

## **Fact Sheet: Community Reinforcement and Family Training (CRAFT Model)**

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**The following is a summary of information found in the following sources:**

Foote, J., Wilkens, C., Kosanke, N., & Higgs, S. (2014). *Beyond addiction: How science and kindness help people change*. New York, NY: Scribner.

Meyers, R. J., Roozen, H. G., & Smith, J. E. (2011). The community reinforcement approach: an update of the evidence. *Alcohol research & health : the journal of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism*, 33(4), 380–388.

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**How does the CRAFT approach help family members and loved ones?**

1. **Addiction Science and Education**
  2. **Strategies to Influence Motivation and Behavior Change**
  3. **Positive Communication Skills**
  4. **Self-Care**
  5. **Helping Them Get Help**
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**Emphasizes educating yourself about addiction and the brain  
(Addiction Science and Education)**

- Moderate to severe versions of substance use disorders (also referred to as addiction) are chronic medical conditions affecting the brain's reward, motivation, and emotional systems.
- Understanding how addiction is a brain disorder can help you see your loved one's behaviors from a different perspective.
  - Knowing that their brain does not allow them to see and appreciate the long-term negative consequence of their substance use and causes them to focus only on using the substance above anything else, can help you cope with the frustration and anger their behavior can cause.
- The CRAFT approach helps you understand your loved one's triggers to use substances in the ways it makes sense from their perspective
- While diabetes and opioid use disorder are both chronic medical conditions, there's no denying that an opioid use disorder comes with very different symptoms and ways it affects a person's life and relationships.
- As a family member/loved one, being impacted by the behavioral symptoms of an opioid use disorder is quite different than if that same loved one had diabetes. Those behaviors can

- provoke strong emotional reactions in loved ones. Having the perspective and knowledge about what underlies this behavior can help family members/loved ones cope and respond.
- The following is a list of behaviors associated with a substance use disorder that are very difficult for loved ones to cope with:
    - Poor and risky decision making, that puts themselves and potentially others at risk
      - Rapid shifts in emotions, more prone to yelling using hurtful words
    - Drastic changes in how your loved one makes decisions and relates to you and others
      - Seeing your loved one minimize the effect their substance use has on you or their life
      - Your loved one struggles to set goals for the future; their brain's decision making and judgment become overly focused on short term needs related to substance use
    - Motivation is concentrated on getting more of a substance which means they stop paying attention to other important aspects of their life
    - Preferring substance use activities over other experiences and relationships
      - Stops engaging activities or relationships that were previously pleasurable
      - Difficulty controlling or stopping use even though it is causing pain and other negative consequences.

**Teaches you scientifically proven approaches that target motivation and behavior change related to substance use disorders**

**(Strategies to Influence Motivation and Behavior Change)**

- CRAFT focuses on ways you *can* have an influence on your loved one's decisions and behaviors.
- CRAFT uses strategies 2 primary strategies that have been shown to be effective at influencing behavior change in psychological research studies.
- The first is Positive reinforcement
  - The nature of a substance use disorder is that someone's brain stops responding to negative consequences or "punishments" related to their substance use.
    - Unfortunately, many approaches from society, the legal system, and in relationships focus on punishment to try to get people to change.
  - Research has shown that positive reinforcement is effective in helping people change. Positive reinforcement essentially means rewarding behaviors that you want someone to repeat. For example, giving something rewarding when your loved one is not using substances. This helps increase your loved one's associations between non-using behaviors and rewards.
- The second involves understanding why and how people change and communication strategies that influence motivation:
  - Substance use serves a meaningful purpose in your loved one's life, even if you can't see or understand how it could.
  - They are often on a mental teeter totter, going back and forth between reasons to stop using opioids and reason to keep using opioids.
  - Telling a loved why they need to change and putting pressure on them to change is often unhelpful and ineffective. Instead, research shows that helping people identify and talk about their OWN reasons for wanting to change their substance use, versus coercing them or confronting them with reasons, is more effective.
  - CRAFT teaches you how to start where your loved one is, not with where you want them to be.

### **Teaches positive communication skills (Positive Communication Skills)**

- It is completely normal and understandable that family members have periods of time when they communicate by yelling, avoiding, or criticizing their loved one with a substance use disorder. This often comes from a place of being overwhelmed, emotionally exhausted, hurt, and/or afraid.
- However, many people would agree that yelling, arguing, and/or criticizing is not an effective or helpful communication strategy. It can provide short-term relief, but often has long term negative effects.
- The CRAFT approach teaches you how to use positive communication so that your loved one has more of an ability to hear what you are saying and be affected by it.
- These positive communication strategies also help you set limits and healthy boundaries with your loved one.

### **Self-Care (Self-Care)**

- The CRAFT approach prioritizes the wellbeing of the family member/loved one.
- Self-care includes a variety of strategies to take care of your mental health including ways to access peer support groups or formal counseling, strategies for regulating overwhelming emotions triggered by your loved one's actions, setting reasonable expectations, and knowing your limits and setting healthy boundaries.

### **Teaches strategies for talking with your loved one about getting help or starting treatment (Helping Them Get Help)**

- CRAFT teaches helpful ways of talking about getting help or accessing treatment that engage your loved on in a conversation and reduce the potential for defensiveness.

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