SUPPORTING VERSUS ENABLING

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Does someone you love have a substance use disorder, also known as an addiction? If so, they probably come to you for all sorts of help. And you probably want to help them. There's a fine line, though, between helping in a way that supports them and helping in a way that enables them to keep using alcohol or drugs. This handout will help you understand the difference.

What Is Enabling?

Enabling your loved one helps them to avoid the consequences of their substance use. It also lets them keep using.

Here are some examples of enabling:
• Giving your loved one money
• Telling lies or making excuses for them
• Getting them out of bad situations
• Doing things for them that they should do for themselves

When you do things like this, you might think you're helping. In the long run, though, enabling will only make your loved one's substance use worse. Instead, you want to help in a way that supports your loved one and gets them on the road to recovery.

What Is Supporting?

Supporting your loved one helps them but not in a way that protects them from the consequences of their substance use.

Here are some examples of being supportive:
• Helping them take steps to improve their life
• Being a sounding board for them as they work through their problems
• Helping them with a problem not related to their substance use

You can also support your loved one by helping them find treatment for their alcohol or drug use. Visit FindHelpNowKY.org to find a treatment center today.

Additional Support for Families

Groups such as Al-Anon and Parents of Addicted Loved Ones (PAL) are for people with loved ones who have substance use disorders. These groups can help you sort through a lot of the issues you face because of substance use in the family. That includes learning how to stop enabling your loved one's substance use and start supporting them on the road to recovery.

There are many other resources for those who have loved ones with an addiction or who are in recovery. Reach out to your nearest Community Mental Health Center for local recommendations.

NOTE: This guide is based on two documents: (1) Are You Helping or Enabling? 7 Ways to Spot the Difference. (2) What is Enabling? Please see these documents for more detailed information on supporting versus enabling.