



Helping vs Enabling

Understanding Healthy Support

When someone we love is struggling, especially with addiction or destructive behavior, it can be difficult to know the difference between helping and enabling. Both may look similar on the surface because they involve giving support, time, or resources. Helping supports growth, responsibility, and solutions. Enabling unintentionally protects unhealthy behavior and prevents growth. Use the guide below to help identify the difference.

Helping (Healthy Support)	Enabling (Unhealthy Support)
Expresses gratitude for help	Acts entitled to your time, money, or resources
Understands you are not obligated	Believes you owe them help
Accepts 'no' respectfully	You fear their reaction if you say no
You help because you want to	You feel pressured or obligated
Often attempts to solve the problem first	Expects others to fix their problems
Honors agreements and commitments	History of breaking agreements or not repaying loans
Focuses on solutions and responsibility	Focuses on problems and victimhood
Situation feels open and honest	Pressure to keep the help secret
Support aligns with your values	Helping requires ethical compromise
Respects boundaries	Uses guilt or emotional pressure
Encourages growth and independence	Protects them from consequences

A helpful question to ask yourself: **Is my support helping this person become more responsible, or protecting them from responsibility?** Healthy support encourages growth, accountability, and independence. Enabling often protects someone from the natural consequences that could motivate change.

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