

Taking care of your adult loved one

While your loved one may or may not show warning signs leading up to a substance use or mental health crisis, one of the most common signs is a sudden change in behavior. This may include:

- Poor personal hygiene.
- Dramatic change in sleep habits.
- Dramatic change in mood.
- Not leaving the house for a long period of time.
- No longer participating in usual activities.

If you notice any of these warning signs, try to step in as soon as possible. You may need to reach out to a doctor, mental health professional or community resource for help.

If the situation escalates to a crisis, do your best to remain calm. Here are some techniques that may help you to de-escalate the crisis:

- Keep your voice calm and talk slowly.
- Listen to the your loved one.
- Express support and concern. Let your loved one know that their life matters to you.
- Ask how you can help.
- Ask if they are thinking about suicide.
- Encourage your loved one to contact a mental health professional.
- Give your loved one space.

If the situation does not improve, seek guidance from a doctor, mental health professional or community resource.

- Think safety first. Do not put yourself in a dangerous situation.
- Remove anything in the area that may be harmful (e.g. guns, pills, etc.).
- Call the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. They have skilled staff and counselors available to speak with you confidentially 24/7/365.
- If possible, take him or her to the emergency room for urgent attention.
- Stay with the person until help arrives
- Visit <https://988lifeline.org/> for more information

To get information and referrals for local mental health and/or substance use disorder facilities, support groups and community based organizations call SAMHSA's National Helpline, 1-800-662-HELP (4357) or via text message: 435748 (HELP4U). This confidential free 24/7/365 information service is in English and Spanish.

Taking care of yourself

Supporting someone with a substance use or mental health challenges can affect your own well-being. It's normal to feel overwhelmed, upset, or angry when someone you care about experiences difficulties, so it's important to take care of your own health, too. If you've been helping your loved one with these struggles for a long time, you might feel tired or start to believe that you haven't been helpful. Small steps like getting enough sleep, getting some exercise, and spending time on activities you enjoy are good for everyone. If you're having a hard time, it's a good idea to seek support for yourself by joining a CRAFT Connect Family Support groups. Go to <https://www.craftconnectfs.com/> and click on the red MEMBERSHIP SIGN UP button.

An important part of any relationship is boundaries. Even though you want to help, it's important to think about your limits, such as what you're not willing to put up with or what you aren't willing to do. For example, it's reasonable (and healthy!) to ask that your loved one not call or text you after a certain time. Have an open conversation about your boundaries so that everyone is clear. Remember to re-valuate your boundaries and make changes, if needed—what worked at one point may not work in a month or a year.

What if my loved one is not ready to change?

This can be a hard situation. You can see that your loved one is having a tough time, but you feel like they aren't doing anything about it. People naturally think of what might be causing the problem and wonder why their loved one won't seek help. Remember it isn't your job to diagnose an behavioral health illness or give treatment advice. Accusing or confronting your loved one likely isn't going to help you or them. If you decide to talk with your loved one, remember to be supportive, calm, and non-judgemental. Here are more tips to try:

- Ask your loved one if they've been having problems lately, and let them know that you're a good person to talk to when they're ready.
- Instead of giving your loved one a list of problems you've noticed, talk about how you've been affected. Instead of saying, "You don't do anything anymore!" you could try using a more positive communication like, "I feel hurt when you cancel our plans at the last minute. Is something going on?"
- Respond to the problems they bring up. For example, if they complain about feeling like they can't concentrate at work or sleep at night you might suggest talking about that problem with someone who can help, like a health care provider.
- There may be other people in your loved one's life that they really respect and seek out when they need advice. These people may have also noticed changes and may have more of an influence. If you're really concerned your loved one it may be helpful to talk with them. Your loved one may be angry that you brought others into the situation, but it's more important to keep your loved one safe.

Please remember

Unless your adult loved one is in danger of hurting themselves or someone else, there's one important point to keep in mind: it is their right to decide how they are going to deal with their challenges, even if you don't agree with their choice. While your loved is deciding if they want to change, we invite you to study CRAFT Connect principles and skills that teach you how to mindfully encourage your loved to make choices that lead to progress and healing for everyone in your family. (adapted from, <https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/infosheet/helping-a-friend-youre-worried-about#how>)