

Taking care of yourself

Supporting a friend can be emotionally challenging. It's important to prioritise your own well-being and self-care throughout this process:

Set and maintain healthy boundaries

- Be clear about what you are and are not willing to do to support your friend
- Avoid enabling or covering up for your friend's harmful behaviour
- Learn to say "no" when necessary to protect your own health and well-being

Seek support for yourself

- Talk to a trusted friend, family member, or professional about your own feelings and experiences
- Consider joining a support group for friends and family members
- Engage in activities that help you manage stress and promote self-care, such as exercise, mindfulness, or hobbies



Recognise the limits of your role

- Understand that you cannot control your friend's behaviour or decisions
- Acknowledge that your friend's wellbeing is ultimately their responsibility
- Let go of any guilt or sense of personal responsibility for their struggles

Conversation starters

Here are some conversation starters to help you get the ball rolling when starting a conversation with a friend about alcohol or other drugs:

“Hey, I’ve noticed you haven’t been yourself lately. I’m here to listen if you want to talk about what’s going on.”

“I care about you and our friendship. I’ve noticed some changes that have me a bit worried. I want you to know that I am here to support you.”

“I know we haven’t talked much about this before, but I’ve noticed you’ve been using [substance] more often lately. I’m not here to judge, but I’m concerned about how it might be affecting you.”

“I’ve noticed you’ve been missing a lot of classes/work lately. I’m not trying to pry, but I want to make sure you’re okay. Is there anything I can do to help?”

“I know life can be stressful, and sometimes we turn to substances to cope. If you’re open to it, I’d like to talk about healthier ways we can manage stress together.”

“I’ve noticed you’ve been going through a tough time lately. If you’re struggling with something, I want you to know that I’m here to support you without judgment.”

“If you ever think about making changes to your drug or alcohol use, I’m here to support you, however you need.”

“What does a good day look like for you, and how can we have more of those? How can I be a better friend to you during times when you’re feeling tempted or stressed?”

Approach the conversation with empathy and avoid judgement. The goal is to express your concern, offer support, and encourage your friend to consider seeking help, not to force them to change or make demands. Be prepared for an ongoing dialogue and continue to check in with your friend while taking care of your own well-being in the process.

Navigating different responses

Your friend's response to your concerns may vary, and it's essential to be prepared for different scenarios:

If your friend is receptive to your concerns

- Thank them for their openness and honesty
- Offer to help them research treatment options or connect with support services
- Continue to check in with them and offer your ongoing support

If your friend becomes angry or defensive

- Remain calm and avoid getting into a heated argument
- Reaffirm that your concern comes from a place of caring, not judgement
- Give them space to process the conversation and revisit the topic another time, if you feel it is safe to do

If your friend is resistant or in denial

- Avoid arguing or trying to convince them that they have a problem
- Reaffirm your care and concern for their well-being
- Let them know that you're available to talk or offer support whenever they're ready
- Encourage them to consider the impact of their substance use on their life and relationships

If your friend is ready to seek help

- Commend them for their courage and willingness to take this step
- Help them research treatment options and connect with appropriate resources
- Offer to accompany them to appointments or support group meetings
- Celebrate their progress and milestones throughout their journey

Everyone's journey is different, and your friend's response may change over time. The most important thing is to continue offering your support and encouragement while maintaining healthy boundaries for yourself.

Resources and further support

Across Australia, there are many incredible organisations that offer help and information. Please, don't hesitate to reach out if you need support. You'll be glad you did.

Where you can get help

There are many resources available to support you and your friend throughout this journey:

24/7 support and crisis lines

- Lifeline: 13 11 14
- Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800
- Family Drug Support: 1300 368 186
- National Alcohol & Other Drug Hotline: 1800 250 015

Other resources and communities

- [Alcohol & Drug Foundation](#)
- [Counselling Online](#)
- [Family Drug Support](#)
- [Hello Sunday Morning](#)
- [ReachOut](#)
- [Positive Choices](#)

Youth-specific organisations/ services

- [Sir David Martin Foundation](#)
- [Mission Australia's Triple Care Farm](#)
- [Headspace](#)



Encourage your friend to reach out and access the support they need, and don't hesitate to access support for yourself when needed.

Seeking help for drug and alcohol use is a courageous and transformative step. By being a compassionate and informed ally, you're playing an important role in your friend's journey towards a healthier, happier life.

This is general advice only. For further support contact the National Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline on 1800 250 015. For crisis support contact Lifeline on 13 11 14.