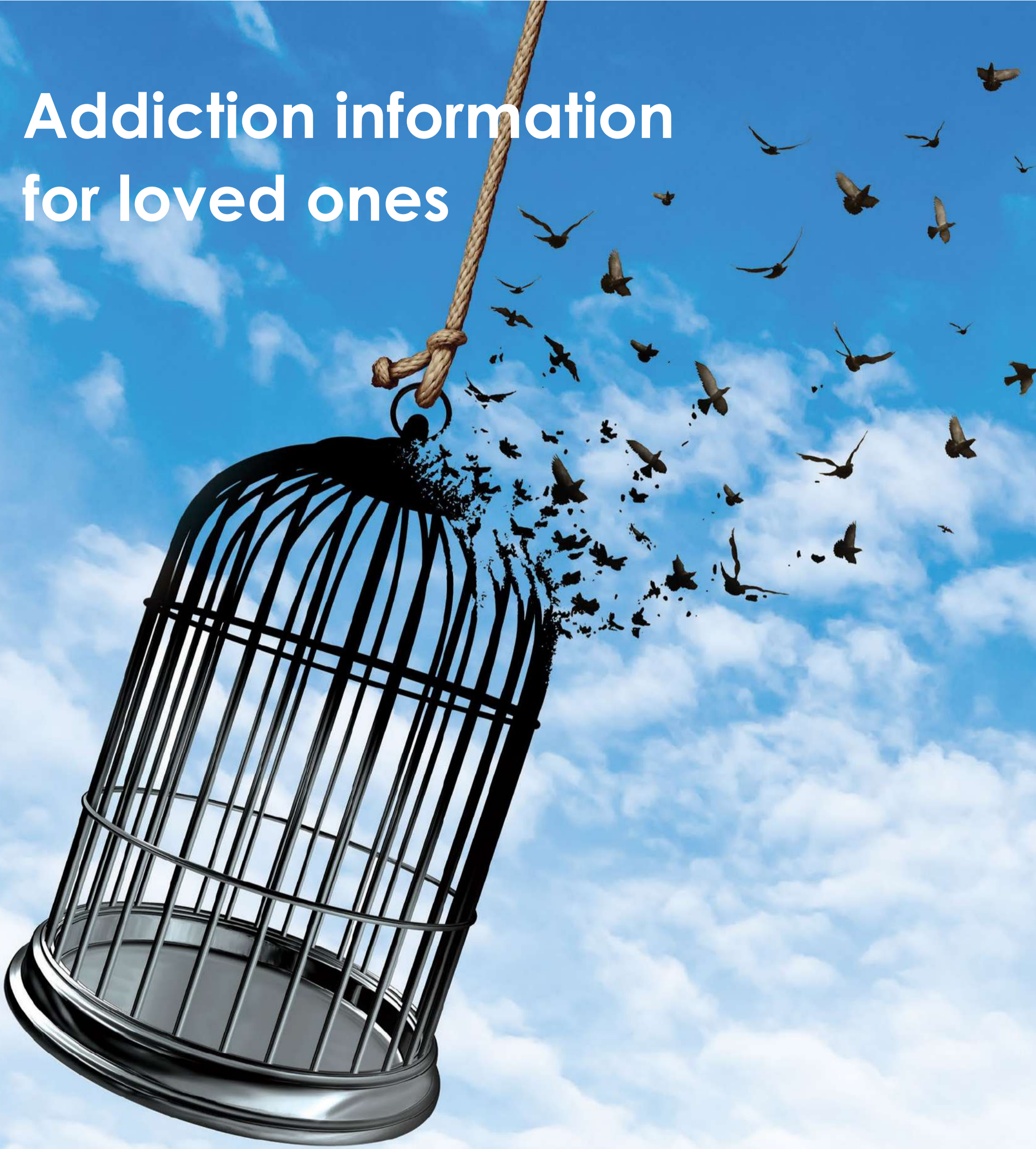


Addiction information for loved ones



BROADWAY
TRANSFORMING LIVES
Since 1974



“Don't punish yourself any longer for something that isn't your fault”

Since 1974, Broadway Lodge has helped to transform the lives of thousands of people, supporting them in their recovery from addiction to alcohol, illicit and prescription drugs, gambling, sex and gaming. Our multidisciplinary team work with clients so they can improve their emotional, mental and spiritual wellbeing and leave with the tools for the best chance of achieving a long-term recovery and to be able to live a happy and fulfilling life.

