

How Does My Family Dynamic Affect Drug and Alcohol Recovery?

When we think of kicking an addiction to drugs, alcohol or some other addictive substance or behavior, most of us think of the most high-profile and popular treatments, such as rehab, detox programs, interventions, and so on. We think of what we see on TV; the most commonly used methods. We don't always see (or think about) what goes on behind the scenes, and how many other things come into play when it comes to beating an addiction. Achieving long-term sobriety involves a great deal of effort and lots more than just a rehab program. To have any sort of success, you must address all the underlying issues that may have led to addictive and/or coping behaviors, as well as providing the patient (and their families and loved ones) with the proper space and skills necessary to cope with the ongoing struggles. Only then can you achieve real success.

Addressing past trauma

Most addictions are, at their root, a coping mechanism developed to deal with pain. Many addicts come from histories of abuse (sexual and/or physical), neglect, and trauma, and often these were situations that happened at home, when they were in their formative years. While a person can “do the work” in [rehab or detox programs](#), they cannot truly heal and move on from their addictive coping mechanisms until they've done the work of addressing their trauma. And often their families are involved with this trauma, and therefore need to participate as well.

Promoting healing, discussion between family members

Most rehab centers and detox programs offer a form of family therapy, to promote healing, discussion/discourse between family members, strengthen family ties, and address old traumas that may be at the root of harmful behavior. These family therapy programs can come in a variety of different types and models. They are all designed to address the traumas and triggers that have led to addiction, but they often follow different approaches. The most common types include the Family Disease Model, which focuses on addiction being a disease that affects the entire family (not just the person suffering from addiction); The Family Systems Model, that recognizes the adaptive nature of a family when a loved one suffers from an addiction and point out the ways in which family members might enable users because it's “easier”; and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, where therapy points out the harmful and maladaptive ways in which a family may be contributing towards a user's behaviors, whether subconscious or purposefully. There is also Brief Strategic Family Therapy, which usually focuses on young people such as teens or pre-teens, and takes a hard look at how families deal with and treat youngsters (and how this treatment can encourage an addiction).


If you or a loved one suffers from addiction, rehab and detox programs are a wonderful first start. But without one of these forms of family therapy, the addict can only go so far in a successful life of sobriety. Old traumas must be addressed and families/loved ones of the person in question all have to do their part, through [extensive family therapy](#), to help their loved one – and themselves – heal.

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