

# What to Expect

When Your Partner Completes  
Addiction Treatment



SILVER RIDGE

A PREMIER PROGRAM BY PYRAMID HEALTHCARE



# Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	3
ADDICTION IS A FAMILY DISEASE .....	4
ESSENTIAL STEPS YOU SHOULD TAKE WHILE YOUR PARTNER IS IN TREATMENT.....	8
HOW TREATMENT HELPS YOUR PARTNER END AN ADDICTION .....	17
YOUR SUPPORT AFTER TREATMENT IS ESSENTIAL: WHAT TO EXPECT .....	19
TREATMENT WORKS, AND IT CAN WORK FOR YOU AND YOUR PARTNER .....	26



## Introduction

When your partner enters treatment for a drug or alcohol addiction, feelings of relief and newfound hope for a happier, brighter future prevail.

Still, you may have feelings of uncertainty. Will treatment work? What if it doesn't? How will life be different once your partner completes treatment? How will your partner be different? What will your relationship be like?

These are common questions. By the time you're done reading this, you'll have some answers, along with some essential tips for supporting your partner in recovery.





# Addiction

Is a Family Disease



Before we can talk about what to expect when your partner completes addiction treatment, it's important to talk about how addiction affects the family unit and what you can do while your partner is in treatment to improve their chances of successful recovery.

Addiction is a family disease, according to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.<sup>1</sup> Addiction causes dysfunction in the family system and reduces the stability and safety of the home. It affects the family's mental health, finances, stress level, unity and the overall functioning of the family unit.

Unsettling or frightening experiences, periods of chaos and the chronic stress that come with addiction affect every member of the family. You may have bent reality or lived in denial in an attempt to maintain some sense of order in the home, even as you felt order slipping away. Addiction and the dysfunction that comes with it can absorb the family system as the problem seems to spiral out of control. You're left with feelings of fear, anger, helplessness and hopelessness.





## A New Sense of Hope

Now that your partner is getting help, hope has returned—and for good reason. Most people who engage in treatment successfully recover from addiction.<sup>2</sup> However, the treatment outcome for your partner depends, in part, on:

- The extent and nature of their problems and needs
- Whether the treatment program is appropriate for addressing those problems and needs
- The quality of the interactions between your partner and their treatment providers

Research shows that treatment lasting less than 90 days is of limited effectiveness, and an inpatient program is best for those with a severe addiction, a long history of addiction or a co-occurring mental illness. The more engaged your partner is in their treatment plan, the better their chances of successful long-term recovery. A high-quality treatment program that takes a holistic, individualized approach to treatment offers the best possible outcomes.

But treatment itself is only part of the equation for successful recovery. The other part of the equation involves the four pillars of recovery, as identified by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration:<sup>3</sup>

- A high level of support at home
- A safe and stable living environment
- Purpose in life
- Good physical and mental health

Learning the best ways to support your partner after treatment is a major factor for success, and what you do while your partner is in treatment makes a big difference in what you can expect after treatment is complete.





A photograph of a middle-aged couple in a close embrace. The man, on the left, has dark hair and is wearing a black and white horizontally striped sweater. He is leaning in and kissing the woman on the cheek. The woman, on the right, has blonde hair and is wearing an orange top with a red and white patterned scarf. She is smiling broadly, showing her teeth. The background is a soft-focus indoor setting with a window.

## Essential Steps You Should Take

While Your Partner Is  
in Treatment



When your partner enters treatment, the whole family enters recovery—but only your partner is receiving professional help. While an individual in treatment is working through a variety of issues and learning healthy communication and coping skills, family members are often passive bystanders. Aside from a few sessions of family therapy or workshops provided by the treatment program, family members aren't typically involved in the treatment process.

The problem with this is that while your partner was addicted, it's very likely that you and other family members developed your own unhealthy ways of coping with the addiction. And there's a good chance you may not even realize it. Unfortunately, these unhealthy coping behaviors don't change simply because your partner enters treatment. But in order for you personally, and for the family as a system, to recover from the damage done by the addiction, they must be addressed. Addressing them is also essential for best supporting your partner after treatment.

