

WORRIED ABOUT SOMEONE'S DRINKING OR DRUG USE?



Support for families, carers and friends.

It can be confusing, stressful and overwhelming — but you are not alone.

This factsheet is here to help you understand what you can do, how to stay safe, and where to find support.

START HERE

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Alcohol or drug use by someone you care about can be confusing, stressful and overwhelming. Many people find themselves supporting someone whose alcohol or drug use impacts their wellbeing — you're far from the only one.

48%

of Australians were negatively affected by someone else's drinking in the past year — including emotional harm, family conflict, financial stress and physical danger.

Source: opal.latrobe.edu.au — Alcohol's Harm to Others in Australia: Patterns, Costs, Disparities and Precipitants

START WITH YOU

LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF WHILE SUPPORTING SOMEONE ELSE

The most important thing to remember is that people cannot change unless they want to. You are not responsible for someone else's choices or behaviours. Your key responsibility is to look after yourself and keep yourself safe.

Remember:

- You don't have to do anything that makes you uncomfortable or unsafe
- Setting boundaries is healthy — and often helps the person you're supporting too
- Seeking support for yourself is absolutely OK

Many services can help you and your family navigate this. You'll find some at the end of this factsheet — please don't hesitate to reach out.

If you are affected by, or witness, violence

Leave the situation immediately and seek help from police or a domestic violence service.

Violence is never OK, regardless of alcohol or drug use. In an emergency, call **000**.

CHECK IN

HOW DO I KNOW IF SOMEONE MAY BE USING?

Changes that may indicate alcohol or drug use include:

Signs to notice

Mood swings or personality changes

Sleeping pattern changes

Changes in spending or unexplained financial stress

Taking more risks than usual

Finding substances or paraphernalia

Behaviours that worry you or seem out of character

These signs can also relate to stress, mental health challenges, or physical health issues — not only alcohol or drug use. It's normal to feel unsure or concerned when you notice these changes. If you're worried, you may choose to talk with the person — the next section has tips on starting that conversation safely and respectfully.

TAKE ACTION

HOW DO I START THE CONVERSATION?

Choose a time when everyone is calm, safe and not intoxicated. Be respectful and avoid accusations. You could say:

"I'm worried about you because..."

"I've noticed some changes and I'm worried about you. Are you OK?"

"How are you coping at the moment?"

Even if they don't want to talk, knowing someone cares can make a difference.

CHECK IN

CAN I STOP THEM FROM USING?

Trying to force or pressure someone to stop using alcohol or other drugs is usually counterproductive. What does help is:

What helps

- Staying connected
- Offering non-judgemental support
- Encouraging professional help when they're ready

Worth remembering

- Change takes time
- Readiness varies for each person
- You can't force someone to be ready

MAKE IT YOURS

WHAT IS MY ROLE? WHAT CAN I DO?

1 Look after yourself and anyone else in your care

Your wellbeing and safety come first. Supporting someone else's alcohol or drug use can be emotionally exhausting and sometimes unsafe. It's OK to set boundaries, take breaks, and seek support for yourself. Children and others who depend on you need your stability and safety — see the helplines at the end of this factsheet.

2 Get informed

Understanding alcohol and drug use can help you feel more prepared. Speaking to your GP or contacting a local alcohol and other drug (AOD) service are great places to start.

3 Offer support

Sometimes the best support is simply listening and staying connected. Only offer support that feels safe and manageable for you — your wellbeing matters too.

Ask whether they've sought help before, and whether they're open to accessing support. They may not know where to begin — that's OK. You can help by finding services, making appointments, or attending with them if appropriate. But remember, the decision to change is theirs.

CHECK IN

WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT?

Every situation is different.

- Some people choose to reduce or stop
- Some may continue using for a while before they're ready for change
- Some people use drugs or alcohol recreationally and take steps to stay safe
- Others may develop dependence and need structured support

Withdrawal and recovery can be complex, and relapse is common. Supporting someone through this can take energy and emotional strength — it's OK to seek your own support or set limits when you need to. AOD treatment services can help you understand substances, withdrawal, treatment options, and how best to support someone safely.

You are not alone.

Support is available for both you and the person you care about.

REACH OUT

HELP AND INFORMATION

Support is available — for both you and the person you care about.

- ALWF Support — alwf.org.au/support
- Your Local Alcohol and Other Drug Service
- GPs and pharmacists
- Fire, Ambulance, Police — **000**
- Lifeline Australia — **13 11 14**
- 1800RESPECT (domestic, family violence & sexual assault) — **1800 737 732**
- Family Drug Support (24/7) — fds.org.au or **1300 368 186**
- tuneinnotout.com — youth wellbeing website

Your safety and wellbeing matter

Reaching out for help is a strong and positive first step — for you, not just the person you're worried about. **Visit alwf.org.au/support, or call Lifeline: 13 11 14.**