



Standby Me

How can I help someone struggling with behavioral health challenges?

One in five people will suffer from mental illness or substance abuse during their lifetime.

“Behavioral health” refers to both psychiatric and substance abuse, and people with these health issues suffer from either or both. Unfortunately, nearly two-thirds of those with a mental health disorder don’t seek help, typically because of the stigma associated with these issues. If you have a family member or friend who has a behavioral health disorder, you can play an important role by supporting and standing by them throughout their recovery.





Many of the signs of mental illness and substance abuse are the same. They include:

- Avoiding people and normal activities
- Changes in sleeping or eating habits
- Weight loss or gain
- Decreased energy
- Inability to perform daily tasks
- Loss of interest in grooming
- Feeling helpless or numb or like nothing matters
- Having unexplained aches and pains
- Smoking, drinking, or using drugs more than usual
- Feeling unusually confused, forgetful, on edge, angry, upset, worried, or scared
- Fighting with loved ones
- Experiencing severe mood swings
- Having persistent thoughts
- Hearing voices or believing things that are not true
- Thinking of harming themselves or others

How to Support a Loved One with Behavioral Health Problems

If a friend or family member is showing signs of mental illness or addiction, you can offer support by:

- Treating them with respect, compassion, and empathy
- Reminding them that mental health and abuse problems can be treated
- Expressing your concern and desire to get them help
- Offering to help your loved one with everyday tasks
- Including your loved one in your plans, even if they reject your invitations
- Educating family members and friends so they understand the facts about mental health problems and do not discriminate
- Finding out if the person is getting the care that he or she needs and wants—if not, connect him or her to help

GETTING HELP

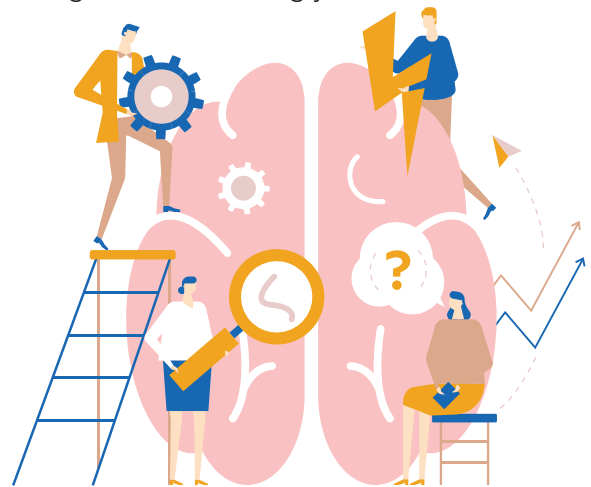
One of the most important ways you can help a loved one is by connecting them to professionals that can help with their treatment and recovery.

- Talk to your healthcare provider about resources that you can tap into to get your loved one the help they need.
- Call 911 if the situation is potentially life-threatening.
- Reach out using a toll-free, confidential hotline with trained resources available 24/7, 365 days a year to help with behavioral health issues:
 - ▼ National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-TALK) provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress for you or your loved one.
 - ▼ The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (1-800-662-HELP) is a free referral service that can help you find the resources you need for recovery.

Starting the Conversation

Talking to your loved one about behavioral health problems can be difficult. Here are some ways you can start the conversation so you can begin the process of helping them:

- I've noticed that you are going through a difficult time. Would you allow me to help you get support?
- I care about you and I am worried about you. Can we talk about what's going on? If you aren't comfortable talking with me, who would you rather talk to about it?
- I'm concerned about your safety. Have you thought about harming yourself or others?



ACTIONITEMS

If you have a loved one who has a behavioral health disorder, you can play an important role in their recovery by talking to your healthcare provider to get information on the resources they need to get help. Seek immediate assistance if you think your friend or family member is in danger of harming themselves or others.