Kicking It

Somjit Ball supported her mom through 12 years of recovery after a 20-year crack addiction. Now a program coordinator at Recovery Consultants of Atlanta, Ball shares tips for helping a loved one beat addiction.

July 1, 2005 By Suzy Martin

>>IT'S A CHOICE If you're going to be a support for a loved one in recovery, remember that it's a choice, not a responsibility. If you feel you have to do it, you'll become resentful.

>>IT TAKES TIME You can't just say, "I have the energy for this today." An addict will need a smile and a hug every day. There's no right way to recover. Rather than putting locks on doors and cabinets [to safeguard medication and sharp objects], you'll need—and have to give—strong doses of patience and love. Whatever higher power you turn to, you'll need.

>>REHAB 101 There's no free rehab, and many who need it don't have health or disability insurance or Medicaid. State-funded facilities can be selective; first, they'll likely refer people to a community-based program like ours to help them get into theirs.

>>FIND SUPPORT Abusers are running away from their feelings, so when they start recovery, those pushed-away feelings come flooding back. Both the addicts and their support must be prepared to deal with that. Groups like Al-Anon (for loved ones of alcoholics) and Nar-Anon (for family and friends of drug abusers) can help loved ones get in tune with themselves and deal with the hurt.

>>IT'S WORTH IT Every day with my mother is an accomplishment. When she was in her addiction, we couldn't talk, couldn't hug; now, we can. I appreciate our relationship now more than if I were just learning to walk and she was there with open arms.

For more info, call Al-Anon (888-425-2666); Nar-Anon (800-477-6291); African American Family Services (612-871-7878) or visit Alcoholics Anonymous (www.alcoholics-anonymous.org) or Narcotics Anonymous (www.na.org).

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