Harm Reduction Principles for Family, Friends & Loved Ones
“Family, Friends & Loved Ones”
Anyone who has a significant relationship or role in the life of an individual.
Families, friends and loved ones of individuals impacted by substance use and misuse are often given the same rules to live by as their loved one with a substance use:

- Let Go…
- Admit we are powerless
- Turn our will and our lives over
- Admit the exact nature of our wrongs
Professionals have made terrible mistakes in advice to families whose loved ones use drugs. They continue to say things such as, “They are all liars and thieves,” “They must hit rock bottom,” “Tough love,” “Stop loving them to death“ and “Hugs and Prayers.”

We have been described with words such as:

- Codependent
- Enabler
- Dysfunctional
EFFECTS OF SUBSTANCE USE ON FAMILIES

- Denying or minimizing the problem
- Focusing mainly on the person using substances
- Changing and unpredictable roles within relationships
- Trying to rescue and protect the person using
- Difficulties performing regular responsibilities (e.g., work)
- Deteriorating family relationships and conflict
• Trying to monitor, control and change the person
• Losing trust
• Withdrawing and social isolation
• Losing financial security or physical safety
• Abuse and manipulation by the person
• Neglecting yourself and burnout
• Turning to drugs and alcohol as a coping mechanism
“HARM REDUCTION PRINCIPLES FOR FAMILY, FRIENDS & LOVED ONES”

1. Knowledge empowers! Educate yourself and ask questions
2. Reach out. The most valuable resource families have is each other
3. Communication is key. Promises only cause problems
4. Setting Boundaries. There are no rules except the ones you make
5. Recognizing danger signs & Narcan. You cannot enable drug use, but you can enable life
6. Shame and Stigma. Become part of the Solution, not the Problem
7. Self care. Everyone’s doing the best they can so be kind/gentle with yourselves – and with your loved one
8. Addiction and Recovery is a process. It takes time
9. Change begins with You
10. Plan and be Prepared
We do not try to “save” or “rescue” anyone, we support them wherever they are without judgement or assumption.
Support for families affected by substance use

Complex Needs:
- Domestic violence
- Drugs and alcohol
- Mental Health
- Homelessness
- Criminal justice

Families:
- Troubled families
- Early years
- Education

Carers:
- The Care Act
- Young Carers
- Supporting those who care

Health:
- Drug and alcohol treatment
- NICE standards
- Mental Health
- Community involvement
- Community safety

Communities:
- 5 Ways to Wellbeing
- Mutual Aid and volunteering

Adult Services:
- Adults in social care
- Vulnerable adults

Cost Savings

Adfam
Families, drugs and alcohol
MAT

Behavioral therapy

FDA-approved medications

Methadone

Buprenorphine (Suboxone®)

Naltrexone (Vivitrol®)
REACH OUT ~ FAMILY SUPPORT
A supportive person is someone who:

- Is aware and knows about the problem
- Listens and understands
- Is non-judgmental and accepting
- Does not take sides
- Is sensitive in knowing when to give advice
- Offers help in accessing support services
An unsupportive person is someone who:

- Encourages substance misuse by the person who uses substances
- Is uninvolved
- Is uninformed
- Condemns the situation
- Has a harsh attitude toward the person using.
- Gives unhelpful advice
BENEFITS OF IMPROVING COMMUNICATION

• A greater likelihood of being heard and getting what you want
• A greater likelihood of hearing and understanding the person with a substance use problem
• A greater ability to express feelings, needs and desires
• A greater sense of integrity as a result of not turning to unhealthy communication methods
• A greater ability to set boundaries
• A greater ability to be supportive and helpful
• Less fighting, nagging and stress
• Less hostility in the relationship
TIPS FOR COMMUNICATION

- Choose an appropriate time when the person is not using substances
- Make sure you are both calm and not emotionally vulnerable
- Ensure neither of you is in a hurry
- Use “I” statements when talking about your feelings and needs
- Acknowledge your part in the problem. Take responsibility
- Offer to contribute to solving the problem and to compromise when possible
- Be specific
- Avoid critical, sarcastic, demeaning or blaming remarks
SETTING BOUNDARIES
Setting limits can be difficult. It may be hard to choose a consequence for broken agreements that you can follow through on.

You need to decide when and how much to support your family member, and to communicate the limits of the support and the expectations. This process may take time.
PROTECTING BOUNDARIES INVOLVES:

• **Be aware** of your feelings and needs
• **Know** your boundaries
• **Set limits** on others’ behavior with respect to your boundaries
• **Inform** others of these limits and ask that they respect them
• Ensure that others do **respect** your boundaries
OVERDOSE SIGNS

• Slow and shallow breathing
• Loud snoring – a warning sign and not a sign that the person is asleep as is commonly thought
• If the person has passed out, try to get them to respond by hard sternum rub
• The person is unconscious or unresponsive
• Their eyes are open but they are like dolls eyes – vacant and staring
• They complain of heart palpitations
Prevention of infection - safe sex, injecting practice

Health concerns are usually very much a priority for families living with a drug user.

