

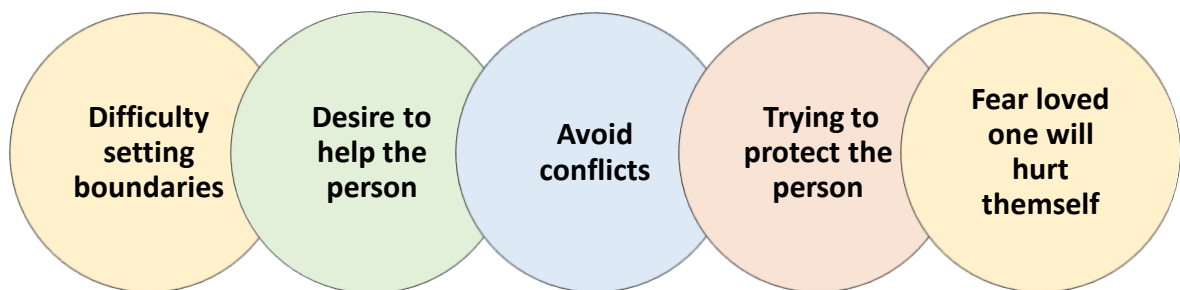


The Detrimental Effects of Enabling Behavior: A Barrier to Recovery

Addiction not only affects the person, it affects the entire family. Oftentimes, family members knowingly or unknowingly nurture and protect the person with addiction. This behavior oftentimes makes it easier for the person with addiction to continue their substance use. If this behavior continues, it can hinder recovery.

This behavior is known as **enabling**: the process where someone (enabler) contributes to the continuation of negative or pathological behavior.

Reasons for Enabling:



Enabling behavior is very common in families who have a family member with an addiction. Most people are unaware of their enabling behavior. Their goal is to help their loved one, not harm them.

Is enabling helpful for a person with addiction? No, it is not.

- ◆ Enabling is not supportive. It actually can be harmful because it often perpetuates addiction because the person with addiction does not suffer the full consequences of their actions.

Is supporting helpful for a person with addiction? Yes, it is.

- ◆ When support is provided to a person with addiction, it empowers the person to take steps towards their recovery.

The Difference Between Enabling and Support:

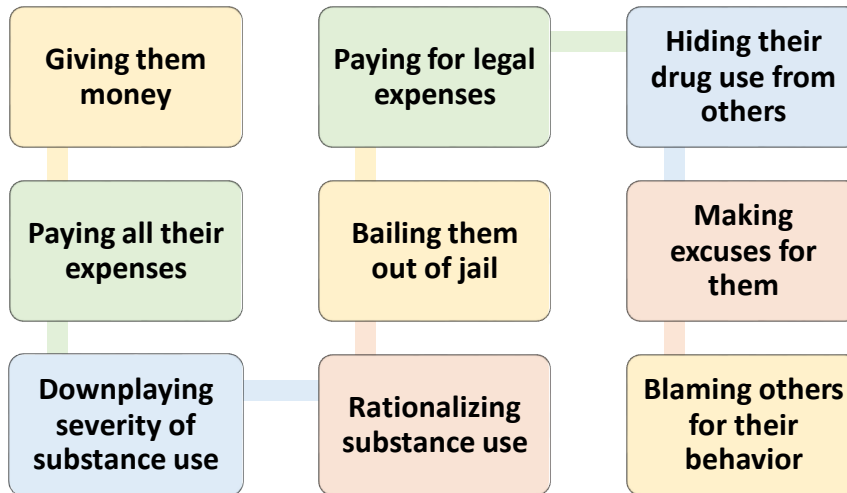
Enabling: Behaviors that protect or safeguard the person with addiction from experiencing the consequences of their addiction. People who demonstrate enabling behavior are often trying to increase stability, regain control, and/or trying to change the situation.

Support: Behaviors that encourage recovery through encouragement, empathy, and being a resource for the person with addiction.



