

10 Tips for Talking to Your Family* about Recovery

1. Tell your family your story that in a general way explains where you were, what happened, and where you are now. Remember that they may be listening through the lens of their disappointment, anger or guilt. This may require several efforts.
2. Tell your story to them in stages, with greater detail when they request it and are capable of hearing it. Their ability to hear you may be limited by their experience with alcohol or drug problems among other family members or, in some cases, by feelings about their own alcohol or drug use.
3. Express your regret for any pain you may have caused them and make amends in ways you can.
4. Provide your family information on Substance Use Disorder and recovery. You can get such information from your doctor, counselor or your support group.
5. Introduce them to the process of recovery support. Invite your family to open meetings and prepare them for what to expect. Remember that it is normal for family to be somewhat jealous of the benefit you get from professional counselors and from recovery support groups.
6. Help connect them with other families. Encourage your parents to attend Alanon, Alateen, Naranon and SMART Recovery Family & Friends groups. There may also be groups for family available from your counseling agency, local churches, or health organizations.
7. Discuss ways they can support your recovery. Some of these may be very simple such as transportation or encouragement as you begin a new job.
8. Let your family know that you need to be responsible for your recovery and that this is something they can't do for you.
9. Negotiate clear expectations of what each of you will do to improve future communication and problem solving.
10. If your family is not ready for communication and support, find others who can offer you guidance and support.

*Family can be blood relatives, spouse/partner, close friends or others who have been part of your journey through Substance Use Disorder and Recovery.

Adapted from: White, William, *10 Tips for Talking to Parents about Recovery*.

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