

How Can I Tell If My Partner Is Serious About Recovery

By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.

Engaging in a relationship with someone who is struggling with addiction can present all manner of challenges. It can be particularly tough to believe them when they say they're ready to get help and get sober. After being let down in the past, it's natural to be skeptical about whether they're genuinely committed to recovery this time. You want to believe and hope. You don't want to be let down again.

The question, "How do I know if they are serious about recovery this time" does not have an easy answer, but you can get a sense of how this will probably go by focusing on their actions rather than their words, especially when you have heard the words before and not observed real change. Observe their behavior and look for specific changes in attitudes, feelings, and activities.

It is pretty easy to have good intentions, and many newly sober people have good recovery intentions. They are usually sincere when saying all the right things and expressing hope for the future. However, intending to stay sober is not the same thing as actively working to stay sober. Intentions, though encouraging, do not necessarily mean they're engaging in recovery activity. Behavior is an indicator of attitude. Observing their behavior is the only way to know whether someone is seriously committed to recovery.

When your loved one tells you they're working a program of recovery and staying sober, it's natural to feel skeptical after the other previous attempts. Challenge your skepticism by asking them about specific behavioral changes they're making or have made. Look for ways they are changing. Are they following through with recovery recommendations?

Behavior is concrete and measurable. Either your loved one is following through with making their verbalized changes, or they're not.

Hold them accountable for their actions and celebrate their positive changes. Don't nag them or take responsibility for driving their recovery. It is healthy to be responsible to them rather than for them. Being responsible to them involves being honest in the relationship and letting them know what you see, what you think it means, and how you feel about it.

People in recovery want to have their sobriety efforts recognized. Let them know when you note recovery behavior, thinking, and feelings management. Encouragement is helpful. As a person grows in recovery over time, they gain more and more insight into the impact that their substance use disorder has had —not only on themselves, but on their loved ones. Be patient for the amends that you want them to make. Although insight in this area does not happen over night, this recognition can assist with maintaining motivation for recovery over time.

Keep your expectations realistic. The changes you expect to see in your loved one may differ from what they are working toward. Recovery is a long and challenging process, and it's unlikely that your loved one will magically become the person you've always wanted them to be. Instead, focus on specific changes in attitudes, feelings, and actions that are achievable and observable. Are they going to meetings? Are they calling their sponsor? Are they reading their recovery literature and working on the steps? Are they going to work? Are they exhibiting more responsible behavior? Progress, not perfection, is the standard.

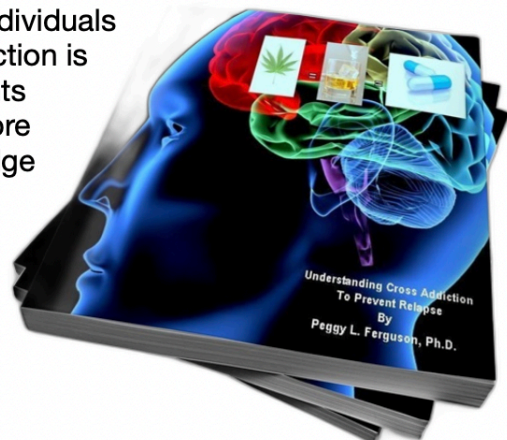
Look toward your changes. What serious efforts are you making to improve your behavior? You may need to focus on your healing journey if you're still fixated on your loved one's actions and planning your responses accordingly. Recovery is not passive – it requires active, ongoing effort. People who are serious about recovery are actively working toward recovery and health.

Change is not easy, and well-established behavior patterns tend to be stable. Well-established relationship interactions are particularly stubborn. You and your loved one must work hard to change old behavior patterns to achieve lasting relationship changes.

If you're involved in a loved one's struggle with substance use disorder, it is natural to be skeptical about their commitment to recovery this time. By observing their behavior and looking for specific changes, you can get a sense of their level of commitment. While your recovery efforts do not determine their level of recovery dedication, your recovery activities can have a high rate of return on your emotional, physical, psychological, and spiritual investment.

Understanding Cross Addiction to Prevent Relapse By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.

Substance use disorder is a complex challenge that deeply affects the brain and behavior. It involves an irresistible urge to use drugs despite negative consequences, driven by both neurological changes and psychological defense mechanisms. Cross-addiction poses an additional risk, compounded by the steep learning curve in recovery. Limited knowledge and struggles to replace the roles fulfilled by substances make newly recovering individuals vulnerable to relapse. Understanding cross addiction is crucial for successful recovery, with family insights playing a pivotal role in relapse prevention. Explore the Cross Addiction Ebook for essential knowledge and strategies. This relapse prevention guide addresses substance use disorder, cross addiction, and includes a helpful worksheet.



\$9.95

PDF E-book
Download