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Prevention Education Treatment Recovery Assistance

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## How to Continue the Important Conversation

Supporting someone with a Substance Use Disorder (SUD) is not easy, especially if they are not willing to admit they have a problem. It can take several conversations for them to decide it's time to seek help. Remember that they are fighting a difficult battle and the best thing to do is to stay positive and supportive. Change is hard but keeping the line of communication open and having hard conversations can help someone stay committed to change.

Here are some tips to help:

**Take Care of Yourself:** Substance Use Disorders are hard on everyone involved, not just the person who is struggling. It's important for you to set boundaries to keep yourself healthy and safe, and then tell the people in your life what you're willing to accept and not accept. For example, you don't need stay around someone that becomes mean or angry when they are using substances. You can support and help someone with an SUD, but you don't have to accept things they might say or do that are dangerous or scary. Sometimes, being firm about what you feel is not ok helps to encourage people to stay on track with recovery.

**Educate Yourself:** Learn about symptoms of SUD and the other conditions, such as anxiety or depression, that might come with it. Check out treatment and recovery options, and ways to help someone make a plan to move forward without substances, such as drugs or alcohol.

**Making a safe space:** Talking honestly about using substances takes trust, and trust takes time. Everyone has heard the negative names used to describe people who use drugs or alcohol. Judging someone does not help grow trust. If you are trying to support someone who is struggling with substance use, try to understand what they are going through, and be a good listener. Help them in important ways such as not drinking around them if they are trying to give up alcohol. You won't have all the answers. The most important thing is that you are there for them, providing a safe place to talk. Show them that you care in simple ways such as sending them encouraging messages, asking them to hang out, and asking them how they are doing.

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**Helpful Conversations:** Stigma is defined as “a mark of shame.” Many of the words or names used to talk about people who use substances are words that shame and make people feel bad about themselves. This stigma is one of the main reasons people don’t reach out for help, No one wants to be judged and shamed. Helpful conversation means listening without shaming or judging the person and the choices they’ve made. If you are helping someone who is struggling with substance use, be there to listen. You don’t need come up with the answers to their problems. Listening helps them to feel important and worthy. Be sure to listen with an open mind, and to listen more than you talk.

| Say this   | Not this   | Why?  |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Person with Substance Use Disorder (SUD)</li> <li>Person with Opioid Use Disorder (OUD)</li> <li>Person with Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD)</li> <li>Patient</li> <li>Client</li> <li>Person in Recovery</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Addict</li> <li>User</li> <li>Drug Abuser</li> <li>Junkie</li> <li>Alcoholic</li> <li>Drunk</li> <li>Former Addict</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using person-first language shows that a person “has” a problem rather than that they “are” the problem.</li> <li>Negative words can create feelings of judgment and shame.</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Substance Use Disorder</li> <li>Use</li> <li>Misuse</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Habit</li> <li>Abuse</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The words “habit” and “abuse” have been shown to create shame and the feeling of being judged.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Testing Negative</li> <li>Testing Positive</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clean</li> <li>Dirty</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using words that don’t stigmatize is important in allowing a person’s sense of hope and comfort.</li> </ul>  |

*AskPETRA is a free service that provides local resources, training and one-on-one help to connect adults, families, and providers with the support they need to understand, prevent, and treat Substance Use Disorder (SUD) in Northern NH.*

