to experiment, can easily turn into an out of control addiction when you don't take action.

*Some steps that you should take to help your teen are:*

- ✦ Recognize that you are in denial.
- ✦ Ask questions and seek information.
- ✦ Know where your kids are and how to contact them.
- ✦ Talk to your kids often about the dangers of peer pressure, alcohol and drug use.
- ✦ Connect with other parents and agree to share information if they feel a child's behavior may cause them harm.
- ✦ Educate yourself about what is happening in your community regarding teen drug and alcohol use.
- ✦ Do not blame yourself for your child's drug or alcohol use.
- ✦ Let go of your shame and get your child the help that they need.
- ✦ Don't be a Not-MY-Child parent. Do not write off a drug or alcohol problem as teens-will-be-teens.
- ✦ Set aside quality time to spend with your child so that you can have fun together and build a bond with your teen.



Some of these tips will work with young adults as well if they are living with you. If they have their own income or have left home, use what applies to your situation.

Denial can be as much a part of the problem as drug or alcohol use itself. Denial is when people refuse to face reality or admit that they have a problem. Drug addicts can be in denial about their habits and parents can also be in denial about their child's drug or alcohol use. It is used to spare ourselves having to leave our comfort zone and feel the stress and pain of the situation.

It is important to recognize when we are in denial, and that by facing the problem now, rather than later, we can face the problem head on and create a better chance of recovery.

**Listen to your instincts. If you feel like something isn't right, act on your instincts and find out the truth of the situation. Until you understand the truth, you will not find peace, nor will you be ready to help your addict.**



### Let go of Shame



*"Shame is an unspoken epidemic, the secret behind many forms of broken behavior." ~Brene Brown*

When our child becomes addicted, we may question our worth as a parent or even as a person. Parents feel shame when their child is addicted. We blame ourselves and continually replay what we did wrong that caused the addiction. Feeling the shame of addiction does nothing to help your child seek recovery, nor does it help your feelings of self worth.

What helped me the most was connecting with other parents that had experienced addiction with their children. I realized that most of these parents were loving parents who tried to do all the right things. They shared their stories and what worked for them. With this group of parents, I don't have to explain, I don't have to apologize, and I don't have to feel shame.

When we let go of shame, the problem comes out of the closet into the light and opens up more possibilities for recovery.



### Let go of Resentment



*"I am becoming used to an overwhelming, grinding mixture of anger and worry..." ~David Sheff*

It has been said that an expectation is a premeditated resentment. When we have expectations that are not met, resentments can bloom and grow.





Resentments can drag us down and keep us feeling like a victim. It is important to forgive and realize that change can benefit not only the addicted person, but parents and family members as well. We can choose to spend our time reviewing in our minds how we have been hurt. As we hold on to these resentments, they prevent us from experiencing the joys of life.

When we forgive and let go, it cuts us loose from the pain of the past. It helps to be willing to see things as they are. Instead of focusing on how our adult children can change, we can put our attention to our own life. We may not agree with our child's choices in life, but we can still love them for who they are.



## Let go of Control

*"How would your life be different if...you stopped worrying about things you can't control and started focusing on the things you can? Let today be the day...You free yourself from fruitless worry, seize the day and take effective action on things you can change." ~Steve Maraboli*

Trying to control others simply doesn't work. It is a challenge to give up control of our child's addiction because it seems so clear to us what needs to be done to get our child on the road to recovery.

Our need for control is often based on fear. Fear of the unknown, fear of what might happen to our child. Parents often feel that they know what's best and that they alone can manage their child's addiction. Some parents seek control because of what we think might happen. We envision the worst scenarios and we want to make sure that our child stays safe.

**Let me be clear. When your teen is under 18, you want to use whatever professional services you deem appropriate** to help your child make better choices. It is much easier to stop abuse in the beginning than try and deal with a full blown addiction. When your child is an adult, you can also help them to see the value of changing their life and seeking recovery. It is important to know what you can do to be supportive.

That being said, we may do what we can to prevent addiction by offering treatment, but we cannot fix the addiction of anyone else, not even our child. They need to be ready to step up and seek recovery themselves. Often parents realize that after the first few relapses, or if the addiction continues on with no effort to seek recovery. Even with the very best treatment programs, there are no guarantees.

Parents can become tormented by the addiction, but when we surrender and understand that we cannot control our child's addiction, we become more calm and peaceful. We accept the situation for what it is. We support the recovery of our child and we keep the faith that things will work out. We realize that we cannot control the ultimate outcome of our child's addiction.

There are no guarantees that things will turn out the way we would like.

Do the work to bring a deeper level of acceptance and serenity to this difficult time in your life.



