

# GuidanceResources® Online

## September: National Recovery Month

Every September, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) sponsors National Recovery Month to increase awareness and understanding of mental and substance use disorders and celebrate those who are in recovery.

While recovery requires time, motivation and support, by making a commitment to change, a person can overcome their addiction and regain control of their life.

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### Types of Treatment Programs

Once someone has made the tough choice to commit to recovery, it is important to explore treatment options and try to determine what will work best for them.

Some typical types of drug treatment programs include:

- **Residential treatment** – involves living at a facility and getting away from work, school, family, friends and other potential addiction triggers while undergoing intensive treatment. Residential treatment can last from a few days to several months, depending on the program.
- **Day treatment/Partial hospitalization** – Ideal for people who require ongoing medical monitoring but wish to still live at home and have a stable living environment. These treatment programs usually meet at a treatment center for 7 to 8 hours during the day, then you return home at night.
- **Outpatient treatment** – can be scheduled around work or school. The individual is treated during the day or evening but does not stay overnight. The major focus of this type of program is relapse prevention.
- **Sober living communities** – this program typically follows an intensive treatment program such as residential treatment. The person will live with other recovering addicts in a safe, supportive and drug-free environment. Sober living facilities are useful if someone does not have anywhere to go or if someone is worried that returning home too soon will lead to relapse.

When choosing a treatment program, there are several things it is important to keep in mind:

- **There is no single treatment method that is going to work for everyone.** Everyone's needs are different. Addiction treatment should be customized to a person's unique situation and it may take some time to find the right program. While this can be discouraging, it is important to test out and do research on different treatment programs to find out what methods will work best.
- **Treatment should address more than just someone's drug abuse.** Addiction affects a person's whole life, including their relationships, career, health and psychological well-being. Treatment success depends on developing a new way of living and addressing the reasons why someone turned to drugs in the first place. For example, someone's drug dependency may have developed from a desire to manage pain or to cope with stress, in which case that person will need to find a healthier way to relieve pain or to handle stressful situations.
- **Commitment and follow-through are key.** Drug addiction treatment is not a quick and easy process. In general, the longer and more intense the drug use, the longer and more intense the treatment a person will need. Long-term follow-up care is crucial to recovery.
- **There are many places to turn to for help.** Not everybody requires medically supervised detox or an extended stint in rehab. The care a person needs will depend on a variety of factors, including age, drug-use history and medical or psychiatric conditions. In addition to doctors and psychologists, many clergy members, social workers and counselors offer addiction treatment services.

### Key Elements of a Successful Treatment Program

While treatment programs can vary depending on the person's type of addiction, a successful program often includes several key elements, such as:

- **Detoxification:** Usually the first step of a treatment program is to purge the person's body of drugs and manage withdrawal symptoms.

- **Behavioral counseling:** Individual, group and/or family therapy can help a person identify the root causes of their drug use, repair their relationships and help them practice healthier coping skills.
- **Medication:** This may be used to manage withdrawal symptoms, prevent relapse or to treat any co-occurring mental health condition such as depression or anxiety.
- **Long-term follow-up:** This can help to prevent relapse and maintain sobriety. This may include attending regular in-person support groups or online meetings to help keep the person's recovery on track.

## Tips for Building a Solid Support System

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Having positive influences and a solid support system is essential, no matter the treatment approach. The more people a person can turn to for encouragement, guidance, and a listening ear, the better that person's chance for recovery.

Some tips on building a support system include:

- **Lean on close friends and family:** Having the support of friends and family members is an invaluable asset in recovery. If someone is reluctant to turn to their loved ones for help because of their behavior in the past, consider going to relationship counseling or family therapy.
- **Build a sober social network:** If someone's previous social life revolved around drugs, they may need to make some new connections. It is important to have sober friends who will support their recovery. Try taking a class, joining a church or a civic group, volunteering or attending community events.
- **Consider moving into a sober living home:** Sober living homes can provide a safe, supportive place to live while a person is recovering from drug addiction. They can be a good option if a person does not have a stable home or a drug-free living environment.
- **Make meetings a priority:** Join a recovery support group such as a 12-step program and attend meetings regularly. Spending time with people who can empathize with the recovery process can be very healing. It can also be beneficial to learn from the shared experiences of the group members and discover what others have done to stay sober.

## Common Causes of Relapse and How to Cope

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While relapse is frustrating and discouraging, it is a common part of the recovery process. It can also provide an opportunity to identify triggers and evaluate treatment options.

Different triggers can put someone at risk of relapsing into old patterns of substance use. While specific causes of relapse differ from person to person, some common triggers can include:

- Negative emotional state - such as stress, sadness, anger, or trauma.
- Positive emotional state - feeling happy and wanting to feel even better, such as having a good time with friends.
- Physical discomfort - such as pain or withdrawal symptoms.
- Trying to test your personal control - "I can use just once" or "have just one pill".
- Strong temptation - feeling an urge or craving to use)
- Conflict - such as an argument with a spouse or partner)
- Social pressure - being in a situation where it seems everyone else is using)

When a relapse occurs, call a sponsor, talk to a therapist, go to a meeting or schedule an appointment with a doctor.

Once sober and out of danger, determine what triggered the relapse. The experience can help determine what adjustments need to be made to the treatment method to help strengthen a person's commitment to recovery.

## Resources

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- National Institute on Drug Abuse: [www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov)
- RecoveryMonth.gov: [www.recoverymonth.gov](http://www.recoverymonth.gov)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

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