



OP-ED: Ways to support a loved one through addiction

by John Markley

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The numbers are clear and alarming – deadly drug overdoses are on the rise throughout the United States. Nearly 64,000 drug overdose deaths happened in 2016 with the number of synthetic opioid overdose deaths doubling from 2015 to 2016 according to the National Vital Statistics System. Illinois opioid-related deaths soared to 1,946 in 2016, more than a 75% increase since 2013. Over the same time in Illinois, deaths from synthetic opioids like fentanyl increased 1000% -- and deaths from prescribed opioids doubled.

If you have a loved one who is struggling with addiction, the statistics and stories about addiction and overdoses can be discouraging, but don't allow them to take away your hope. Recovery is possible and has many pathways. Here are a few ways to support a loved one through addiction.

Be Aware of the Symptoms of Addiction

It is difficult for users and those around them to predict and pinpoint when recreational or occasional use becomes an addiction.

Addiction is a chronic disorder that causes a user to seek out a substance of choice as a need, even when using the substance is harmful to them and those around them. Addiction alters the user's daily life and habits.

Being aware of the addiction signs can help you plan an appropriate action. Symptoms of addiction include drastic changes in behavior, denying or rationalizing behavioral problems, the inability to stop using the substance, poor work performance, legal problems, irritability and emotional problems such as anger or depression.

Listen Without Judging

Having an open dialogue about addiction with your loved one can help break down preconceived notions of addiction, strengthen connectedness and provide them with the comfort of knowing that someone is there to help. Addiction affects everyone differently, so the path to recovery is a personal journey.

Support and Encourage

Most importantly, support and encourage your loved one to seek help. Addiction impacts all of us. There are numerous programs, intervention services and professionals available to provide help for you and your loved one.

At Centerstone, our team of experts are committed to providing the support and tools needed to assist those seeking recovery from substance use issues. For example, in Madison County, Illinois, Centerstone provides medication assisted treatment through methadone and buprenorphine. When combined with a supportive treatment program that includes individual and group therapy, medication assisted recovery can be successful in ending the cycle of addiction. Centerstone Illinois hopes to expand medication assisted recovery options to more of its locations in Illinois.

Helping a loved one through addiction can be difficult, but don't let go of the possibility of recovery.

To learn more about the signs of addiction and Centerstone's addiction services and locations, visit Centerstone.org.

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