**Here are five essential things you should do while your partner is in treatment for addiction. These will improve your own mental health, the quality of your life and your partner's chances of long-term success.**



## 1. Understand addiction.

Addiction is a highly complex, chronic disease that changes the chemical function and physical structures of the brain. These brain changes lead to compulsive drug use despite the consequences, which often include relationship, legal, financial, mental health and medical problems. They also lead to dysfunctional thought and behavior patterns that make an addicted individual seem like a totally different person than they used to be.

**Understanding addiction is essential for understanding how it's treated and how you can best support your loved one in recovery. Here are a few important facts about addiction:**

- It usually involves one or more underlying causes, such as chronic stress, a history of trauma, a co-occurring mental illness or dysfunction in the household.
- It almost always requires professional help to overcome.
- Like other chronic diseases, it can relapse, and relapse prevention is the primary focus of treatment.

While your partner is in treatment, learn as much as you can about addiction, including how it develops and progresses, how it's treated and how it can relapse.



## 2. Get counseling.

Individual therapy for you can make a huge difference in your ability to help your partner stay in recovery after treatment. It can also improve your mental health, your relationships and your quality of life.

Therapy helps you work through the complex—and often harmful—negative emotions you have regarding your partner's addiction. It also helps you address the unhealthy coping behaviors you've developed, such as co-dependent and enabling behaviors. These are very common in family members, and they can make recovery difficult for both you and your partner.



## Co-Dependence

Co-dependence is a collection of learned thought and behavior patterns that develop as you adapt to a life affected by addiction. These lead you to neglect your own needs and wants as you become obsessively concerned with your partner's problems. Co-dependent behaviors include:

- Constant worry about your partner's drug abuse and the consequences of the addiction, or denial that there's a serious problem
- Lying to others about your partner's substance abuse
- Low self-esteem due to neglecting your own emotional, physical and spiritual needs in favor of focusing on your partner's addiction
- Misplaced anger that gets aimed at others, such as the pets, the kids or other people
- Engaging in unhealthy habits that help you cope with reality, such as overeating, excessive shopping or internet use or substance abuse
- Basing your own moods on the moods of your partner







### Enabling

Enabling behaviors are those that make it easy for your partner to continue to engage in heavy substance abuse without consequence. Enabling is unhealthy for you, your partner and other family members. Enabling behaviors include:

- Using drugs or alcohol with your partner in hopes of keeping trouble at bay
- Keeping your feelings to yourself in order to keep the peace with your partner
- Accepting your partner's excuses and justifications for substance abuse
- Minimizing the consequences of the addiction to protect your partner, such as by taking over their responsibilities or by making excuses for their actions
- Going out of your way to make it appear as though everything is fine at home
- Feeling guilty when you can't prevent the consequences of the addiction from affecting your partner or other family members

Ending your co-dependent and enabling behaviors will improve your own mental health and help you better support your partner once they leave treatment.

### 3. Engage in couples or family therapy.

Your partner's addiction probably took a major toll on your relationship. You may even wonder if the relationship is salvageable. Chances are, it is, but couples or family therapy will probably be essential for working through complex relationship issues.

Working through these issues is so instrumental to successful recovery that high-quality treatment programs usually include some form of family therapy in an individual's treatment plan. Participating in family therapy during treatment is important, and continuing with family or couples therapy after treatment, if necessary, is crucial for restoring your relationship.







#### **4. Get support.**

Living with your partner's addiction hasn't been easy, and recovery is hard work. Your partner will engage in group therapy and participate in a support group during treatment, which provides a high level of emotional support. But you need support, too. Support is important for family members affected by addiction. A support group like Al-Anon or Nar-Anon benefits you in a number of ways. It offers:

- A safe, supportive place to vent negative emotions like fear, anger and frustration
- The opportunity to share tips, resources and positive and negative experiences with others who will understand and can offer help or just a sympathetic ear
- A high level of emotional support when you feel worried or overwhelmed

## 5. Take care of yourself.

Self-care will be extremely important for your partner once they're finished with treatment. A lack of self-care is an important early sign of an impending relapse. Likewise, taking care of your own physical, emotional and spiritual needs is—and will continue to be—crucial for supporting your partner's recovery during the early months after treatment and beyond. Self-care includes:

- Reducing your stress and coping with stress effectively
- Getting adequate sleep
- Eating a healthy diet
- Getting regular exercise
- Spending time relaxing and engaging in activities you enjoy

Good self-care is essential for emotional strength and stability and reducing feelings of anxiety, depression and other negative emotions.







