

## Recognizing Enabling Behavior

If you live or work with someone who abuses alcohol or drugs, you may be consciously or unconsciously enabling his or her habit. Enablers – also called ‘co-dependents’ – often try to protect users from their problems, or help hide the problems from others. Following are some examples of enabling behaviors:

- Taking over the responsibilities of the substance abuser
- Making excuses or covering up errors and accidents for the substance abuser
- Going along with excuses for using substances
- Helping the abuser get out of financial difficulty related to substance abuse
- Fixing problems caused by the substance abuser

### Why Doesn't Enabling Help?

It's natural to want to help and protect someone you care about. However, you are not helping by buffering the substance abuser from the negative consequences of his or her behavior. You are, in fact, condoning his or her actions and enabling the abuser to freely continue the destructive behavior.

### How Can You Avoid Being an Enabler?

- Don't take responsibility for problems that the substance abuser should be handling.
- Don't try to protect the abuser; serious problems have serious consequences.
- Don't accept blame or guilt from the abuser. You did not create the abuser's problems, and it is not your job to fix them.
- Be honest. Let the abuser know how serious you think the abuse problem is.
- Suggest that the abuser seek counseling or other treatment.

### Think of Yourself

So many times, the focus is on the substance abuser and little consideration is given to how the abuse affects others. Think about what you need and take care of yourself. You may consider joining a support group or participating in a program like Al-Anon. The people in your own support system may help you realize that your situation can be better and you can learn positive ways to react in different situations.

### Reach Out for Help

Take the first step in reaching out for help. Log on to [www.MagellanHealth.com/member](http://www.MagellanHealth.com/member) or call your program's toll-free number 800-523-5668 to get the information, help and support you need.