

Riverbend Resources If You Love Someone Who Struggles with Addiction

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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RIVERBEND - The holidays can be tough for anyone, but for the loved ones of someone who struggles with substance use, this time of year can feel especially difficult.

No matter if your loved one is in active addiction or somewhere in the recovery process, there are many local resources that can offer help to you and others affected by substance use. You already know how devastating addiction is. But just like [your loved one can get support](#), so can you.

“Addiction — let’s face it, it affects the whole family,” Ty Bechel said. “It affects so many people within the orbit of it.”

Bechel is the executive director of [Amare](#), a nonprofit based in Madison County that offers services to people impacted by substance use disorders. While Amare has recovery coaches, support groups and resources for people struggling with a substance use disorder, they also offer a Family Connections and Support program for friends and families.

Jaime Armstrong is Amare’s Family Connections program coordinator. She explained that she tries to meet family and friends where they’re at. Through their conversations, she helps them make sense of how their loved one’s addiction works and how it affects them. She noted that understanding what long-term drug use does to someone’s mind is an important part of understanding your loved one.

“We just kind of figure out where they’re at, and then we start addressing enabling behaviors and the importance of boundaries and educating about what the effects of drugs are to their loved ones,” Armstrong said. “A lot of times the family members don’t know at all. They just feel like, ‘Okay, this person is crazy and I don’t know what to do.’ Once you can start to understand what the signs and symptoms are when their loved one is actively using, they can better prepare themselves for those conversations and then start using boundaries to keep themselves safe and kind of encourage their loved one to look into resources.”

Not everyone is ready to talk about boundaries and enabling when they first sit down with Armstrong, and that’s okay. She tries to help people understand how drug use changes an individual’s personality and how their loved one is often focused on their next fix above all else.

When Armstrong’s clients understand this, then they can usually start thinking about their behavior, boundaries they want to set, and how to improve their own health. She said she talks to a lot of people who have stress-induced health issues.

“You cannot cover for your loved one at the cost of your own health. Usually by the time I’m working with someone, that clicks. They understand, like, ‘Yeah, I’m slowly dying too,’” Armstrong said. “It’s so common, the way that everyone is — and I hate to use this word, but it’s very true — they’re manipulated, you know? Once their loved one gets so stuck in their addiction, their personalities are just no longer there, but the addictive behaviors are, but the family members don’t usually always know that or understand that.”

This is also why Amare believes support groups are so important, both to individuals with a substance use disorder and the people who love them. Much like [Alcoholics Anonymous](#), [Narcotics Anonymous](#) and [Celebrate Recovery](#), there are support groups for families as well. [Al-Anon](#) and [Nar-Anon](#) are for people with loved ones who drink or use drugs, respectively. [Alateen](#) is a resource specifically for teenagers who are affected by a loved one's alcoholism. Amare also offers a Codependents Anonymous group and a grief support group.

National groups like Al-Anon and Nar-Anon have chapters across the country, so you can find a meeting that works for you locally. Armstrong pointed out that most of these groups have online Zoom meetings if you're not comfortable going to a local in-person meeting.

“Going to a support group for yourself can be the first step in investing in your own mental wellbeing,” she added. “Support groups are not just for the individuals that are suffering from addiction. It's for the family members, too, because we ride that chaos train with them. Going to a meeting and talking and listening to other people's stories and understanding that that's your community — we are a community, and the only way to help as many people as possible is to engage in it.”

Depending on what level of support you and your family need, there are other options in the Riverbend area. [Centerstone](#) is an organization that provides mental health and addiction services in Alton. Their [Flourish program](#) is a popular group for families with children. They offer parenting classes, case management, peer support services and individualized activities and treatments for families. Staff members also work with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to help families through the Flourish program.

This is just one example; Centerstone has several other [services for children and families](#). You can [contact them](#) to learn more. Centerstone will also work directly with the foster parents of children with histories of emotional/mental disorders or trauma. Their [therapeutic foster care services](#) help to support the child and family.

Ultimately, Armstrong, Bechel and others in the recovery community hope to make more space for the loved ones of people with substance use disorders. Substance use affects everyone in a person's life, but it's not something that any family has to navigate alone. Whether you decide to reach out to [Amare](#), [Centerstone](#) or another organization, you deserve to have support. These organizations and support groups can help you through it.

“The longer we turn a blind eye as a community, the more it’s going to impact our kids and the future generation,” Armstrong added. “By actually seeing that this is a problem and investing in the recovery community, we can decrease that stigma, make services more available and start healing families.”

You can contact the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s national helpline](#) at 1-800-662-4357 for additional support.