

How To Tell Your Family About Your Addiction

Whether your family knows you're struggling with addiction or not, talking to them about it can be daunting.

While some stages of substance use disorder can be hidden, after a while it becomes quite obvious—as much as we like to think we're great at covering our tracks. Whether your family know or not, telling them can be daunting. At this point in your addiction, it's likely that you're riddled with so much shame and guilt only exacerbates your fears of speaking up.

However, that fear is often unnecessary as most families and friends are really supportive because we're taking accountability and asking for help. Even if some loved ones do not understand and lack the ability to support you there are tons of other resources to help you on your journey of recovery.

The insidious nature of substance use disorder means that—depending on the drug—you may have become a master of deception, silently taking increasing amounts of substances under the radar. Usually people only take any serious notice when patterns of behavior emerge, or there is an incident—like a DUI. Then again, I've heard some people be completely surprised to find a loved one is in rehab. But they seemed so together, so normal. Are you sure it's them?!

Over time though, family and close friends start to put

together the pieces—the tell-tale signs of someone excessively using substances—isolation, turning up late, flaking altogether, the excuses, depression, unreliability, moodiness, hysteria, instability, and, in some instances, drunk, or high, all-the-time.

Whether people have suspicions, or have no clue, it is important to note that there is no shame in asking for help, or in telling people that you have been struggling.

My close family knew. They painfully watched my slow decline into substance use disorder. They witnessed my declining mental and physical health, the calls of desperation, and the total despair and disconnection in my voice. I had totally detached from the world. I had one purpose: obliterate all senses and numb me to my experience in the world. This must have been very difficult for them to watch. They tried to help: restricting money, not speaking to me, trying to control me, and even taking me to meetings. I eventually reached a point where I couldn't go on. It was then I asked for help and started my road to recovery.

As I began to recover I needed to tell close friends and other family members to get as much support as possible, and to explain my erratic behavior. Some friends and family were very understanding and supportive. Others struggled with the words alcoholic, addict, addiction, and disease. They believe that obsessively and compulsively taking drugs, despite the negative consequences, is a choice—but that's a whole blog post in itself!

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Whether your family knows or not, it is important to try and tell them what is going on for you.

It benefits us greatly and goes a long way toward developing healthier behaviors and building a supportive network for our continued recovery.

The best way to approach telling your loved ones about your substance use disorder is:

Consider beforehand which family members will be supportive and choose to tell them.

Assume they already know.

Be prepared for a difficult conversation and plan to do something supportive afterward, like calling a friend in recovery, going to therapy, or hitting a meeting.

Plan what you want to say: be honest, acknowledge your problem, tell them what steps you are taking to get help, and be clear in the help that you need of them (supportive phone calls/texts, help getting you into treatment, love and compassion).

Understand that you may have hurt people as a result of your behavior—and part of recovery is amending that hurt—so be conscious of that when asking for help. You may have to accept that some are not willing to support you.

Speaking up, while difficult, is cathartic—you'll feel like a huge weight has been lifted off your shoulders. And even if you don't receive the support you would like, there are tons of resources available: at rehabs and treatment centers, meetings, therapists, and many other people in recovery walking the same journey as you. Family support is great, but it isn't essential to recover.

Workit Health helps you meet your recovery goals.

(Source: Workithealth.com)