## Set Boundaries

*"Boundaries are healthy for you and those surrounding you. I cannot change my addict's behavior by setting rules. Any success for me in dealing with my son's addiction is a result of setting good boundaries for myself." ~Ron Grover*

A personal boundary is a force that holds in our resources, such as our core beliefs, feelings, thoughts and ideas. We feel out of control when our boundaries are weak. Other people and other circumstances begin to dictate how you act and behave. You react and respond to what is happening around you, rather than feeling in charge of your life.

**When our child is abusing drugs or alcohol, life can suddenly feel out of control.** Our self esteem goes down, and we feel that our child's addiction is running our life.

When setting boundaries, consider what is in your control and take full responsibility for those matters. For instance, you don't have to tolerate drug or alcohol abuse in your home, verbal abuse, stealing money or staying out late. Depending on the age of your child and whether they are living with you, come up with boundaries that work for you and your family. Write them down and discuss them with your child ahead of time so that all parties concerned understand the consequences. Set healthy limitations for yourself and your child. That is one way that you will feel that you have gained control of your life.



## Encourage the Addict to Get Treatment

*"It just takes one to stop the dance, to change the steps and start a new dance. But if both change and learn the new steps and practice those steps, together, a new dance is created. Sometimes one or both will go back to the old one – that's normal – it's what is most comfortable; it's what they've practiced for years. But a new dance is possible. It may be together; it may be solo, but it is possible. It takes learning the new steps, and it takes a lot of practice." ~ Lisa Frederiksen*

If your child is under 18, you still have parental rights and can get your child the help they need whether they acknowledge their problem or not. If your child is 18 or older, you can talk to your child in a calm, nonjudgmental manner and suggest that they seek help. They do, however, have the power to decide whether they will seek and stay in treatment.



If your adult child refuses help and is in denial about their drug or alcohol use, as a parent you need to come to terms with this fact. Seek outside help whenever necessary. An objective opinion can make all the difference.

Interventions by family members or professionals is one option to consider. An intervention is about re-establishing the connection between the family member suffering from untreated addiction and their loved ones through a carefully managed, respectful process. An intervention can serve as the first step on the road to recovery.

It is important to recognize your child's drug use for what it is, and take appropriate action to help your child as well as yourself and other family members seek recovery and find peace of mind.



## Get Family Support (Take Care of Yourself)



*"If the family works together, the chances of recovery go up exponentially. It's important for parents to know things can get better." ~Diane Vogt*

**You don't have to be addicted to a substance or behavior to suffer from addiction. It is important to get help. Often the problem is much worse than you think.**

Take care by eating well, getting enough rest, exercising regularly, using techniques such as being still, deep breathing, meditation or journaling to let go of the stress.

Some parents, because they don't know where to turn and because they don't want anyone else to know about their problem, try to handle the situation on their own. This cannot only encourage the substance abuse to continue, it can also be a fatal mistake.

Getting support for the parent as well as other family members is one of the most important things you can do. Learning from others who have experienced addiction with their children through support groups and/or talking to a professional who can offer guidance and direction are invaluable. No parent plans on having to cope with this situation and unfortunately most parenting books do not include a section on teen substance abuse.

Al-Anon has become an invaluable part of my life, but there are many types of support groups out there. Finding the right meeting for you takes time and effort. **With desire and persistence, you will find the support that works for you.**

After trying many wonderful and inspiring meetings, someone told me about a Parents' Meeting in my area. I attended and it only took a few minutes to realize that I had found a place where I felt comfortable and could learn from others.

This is a place where parents support each other; where we can grieve for our children, express the pain of our shattered lives, and celebrate their return from the stranglehold of addiction. We can listen and learn from each other as we try to make our way through this new life that has been thrust upon us.



Some have lived through alcoholic parents as a child. They may be better able to understand the ups and downs of the disease. Some may be in recovery from their own addiction and know first hand the struggle and challenges of the disease. For some of us, this is a brand new experience, one that came with no previous knowledge, and so the learning curve is little steeper.

Meetings are a place to learn and grow. You have the opportunity to listen to others tell their story. Some days you may have much to share, other days you just want to listen. Many say that they feel closer to those at their weekly meeting than their lifelong best friends. Attending a meeting gives you the opportunity to freely express how you are feeling on any given day and gives you support throughout the ups and downs of addiction.

When you attend a meeting for family and friends of alcoholics/addicts, the purpose of the meeting is not to cure your loved one, but to help you with your recovery.

Trying a number of different meetings helps make the decision if a parent support meeting is right for you. It is not the only way to receive help, but it has the potential to offer the kind of support that is invaluable.



## Detach with Love

The unknown result of letting go is frightening. It does not seem like something a loving or caring parent would do.



*"Detachment is based on the premises that each person is responsible for himself, that we can't solve problems that aren't ours to solve, and that worrying doesn't help." ~ Melody Beattie*

### **How could I detach if I don't believe there is a problem?**

For parents of addicted children, reaching recovery includes the slow process of "detaching with love" from your child. This can be difficult when you are concerned about your child's life.

