

A Community Position on the Value of Life in Hancock County
Messaging Support Document

If you know someone who needs help, please call 2-1-1 for information about local treatment and support services.

LANGUAGE MATTERS

Language is powerful – especially when talking about addictions.

Stigmatizing language perpetuates negative perceptions.

“Person first” language focuses on the person, not the disorder.

When Discussing Addictions...

| SAY THIS... | ...INSTEAD OF THIS |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Person with a substance use disorder | Addict, junkie, druggie |
| Person living in recovery | Ex-addict |
| Person living with an addiction | Battling/suffering from an addiction |
| Person arrested for drug violation | Drug offender |
| Chooses not to at this point | Non-compliant/bombed out |
| Medication is a treatment tool | Medication is a crutch |
| Had a setback | Relapsed |
| Maintained recovery | Stayed clean |
| Positive drug screen | Dirty drug screen |

How to Support Someone in Recovery from Addiction

- **Don't judge.** Many people in recovery feel judged by their family and friends. Accept them for who they are and refrain from criticism and negativity.
- **Be patient.** Recovery can be a long, complicated process. People often have setbacks. It's important for them to know that you support them when things get tough.
- **Reinforce that recovery is possible.** Like other chronic diseases, people can manage addictions successfully.
- **Actively listen.** Take notice of your loved one's victories and struggles.
- **Encourage healthy habits.** Cooking, exercising and playing games are all positive, substance-free activities you can do with a person in recovery.
- **Suggest a support group.** Support groups allow people in recovery to interact with and receive encouragement from others who struggle with addiction.
- **Continue to offer encouragement and support.** Emphasize that it takes a lot of courage to get help for an addiction.
- **Take care of yourself.** Take time to participate in activities you enjoy. Spend time with others, or consider joining a support group for friends and families of people with addictions.

Tips for Talking with a Loved One About Substance Use

- **Talk** with them in a quiet, private place when both of you are sober and calm.
- **Try to understand** the person's own perception of their substance use. Ask if they believe their substance use is a problem.
- **Consider** the person's readiness to talk about their substance use.
- **Do not force** the person to admit they have a problem.
- **Express** your point of view by using “I” statements, like “I have noticed...” or “I am concerned...”
- **Identify and discuss** their behavior rather than criticize their character.
- **Let the person know** that you are concerned and willing to help.
- **Listen** without judging the person as bad or immoral.
- **Do not label or accuse** the person of being an “addict.”
- **Treat the person with respect and dignity.**
- **Have realistic expectations for the person** – learning to manage a brain disease takes time.

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