

NINE WAYS TO MINIMIZE THE RISK OF OVERDOSE



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Drug overdose is now the leading cause of death in the U.S. for those under 50, increasing by over 100% from 2015 to 2022. We lost 107,573 lives - 295 DAILY, in the U.S. in 2021.

Putting this into perspective, lives lost to overdose are the equivalent of a 911 terror attack EVERY 10 DAYS!



While it's true that we can't control the actions of another person, there are things we CAN do as parents - and as a society - that could save a life.

Following are some of them:



Despite a 50 year 'War on Drugs' and over a trillion dollars of taxpayer dollars, the U.S. has 4% of the world's population, with 27% of the world's drug overdose deaths.

EVERY FAMILY IS AT RISK!!



Whether you're worried about your child, the impact on medical care for everyone, or concerned about cost to taxpayers saving lives and implementing policy that WORKS benefits everyone.

While it's true that we can't control the actions of another person, there are things we CAN do as parents - and as a society - that could save a life.

Following are some of them:

1. Carry Narcan

Opioids can slow or stop a person's breathing, which can result in death or brain damage. If you see someone whose breathing is slowed or cannot be woken up, Narcan® (the brand name for naloxone) should be administered.



On March 29, 2023, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved Narcan for over-the-counter nonprescription use.

2. Make Your Son or Daughter Aware of Risks of Overdose & Good Samaritan Laws

Even when we're not sure they're listening, conversations with teens and adult children about the risks of overdose may make a difference. As part of that conversation, make them aware of Narcan & Good Samaritan laws that shield individuals administering Narcan from civil liability. These laws also prevent criminal prosecution for drug possession for people who overdose or for those who seek medical help for someone else overdosing. The extent of protections varies from state to state, so law in your jurisdiction should be consulted before assuming protections apply.

Knowledge of these legal protections can be the difference between receiving medical help or being left to die.



3. Be aware of the heightened risk of overdose upon release from jail, treatment or any other period of abstinence.



We all want to be optimistic that a period of abstinence is the beginning of long term sobriety, and it may be. It is important to be aware that the risk of overdose significantly increases after abstinence.

Drug tolerance that increases with regular use declines. If previous levels of drug use are resumed, overdose risk escalates.

(Public officials should be aware that short term jail sentences for minor violations can be DEADLY.)

4. Use Naltrexone or other medications to minimize risks of relapse.

Debate continues regarding the best path to successful recovery, but medications have proven to significantly improve results in appropriate cases. Medications minimize cravings and reduce the risk of relapse. Medications save lives.

Statistics show that adding medications to the arsenal of treatment techniques highly increases chances for successful long-term recovery. If we keep our focus on the goal of embracing any avenue to allow our sons and daughters to lead productive lives, and allow ourselves to be open to whatever methods are available to get there, lives can be saved.

According to
the Substance
Abuse &
Mental Health
Services
Administration,
use
of medications
in treatment
cuts the risk of
death IN
HALF.

Even large treatment centers like Hazelden/Betty Ford now include medications in their treatment programs. For more information on use of medications in treatment, visit www.WarOnUs.com. A book, and special help for parents dealing with addiction in their family is available.

5 Question Conventional Wisdom Including 'Let Them Hit Bottom' & 'Just Say No'

The ongoing stigma and the attitude that addiction is caused by a moral failing is destructive, inaccurate, and inhumane. The mandate for total abstinence can deny necessary medical treatment alternatives, threatening recovery. Substance use disorder is a health issue, and should be treated as one.

Would we wait for a cancer patient to 'hit bottom' before getting them help?

Would we deny them medications that could minimize pain and help with recovery because we believe they should be 'clean' with no drugs used?

Would we put them behind bars if an attempt at treatment wasn't successful, or would we try other avenues for treatment that might be more successful for that individual?

