

Five Tips on Talking to Someone with a Substance Use Disorder

A substance use disorder occurs when the use of one or more substances leads to a clinically significant impairment or distress in an individual's life. For many people, the most effective treatment approach involves a combination of counseling and medication. Early treatment is best, and

must address each individual's specific needs. Family and friends should reach out to individuals with substance use disorder and encourage them to get help. Below are some tips on how you can start the conversation.



- 1) Talk to them when they are sober.** If the individual is under the influence of a substance during the discussion, they are less likely to listen to your concerns. It is important to let them speak during your conversation and avoid being overly negative or critical about their situation.
- 2) Give examples of how substance use is affecting their life.** Providing specific examples of the negative consequences that their substance use is having in their life can present a clear explanation for your concerns.
- 3) Set boundaries.** Don't be afraid to set limits and follow through to show you aren't simply making empty threats. If the person seems unwilling to change, and you feel you cannot be around them while they are using, gently let them know.
- 4) Show love and support.** Let the person know you are there to help them, and that you have their best interest at heart. Explain how the person's substance use makes you feel and that you are concerned for their health and well-being.
- 5) Encourage them to seek treatment.** Explain the benefits of treatment and living sober. Encourage them to talk to a professional or a peer support specialist who can help them find a treatment plan and provide support throughout treatment.

If you or a loved one has a substance use disorder and wants to explore treatment options, call our 24-Hour Helpline at 1.800.928.8000. We can help.