# How Treatment Helps Your Partner End an Addiction

Understanding some of what your partner will be working on in treatment can help you know how to best support them in recovery.

**A high-quality, holistic treatment program offers the best recovery outcomes. Through a combination of traditional therapies, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy, and complementary therapies, like art and meditation, your partner will:**

- Learn ways to reduce and cope with stress, which is a major factor for relapse
- Identify self-destructive thought and behavior patterns and re-learn healthy ways of thinking and behaving
- Work through a range of underlying issues that contributed to the addiction
- Get any mental or physical illnesses under control
- Evaluate attitudes and beliefs about themselves, their addiction and life in general and discard those that don't serve them well
- Evaluate their relationships and learn how to end those that are toxic or unsupportive of a life in recovery
- Learn how to repair damaged relationships, restore family function and maintain healthy relationships by developing essential relationship and communication skills
- Develop an arsenal of skills and strategies to help them cope with cravings, high-risk situations and other triggers for relapse
- Find purpose and meaning in life based on inherent strengths and values
- Identify hopes and dreams for the future and set realistic, actionable goals to achieve them
- Learn to relax and have fun without drugs or alcohol

If your partner engages fully in treatment, they'll come away with a higher level of self-awareness, self-esteem and overall clarity. Coupled with your own improved self-awareness and self-esteem that you gained through individual therapy, the stage is set for success once treatment is complete.





Your Support After  
Treatment Is Essential:  
**What to Expect**



Here's what you should expect once treatment is complete.

**Expect to make healthy lifestyle changes.**

A healthy lifestyle is essential for successful recovery. Making healthy lifestyle changes that support a high level of self-care will promote good physical and mental health and long-term sobriety. It also offers opportunities to improve your relationship as you work to find ways to enjoy a healthy lifestyle together.







### **Expect to redefine your relationship.**

There's no doubt that your relationship will change in recovery. For the most part these changes will be positive, but sometimes they can be negative. Negative changes typically come from not knowing how cope with each other without the addiction. For example, the recovering partner may zealously embrace sobriety, while the other partner may not be ready for this new personality that emerges.

Additionally, it may be difficult for the partner of someone in recovery to give up co-dependent or enabling behaviors, even though their partner is no longer using. This can cause snags as you both work to redefine your identities and roles in the relationship.

It can take some time to redefine your relationship and settle into your new roles, and patience is essential. It can also take time for you to begin to trust your partner again, and this can affect your relationship. Continuing with family therapy and mindfully practicing healthy communication skills can help you re-establish trust and improve the health of your relationship more quickly. This, in turn, will further improve the chances for long-term successful recovery and a better, stronger relationship moving forward.

### **Expect honesty.**

Dishonesty is a common characteristic of addiction, often on both sides of the relationship. Expect your partner to be honest with you about their thoughts and feelings, and strive to be honest with your partner about yours. Dishonesty can lead to more problems, and it can be a sign of potential relapse. Practice being honest with each other every day.

### **Expect your partner to engage with a support group, and stay with yours, too.**

Ongoing participation in a support group will probably be a component of your partner's aftercare plan, which will be developed once treatment is complete. Expect your partner to attend meetings regularly. Their support group will help them stay accountable, honest and motivated to stay sober.

Likewise, continuing to engage with your own support group will help you cope with changes, and it'll provide help, advice and support during rough patches. Ongoing support helps reduce stress, and it helps you continue to support your partner as effectively as possible. It also gives you the opportunity to help and encourage others who are starting their own recovery journey.





### Expect setbacks.

Treatment isn't magic, and recovery isn't always easy. A setback can be an instance of using again, or lapsing, or anything that leads your partner closer to lapsing. It could be a bout of depression or a period of high stress. It could be a big fight with you, or it could be a major life event, such as a career change or a death in the family.

Staying positive and focused on recovery during setbacks is crucial for preventing a relapse of the addiction. A relapse is a recurrence of the addiction, once again characterized by compulsive use despite the negative consequences.