Many of us want to solve their issues and shortcut the process so healing can begin sooner rather than later. It helps us remain in our comfort zone of control and return our family to "normal life." For parent of teens: Take an interest in your teenager's lives and be aware of who their friends are. In many cases, your teen will feel that you are interfering and imposing on their freedom. They may give you the silent treatment or even shun you.

As painful as this may feel, as your teen grows older, these feelings will pass. Dealing with a bit of silence is a much better option than to have your teen spiral out of control, end up overdosing or incarcerated.

For parents of addicted young adults: As hard as it feels when we realize that we cannot control or solve our child's issues, the best option left is to detach from your child's issues.



This does not mean that you are not supportive. You can be available and ready to help once your child makes the decision to seek recovery. **You can support their recovery in whatever way you feel is appropriate.** Until that day, you can love them and care about them, but withdraw from the emotional ups and downs of their day-to-day situation.

You might be wondering what happened to my daughter. Did she recover or is she still in the midst of her addiction? My daughter was 19 when I discovered she was addicted to crystal meth. I am so grateful that she is now in her mid-twenties.

After I flew back to Colorado to see what I could do, she made the choice to come home with me. Her instincts told her it was time to make a change and find a better way to live.

Within one week, she was on a plane to Utah to attend a Wilderness program for five weeks. She then headed to Southern California where she was in treatment for another three months. Following that program, she resided in a sober living home for six months.

Her recovery program included getting a job and/or attending college. She did both and graduated from a local state university in 2009. A part-time job in a grocery store helped pay her expenses while going back to school.

After leaving the program, she remained in southern California and has lived in apartments with amazing young women from her program. Several remain close friends.

She worked full time at the store until she found her present job in advertising, and today, she has relocated again to live closer to her family. She has come full circle.

*Being addicted is not what any mom dreams for her child. This is the last thing I expected for my daughter. The emotional exhaustion sends you down a devastating path. It is a challenge to find your way back. The financial costs took my breath away.*

As a parent, we had weekly calls from the wilderness camp and received weekly reports from her treatment center. I tried counseling, coaching and groups in my efforts to find support. I thought about who I would tell about this difficult journey and felt the shame of addiction. I also felt guilty, frustrated, angry and afraid.

Now as a young adult, my daughter has returned to living her life. She is mature beyond her years. She is insightful and has embraced a spiritual component to her life. In some ways, my daughter's past is invisible.

She has moved on and doesn't discuss her addiction often. She knows, however, that life can be hard due to poor choices and the disease of addiction. She also knows that there is always hope. We both realized that our lives could change when we were ready to dig deep, overcome our fear, and take on the challenge to begin again.



*Realize that while addiction can be a serious disease, there is always hope. Let go of your shame, for you are not alone. Reach out and get the help you need.*



Know that we walk this path together, with no need to explain.

Do you need support as you cope with your child's growing substance abuse? Parent Recovery Coaching is a group or individual program that is uniquely crafted for your needs and goals. When we work together, I'm focused on supporting you on your journey to a happy, healthy, and inspired life of family recovery.

I offer a program that recovers, restores and ultimately reinvents your life. I'll support you with the following:

- ✦ Setting effective, achievable and positive goals.
- ✦ Letting go of expectations that are keeping you stuck
- ✦ Taking small, but powerful steps that put change in motion immediately
- ✦ Learning new information about recovery, wellness and personal development and how it can transform your life
- ✦ Designing long-term changes in a positive, supportive no pressure setting.

To learn more about personal coaching or book your complimentary session, click below.

[✦ FIND OUT MORE ✦](#)



## Resources:

### **Books about Addiction:**

Addictive Thinking: Understanding Self Deception, by Abraham J. Twerski M.D.

Get Your Loved One Sober: Alternatives to Nagging, Pleading, and Threatening, by Robert J. Meyers

Why Don't They Just Quit?, by Joe Herzanek

Crossing the Line: From Alcohol Use to Abuse to Dependence, by Lisa Frederiksen

Recover to Live, by Christopher Kennedy Lawford

### **Addiction Memoirs:**

My Beautiful Boy, by David Sheff,

The Lost Years, by Kristina Wandzilak and Constance Curry

Stay Close, by Libby Cataldi

### **Videos:**

HBO Addiction

The Overtaken Documentary

Suburban Junkies

Collision Course – Teen Addiction Epidemic

Behind the Orange Curtain

### **Websites:**

The Partnership at Drugfree.org

(For immediate help, call the Parents Toll-Free Helpline at 1-855-DRUGFREE

Monday through Friday from 10:00-6:00 EST to speak to an addictions counselor.)

NIDA (National Institute on Drug Abuse)

SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)

Breaking the Cycles

The Fix, addiction and recovery straight up

All About Addiction