Addiction is a family illness and we believe that it's important for as many people as possible learn about and be involved in the addiction treatment and on-going recovery process. We also understand how important it is for loved ones to be able to look after their own wellbeing. This guide contains helpful information about addiction in the family as well as details of other charities that offer advice and support for relatives and friends of individuals with addiction.

Addiction & the Family Member

Whether we choose to call addiction a family illness or a disease of the mind, a state of dis-ease, chemical dependency or simply an obsession or compulsion, we have to agree that substance misuse is extremely complex. Consider that addiction can be caused by a combination of behavioural, emotional, environmental and biological factors with a possible genetic risk factor thrown in for good measure.

People with addiction are not necessarily bad people no matter how bad their behaviour becomes; they are 'ill' people. Chemical dependency can be termed as an illness of the body and the mind, after all, what sane person would take drink or drugs to excess knowing full well the harm it will bring to themselves, to their lives and to their loved ones, unless they were ill and had no choice. Chemical dependence tells the sufferer that they haven't got it, that they can handle drugs or alcohol, that they can give up at any time they want etc. Sufferers are usually the last people to see what the illness is doing to them; they have lost control over their drinking or drug taking.

The way that the family deal with addiction can increase or decrease the chances of the addicted individual getting into recovery. The family's actions and reactions can make all the difference – if you make the effort to understand what these actions and reactions should be. However, there is usually another 'illness' to be confronted first; this is the 'Family Illness'. Most families can see what chemical dependence is doing to the individual, what they may not be able to see is what the individual's chemical dependence is doing to them.

It is generally recognised that for each actively addicted person, be it alcohol, drugs or a harmful behaviour, at least 20 other people are affected in some way by the addiction and associated behaviour. Most affected are those closest to the person, such as the father, mother, brothers, sisters, husband, wife and children, and each are drawn into the crazy world of addiction. Unknowingly, these family members become part of the illness themselves. The 'family illness' we speak of is the response to the family members to the addictive illness of the sufferer in that they themselves become addicted, unknowingly, to fixing, helping and rescuing the addict regardless of the consequences to themselves or other family members.

How would the family member recognise that they have succumbed to the family illness?

The family member is determined to help, fix and save the addicted person from the addiction no matter what the cost. Be it money, time, lecturing, scolding, reasoning with, arguing, threatening, daily searches for evidence to confront the addict with, putting off holidays, sending the addict on holiday, spiritual, physical and mental exhaustion. Eventually, marriage and family inevitably break up.

Time and again the family member gives more time, money and other forms of support than they can afford. The family member will continue to help despite it becoming increasingly obvious that these 'helping actions' do not help the addicted person to get into recovery. It can be shown that these 'helping actions' actually enable the addicted person to stay sick.

The family member may try to help the addict using such actions including providing a comfortable home, food, cleaning up the mess, telling lies for, covering up for, protecting, paying fines for, making excuses for, providing transport, providing money, buying clothes to replace other clothes which have mysteriously disappeared – the list is endless.

Of course, it can be argued that most of these things are part of normal family commitment in today's society and would normally be expected of the family. But in truth, the family trying to cope with the addicted illness is anything but a normal situation. If the family was dealing with any other illness then these acts of helping would be acceptable and considered normal family behaviour. However, the sad truth is that with addiction the helping behaviour of the family member, however well meant, usually gets in the way of recovery or prolongs the time before the addicted person seeks help for themselves. The capacity of family members to absorb punishment and come up asking for more is simply phenomenal.

“Don't give up hope, you can handle today!”

