



# **A sibling's Journey;**

**where  
are you  
right  
now?**

# Bros & Sis

## A sibling's Journey; where are you right now?

Dealing with a brother or sister's alcohol or drug problem tends to be a continual process, which can be seen as a series of stages.

**Stage One:**  
Lack of Awareness of the Drug Use.  
As a sibling you may:

- Sense that something is wrong.
- Notice unusual behaviour in your brother or sister.
- Feel concern, confusion, annoyance, self-doubt, suspicion.

**Stage Two:** Awareness of and Reacting to the Drug Use.

You may:

- Wonder who to talk to: do you keep it a secret from family and friends?
- Realise how much alcohol or how many drugs the person is using.
- Try to control the person's behaviour.
- Try to fix the problem.
- Focus on the person using drugs at the expense of your own life.
- Seek help and information.
- Be overwhelmed by emotions. You may feel sorrow, anger, anxiety, guilt, hopelessness, powerlessness, shock and denial.

During this stage, tension and conflict may develop between family members. Some family members may step back from the situation.

**Stage Three:** Learning to Respond.  
You may:

- Realise that you cannot solve your brother or sister's problem and that change takes time.

- Focus on 'what is happening' rather than 'why it is happening'.
- Seek support for yourself.
- Build new ways of communicating with everyone involved.
- Start thinking in a new way, adding in what you have learnt.
- Feel acceptance and understanding.

**Stage Four:** Reclaiming Your Life.

You may:

- Learn to set limits and boundaries.
- Get support when you need it.
- Stop thinking so much about the drug use.
- Learn better ways to deal with feelings; realise and accept that old emotions might come back.
- Get on with your own life.
- Support your brother or sister in their desire to change.
- Feel relief, hope, a sense of control, sad (but less intensely).

**Stage Five:** Back Flips.  
A time of feeling worried again for a while, often when there's a crisis.  
You may:

- Try to fix the drug-use problem.
- Focus on the drug use.
- Forget to think about your own needs.
- Feel desperate, hopeless and discontented.
- You will usually return reasonably quickly to your previous stage.

**Stage Six:** The Long Haul.  
You may:

- Continue to get on with your own life.
- Accept that it can take a long time for the person to gain control of their drug use.
- Help yourself feel more 'normal' by taking part in activities that you feel interested in and might help you survive.
- Feel more trusting of your brother or sister, less anger and fear, a degree of hope.