

A LOVED ONE IN ADDICTION

Does someone you love seem to be self-destructing addictive behavior? Are you noticing someone abandoning things that were once important to them because of drugs, alcohol, sex, or some other stimulant? An addiction or dependence is commonly defined as “a recurring compulsion to do the same thing over and over, despite harmful consequences to health, mental state, or social life.”

If you are seeing this trade-off in someone you care about - a compulsive pursuit regardless of the effects it has - and you're seeking advice on how to approach helping them, here are some helpful suggestions. Please note that taking responsibility for another person in an area that they should be responsible for themselves can lead us to unhealthy habits and lifestyles. Boundaries are important as we approach this subject, so we've included helpful educational resources below on this topic.

Step One: Assess the willingness to change

Has your loved one admitted a problem and shown interest in getting help? If they've given you any sign of wanting to deal with their problem, take that opportunity to get the best of Christian counsel and direction from those most familiar with the specific addiction he or she is indulging. Our church can connect you with wonderful therapists and counselors who love the Lord and are knowledgeable in these areas. If instead you're dealing with someone in denial, first, personally speak with them in love about the destructive pattern you have seen. If there is no response, your next step is to implement healthy boundaries and seek pastoral and Christian counseling and accountability to help give insight to your blindspots and for your personal safety. If you find yourself in an unsafe condition, please reach out and do not keep you or your children in an abusive environment. Bringing trusted pastoral care into the situation can help shield your home from the emotional, physical, and spiritual vulnerability of an out-of-control problem. Most importantly, do not walk through this alone.

Step Two: Recognize this needs treatment of body, mind, and spirit

Counselor Rob Jackson tells families that the addictive behaviors they see are just the tip of the iceberg. Many addictions spur from extremely hurtful and traumatic situations, which should lead us to compassion even as we pursue healthy efforts to encourage recovery. Efforts to modify behavior only might seem effective in the short term, but can re-appear or show up in a different sort of compulsion if underlying issues are not addressed. Deuteronomy 6:5 says “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind.” Those struggling with addiction need to treat problems of the body, mind, and spirit - to go beneath the surface and deal with the thoughts, emotions, and spiritual conflicts driving those behaviors. It's going to be deep heart work, not just behavior adjustment. And it will be hard work, so if your loved one is beginning this journey, be as gracious and encouraging as possible.

James 1:14 describes how dependence progresses from desire to enticement to sin and, ultimately, to death. The most effective approach to recovery is to reverse that progression - to restore a right relationship with God (Romans 8:1-15), to let God give

you a clean heart (Psalm 51), to let Him renew your mind (Romans 12:2) and then as a result, we bear good fruits in behavior. (Galatians 5:19-23) We would encourage you to begin to pray these Scriptures over your own life and over the life of your loved one. There is power in prayer and in the Word of God.

Step Three: Find hope in perseverance

God is able to redeem anyone and restore them to a life characterized by self-control. (Titus 2:11-14) While there may be consequences for sinful actions and boundaries to put in place, you can still have hope that God is bigger than addiction. There is hope in persevering as a family through the struggles of recovery. Romans 5:3-4 says "We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope." Ultimately, be praying that God's best will win out for your loved one, and don't do this alone. You'll find great resources below!

RESOURCES:

Books:

Boundaries by Dr. Henry Cloud & John Townsend

Life's Healing Choices by John Baker

Programs:

Celebrate Recovery, a Christian 12-step recovery program

Counseling:

Freedom recommends the Babb Center in Hendersonville, TN