

## DON'T TRY TO DO IT ALL

Friends (even good ones like you) can't fix a friend's alcohol or drug problem. Your friend probably will need experienced assistance, so try to guide your friend into getting help. Suggest that s/he talk to someone who you find to be understanding and helpful. Maybe there's a Student Assistance Program or Employee Assistance Program where your friend can start looking for help.

If your friend says, "Yes, I need help. Where can I go?" you can tell her/him about the assistance available on campus or in your community. You may need to encourage your friend to talk with more than one helper to find someone who s/he feels really understands the problem. It can be easy to give up because "no one understands," but there is someone who can help.

If your friend decides to get help, you can be supportive during this hard time by showing you care. Call. Send a funny gift. Draw a picture. Write a poem. Just be there. All those little things will help.

**If you can do all or any of this, you've made a difference. Your friend is lucky to have a friend like you.**

## TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

You may need to seek counseling or find someone to talk to if being supportive of your friend becomes too exhausting or time-consuming. If you don't take care of yourself, you can't help your friend.

If your friend is getting you into dangerous situations, avoid being with him/her when s/he is drunk or high. Tell him/her that you still care, but that you deserve to be safe. If you end up in a situation where your friend is dangerously drunk or high, find someone to help you and your friend get out of danger.

Arm yourself with knowledge. Knowledge will help you better understand your friend's situation, and allow you to relate more effectively. The Washington State Alcohol/Drug Clearinghouse (WSADC) is available to assist you as you reach out to a friend. Complimentary prevention

resources and materials are available through the Clearinghouse. To request information, call 1-800-662-9111.

The Washington State Alcohol/Drug Clearinghouse (WSADC) is a resource center for those interested in finding timely information to promote healthy, drug-free communities in Washington state.

### **The Washington State Alcohol/Drug Clearinghouse**

3700 Rainier Avenue South, Suite A  
Seattle, WA 98144

Locally: (206) 725-9696

Statewide: 1-800-662-9111

Fax: (206) 760-0589

E-mail: [clearinghouse@adhl.org](mailto:clearinghouse@adhl.org)

Website: [clearinghouse.adhl.org](http://clearinghouse.adhl.org)

#### *Services currently available through the Clearinghouse:*

- Video lending library of over six hundred educational videos.
- Over eleven hundred varieties of free publications, brochures, pamphlets, posters, and educational materials surrounding the misuses of alcohol, tobacco and other substances available to all citizens of Washington.
- Display availability for statewide prevention and health-related exhibits, fairs, and conferences.
- Regional Alcohol and Drug Awareness Resource (RADAR) Network State Center site for Washington.

To discuss an alcohol or other drug abuse problem, contact:

#### **Alcohol/Drug 24-Hour Help Line**

(206) 722-4222 or 1-800-562-1240

Partially funded by the Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse.

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# YOU CAN HELP A FRIEND WITH AN ALCOHOL OR DRUG PROBLEM

Washington State  Alcohol/Drug Clearinghouse

## YOU CAN HELP A FRIEND WITH AN ALCOHOL OR DRUG PROBLEM

If you know someone who has problems related to drinking alcohol or other drug use, you're not alone. Each of the more than 12 million problem drinkers and alcoholics in this country have people in their lives who are personally affected by alcohol or other drug abuse.

### WARNING SIGNS

Alcohol or other drug problems come in many forms. Chemical dependency, being dependent on alcohol and/or another drug, is an illness. But your friend doesn't have to be chemically dependent to have a drinking or drug problem: Traffic accidents and unwanted pregnancy are just two of the serious problems that can affect young adults who drink and/or use drugs. You don't have to be an expert to know if a friend has a problem. There are many indicators that a person has a substance abuse problem. Does s/he:

- Drink or use drugs illegally?
- Try to hide his/her drinking or other drug use?
- Drink or take drugs to handle college and/or work?
- Have problems in relationships at home, school or work because of alcohol or other drug use?
- Have problems in job or school performance?
- Often drink or take drugs to relax or to handle problems?
- Take physical risks, like driving, biking or swimming while intoxicated?
- Avoid talking about drinking or drug use, except to brag about how drunk or how high s/he got?
- Limit friends to those who drink or use drugs a lot?
- Have a major behavior and/or personality change (for example, someone who was mild-mannered and easygoing now gets easily angered or mean while drinking or using another drug)?

- Rely on drugs and/or alcohol to have a good time?
- Make you afraid and/or embarrassed when s/he is drinking or getting high?
- Steal money or do something illegal to get drugs?
- Get angry when you mention your concerns and deny that there's anything wrong?
- Have a history of alcohol or other drug problems in the family?

### HOW TO HELP YOUR FRIEND

First, learn more about alcohol and other drug abuse and resources. College counseling centers, student health services, dean of student offices, residence hall counselors, human resource departments, libraries, alcohol and other drug information agencies and treatment centers are good places to get more information.

Next, find out where your friend can get help on campus or in your community. Having this information available if and when your friend needs it will pay off. Most people who seek help for alcohol or drug problems get better. Ask a campus counselor, a professor or a parent you trust, someone from your church or synagogue, or a counselor or therapist in the community. You don't have to mention your friend's name. Many campus and community agencies work with people who have trouble with alcohol and other drugs or can recommend a person or agency that can help. If your friend doesn't want to talk to anyone, books and pamphlets can be helpful. Free resources are available by calling the Washington State Alcohol/Drug Clearinghouse at 1-800-662-9111.

You can also look in the phone book yellow pages under "alcohol" or "alcoholism." Most communities have organizations prepared to help people with drug and alcohol problems. A national toll-free line is available for cocaine information, 1-800-COCAINE. You also may find out about other nearby treatment services sponsored by hospitals, mental health programs or other agencies.

### TALK TO YOUR FRIEND

Once you know something about alcohol/drug abuse and people who can help, you can try to guide your friend to help. This can be very hard. It may be easier to have another close friend or relative who cares about your friend support you when you talk to him/her. If your friend doesn't want help or denies having a problem, you may not be able to change his/her mind. You can only try.

Let your friend know how much you care. Explain how his/her drinking and/or other drug use affects you and your friendship. You might say something like this: "I feel disappointed when you get drunk because I can't talk with you the way I used to. It seems like we're not very close anymore, especially when you're high. And you seem to be high a lot."

Use your own words and say what is right for you. Be honest and specific. Say exactly what makes you unhappy and how those problems relate to drinking and/or drugs. And try to follow these rules:

- Only talk about getting help when your friend is sober.
- Don't get discouraged if your friend gets angry, refuses to listen or denies the problem. These reactions are common in people who have alcohol or other drug problems. All you can do is say how you feel, show that you care and suggest ways to get help. Feel OK if you do that. Only your friend can make the final decision to get help.
- Don't drink or use other drugs with your friend. This could make your friend think his/her drinking is OK, and it won't make you feel any better.
- Don't be afraid to try again if at first you don't succeed. It may take time and repetition for your friend to accept your feedback.