

Codependency and Addiction

WA State Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

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If you live or work with someone who abuses alcohol or drugs, you may be consciously or unconsciously enabling their habit. Enablers – also called “codependents” – often try to protect users from their problems, or help hide the problems from others.

Enabling an addict can have disastrous consequences. Medical and financial issues, relationship or family struggles, injuries, and incarceration may all be serious results of a drug or alcohol addiction. If the abuser is allowed to continue to use without any repercussions, this may lead them not facing up to their problems until it is too late.

Following are some examples of enabling behaviors:

- Taking over the responsibilities of the user
- Making excuses or covering up errors and accidents for the user
- Going along with excuses for using substances
- Helping the user get out of financial difficulty related to substance abuse
- Cleaning up after the user

Why is Enabling Unhelpful?

It is natural to want to protect someone you care about. However, you are not helping substance abusers by shielding them from the negative consequences of their behaviors. The best way to assist a substance abuser is to let them face the reality of their situation. As long as you are there to save the day, the user can continue with their destructive behaviors.



Sometimes, the enabler acts out of shame, embarrassment, and fear to protect themselves as well as the negative outcomes of the addict's behavior. Enabling is done usually out of good intentions, love and care for another person. An enabler means well by their actions, but this simply prolongs the consequences of an addict's behavior.

CODEPENDENCY AND ADDICTION

How Can I Avoid Being an Enabler?

- Don't take responsibility for problems that the substance abuser should be handling.
- Don't try to protect the abuser; serious problems have serious consequences.
- Do not accept blame or guilt. You did not create their problems, and it is not your job to fix them.
- Let the abuser know how serious you think their problem is.
- Suggest that they seek counseling or other treatment.
- Think about what you need. Take care of yourself.



What the EAP can do

Your EAP's licensed professional counselor can provide confidential support and assistance to mental health counseling, support groups, and resources.

Contact the EAP today at 1-877-313-4455. www.eap.wa.gov

Resources

Co-Dependents Anonymous www.coda.org

Friends and Families of problem drinkers www.al-anon.org

Narcotics Anonymous www.na.org