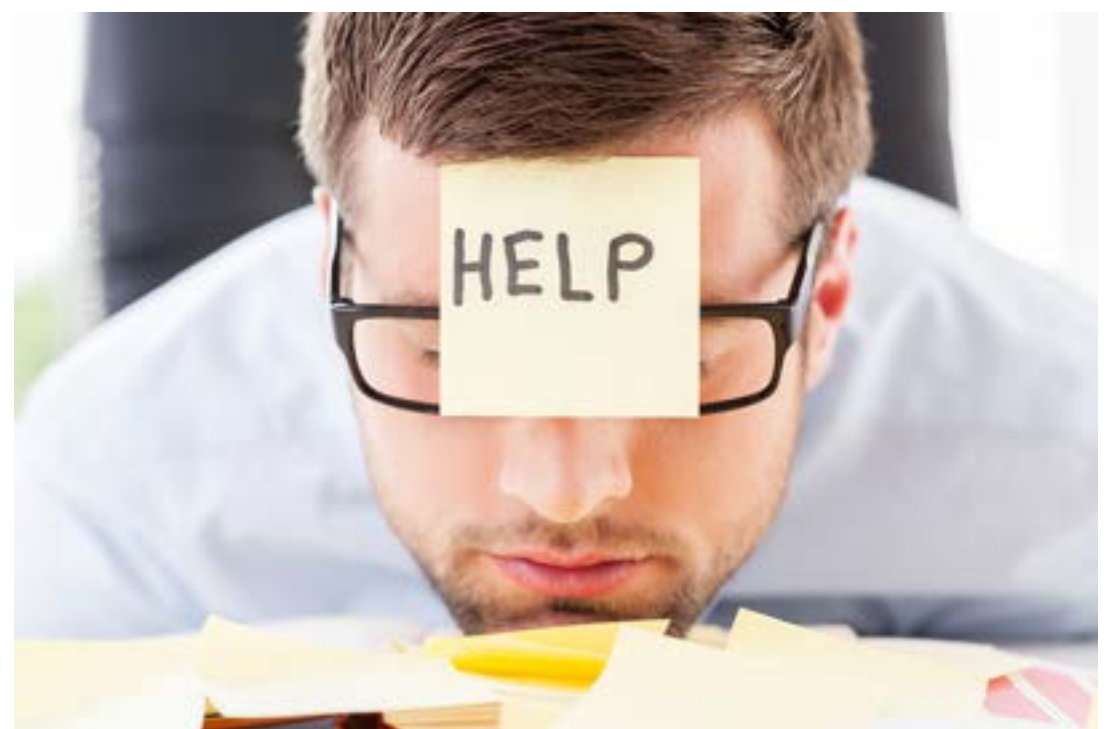


Making treatment available and moving away from the 'perfection' model goes a long way toward returning hope and self-respect to those suffering from substance use disorder. Recovery would be easier to achieve without the stigma and potential for prosecution.

6 Be Proactive in Coordinating Treatment, and Locate Treatment That Fits the Specific Needs of the Individual.

The best treatment for each individual varies. Too often, decisions are made in crisis mode, based on where a bed can be found, what's affordable, or what's mandated by a court, rather than on what best suits the needs of the individual. Then, when treatment isn't successful the first time around, the patient is blamed, and sometimes put behind bars.

Family members often do their best to research alternatives. Requiring families to diagnose and select treatment for any other medical condition would be unthinkable, yet this is typical in regard to addiction.



Consider 5 factors in assessing treatment:

1. What treatment setting is needed?
2. What treatment philosophy best suits the individual?
3. Is use of medications appropriate?
4. What specific treatment provider will be the best fit?
5. What treatment is affordable & available?

Note that affordability and availability are the last item. While these factors obviously make a difference, an affordable or available provider that doesn't fit the needs of the individual benefits no one. The most expensive or most intense treatment is often not the best. If the right treatment is found, insurance, government benefits, financing, or scholarships may apply.

7 End the War on Drugs & Convert Funding for Prosecution & Incarceration to Treatment

The U.S. has spent over a trillion dollars of taxpayer money on the War on Drugs since 1971. This doesn't even consider costs of lost productivity and lost opportunities for those incarcerated or whose criminal records compromise career opportunities.

Despite all this expense, the U.S. is the number one nation in the world in illegal drug use, and the addiction and overdose epidemic continues to escalate. Clearly, these policies are NOT working -- yet we hear some policymakers suggest that 'more of the same' is the answer.



Fewer than 20% of all drug users end up addicted, yet we incarcerate, and sometimes mandate treatment for those arrested, regardless of whether it's needed. At the same time, less than 11% of those with *true* substance use disorders are able to get treatment.

Of all public funding in regard to addiction, only 1.9 cents of every dollar is spent on any type of prevention or treatment, with 95.6% of funds spent on prosecution, incarceration and other attempts at controlling supply. The result is not even being able to keep drugs out of prison and leaving those with substance use disorder with destructive criminal records and stigma.

