

How to Respond to a Friend with a Drinking Problem

1. Don't be afraid to talk to a friend who seems to have an alcohol-related problem.
2. Wait until the next day to talk, when you are sure he or she is sober.
3. Explain that you are concerned about certain specific behaviors.
4. Sincerely explain your concern and support. Avoid preaching or criticizing.
5. Use "I" statements that express your feelings about their behavior. An example is "I'm concerned about your safety when you walk home alone when intoxicated" or "I feel angry when you wake me up at 4:00am".
6. To help a friend face reality, describe specific instances in which his or her drinking has resulted in negative consequences – intoxication requiring medical attention, lower grades, missed classes, arguments, injuries, damaged relationships, mood swings, the inability to meet responsibilities, driving while intoxicated, or trouble with campus authorities or police.
7. Keep your attitude positive and be sincere about your feelings.
8. Emphasize the contrast between the person's sober behavior, which you like, and the drinking behavior, which you dislike.
9. Do not get into discussions about anything else that detracts from your purpose until your message is delivered. Be a "broken record" if need be.
10. Remember that your message is "I like you, though I don't like your behavior when you drink".
11. Offer specific referrals to the different types of professional help available in your area, as is appropriate for their situation. Offer to help them set up an appointment, to go with them to a visit a professional or even attend an AA meeting.
12. Be a friend, not a professional counselor...that's not your job.
13. Be prepared for your friend to make excuses and deny the problem. Denial, blaming and alibis are very common if a person has progressed into the harmful, more advanced stages of dependency.
14. Try not to expect the person to heed your advice immediately. It may take 5 or 20 or even 100 people saying the same thing before they realize they have a problem.

If more of us begin to recognize that real friendship includes helping a friend see a problem he or she may be unaware of or unwilling to accept – and if we tell that person about our observations and feelings in the manner suggested -- we may help that person recognize the problem and accept appropriate solutions.

**Developed by
WesWell, the Office of Health Education
Davison Health Center, 2nd floor ✪ 685-2466
www.wesleyan.edu/weswell/**