

Supporting Children with Substance Abuse in the Home

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According to the National [Institute on Drug Abuse](#), approximately 25 percent of American children grow up in households where substance abuse is present. Being exposed to substance abuse in the home puts children at a higher risk for low self-esteem, poor performance in school, emotional and behavioral problems, risk of developing anxiety or depression, earlier onset of substance use, higher likelihood of becoming addicted to substances, and a higher risk of abuse. Finding ways to support youth struggling with a parent with a substance use disorder can be difficult, but life changing for the child. There are many resources available to help build resiliency, encourage life skill development, and develop protective factors. The [American Addiction](#) Centers provide these suggestions for kids:

Find and adult to confide in- At least one older person they trust and who understands them. This can be a family member, a teacher, a coach, a counselor, or a friend's parent.

Keep a journal- Writing down feelings can be a good way to work through feelings and express yourself.

Participate in activities that make you feel good about yourself- Exercise, art, writing, photography, music, organized sports, school clubs, etc.

Stay close to your friends- It can be tempting to isolate when there are problems at home that you can't control, but finding at least one safe friend who makes you feel good about yourself is vital.

Collect emergency phone numbers- Making a safety plan including a list of people to contact in a crisis, emergency services, teen hotlines, and other adults who you can turn to if home life becomes unsafe.

Remember it's not your fault- Guilt and upset feelings are very common in children whose parents struggle with substance use. It is so important to remind yourself that you are not the cause of your parent's problem and you can't control their use or their actions. Reach out for help from safe friends, family members, and engage in activities that make you feel good about yourself when you are having trouble working through difficult feelings.

In addition to these suggestions, family members should check out local Al Anon and Al Ateen meetings. Find meetings at <https://al-anon.org/>

If you, or someone you know struggle with substance abuse in the family, please take the time to review the resources available and feel free to reach out to ISD622's chemical health specialist, Ashley Rome at arome@isd622.org.

<https://americanaddictioncenters.org/guide-for-children>

<https://nacoa.org/families/just-4-teens/>

<https://al-anon.org/newcomers/teen-corner-alateen/teen-faq/>

<https://drugfree.org>