Realities of Drug Addiction

Examples of Enabling Behavior:

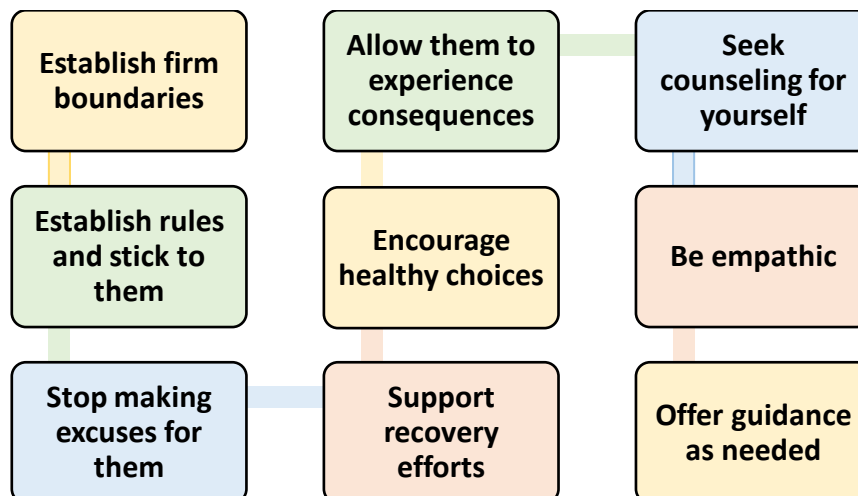


Others ways that you may be unintentionally enabling the person with addiction include:

- ◆ Putting all your focus on the person with addiction
- ◆ No focus on yourself and your needs
- ◆ Maxing out credit cards or depleting bank accounts to provide for the person
- ◆ Isolating yourself from family and friends

Enabling behavior can be very difficult to change. Focusing on the fact that enabling perpetuates substance use, reduces independence, and hinders behavior changes and recovery may help a person to stop their enabling behavior.

What Can Be Done That Is Supportive, Not Enabling:



- ◆ When enabling behavior is stopped, there are fewer means of getting the substance.
- ◆ They may have to choose between continuing substance use or having their basic needs met.
- ◆ The person may experience a “wake up” call and take steps towards recovery.



Realities of Drug Addiction

Am I An Enabler?

- 1) Are you able to admit your loved one has a substance use problem?
- 2) Are you downplaying the severity of your loved one's substance use?
- 3) Are you hiding your loved one's substance use from family and friends?
- 4) Are you ignoring or tolerating their substance use?
- 5) Are you providing financial support for their substance use?
- 6) Are you paying for their rent, food, gas, and other material items?
- 7) Are you taking over your loved one's responsibilities?
- 8) Are you always rescuing your loved one and not letting them suffer consequences?
- 9) Are you making excuses or blaming others for your loved one's substance use?
- 10) Are you avoiding a conversation with your loved one about their substance use?

If you answer yes to any of these questions, you may be enabling your loved one's substance use.

Something to Remember:

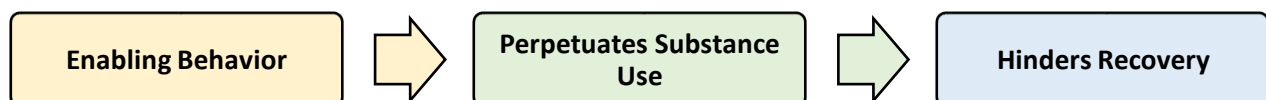
- ◆ It can be very scary when we stop enabling a person especially if the person has no money, no place to live, and no job.
- ◆ When you stop enabling behaviors, you are **NOT** rejecting the person with addiction. You are rejecting their behavior and substance use.

Examples of Enabling:

- ⇒ *"I can't kick him out of the house. He would have nowhere to go. What else can I do?"*
- ⇒ *"I don't want to upset him because I'm afraid he might take more drugs and overdose."*
- ⇒ *"I had to bail him out of jail. He can't afford to lose his job."*
- ⇒ *"I can't tell my family about his addiction because they would reject him."*
- ⇒ *"Of course I bought him new clothes. He couldn't afford to buy them himself."*
- ⇒ *"I let him drive my car to work. How else was he supposed to get there."*

- ◆ Remember, there are reasons we enable someone with addiction and at the top of that list is love for the person and the desire to help them. It is never too late to stop enabling and start supporting them as they work towards addiction.
- ◆ Stopping enabling behavior is not easy. It takes a lot of strength, commitment, and determination. Fear that your loved one may overdose, get hurt, or even succumb to an overdose or accident can make it very difficult to stop the enabling behavior.

Just remember this:





Realities of Drug Addiction

From the Realities of Drug Addiction Facebook Page

An example of a child asking their parents to stop enabling them.

Credit: Lorelie Rozzano & jaggedlittleedges.com

*Dear Mom & Dad,
If you want to help me, go to a meeting.
Learn all you can about my addiction.
Learn to say no and set boundaries with
me. I won't like it. I might yell at you,
but do it anyway. I know that addiction
has hijacked my thinking and I'm not
myself right now. I need you to act in
my best interest until I can. Please
be strong and don't give in to
me. Reach out for support.
You are the best chance
that I have.*

*Love ,
Your Addicted Child*



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