

WHEN A PLANE IS IN TROUBLE, YOU HAVE TO PUT YOUR OXYGEN MASK ON FIRST BEFORE HELPING OTHERS WITH THEIRS. THIS INCREASES THE OVERALL ODDS OF SURVIVAL AND RECOVERY. WHEN SUPPORTING AN ADDICT, THE SAME RULE APPLIES...

### TIME TO INTERVENE

"It is estimated that 10% of the South African population struggles with addiction in one form or another. This includes substance abuse, gambling and sex addiction. That translates to one in 10 people, with most families having at least one person struggling with a substance-abuse problem," says Gideon Williams, an experienced addiction counsellor and owner of Start to Stop Bespoke Addiction Services in Cape Town.

It's a hard pill to swallow, knowing how badly addiction can take possession of one's life – whether you are the one addicted or watching from the sidelines. There will always be that feeling of helplessness and hopelessness.

# Tough love, SELF- LOVE



In 2018, 60% of murders, 30% of rapes and 80% of youth deaths were committed or caused by being under the influence of alcohol or drugs. From children as young as eight years old to adults and the elderly, addiction (especially to drugs or alcohol) is a disease that can consume anyone.

It is also one that can be cured if love, support and the will to recover are present, along with the necessary facilities and resources. (SA organisations dealing with this issue experience a shortage of funds, so our government has its work cut out for it.)

What can we do, as the friend or family member of an addict, to help them on the road to recovery? The truth is, not much if we are struggling to cope with it ourselves.

### ADDICTION NARRATIVE

The stress and pain of being on the outside looking in is not to be ignored, since the emotional cost of addiction can be overwhelming and makes us more susceptible to the risks of helping an addict.

As Gideon explains, there is a possibility of being manipulated by an addict into enabling their addiction or narrative of being

### READ THE SIGNS

Any unsettling feelings or thoughts that arise as a by-product of experiences beyond your control can cause tremendous harm to yourself. Recognise when you may be losing perspective, feeling anxious and overwhelmed, and hitting an all-time low. These are all signs that you need to draw the line with your loved one and get help and support for yourself.

“Family members can assist by focusing on their own recovery,” says Gideon. “Support exists within religious organisations or places like Al-Anon or Nar-Anon, which

## THERE IS THE POSSIBILITY OF BEING MANIPULATED BY AN ADDICT INTO ENABLING THEIR ADDICTION OR NARRATIVE OF BEING ‘HELPLESS’

### HELPFUL RESOURCES

#### Start to Stop Bespoke Addiction Services:

Website: [s2st.co.za](http://s2st.co.za)  
Email: [gideon@s2st.co.za](mailto:gideon@s2st.co.za)

SADAG – The South African Depression and Anxiety Group  
Call: 011 262 6396

Social Development Substance Abuse Line:  
Call: 0800 12 13 14  
SMS: 32312

LifeLine (Trauma Counselling)  
Website: [lifelinejhb.org.za](http://lifelinejhb.org.za)  
Call: 0861 322 322

‘helpless’. These individuals may also turn to self-harm to escape their difficulties – or gain attention and get what they want from you (part of the manipulation) – which can result in added trauma for both parties.

In asking for help, struggling loved ones may ‘trauma-dump’ on us, leaving us more aware of (and involved in) their circumstances, with not much know-how on the best way to help them.

Acknowledge that the process of helping an addict can be stressful and emotionally taxing, and that you need support too. Second-hand trauma exists! The best support you can give an addict is the belief that recovery is possible for them (and you), and to recommend professional help.

facilitate family recovery from the effects of addiction. It is better to provide support when you are in your place of healing.”

So, don’t feel guilty for needing to step away from the situation, even just temporarily. It’s tough love for them but it’s much-needed love for you. Remember that you have a life of your own and you are entitled to explore and enjoy it, while also lending a helping hand of emotional support or the occasional shoulder to cry on.

Putting someone before yourself is a beautiful act of love, but focusing on that person instead of yourself gives no love to anyone. By taking care of yourself and your well-being, you can inspire those around you by your example to do the same for themselves. X