An added level of support is important during these times, and this is where your respective support groups can make an enormous difference in ongoing recovery. Depending on the severity of the setback, you may need to consult with your partner's aftercare case manager for advice about the best way to move forward.

It's important to understand that lapses and relapses are considered to be a normal part of recovery. Relapse rates for addiction are similar to those of other chronic diseases like diabetes and heart disease. Between 40 and 60 percent of people in recovery will relapse at least once.<sup>4</sup>

Experts view a lapse or relapse as an opportunity to identify the missing skills that led to it and develop those skills in order to prevent a similar occurrence in the future. Remember that, just as it took time for the addiction to develop and progress, it takes time to re-learn healthy ways of thinking and behaving and develop the skills it takes to cope with the triggers and faulty thought patterns that lead to relapse. Recovery is a process of change, and it may take a couple of tries to get it right for the long-haul. That's perfectly normal and even expected.



How you and your partner approach a lapse or relapse will determine how quickly your partner gets back on track with recovery, according to an article published in the *Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine*.<sup>5</sup> If you or your partner regard the lapse or relapse as a personal failure and the end of recovery, it can take a great deal longer to get back on track with sobriety.

It's imperative after a lapse or relapse to remember and embrace all of the positive gains made so far, and to feel empowered and inspired to build on them. It's important to view the lapse or relapse as an opportunity to re-evaluate the recovery plan, identify the skills that are missing, and work to develop them. Research shows that this positive approach to relapse not only gets individuals back on the road to recovery more quickly, but also stronger and more motivated than ever to make it work.







Treatment Works,  
and It Can Work for  
You and Your Partner





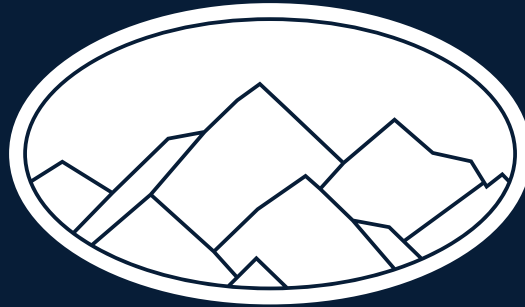
Treatment arms your partner with the skills, tools, techniques and strategies they need to stay sober once and for all. Your support is crucial to their success after treatment. Viewing their recovery as a partnership that involves both of you working together to create a new life of sobriety will help improve their chance of success.

Get the help and support you need for yourself, and things will fall into place. Stay positive, stay honest, and stay mindful of recovery every day. Relax together, have fun together, and strive to do something every day that moves you both closer to achieving your short-term and long-term goals. Most importantly, through good times and bad, don't let go of hope, which SAMHSA identifies as the very foundation of recovery upon which the four pillars—home, health, support and purpose—stand.<sup>6</sup> A life of recovery is entirely possible, and together, you can make it happen.

# Sources

1. Family Disease. (2016, February 24). Retrieved from <https://www.ncadd.org/family-friends/there-is-help/family-disease>
2. Principles of Drug Addiction Treatment: A Research-Based Guide (Third Edition). (2012, December 1). Retrieved from <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/principles-drug-addiction-treatment-research-based-guide-third-edition/frequently-asked-questions/how-effective-drug-addiction-treatment>
3. SAMHSA's Working Definition of Recovery: 10 Guiding Principles of Recovery. (2012). Retrieved from <https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/PEP12-RECDEF/PEP12-RECDEF.pdf>
4. Drugs, Brains, and Behavior: The Science of Addiction. (2014, July 1). Retrieved from <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugs-brains-behavior-science-addiction/treatment-recovery>
5. Melemis, S.M. Relapse Prevention and the Five Rules of Recovery. (2015, September 3). *Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine*, 88(3), 325-332. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4553654/>
6. Recovery and Recovery Support. (2017, September 20). Retrieved from <https://www.samhsa.gov/recovery>





# SILVER RIDGE

---

A PREMIER PROGRAM BY PYRAMID HEALTHCARE

Silver Ridge serves established midlife adults who need to retreat discreetly from their daily lives. Here, we provide the perfect setting to focus on the addictions compromising your relationships, your future and your legacy.

**Every great legacy has a strong foundation. Build yours here.**