



## SUPPORTING A LOVED ONE AND HOW PALLADIUM PRIVATE CAN HELP

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**It's not always easy to be a support person, it can be a challenging and thankless task.**

Chances are you are not trained in this area and it can leave you questioning whether you are doing the right thing, supporting in the right way and if all the effort is actually making a difference.

This guide gives you tips for guidance when taking care of your loved one experiencing mental health or dependency issues.

This guidebook has been put together by Palladium Private psychologists and counsellors along with many of the clients providing input during and after their programs, with a focus on what clients are looking for after they have completed their residential part of the program.

## 1. GETTING TO KNOW THEM

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- Most of the time when a client comes to the retreat it is because they want to change parts of who they are. They want to change their behaviours, their goals, their lifestyle. They want to leave the retreat different to how they came in. This means you need to get to know this new person, or least the person they want to become.
- This can be fun, it is almost like getting to know them again. Don't make them slot back into the same routines and same 'story' that was playing when they left. Give them space to be different.
- We often type cast people. We put them in roles, we make assumptions of who they are and we are rarely mindful as to whether this is actually true.
- We can go through our whole life living with a person but never actually getting to know them beyond who we think they are.
- We are all changing all the time, get to know your loved one for who they are today, not who they were yesterday.
- It is helpful to draw a line in the sand, what has passed is past. It's done. If you are still finding it difficult to accept some of the past then I recommend you seeking support for this and avoid going over it again and again with the person you are trying to support.

## 2. BE A GOOD LISTENER

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- Listen to understand not to challenge or to fix, or to assume responsibility.
- Your role as a support person is not to take away the discomfort, it is more to validate, acknowledge and understand your loved ones' feelings and thoughts.
- The thoughts they express are not facts, they are not necessarily accurate accounts of the situation, but they are how they have interpreted it.
- You will no doubt think and feel differently. Listening doesn't mean you agree or are in any way responsible. It just means you acknowledge how they feel and think.
- A light example for this is, I say my favourite colour is orange, you don't have to agree that orange is the nicest colour, you don't have to even have to like orange, but you can accept that I feel orange is a nice colour.
- Try to give this tolerance to their opinions.
- Give them space to express themselves. This allows them to move through their emotions instead of staying stuck in them.
- Often once a person has voiced how they feel, and heard their thoughts out loud they feel a lot better. Venting can be very helpful at releasing emotions and moving towards solutions.
- If we are finding it difficult to allow others to vent it may be because we take responsibility for how they are feeling in some way. This is the error.
- Next time someone wants to talk, practice the art of listening to understand without taking it on.
- Ideally this is a two-way street. Hopefully your support person will in turn give you space to express how you are feeling. I understand you may not have been this dynamic in the past but hopefully now there will be some space to change how you relate and communicate with each other.

### 3. BELIEVE IN THEM

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- An important part of healing in mental health is a person's self-efficacy. This is their belief in themselves to achieve set goals. They need to feel like they have the ability to change, and succeed at their goals if they are ever going to attempt them.
- This makes sense, we are not going to be motivated to do something we think we are destined to fail at.
- We're making an assumption here, but usually as a support person you have a strong influence in your loved one's life. They would not have you this close to their vulnerability if they did not care about your opinion. If you do not believe they can change and achieve set goals then this can be significantly discouraging for them.
- You may not even say it but they can still pick up on it.
- Finding a way to believe in them and communicate this to them on a regular basis can be very supportive.
- If you do not believe in them then you might not be the best person to support them on this journey of change.

## 4. DO NOT BECOME THEIR CARE TAKER

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- Everyone that has left the retreat is perfectly capable of taking care of themselves. We did not baby them. We supported and encouraged them, but we did not become their care takers.
- You need to do the same. They are adults and they need to make their decisions, take responsibility for their actions and take care of themselves.
- We see a lot of clients come into the retreat being taken care of. However, during the duration of their stay they have to take care of themselves.
- This helps them to feel empowered and gain that self-efficacy that we were talking about before.
- When they hit a few hurdles they may want to slip back into a role where you make all the decisions for them and take care of them but this will not help them move forward in the direction they want to go in their heart of hearts.
- Of course, you can help them and preform acts of kindness but be aware of the difference between taking care and care taking.



## 5. ACT WITH THE INTENTION OF LOVE AND KINDNESS

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- Part of being human is to have emotions, insecurities, control struggles, experience physical fatigue and become overwhelmed and reactive. This results in us not always acting with love and kindness.
- As humans have some tough love beliefs and may think that punishment and shame is a good tactic to use to deter undesirable behaviour. In reality, tough love and shaming do not help support someone who is acting out due to stress and insecurity.
- While we acknowledge their behaviour is frustrating if meeting fire with fire is all you can offer, it is best to offer nothing and take some space. This does not mean give each other the cold shoulder and start a four day silence battle, it means take a break, cool off and when you are grounded again come back and address what needs to be addressed.
- Even with the best intentions, chances are you both may still lose your temper, shame and blame, get emotional and irrational. It's ok, it's human nature.
- If you can rationally acknowledge this tactic is ineffective in solving anything, you will resort to this reactive behaviour less and come back to kindness quicker. That is the best we can ask for really.
- Aim to treat people with respect, communicate like adults, own our emotions and act with the intention of helping and supporting others.

## 6. ENGAGE IN LIFE WITH THEM

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- If you embrace this point, then the way you look at being a support person will change.
- You are not there to watch over them and make sure they do not slip back into old patterns of behaviour. Supporting is more about encouraging new behaviours. And often the best way to do this is to do it with them.
- A metaphor that I really love is; “don’t go in and beat darkness with a stick, bring in the light.”
- Don’t focus so much on all the hard days, undesirable behaviours and situations, focus more on the good days and encourage the healthy behaviour.
- It’s like gardening if you continue to plant flower and pull weed eventually you will have a beautiful garden.



## 7. LET GO OF EXPECTATION

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- I know it is really hard but this is more for you own personal mental health. Let go of expectation of what the other persons life journey should look like.
- Often we offer support with conditions such as, expecting permanent change, or gratitude or the favour returned.
- It is often these expectations that will lead to you being disappointed and having an emotional reaction.
- You need to acknowledge that the journey out of stress, depression, addiction and anxiety is up and down.
- They will have good days and bad days, like all of us, and if you are the support person you may be the one seeing more bad days than good days.
- It is important to remember that your role is to stay strong and support them when they are struggling.

## 8. BE OPEN TO CHANGE

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- Ideally there will be change after your loved ones retreat stay. Chances are this will impact you and may also put some pressure on you to change.
- Trust me it is all for the good.
- Yes, they are the ones that went away and they took on this journey to change but it might just spill over into your life especially if you are trying to support them.
- It might mean trying new types of food, new activities, new routines, learning new information, new ways of interacting and communicating.
- We already talked about how engaging in activities, and taking on lifestyle changes with them is one of the best ways to support as it facilitates connection and motivates them to integrate their learnings.
- Also, we cannot expect others to go where we are not willing to go ourselves.
- So be open to change, be curious as to how your life could also improve as a result of supporting your loved one.

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MAKE THE CHANGE FOR GOOD

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