All help given to the addicted person in whatever form is simply converted into more opportunity to continue the addiction. After all, if someone else is going to pick up the pieces and put things right all the time why should the addicted person want to seek recovery. Their world is ok – they are oblivious to the pain, chaos and anarchy they are causing around them and they are living in a world of denial. Only when they are beginning to suffer the consequences of their own actions and only when they begin to feel the pain from those consequences of their addiction, are they likely to want to recover.

A way for the family members to learn to 'let go' and 'detach' from the addicted person is to attend family therapy groups such as the family programme offered at Broadway Lodge (details within this pack) and attend the appropriate self-help fellowships such as Al-Anon, Alateen or Families Anonymous. Total commitment to helping the addicted person regardless of cost to oneself, actually works against recovery as it fails to confront the addicted person with the full consequences of their addiction.

Common reactions to addiction in the family

Guilt

That the family member may possibly be the cause of the problem, by something done or not done in the past (this feeling of guilt is often played on by the addicted person).

Isolation

The family member becomes progressively isolated from friends and social life as helping begins to take more and more time and effort. Holidays are put on hold, time taken off work etc.

Preoccupation

The family members life is haunted day and night by thoughts of what might be happening to the person with addiction and what action, if any, can be taken to help (self-help groups call this 'projecting').



Denial & Disbelief

This cannot happen in our family.

Anger

With oneself, the person suffering addiction, society and others.

Inadequacy

The family member feels inadequate and frustrated because they may not understand what they are observing and more importantly, not know what on earth they can do about it.

Focus

The family member becomes totally focused on the person with addiction to the exclusion of everything else; sometimes leading to the break-up of the family. It is unfortunately not unusual for a marriage to break up because the husband or wife becomes so absorbed in the helping process that they will actually choose to side with the addicted son or daughter rather than with their spouse or vice versa. Blind to the fact that it is more than likely that the imminent break-up is due in part to the stress of living with the addictive illness, but more likely it is mainly due to the divisive and manipulative nature of the addicted person. Where the family member is married to the addicted person they may accept progressive destruction of all that they should reasonably expect from a marriage. The family member may even knowingly assist the decline by adopting a negative posture of blame and being the martyr.

Shame

That such a thing could happen in the family.

The eventual consequences of the family illness are a loss of trust, faith, hope and love, mood swings, anxiety, depression, progressive isolation and poor health.

The values of the family member may change to accommodate behaviour by the addicted person that previously would not have been tolerated, allowances made because of the addiction when in fact, the opposite should apply. The financial burden of supporting the consequences of the addiction can be crippling. It is a fact that some families are more willing to pay off the debts or court fines than pay towards the cost of treatment. This is perhaps done to avoid the disgrace of the addicted person going to prison, or the family secret being exposed to all, whereas in fact this may be the crucial turning point that brings the addicted person and the family member into full realisation of the seriousness of addictive illness and the need for both to seek recovery.

The family illness can be treated. Recovery and healing begins when the family member attends a family programme or an appropriate anonymous fellowship. Here the family member will learn from others who have been through the living hell of insanity that goes with the addictive illness. They will learn to love the addicted person whilst still hating the illness. They will learn about 'tough love' and how to begin to 'let go'. Once the family member accepts the concept that they have no control over the addicted person's life or behaviour, that the only life over which they have control is their own, then they can start to put the focus back on their own lives and the healing can begin.

Resentment

Mainly towards the addicted person and sometimes coupled with blame towards other family members.

Anxiety

For the person with addiction, what they may or not be doing.

Blame

Blaming others for causing the addiction, bad friends, poor school discipline, police, society, even other family members.

Fear

For the future and what may or may not happen.

If I keep from meddling with people,

They take care of themselves.

If I keep from commanding people,

They behave themselves.

If I keep from preaching at people,

They improve themselves.

If I keep from imposing on people,

They become themselves.

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Family Recovery

The place to begin helping the addicted person to recover is with you. Learn all you can. Put into practice, not just words. This will be far more effective than anything you attempt to do for him or her. It is easier to find a list of don'ts in dealing with the person, for it is easier to understand why you fail than to know why you succeed. The following list of don'ts is not inclusive but makes a good beginning.