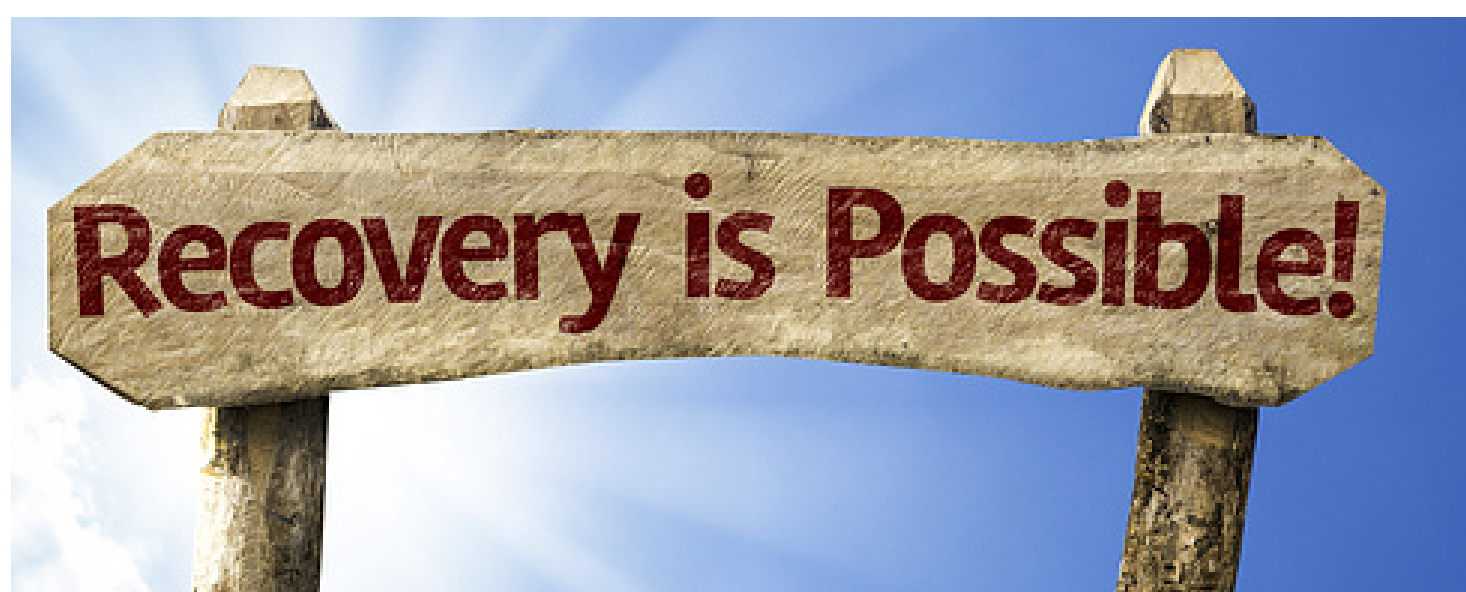
Funding treatment instead of prosecution and incarceration would not only save lives, but protect quality and integrity of life.

8. Invest in Harm Reduction

1. Apply funds currently spent on prosecution, incarceration and supervision of 'offenders' of drug possession 'crimes' to treatment. Convert addiction from a legal issue to a health issue - to be treated by medical professionals.
2. Provide funding for evidence-based treatment based on individual medical diagnosis for each patient. Allow admission without waiting periods which can increase risk of relapse and overdose.



3. Provide funding for treatment medications. Eliminating delays & the risk that services and access to medications may be lost increases the chance that recovery will be pursued, and decreases risk of relapse and overdose.
4. Offer needle exchange, fentanyl test strips and safe injection sites with access to treatment for those who are ready. Make it easy for those suffering with substance use disorder to develop trust, and to feel safe in asking for help.



9. Be Kind and Offer Opportunity.

Each of us CAN make a difference.

- . If you're a landlord, accept a tenant in recovery (even if a criminal record exists).
- . If you're an employer, open doors of opportunity and benefit from dedicated and appreciative employees.
- . If you're a parent, advocate for your child, even when they make you want to pull your hair out. Help to coordinate treatment, and let them know they're loved.



**HOPE
SAVES
LIVES!**

ATTENTION: PARENTS WITH ADDICTED SONS & DAUGHTERS

Click [HERE](#) for a **FREE**
Webinar:

**"How to Protect Your
Family's Finances and
Finally Get REAL Help for
Your Child"**

-Without 'Letting Them Hit
Bottom', Expensive Treatment
Programs, or Getting Sucked
Into Destructive Myths.

For those parents who've lost a child to overdose:

The information in this booklet in NO way suggests that you should have, or could have, saved your son or daughter.

Any parent who has ever witnessed their child's substance use disorder understands that any day, we could lose our child.

Our hearts go out to anyone who has had to endure the agony of losing a child or any loved one.



"Mothers hold their children's hands for a short while, but their hearts forever."

www.WarOnUs.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

In this e-book, Attorney Colleen Cowles combines legal expertise, her work with clients and their families, and over two decades of research including extensive interviews with experts on topics covered. Most importantly, Colleen understands the impact that addiction has on families through her own experiences on the roller-coaster, heartwrenching, learn-as-you-go journey through addiction in her own family.



Ms. Cowles consults with families struggling with addiction in their families and is author of the book 'War On Us: How the War on Drugs & Myths About Addiction Have Created a War on All of Us'.

Attorney Cowles is an author, speaker, teacher, and advocate on topics related to substance use disorder. Her passion and expertise are focused on minimizing the pain that families experience when addiction is involved, helping parents to help their children without compromising their own financial security and sanity, and improving outcomes for those suffering from addiction. She also advocates for reform of the criminal justice system in regard to addiction.

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