

The Risk of Relapse

How to Help Your Loved One Stay in Treatment

NIH
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HEALing Communities Study
Ohio

INTRODUCTION

Recovery from opioid use disorder (addiction) is possible! The chances of recovery are much better when medications for opioid use disorder are used for as long as necessary.

Even with treatment, though, sometimes people slip back into drug use.

A slip or lapse (using once or twice) is not uncommon and can be part of the recovery process. Relapse into continuing use may also take place. This does NOT mean that treatment has failed or that the hope of recovery is over. It simply means that treatment might need to be restarted and adjusted.

A person who slips or relapses should contact their treatment center, counselor, or health care provider right away. They all know that it takes practice to learn to live without drugs and will discuss a path forward without judgment.

Moving back into treatment with medications for opioid use disorder as soon as possible is likely the best way to continue to make progress toward recovery. As their loved one, it's important to not focus only on what happened...focus on helping your family member or friend move forward with treatment and recovery.

HOW TO HELP

First, encourage your family member or friend with opioid use disorder to get back into treatment.

Second, you can also help them identify the triggers that put them at risk for relapse, like hanging around with the same people or at the same places where they used drugs. During the treatment process, there can be a compelling desire to revisit these familiar activities. Ask your friend to think about their personal triggers and encourage them to work with their health care provider on a plan to avoid these risky situations.

SIGNS OF RELAPSE

Is your loved one

- starting to hang out with friends who use drugs
- acting as if they are hiding something
- missing healthy activities such as support groups, therapy, or work

If you notice the signs above, ask your loved one if you can call their counselor or treatment program because they seem to be struggling and need extra help. They will need to fill out a release of information form for this to happen, so be sure to plan for this early in treatment. Perhaps they can give you a name and number to call. If so, fill it in here:

No one knows your loved one or friend with opioid use disorder better than they know themselves. Ask them what other signs to watch out for. Plan with your friend about what other steps to take if they seem to be at risk for using again.

You can write down those steps here:

BE A CHAMPION

Remember, recovery is much more likely when medications for opioid use disorder are used. Do what you can to support your loved one's continued treatment with these medications, as guided by a doctor or other qualified provider.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information, please visit the HEALing Communities Study website at www.HealTogetherOH.org.

