



How to Help a Teen in Recovery

Parents and family members want to support their teen in recovery. The good news is that there are many good things you can do for your child.

Choosing a Recovery Program

There are many recovery programs out there. Make sure you choose one with a good reputation, a staff that works with teens and families, and one that is certified by your state or a national licensing/certification board or agency (ASAP is [CARF](#) certified). Good recovery programs also use [research based](#) models for recovery.

Meet Their Basic Needs

When someone is in recovery, meeting basic needs is extremely important. You can make sure your child gets adequate nutrition and sleep, attends school, and gets enough exercise. You may have heard the acronym HALT. It is used in many recovery programs. The idea is not to let yourself get too hungry, angry, lonely, or tired, as these can all be triggers for use. As a support person, you can help your teen avoid these situations to be more successful in recovery.

Be Supportive

Try to be as supportive as possible while your teen is in recovery. We know that slip ups and relapses can occur. For people who are serious about their sobriety, they likely feel badly about the mistake too. Help them through the bumps by contacting their care manager or treatment

program, getting them to a [meeting](#), and creating a plan to do better the next time a similar trigger happens.

Caring for Yourself

The very best thing you can do, though, may be counter intuitive. It isn't really for your child at all—it's for yourself. As a parent or other care-giver, the most important thing you can do for your teen in recovery is to take care of your own needs. As we hear each time we fly, "Put on your own oxygen mask before you put on your child's."

Caring for yourself when you have a child in recovery can feel difficult, or even impossible. It can feel selfish to take time for yourself, but it is a necessary part of helping a teen in recovery. If you aren't healthy (physically and mentally), you can't effectively take care of your child.

Get support for yourself through therapy, 12-step meetings for family members (like Nar-Anon, Al-Anon, or SMART Friends and Family), and finding supportive family or friends to talk with. Take a break when you need it. Plan social events or dinner out with your spouse or friends. Plan [activities](#) for your family that are more likely to be successful and fun.

Having a child who uses alcohol or other drugs can be extremely stressful on a marriage or partnership. Some couples find that couples/family therapy is helpful during this time.

By taking care of yourself, you will be modelling healthy living, and you will also have enough energy to cope with the challenges parenting a teen in recovery presents.