

How to Help a Friend or Family Member with a Drinking (Drug) Problem

If you think someone in your life has an alcohol or other drug problem, you can do something to help them. Oftentimes, that means putting yourself in a stressful or uncomfortable situation; you are in a position to have an impact and facilitate getting that individual the professional help they may need.

In deciding whether someone has a problem, you need to evaluate not only *how much* they are drinking or using, but also *changes in their pattern of use, the reasons behind their use, and the impact of their use on their life* (relationships, school and work performance, etc).

Here are some tips to keep in mind when speaking with someone about your concerns:

- Do not confront someone who is drunk or high. They are not in a state of mind where they can comprehend what you're trying to say.
- When you're talking with them, make sure to express your concern.
- Be specific about the behaviors that concern you-Stick to the facts. Use "I" statements rather than "You" statements (e.g., I'm concerned about your drinking rather than you drink too much).
- Make it clear that you dislike the behavior, not the person.
- Listen to what they have to say. Avoid lectures, threats, and verbal attacks.
- Let the person experience the consequences of their actions (unless life threatening).
- Do not be manipulated into taking over their responsibilities, covering up, making excuses, or lying for them. Sometimes the best thing you can do is to let them fail.
- Get a handle on your own use and do some soul searching about your own beliefs. They will be sure to bring it up.
- Talk to their friends, relatives, or other important people in their life and get them involved.
- Offer to go with them to get some help: Walk them over to the [Counseling Center](#); Go with them to an AA (or other 12-step meeting); accompany them to their physician's office.

- Set limits around what you will do with them or for them (in regard to their drinking or using) and stick to those limits.
- Remember you can't control someone else's drinking or using. Don't get into a policing or babysitting role-It ultimately will not help. It's up to them to take responsibility for changing their behavior and participating in their recovery.
- Get consultation from a professional if you're still having trouble or concern about approaching an individual.