

Introduction to the Special Series on Addiction and Social Support

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Social support is an essential factor in promoting overall [health and wellbeing](#). Support can come in [many forms](#) - emotional support, such as providing comfort during times of distress; informational support, such as sharing advice and resources;

instrumental support, which involves tangible actions like helping with household tasks; and esteem support, which involves expressing encouragement and boosting feelings of confidence in others. Receiving any type of support can contribute to [increased self-esteem and reduced stress](#). This is because feeling supported and being able to comfortably talk about feelings and experiences with others promotes a sense of belonging and helps individuals [build resilience](#) and better cope with stressful situations. Social support can also come from a variety of people - family, friends, colleagues, community organizations, and more. Having positive and close relationships with others reduces loneliness, which is associated with a [decreased risk](#) of developing depression, anxiety, and other physical health problems.

Support systems are especially important during experiences like addiction recovery. Family, friends, and peers can provide support by offering encouragement and accountability, which may help [motivate individuals](#) to meet their recovery goals. Mental health and addiction counselors can also help by providing resources and guidance on treatment plans and connecting individuals with support groups and other safe spaces to share their experiences. Ultimately, strong social support can help [promote treatment compliance](#), decrease the likelihood of [return to substance use](#), and improve overall recovery outcomes. It is important to spotlight the importance of support systems because in today's digital age, decreased in-person interactions and negative social media experiences can contribute to [increased loneliness](#) and poorer quality social

connections.

This month, the BASIS will feature four articles that highlight the role of social support in addiction-related experiences. For [ASHES](#), we will review an article that explores how [social and community organizations](#) can provide support to clients who smoke. For [STASH](#), we will review an article about how [women's social networks](#) influence their opioid use trajectories. Then, we will summarize a study on the association between [coping styles, social support, and gambling-related harms](#) among affected others for [The WAGER](#). Finally, we will summarize a study on the role of [social support in maintaining sobriety](#) from alcohol use disorders for [The DRAM](#). To complement these review articles, we will also share three editorials from experts in this research field. [Dr. Deborah Rodriguez](#) will share how beauty industry workers can support the health and wellbeing of community members; [Dr. Abenaa Jones](#) will talk about how family relationships affect substance use and recovery; and [Dr. Peter Treitler](#) will highlight the impact of peer recovery services.

— *Annette Siu, Research Coordinator, Division on Addiction at Cambridge Health Alliance, a Harvard Medical School teaching hospital*

Conflict of Interest Statement

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