

🏠 / [Rehab Guide](#) / Married To A Drug Addict

Living With an Addict: How To Deal With an Addicted Spouse

Written by: [Editorial Staff](#) Updated Mar 8, 2024

5 min read · 5 sections

🔗 Medical Detox 🏠 Evidence-Based Care 🧑 Expert Staff

Our intimate relationships are supposed to be safe havens, and our homes places that provide shelter from danger. Yet, being in a relationship with a partner that has an addiction to alcohol or drugs can lead to an unhealthy relationship with emotional stress and abuse.

For many Americans, a [close relationship with an addicted partner](#) can become a source of chaos, negativity, emotional upheaval, and even violence. Substance abuse can eventually destroy a couple by undermining trust, which weakens the bond between partners. If children are part of the relationship, conflicts over parental responsibilities, neglect, or abuse can occur as a result of one partner’s – or sometimes both partners’ – drinking or drug use.¹

Helping a spouse face their addiction challenges takes a team effort. The team at American Addictions Centers is here to help by offering targeted treatment plans for alcohol and substance abuse for your spouse. We are committed to helping you and your loved one build a foundation to stay sober. Please know that when your spouse goes to one of our facilities, they are part of the AAC family. For more information, contact us now at **(313) 209-9616** ⓘ

What you will learn:

- ✓ The effects of substance abuse in a relationship.
- ✓ How to support without enabling.
- ✓ Treatment options and support groups for couples.

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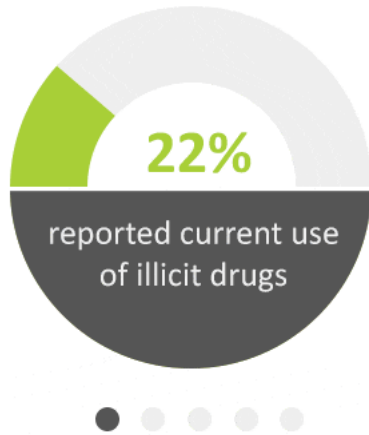
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Drug & Alcohol Use Statistics

Drug and alcohol abuse affect millions of adults ages 18 and older in the United States. The results of the [National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#) provide the following data on drug and alcohol use:

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1



- In 2005, 7.7 million Americans, age 12 and older, reported current use of illicit drugs.
- In 2015, an estimated 27.1 million Americans, age 12 or older, were currently using illicit drug.
- There were 138.3 million Americans aged 12 or older, in 2015, who reported current use of alcohol. Out of this group, 66.7 million people reported [binge drinking](#) in the past month..
- In American, 22.2 million people, aged 12 or older, in 2015 were current users of [marijuana](#). Out of this group 8.3% reported using marijuana in the past month.
- About 1.6 million adults ages 18-25 and 4.3 million adults age 26 and older, in 2015, reported use of psychotherapeutic drugs, which included prescription pain relievers, tranquilizers, and stimulants, for non-medical reasons.

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Many of these adults are involved in some type of cohabiting relationship, and these partners are feeling the painful repercussions of alcohol or drug abuse. Whether this relationship involves marriage, a domestic partnership, or a more informal living arrangement, substance abuse affects everyone in the home, not just the individual who is addicted. Effective therapeutic interventions involve both partners as well as their children.

How Substance Abuse Affects Relationships & Marriage

The [American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy](#) describes a cycle of conflict that occurs in domestic partnerships, in which substance abuse leads to verbal and physical conflict, which in turn leads to further disagreements about the substance abuse itself.

Other concerns that can occur for many couples affected by substance abuse include:²

- Financial difficulties.
- Legal conflicts over child custody, drunk driving, or illicit drug use.
- Verbal, physical, or sexual abuse.

Alcohol and drugs can impair judgment, arouse feelings of anger and resentment, and create an atmosphere that leads to [conflict at home](#).

Any experiences of abuse or potential signs of abuse must be taken very seriously in recovery. Individuals who have verbally abused or physically attacked their partners will require anger management courses and may face legal consequences, depending on the severity of the assault.

Anyone who feels that they are in danger because of an abusive partner should seek help immediately from legal authorities, a healthcare



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Supporting a Partner Without Enabling

What is the most effective way to support a partner who's going through rehab?

[Offering support to an addicted partner](#) can take a tremendous toll on your physical energy and emotional health. On top of this, the needs of the rest of the family, such as children and aging parents, and the demands of work and social commitments can quickly become overwhelming.

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Enabling Behaviors

Enabling occurs when one partner, usually without conscious intention, makes it possible for the other to continue drinking or using without having to face the consequences.

Examples of enabling behavior might include:

- Allowing a loved one to neglect their responsibilities.
- Letting a loved one abuse you or someone else.
- Making excuses for a loved one.
- Neglecting your own needs to help someone else.

How can you tell if you're supporting a partner versus enabling?

If you find yourself lying, making excuses, or creating explanations for a partner that allows them to remain in denial, you are probably enabling rather than supporting.

[Codependency](#) is when a loved one is depended on another in a partnership. If a couple is living with a substance addiction, codependent partners can end up enabling. In some cases, the codependent loses their sense of self in the overwhelming effort to "save" the partner from addiction; however, when that partner gets close to recovery, the codependent may undermine the process in order to retain feelings of power or self-esteem.

