Make waves
COMMUNITY EDUCATION DAY

BREAK THE SILENCE.
The Challenging Balance of Being a Loved One of a Person with a Substance Use Disorder

Peter White, MA, LPCC, LICDC
Addictions Counselor
Key Points

• Chronic crisis is common for loved ones of people with substance use disorders.
• Reactivity or inactivity is a frequent response.
• There is a range of responses that can be helpful.
• These responses build skills and strike a balance between intervention and disengagement.
• Self care is a core skill, and self care usually involves a journey of acceptance, grief and hope.
Living with Chronic Crisis

When addiction is in the home common problems include:

- Disrupted relationships
- Loss of predictable roles and routines
- Decay of communication
- Disruption of social life and household stability
- Excessive secrecy, loss, and fear
- Increased risk of violence and abuse
Moving from Crisis to Balance

Loved ones often feel trapped in choices with risky outcomes at best:

• Demand the person quit
• Disengage if they don’t quit
• Continue to make unwanted adjustments or compromises if they don’t quit
Acceptance, Grief, Hope

It is painful to accept that Substance Use Disorders are chronic conditions, and therefore our responses need to be both effective and enduring.

• **The Bad News**: Substance Use Disorders have no cure

• **The Good News**: Recovery remains immediately and continually available
Building a Balance

We can build our skills to stay healthy and intervene:

• Help our love ones get motivated for recovery
• Become partners who see the issues accurately
• Learn how to make sobriety rewarding
• Improve our communication, even when angry
• Learn, specifically, how to access treatment
• Expand our own lives with safety and happiness
Acceptance, Grief, Hope

• Acceptance of the ongoing presence of a Substance Use Disorder impacting the home comes with the grief of the loss of living a life without a destructive chronic condition.

• We work to honor our losses and ‘Change the Dream’ to build and grow in the satisfaction of recovery.
Acceptance, Grief, Hope

Self Care is the compassionate response:

• It can help repair the damage of current or past substance use.

• It can lower the impact of any future substance use.

• Self-care may seem selfish, but it is the most effective way to care for your loved one and everyone else in your life.
Resources

• SMART Recovery Family and Friends
  https://www.smartrecovery.org/family/

• Greater Cincinnati Al-Anon
  https://cincinnatiafg.org/

• Addiction Services Council
  https://addictionservicescouncil.org/