No one recovers from addiction or mental illness alone. A long-term, holistic recovery takes the support of family, friends, employers, and healthcare workers. With appropriate services and supports an individual can reclaim their spiritual, emotional, and physical health through recovery.

Addiction is a chronic lifelong disease as has been recognized by the American Medical Association since 1956. Addiction impacts individuals of all ages, religions, ethnicities, social economic standing, and gender.

Mental illness is a wide range of conditions that affects a person's thinking, feeling, mood, and/or behavior. There are many types of mental illness, and they can range from mild to severe and debilitating.

Thankfully, like many other chronic diseases, addiction and mental illness can be treated. We know that Treatment Works, and People Recover! With the appropriate help and support, individuals with either an addiction or a mental illness can and do become more active and productive members of their families, social networks, and communities.

However, we also know treatment must address the whole person. Stopping the addiction or mental health crisis is just one part of a long and complex recovery process. When individuals enter treatment, addiction and/or mental illness has often caused serious consequences in their lives, possibly disrupting their health and how they function in their family, with their friends, at work, and in the community. Because mental illness and addiction can affect so many aspects of a person's life, treatment should address the needs of the whole person in order to be successful.

Individuals recover in different ways and in different stages. Each individual, with the support of family, friends, employers, and/or health care professionals, will need to determine which path to recovery is best for them. Once a person accepts and understands that they have an illness and begins their path toward recovery, they have the opportunity to improve their physical, emotional, social, and occupational lives, and become or return to being productive and contributing members of their families, social networks, and communities.

How to Make Sure a Treatment Program is the Right Fit

There are many types of treatment programs available across Ohio. Make sure that you find the program that will allow the individual in need to follow their path to recovery, while giving the tools needed for long-term health and wellness. When considering whether or not a program is the right fit, make sure that the program:

- Is appropriately licensed or accredited;
- Either offers all types of treatment available, or has the type desired;
- Addresses the exact issue, i.e. type of mental illness and/or addiction;
- Individually develops a treatment path for each client;
- Has the clients involved in all decision-making processes from beginning to end;
- Has a process for involving family and/or loved ones;
- Has a history of planning for aftercare and/or long-term supports;
- Provides all clients with their rights, roles, and responsibilities while in treatment; and
- Accepts the client’s insurance and/or has a plan for helping finance treatment.
Supporting Individuals with a Mental Illness and/or Addiction

Families, social networks, and employment settings that are involved with someone who is dealing with a mental illness and/or addiction need to learn about addiction and mental illness and how it can affect them, their family, social network, and/or workplace. The more you know the better you will be able to support the person dealing with a mental illness and/or addiction.

Families, friends, and co-workers can be extremely beneficial sources of support in helping someone recognize and accept that they have a problem and need help. In order for family members and friends to most effectively help, they need to understand the illness and how it may affect them and others around them.

How You Can Support Someone with a Mental Illness and/or Addiction

- Learn all you can about mental illness and/or addiction and the recovery process
- Talk with the individual and listen without judgement
- Focus on the person, not the illness
- Don't question their feelings
- Be honest with your answers and feedback
- Support individuals in treatment to stick with it, even when it becomes difficult
- Create a stable and safe environment for yourself and them, when appropriate
- Ask them what they need and what would help
- Let them know you are there for them and want to help
- Encourage healthy habits and living
- Take care of your physical and mental health
- Keep hope alive - let them know recovery will happen

As a friend or family member who is supporting someone with a mental illness and/or addiction, one of the most important things that you can do is be vocal about the need to ensure that all communities have access to a complete continuum of care from prevention to treatment through lifelong supports.

Know When and Where to Find Help

The more you know the better you can help yourself and others who are impacted by the individual dealing with a mental illness and/or addiction. As the condition worsens and the behavior of the affected individual becomes more erratic, family members, friends, and co-workers may not know what to do, how to help, and how to keep themselves from being adversely impacted.

There are many places you can go today to help you take care of your loved one and yourself, including the following:

- Your local ADAMH Board - oacbha.org/mappage.php
- Recovery Is Beautiful - recoveryisbeautiful.org/gethelp
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration - samhsa.gov
- Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services - mha.ohio.gov
- NAMI Ohio - namiohio.org
- Ohio Citizen Advocates for Addiction Recovery - oca-ohio.org

Sources:
Faces and Voices of Recovery
OhioMHAS
National Alliance on Mental Illness
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

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