

Ten ways family members can help

1. Learn the facts about drug and alcohol use

Go to an education program. Have one-to-one counselling with someone who has knowledge and understanding of drug and alcohol dependence. Join a support group. Call the **Family Drug Helpline** again if you need to talk: **1300 660 068**.

2. Don't always rescue your loved one

Think about what you want to say and write it down so you can share it with your loved one. Say something like "I am willing to support you to get help, but I won't support your drug use". Statements like these, said with love and concern, can be a powerful motivational tool.

3. Ask yourself - do I want to financially support their drug use?

Have a look at the ways you are providing financial support- and don't just limit this to money. Look at other ways you might be financially supporting them. For example, letting them live with you and all that entails.

4. Don't blame yourself

Don't try to analyse why your loved one is using drugs. There can be many underlying causes and it doesn't change what is in front of you. Examine the ways you have blamed yourself for your loved one's drug use and ask if this was helpful.

5. Set boundaries and have consequences

Say what you mean and mean what you say. Make a list of simple statements that convey your new ground rules. Consider your own feelings in terms of what stops you having open discussions and following through with plans and statements. Use "I" statements - "When you do that, I feel this". Think about the consequences you will put in place if a boundary is broken. If you are unsure about setting boundaries or using "I" statements, call the **Family Drug Helpline** on **1300 660 068**. (Family members are often uncertain about how to go about this and need support)

6. Don't extract promises

Have there been times when your loved one made a promise but didn't keep it? Having open, transparent discussions and inviting your loved one to get treatment can be helpful. Extracting promises is often unhelpful, as it can push your loved one to make a commitment they are not ready to keep. Failure to keep promises can add to your loved one's shame, guilt and resentment about the situation they are in, which is not helpful.

7. Don't preach or lecture

Do you have a tendency to do these things? Can you identify the feelings that cause you to take this approach? Is it your fear and anxiety? Think about whether trying to preach to or lecture your loved one is really helpful.

8. Try and avoid acting out of anger and pity

Can you recount the times when pity/guilt/worry led you to 'give in'? Have you acted out of anger at times and perhaps 'doled out punishments'? How do you feel now looking back? Consider if giving in or lashing out is helpful to you or loved one. These approaches can sometimes be damaging to relationships.

9. Don't accommodate the drug use

Make a list of ways your lifestyle has changed as a result of your loved one's drug use. What have you changed about your life because of concerns about your loved one? How much time do you spend worrying about them? How have relationships with other family members and friends been affected? Have you had to "pick sides" when it comes to other family members? Have you ignored the needs of others because of the demands on your time and energy made by your loved one who is using drugs?

10. Try and focus on YOUR life and responsibilities:

What are some of the things you could reclaim in your life? Are there changes you would like to make- with your work, hobbies, holidays, or your health? What activities could you get involved in that would help you look after yourself?