Maintaining the health of the user and nonusers is important. If they are living on the streets this may mean helping to provide information about low grade infections, sexual health, scabies, lice or nits, and how to treat them, and also prevent their spread to others in the family.
SHAME AND STIGMA
IT HAPPENS IN THE BEST OF FAMILIES.

REMOVING THE STIGMA OF ADDICTION

I AM YOUR FRIEND
I AM YOUR SON
I SIT NEXT TO YOU IN SHUL
I SMILED AT YOU TODAY
I AM YOUR CHAVRUSA
I AM YOUR DAUGHTER
Here are some ways to avoid using words that stigmatize substance use and addiction:

1. Use “people-first language.” For instance, refer to a “person who uses substances”, or a “person who has a substance use disorder”; and not a “drug user”, “addict” or “alcoholic”. This is more neutral language that helps to maintain the individuality of the person.

2. Refer to “substance use” rather than “substance abuse”. “Abuse” or “abuser” has been shown to contribute to negative judgments about people with substance use disorders, and may suggest that people should be punished rather than receive treatment.

3. Choose to recognize that substance use disorders are health disorders. They are not the result of any kind of character flaw or lack of personal willpower. In fact, substance use disorders are the second most common mental health disorder.

4. Choose to refer to “drug poisoning” rather than a “drug overdose” as the latter perpetuates the myth that a person has “brought this on themselves”.

5. Referring to a “drug habit,” or “drug of choice” implies that the person can simply choose to stop. Refer instead to “the substance a person is using”.

6. Choose language that promotes the recovery process. This means not describing a person as being “clean” or “dirty” but rather as “not currently using substances”. Also, refer to a person who is not using substances, or is reducing use, as being “in recovery”.

7. Avoid perpetuating negative stereotypes and biases through the use of slang and pejorative names.

8. The recommended use of non-stigmatizing language also applies when describing a person with other mental health problems and illnesses.

References:
Michael P. Botticelli & Howard K. Koh, Changing the Language of Addiction. JAMA October 4, 2016 Volume 316, Number 13
www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org
EMPOWERING YOURSELF THROUGH SELF-CARE
In order to help with a substance use problem, you need to recognize the importance and need for self-care.

Taking good care of yourself gives you more physical and emotional energy to deal with the challenges you face, and that will benefit your loved one.
SELF-REFLECTION: SELF-CARE

Self-care activities, such as relaxation, play, diversion, laughter, sleep and eating have many positive effects on the body, mind, emotions and spirit.

Think about something in your life that brings you meaning, joy, fulfilment or that restores you.
KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

- **Recognize**/accept the impact substance use has on you
- **Know** your own limitations with the situation and that you have limited ability to change others
- **Focus** on and **prioritize** the importance of looking after yourself
- Look **for support** through information, education, building a support network and stress management
- Consider joining a family **support** group
RECOVERY. IT TAKES TIME
We now have more options & suggestions than the old “let them hit bottom” and “stop enabling and being codependent.” We can now say, “don’t stop loving them!” and “when they are ill we need to hold them closer.”

Learning how and when to “hold them closer” so change can be possible is the challenge
As you begin your journey to forgiveness, it is important that you remember that this whole process is really about you addressing your own needs so that you will gain the freedom to start living a healthy life once again.

Truly letting go of the past will allow you to move towards a new life filled with an abundance of peace and serenity.
Letting go of past wrongs and anger can be difficult, but it is important for you and your peace of mind.
CHANGE BEGINS WITH YOU
Effective View of Addiction

You didn't cause it
You can't control it
You cannot cure it

Choices
Changes
Chances

You must make a Choice to take a Chance to Change your life
“CHANGING THE WORLD BEGINS WITH THE VERY PERSONAL PROCESS OF CHANGING YOURSELF, THE ONLY PLACE YOU CAN BEGIN IS WHERE YOU ARE, AND THE ONLY TIME YOU CAN BEGIN IS ALWAYS NOW.”

GARY-ZUKAV
"Sometimes we're so focused on the end goal that we miss all of the subtle changes along the way. Sometimes it's good to celebrate the little victories, even if your loved one is still using."

Mary Ann B., Master Addictions Counselor
• What are the drugs of choice? Know the signs and symptoms
• It’s a family disease. Remember the siblings and spouse
• Listen to your intuition. You are usually correct
• Protect your assets. They may become someone else’s
• Detox~ What is it and what happens next
• Relapse. Is it a failure?
• Questions for treatment providers. Not all are worthy
• Judicial system. The legalities of addiction are many
• Prepare for a long ride. The journey isn’t over quickly
• Know your triggers. You, too will have them
www.Ohiocanchangeaddictionnow.org
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