Partners and Spouses Ask Yourself...

- *Am I setting healthy boundaries for myself?*
- *Am I letting the people in my life take responsibility for themselves?*
- *Am I seeking help from professionals outside the home?*



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Can I Force My Spouse Into Rehab?

Some loved ones may ask themselves whether they can legally force their spouse into a rehab program. Some states have enacted involuntary commitment laws where certain criteria must be met in order to [send someone to rehab involuntarily](#). Criteria for forcing someone into rehab may include: determining they are a threat to themselves or others, that an addiction has rendered them disabled, that the person lacks the ability to make decisions, and other potential criteria.

Treatment Options

Approaches to Couples Therapy

Support for Couples in Rehab

How to Support a Spouse in Recovery



- [Addiction Assessment Quiz](#): This questionnaire includes 11 questions that can help you determine whether a loved one has a substance use disorder and what next steps may be appropriate for your loved one's unique situation.
- [Al-Anon](#): One of the most widely respected 12-Step programs worldwide, Al-Anon offers strength and hope through mutually shared experiences. This 12-Step group is open to spouses, partners, parents, children, friends, and other individuals who have been affected by the disease of addiction.
- [Couple Recovery from Addiction](#): Based on a recovery philosophy known as CARE (Couples Addiction Recovery Empowerment), this support organization provides a holistic model for couples seeking to overcome the damage and dysfunction caused by addiction.
- [Nar-Anon](#): Nar-Anon is a sister program to Al-Anon, with a focus on individuals affected by narcotic abuse. Like Al-Anon, Nar-Anon applies the 12-Step principles to recovery to the loved ones of individuals struggling with substance use disorders.
- [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#): This online collection of informational materials and resources was developed to empower the victims and survivors of domestic abuse. The telephone hotline provides immediate access to support services and crisis intervention: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233).
- [Recovering Couples Anonymous](#): This organization is not affiliated with Alcoholics Anonymous, but it is based on the principles of 12-Step recovery. The goal of this fellowship is to create committed, lasting relationships through the shared experience, strength, and hope of members.
- [SMART Recovery Family & Friends](#): SMART Recovery (Self-Management and Recovery Training) is a nonreligious support program for individuals who have a problem with drugs or alcohol and prefer a secular approach to recovery. A nonreligious alternative to Al-Anon, Family & Friends is a group within the SMART Recovery system that supports the loved ones of individuals in recovery.
- [Substance Abuse and Intimate Relationships](#): This informative article from the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy provides an overview of the effects of addiction on marriages and other intimate partnerships.
- [VAWnet: The National Online Resource Center on Violence Against Women](#): Created in 1995 by the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, this online network provides educational materials and resources on domestic abuse against women and gender-based violence.

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American Addiction Centers is in-network with many private insurance companies. We'll help you verify your insurance coverage for treatment quickly and easily.

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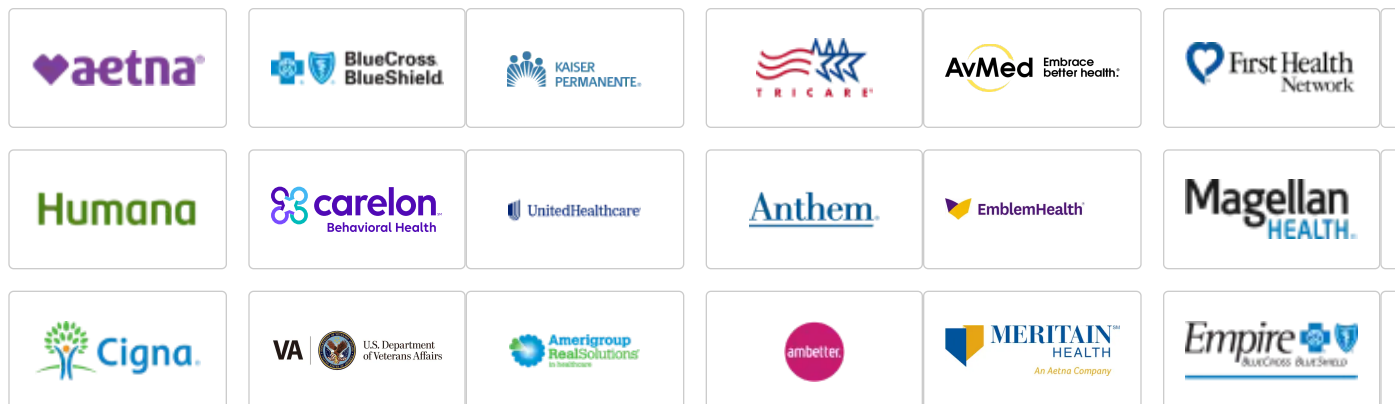
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01

Substance Abuse Assessment

Learn about the severity of your or a loved one's potential substance addiction.

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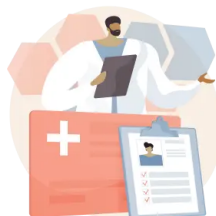
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[All Addresses](#)

