

Faculty and Employee Assistance Program

NEWSLETTER

How to Help Someone Who Needs to Stop Drinking

Many people ask how they can tell if a person they care about has an alcohol problem. Problem drinkers often can answer “yes” to one of the questions below. More than one “yes” means it is highly likely that a problem exists:

Have you ever felt you should cut down on your drinking?

Have people annoyed you by criticizing your drinking?

Have you ever felt bad or guilty about your drinking?

Have you ever had a drink first thing in the morning to steady your nerves or get rid of a hangover?

Alcohol problems are treatable, but sometimes the person with the drinking problem is not willing to get help. This doesn't mean, however, that you have to wait for a crisis to make a difference.

The following steps can be useful in getting someone to see a need for help.

1. Stop All Rescue Missions

Family members often try to protect someone from the results of his/her behavior by making excuses to others about his/her drinking and by getting him/her out of alcohol related jams. It is important to stop all these rescue attempts immediately, so the person will fully feel the harmful effects of their drinking and then become more willing to stop.

2. Time Your Intervention

Plan to talk with the drinker shortly after an alcohol-related problem has occurred—for example, after a family argument in which drinking played a part, or after an alcohol related accident.

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Choose a time when he or she is sober, when both of you are in a calm frame of mind, and when you can speak privately.

3. Be Specific

Tell the family member that you are concerned about his or her drinking and want to be supportive in getting help.



Back up your concern with examples of the ways in which his or her drinking has caused problems.

4. State the Consequences

Tell the family member that until he or she gets help, you will carry out consequences—**not to punish the drinker, but to protect yourself from the harmful effects of the drinking.** These may range from refusing to go with the person to any alcohol-related social activities to moving out of the house. Do not make any threats you are not prepared to carry out.

5. Be Ready to Help

Talk to your FEAP Consultant and gather information in advance about local treatment options.

6. Find Strength in Numbers

With the help of a professional therapist, some families join with other relatives or friends to confront the drinker as a group. While this approach may be effective, it should only be attempted under the guidance of a therapist who is experienced in this kind of group intervention.



7. Get Support

Whether or not your family member seeks help, you may benefit from encouragement and support of other people in your situation. Support groups offered in most communities include Al-Anon and Alateen.

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