

How to survive someone else's drug or alcohol use

The Basics

Open and honest communication is almost always the best policy

- Listening is the most useful communication skill. Expression of emotions and acknowledgement of feelings is therapeutic.
- When talking is impossible or very difficult try other options— email, Facebook, texting.... Walk away from confrontation.
- Try not to be judgemental, critical or emotional. Let things cool down if you are not calm when communicating.
- No-one's drug/alcohol use can be controlled by another person. Understand the meaning of dependence: for yourself and your loved one.
- Support is not the same as rescue. Question whether you are unintentionally aiding the problem to become worse.

Difficult situations demand different ways of coping

Don't be afraid to talk to people and ask for help. Families also need help, not just the drug/alcohol user. If one way is not working try another.

- Separate negative behaviour from the one you love. Be aware of why they are acting this way.
- No treatment will work unless he/she wants it to.
- Lapsing should not be seen as a failure. It is often an important factor leading to permanent recovery.

Top Tips.....

Be clear on boundaries. If you say something then stick to it: i.e. you cannot have any more money.

- Be consistent. Talk it through with members of the household (including the drug/alcohol user) and decide what to do between you all and then try to stick to it – back each other up.
- Take things one-step at a time. Reduction, control and improvement of lifestyle can be an excellent start.
- Avoid blaming yourself. Families generally do the best they can with the knowledge, awareness and circumstances they have at the time.

What can you do?

Seek help: speak to the Drug & Alcohol team

- Don't deal with things on your own. Try to talk openly with the rest of the family.
- Gain more knowledge about the effects of drugs and alcohol.
- Try to avoid control and confrontation. These tactics usually lead to more secretive behaviour and resistance to change.

Look after yourself: Take care of your physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing. For a positive outcome, you and your family have to survive too.

- It is no good doing something you are not comfortable with. Before taking action, think through the outcomes and choose the one you can live with.
- Look at your own use of drugs and alcohol.
- Be aware of your own emotional state and family relationships in relation to the drug/alcohol problem.
- All family members are affected and need understanding and support. Every member can influence change.
- Sharing information with other families creates collective wisdom. Find out how to get further information by contacting the Drug & Alcohol team or coming along to a sup-port session.
- Abuse, particularly physical should never be tolerated or accepted. Seek confidential help from the Domestic Violence helpline on 08082000 247 – this does not have to mean abandonment or disconnection.

- Seek information on all aspects of drug issues e.g. treatment options, courts, overdose prevention, risks and responses. Know about tolerance and poly-drug use.
- Professionals have skills, knowledge, resources and expertise useful in helping families. The sessions have a wealth of information you can take away and absorb.
- It is proven that family support is a paramount factor in successful outcomes for the person wanting to change their drug/ alcohol use.

Don't put your life on hold. Continue to do the things you love.

Positive Goals....

- Improved well-being of the person using drugs/alcohol and the family.
- Improved competence, confidence and management of drug/ alcohol usage within the family.
- Improved relationships within the family, with all people involved and relationships strengthened.
- Improved emotional health for all the family.
- Improved problem solving skills.
- Positive changes for the family, however small.
- Believe in a win/win situation.

Never give up hope....

Come to the Drug & Alcohol team support sessions - we can help

**To find out where your nearest support session is
contact us on 0300 028 8888**