

# How to Confront a Friend About Their Substance Use



Confronting a friend, family member, or coworker about their substance use can be difficult. The person may react in a number of ways – denying the problem, making excuses for their behavior, being defensive, or trying to manipulate the situation to make you feel guilty. What is important to remember is that you are acting because you care.

## STEPS IN CONFRONTING

1. *Start by telling the person what they mean to you and how important your relationship with them is.*
2. *Give examples of the behaviors that are concerning you. Be specific.* For example, “Your behavior changes when you drink. You get angry. Like the time you broke the back door and cut your hand. Or the time you knocked the tv over and then blacked out.”
3. *Discuss how the problem is affecting your relationship.* For example, “I feel embarrassed and concerned when you do those things. Our relationship has changed because of it – I can’t trust you to watch my dog, and I’m afraid to have you in my house when you get drunk and violent.”
4. *Tell the person what you would like them to do about the issue or what changes you need for them to make.* For example, “I want you to stop drinking around me,” or “I want you to see a counselor and get help.”

## Do's

- Remember that timing is important – wait until they're sober or not in a crisis.
- Take the time to get your thoughts together and think objectively.



- Stick to the facts and remain calm.
- Use “I care” messages and “I” statements.
- Focus on their *behavior*, not them as a *person*.
- Be persistent and patient.
- Know your limits. Recognize when you need to refer your loved one to professional resources, like NCADA.

## DON'T'S

- Don't get high or use substances with the person you are confronting.
- Don't confront when the person is high or drunk.
- Don't confront when the person is angry – or when you are angry.
- Don't preach, give advice, or label with words like “alcoholic” or “addict.”
- Don't say “always” or “never.”
- Don't be personally offended by their comments.
- Don't let the person turn the problem on you.
- Don't give up, but don't argue or debate with the person.

For help or information, call NCADA at 314.962.3456 or visit [ncada-stl.org](http://ncada-stl.org)

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