1. Don't let the addicted person exploit you or take advantage of you, for in doing so you become an accomplice in the evasion of responsibility.
2. Don't let the addicted person outsmart you, for this teaches him/her to avoid responsibility and lose respect for you at the same time.
3. Don't let the addicted person lie to you and accept what they say as the truth for the truth, for in doing so you encourage this process. The truth is often painful, but get at it.
4. Don't lecture, moralise, scold, praise, blame, threaten or argue when drunk, using drugs or sober. Don't throw out alcohol or get rid of drugs; you may feel better but the situation will be worse.
5. Don't accept promises, for this is just another method of postponing pain. In the same way don't keep switching agreements; if an agreement is made stick to it.
6. Don't allow your anxiety to compel you to do what the addicted person must do for him/herself.
7. Don't cover up or excuse the consequences of drinking/ using drugs. This reduces the crises but perpetuates the illness.
8. Don't try to follow this as a rule book; it is simply a guide to be used with intelligence and evaluation. Seek professional help. You need it as well as the addicted person.
9. Above all, don't put off facing the reality that alcoholism/ drug addiction is a progressive illness that gets increasingly worse and use continues. Start NOW to learn, to understand and to make a place for recovery. To do nothing is the worst choice you can make.

'Let Go'

To let go does not mean to stop caring; it means I can't do it for someone else.

To let go is not to cut myself off, it is the realisation that I can't control another.

To let go is not to enable, but to allow learning from natural consequences.

To let go is to admit powerlessness which means the outcome is not in my hands.

To let go is not to try and change or blame another; it is to make the most of oneself.

To let go is not to care for but to care about.

To let go is not to fix, but to be supportive.

To let go is not to judge, but allow another to be a human being.

To let go is not to be in the middle arranging the outcome, but to allow others to affect their own destiny.

To let go is not to be protective; it is to permit another to face reality.

To let go is not to deny, but to accept.

To let go is not to nag, scold or argue but instead to search out my own shortcomings and correct them.

To let go is not to adjust everything to my desires but to take each day as it comes and cherish myself in it.

To let go is not to criticise and regulate anybody but to try to become what I dream I can be.

To let go is not to regret the past, but to grow and live for the future.

To let go is to fear less and love more.

Addiction in the Family

Love and Compassion

The parents or spouse of the addict has no more right to say "if you loved me you wouldn't drink" than they have as saying "if you loved me you would not have cancer." This is hard to accept but chemical addiction is an illness. It is a condition and not an act. It is not far from the truth that an addict feels unloved or unwanted. They see a world without love and without compassion, for they live in a world that is dominated by self. Alcoholics Anonymous says that 'The alcoholic knows loneliness like few do'. And they will drink to take away the pain and the next morning will show a complete unwillingness to discuss what happened.

Love is Destroyed

The addict creates pain and then escapes its consequences by drinking/taking drugs. The family will then suffer the consequences for him/her, thinking that this is required if they truly love the addict. If this process is allowed to continue, love and compassion will gradually be eroded away until it is completely destroyed. It is then replaced by fear, resentment and hatred. The only way that love can be retained is by the family member learning not to suffer when drinking/using is in progress and learning not to undo the consequences.

The Three C's

The family member should try to remember the three c's; that they:

1. Didn't Cause it.
2. Can't Control it.
3. Can't Cure it.

The best help a family member can give is to seek help for themselves.

Long Range Recovery

A mistake often made by the family member is to try to keep the addict away from the drink/drugs. Other than locking them up, this is impossible. Remember that you have already lost the battle with alcohol or drugs so it is pointless continuing it. Winning the war against addiction is the objective. The addict needs motivating towards the desire to stop drinking/using and to accepting help in achieving this goal. The way this motivation can be accomplished is to allow the addict to realise the consequences of his/her addiction so that these actions become so painful that they will be encouraged to seek help through sobriety. This will take courage on behalf of the family member and may involve suffering but not suffering of the pain of the substance misuse and its consequences. It also means offering the addict a more constructive and positive love as well as understanding in their sobriety.

