

Helping a loved one with co-occurring disorders

Helping a loved one with both a substance abuse and a mental health problem can be a roller coaster. Resistance to treatment is common and the road to recovery can be long. It's common to feel isolated, overwhelmed, scared, and confused.

The best way to help someone is to accept what you can and cannot do. You cannot force someone to remain sober, nor can you make someone take their medication or keep appointments. What you can do is make positive choices for yourself, encourage your loved one to get help, and offer your support while making sure you don't lose yourself in the process.

- **Seek support.** Dealing with a loved one's mental illness and substance abuse problem can be painful and isolating. Make sure you're getting the emotional support you need to cope. Talk to someone you trust about what you're going through. It can also help to get your own therapy or join a support group.
- **Set boundaries.** Be realistic about the amount of care you're able to provide without feeling overwhelmed and resentful. Set limits on disruptive behaviors, and stick to them. Letting the substance abuse problem or mental illness take over your life isn't healthy for you or your loved one.
- **Educate yourself.** Learn all you can about your loved one's mental health problem, as well as substance abuse treatment and recovery. The more you understand what your loved one is going through, the better able you'll be to support recovery.
- **Be patient.** Recovering from addiction and mental health problems doesn't happen overnight. Recovery is an ongoing process that can take months or years, and relapse is common. Ongoing support for both you and your loved one is crucial as you work toward recovery.