

If Someone You Know Has an Alcohol Problem



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MANY OF US HAVE A PERSONAL INTEREST IN HELPING SOMEONE close find a way to overcome alcohol or drug problems. It is very well known that for every problem drinker or drug user, there are family members, friends, co-workers and others who are also hurting. If someone you know has a problem with alcohol or other drugs, what can you do?

It is easy to be polite or to avoid the issue, hoping that the problem drinker or drug user will simply “wise up” and change his ways. Deciding to take action involves not just courage, but accepting that your help may be initially unwanted or unappreciated. However, it is neither “polite” nor kind to let another person jeopardize the well-being of everyone involved, himself included.

Most importantly, be willing to talk to the problem drinker or drug user about how his behavior is affecting everyone, the user included. Don’t excuse or shield the abuser from the consequences of destructive behavior. People rarely choose to change if they do not see their actions as problematic. You may need to be persistent to break through any denial barriers. Try to remain calm and factually honest in speaking about the behaviors. Your patience and concern will keep most arguments in check.

Meanwhile, it is also important to continue to maintain a healthy atmosphere at home or at work. The ongoing needs of the family or workplace cannot simply wait for the problem drinker or drug user to decide how he wants to participate. He should be encouraged to be a part of the usual daily activities. If the abuser is not willing to participate responsibly or to get appropriate help, the family or workplace may need to continue without this individual. Neither families nor workplaces can always hold a place for the problem drinker or drug user while waiting to see if he will choose to get help.

The more you know about alcohol and drug abuse, the more support you will be able to offer. There are pamphlets, newsletters, articles, books and support groups available nationwide. You can discuss your particular situation with a friend, clergy member, EAP counselor, or someone who has experienced problem drinking or drug use. The person who sets out to help a problem drinker or drug abuser may feel alone at first, but with information and support, you are in a good position to really make a difference.

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