Denial

Any addiction can affect the whole family. The family will not generally be able to admit that a member is suffering from an addiction until the illness has been critical for a number of years. Once they do admit it to themselves they will probably try to hide it for another couple of years before seeking competent help. All addiction carries with it a form of denial whereby the addicted person is resistant to treatment. If the family accepts this denial and refuses to break the lock, most addicts will eventually die.

Recovery begins with the family

The significant other in the addictive relationship may need as much assistance and counselling as the person with addiction if a successful and effective recovery programme is to be launched. Otherwise, interaction between the addict and the family may be destructive rather than helpful. For example, wives or husbands may find themselves blamed for everything that is wrong in a marriage. The addict is highly skilled at blaming others to the point where the other will truly believe it is them who are at fault.

The Alcoholic Weapons

Anger/ Loss of Temper:

The first weapon of the addict is the ability to arouse anger or provoke loss of temper in others. If the family member or friend becomes angry or hostile towards the addict, then this person has completely destroyed his or her ability to constructively help. The addict is also expert at projecting an image of self-hatred. If this is met by hostile attacks it is then verified. The consequences of the verification are that the addict can justify their next drink/drug use.

Anxiety:

The second weapon is an ability to arouse anxiety on the part of the family. The family will then deal with this anxiety when it becomes too intense, thus establishing a pattern for the addict in the area of problem solving. He or she now knows that when a problem occurs then the family will deal with it. More importantly, when others resolve the problem it re-enforces the addict's own sense of failure and adds to the family's sense of hostility and condemnation and once again gives a convenient excuse to drink/use drugs.

Seeking Help

Broadway Lodge Family Programme (Selected Sundays)

Throughout the year on selected Sundays (usually the last Sunday of the month), Broadway Lodge run a free family programme which is led by one of our counsellors in a small group setting. It is open to anyone who is seeking support because a loved one has an addiction and we recommend attending as many as possible for the maximum benefit.

It is very important for anyone affected to look after themselves and know how to recover from the traumas of the individual's illness. We understand that relatives are often stressed, worried and fearful for the individual and we support family members by offering education about addiction and ways to look after their own wellbeing. The session will cover topics such as resentments, people pleasing, anger and co-dependency.

All upcoming dates are listed on our website in the 'events' section and you can book on by calling [01934 812319](tel:01934812319) or emailing hello@broadwaylodge.org.uk

Other Support Groups/ Advice for Family Members

Al-Anon



Al-Anon Family Groups provide support to anyone whose life is, or has been, affected by someone else's drinking, regardless of whether that person is still drinking or not. There are over 700 Al-Anon groups held across the UK and Ireland and you can search for your nearest groups on their website. Their group meetings "can provide a much-needed safe haven in which to share experience, strength and hope." Al-Anon also have a helpline number – details can be found on their website.

Alateen is part of Al-Anon and hold meetings specifically for teenagers (12-17) who have a relative or friend with addiction. Details about Alateen can be found on the Al-Anon website below.

www.al-anonuk.org.uk

Families Anonymous



Families Anonymous hold group meetings across the country and are specifically for families and friends of those with a mind-altering substance or related behaviour problem. If there are no face to face groups being held in your local area, you can join their discussion forum which can be found on their website. Families Anonymous also have a helpline number.

www.famanon.org.uk

Co-Dependents Anonymous



"Co-Dependents Anonymous (CoDA) is a set of informal self-help groups made up of men and women with a common interest in working through the problems that co-dependency has caused in their lives. CoDA is based on AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) and uses an adapted version of their Twelve Steps and Traditions as a central part of its suggested programme of recovery. To attend CoDA meetings, all you need is the willingness to work at having healthy relationships. This means that all kinds of people attend meetings." (Coda website). Locations of meetings and further information about Coda can be found on their website.

www.coda-uk.com

Adfam



Adfam's website provides a wealth of information to help families affected by drugs or alcohol. It features information about other organisations offering support for families and has a search facility where you can find a support group in your local area.

www.adfam.org.uk

Local Drug & Alcohol Service

Your local authority is likely to have a drug and alcohol service e.g. Addaction in North Somerset, SDAS in Somerset, who may provide free support services for relatives, friends and children of individuals with addiction.

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