

Convincing a Loved One to Enter Rehab

7 Tips for Friends and Family

Convincing a loved one to enter rehab is not an easy feat, especially if they are in denial that they have a problem. However, once you've recognized that a friend or family member is in need of professional help, there are steps you can take to motivate them to seek treatment. Here are seven tips to help you in this process:

1. Get help before they hit "rock bottom"

Although some addicts say that hitting "rock bottom" was the wake-up call they needed to get clean and sober, there's no reason to let your loved one get that far before you step in. Drug and alcohol addiction can be fatal, and for some, "rock bottom" may mean death. Consequently, if you're concerned that a friend or family member has a problem with drugs or alcohol, don't wait for "rock bottom" to intervene. Be proactive and take steps to get them the help they need as soon as possible.

2. Educate yourself

If you suspect that a loved one is abusing drugs or alcohol, it's important to educate yourself about the common signs of addiction as well as the psychology behind this disease. Reach out to a local drug and alcohol treatment center who may be able to provide you with helpful resources. When speaking to your loved one about their substance abuse, it's also okay to admit that you don't know everything. When someone feels cornered or gets defensive about their behavior, they may say, "You don't know what you're talking about." It's okay to say, "You're right, I don't know everything, but I do know your behavior is making me scared for you."

3. Use empathy instead of blame

When approaching your loved one about their behavior, avoid coming from a place of blame or judgement. Blaming your loved one for their addiction may only cause them to get defensive and shut down or escalate the conversation into an argument. Instead of blame, use empathy while expressing your concern. One way to do this is using “I” statements. Instead of saying “Your addiction is ruining our relationship”, say “I’m concerned about you because I love you.”

4. Ask for rehab as a “gift”

If your loved one asks what you want for a birthday, holiday, or any special occasion, don’t be afraid to ask for rehab as a gift. Even if your friend or family member is in denial that they need treatment, saying “Going to rehab would be the greatest gift you could give to me” can be powerful and effective for two reasons. First of all, even if your request is met with resistance, a seed has been planted. It’s another way to express to your loved one that their addiction is harming your relationship. Secondly, even if they initially enter rehab only to appease you, working with counselors, therapists, and 12-step groups may open their eyes to how their addictive behavior is negatively impacting their life and relationships.

5. Provide video evidence

If words are not enough to convince your loved one that they have a problem, consider filming them while they are intoxicated. Many addicts convince themselves that their behavior is not “that bad” or may forget what they said or did while under the influence. Seeing evidence of themselves passed out surrounded by bottles, slurring their words, picking a fight, or engaging in embarrassing behavior can force them to see the truth of the situation and may motivate them to seek help.

6. Ease the fear of detox

Some addicts, especially those who have tried to detox on their own in the past, may be hesitant about going to rehab due to fear of experiencing symptoms of withdrawal. Withdrawing from drugs or alcohol can indeed be painful, and in some cases, life-threatening. However, when your loved one detoxes at a rehabilitation facility, they will be under the care of nurses and doctors who specialize in medical detox. These medical professionals are trained to make the withdrawal process as safe and comfortable as possible, and will do everything they can to support your loved one during the detox phase.

Detoxing may not be fun, but letting your loved one know that it doesn't have to be agony is crucial to easing their fear about entering a rehab program.

7. Take steps to plan an intervention

Staging an intervention can be an emotionally challenging process, and doing it without the proper tools can often do more harm than good. Taking steps to plan an intervention beforehand will increase your chance of success. Reach out to a drug and alcohol treatment center or consult a professional interventionist to devise a strategy. This will allow you to move quickly if the intervention is successful. Also, don't be afraid to enlist professional help. A professional interventionist is trained to help friends and family members during the intervention process and can help your loved one get the treatment they need as quickly as possible.