# How to talk to someone about their alcohol use

# How to talk to someone about their alcohol use

## Discussing alcohol use requires both empathy and sensitivity

# How to talk to someone about their alcohol use

## Discussing alcohol use requires both empathy and sensitivity

The impact of alcohol can reach far beyond the person directly experiencing alcohol harms, often also affecting family members, friends, and workmates.

In Australia, almost [****10 million adults****](https://fare.org.au/alcoholic-products-are-harming-10-million-australians-each-year-new-research-indicates/) a year experience the effects of someone else’s drinking, in a range of ways.

If you are concerned about the alcohol use of someone you care about, there are strategies you can use to speak with and support them.

## When to start a conversation

If you can safely have a conversation with the person you are concerned about, it can help to speak honestly, approaching any discussion with empathy and without any stigma.

Try to pick a place and time to talk where they are likely to feel safe, comfortable, calm, and open.

If they are not ready to talk and get defensive or upset, be patient and try again another time.

## How to have a stigma-free, honest conversation about alcohol

* Only start the conversation when the person is not currently under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.
* Ask open-ended questions to encourage them to talk, use positive and supportive language, and be ready to listen without blame, criticism, or judgment.
* A good conversation starter might be: “I’ve noticed you’ve been drinking more lately. How are you feeling?” or “I’m a bit worried about your drinking.”
* Let them know you care and that you can support them when they are ready.
* Keep the conversation focused on your concern about their health, the harms from alcohol and how you feel about its effect on your relationship with them.
* Allow time and space for them to open up to you about how they are feeling.
* Know what support is available if your friend or family member wants to cut back or cut out alcohol, if they want to take action.
* Conversations about alcohol are often ongoing. Reassure the person that you are always there to support them and set up regular catch-ups to check in on how they are travelling.

## Ensure you look after yourself

When supporting someone who has an alcohol dependency, it’s also important to find ways to take care of yourself.

This may look different for every person.

For some people, simply sharing concerns and feelings with others can help. You may choose to speak with a friend or family member, or with trusted people in your community such as your GP or counsellor.

Your workplace may offer counselling through an Employee Assistance Program.

Online and telephone support lines are also available, such as [**Family Drug Support,**](https://www.fds.org.au/) which operates 24/7.

Connecting with others who are currently having or have had similar experiences can be a valuable reminder that you’re not alone. There are online and in-person groups you can attend.

If you’re not ready to participate yet, you may find it helpful to simply read or watch the stories of others.

There is information and support available to help facilitate these honest conversations around alcohol. Check out the following resources:

[Supporting Family Conversations](https://supportingfamilyconversations.com.au/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) [Positive Choices](https://positivechoices.org.au/) [Talk about it](https://adf.org.au/talking-about-drugs/parenting-talk/)

### Are you safe?

Everyone has a right to feel safe. If you think this conversation would lead to you being unsafe, then it’s best to first reach out for support before speaking with the person about their alcohol use.

There are family support and family violence services that may be able to help.

[Finding help](https://fare.org.au/resources/alcohol-support-services/)

### Paige shares her family story

Just after her 30th birthday, Paige was faced with what would become a turning point for her family – speaking with her partner about his alcohol consumption.

An acquaintance reached out to speak with Paige about her partner’s drinking, and after reading through advice online she was able to have the conversation with her partner, set new boundaries, and help him seek support.

Watch Paige’s story about how her family tackled alcohol.

More information

## Related information



## Need advice or support?

To find a local GP, you can call 1800 022 222 or visit [healthdirect.gov.au](http://healthdirect.gov.au). To find a local psychologist, visit [psychology.org.au/find-a-psychologist](http://psychology.org.au/find-a-psychologist). If you need other support to reduce your drinking, you can contact the National Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline on 1800 250 015.

## Join our community

Will you join the community taking action on alcohol?