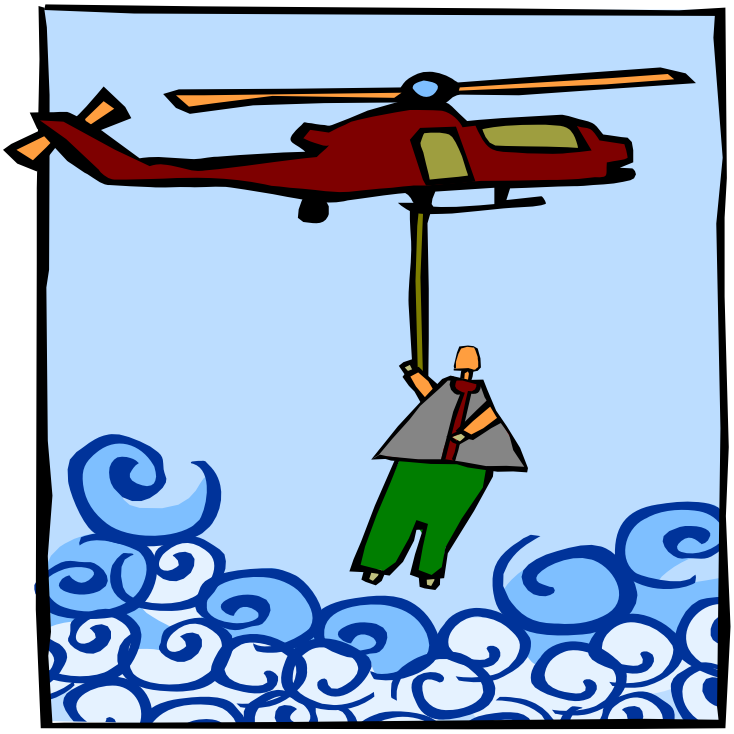
Understanding

...enabling

Due to inaccurate in formation and mistaken beliefs about alcoholism or addictive disease, people who are close to the addict (alcoholic) "enable." This behavior pattern occurs in personal relationships with addicts, both at home and at work. There are usually persons in relationships with addicts who are considered primary enablers.

DEFINITION

Enabling at work is behavior exhibited by coworkers or supervisors that helps the addict not realize or face the consequences of his/or her problem behavior resulting directly or indirectly from the alcohol or drug use. Enabling typically appears as the "right" thing to do in response to the problem behavior but helps the alcoholic or addict escape responsibility for actions or problematic events. The ability of the addict to deny, rationalize, externalize, and minimize problems while having others accept excuses and explanations helps the addict get sicker.



IMPACT

Enabling may be so well accomplished that the alcoholic or addict may appear as a person with no problems. In the earliest stages of addictive disease, this person could be perceived as the most competent, well-liked, and socially accepted worker in the organization. As addictive disease grows worse, problems follow --- and enabling increases. The alcoholic's past history of job success without problems may span decades. This keeps managers unsuspecting of an alcohol or drug problem. They easily believe some other problem explains job performance issues. These problems are often symptoms of the primary addiction. Supervisors or coworkers are easily led or manipulated to excuse, help, make up for shortcomings, or in other ways support and protect the addicted worker. These enabling patterns can continue in the face of late-stage addiction, such as alcohol on the breath, erratic and disturbing mood swings, and obvious withdrawal symptoms.

LOSS

Eventually the enabling behavior becomes so automatic and institutionalized in the company, that only a crisis will break the pattern. Often this crisis is one that causes extreme embarrassment, financial loss, or other cost to the organization. Unfortunately, the response to such crises is often termination or transfer at great expense to the organization. The loss of a potentially valuable employee is the real tragedy. Sometimes medical retirements are arranged for workers who have become too ill to function. When this happens, the life span of such employees is often shortened, due to uncontrolled drinking supported by a fixed income. An ensuing decrease in the alcoholic's interest in treatment and an increase in medical and social dysfunction accompany this financial independence.

This information is not intended to replace the medical advice of your doctor or healthcare provider. Please consult your health care provider or EAP for advice about a personal concern or medical condition.

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