



**How to  
help your  
brother  
or  
sister**

# BroS &Sis

## How to help your brother or sister

Talk to them:

Encourage your brother or sister to talk.

Listen with genuine interest, without being judgmental. Blaming, preaching or criticising your brother or sister can mess with the relationship, close down the lines of communication, and create conflict. Remember that 'drug use' does not necessarily mean 'drug problem'.

Talk about their behaviour, not the drugs.

If they're doing something that's bothering you, like anger outbursts, deal with the specific behaviour, not their drug use. You could try naming the specific problem or behaviour, and say it in terms of 'you and I' statements. For example, 'when you lie to me all the time, I feel like I can't trust you'.

Choose your moment.

It is difficult to talk with your brother or sister if they are intoxicated, drug affected or when you are angry or upset. Wait until they are sober and you feel ready.

Understand the drug.

Get the latest information on the drug

they are using and its effects. This may help you to feel more prepared. Have a read of the drug-specific fact sheets on our website, or call ADIS or DirectLine for advice (1800 888 236). Be careful not to overreact or jump to conclusions though, as drug advice pages tend to give you the worst case scenario.

Remember you can't 'fix' them. Only your brother or sister can take steps to cut down or stop their drug or alcohol use. Sometimes they won't want your help. If they don't admit there's a problem, and are not ready to get help, you can still look after yourself and others close to you. Realise that recovery may take time and many, many attempts before success. Even small steps are a positive sign.

Things that may help your brother or sister:

Recognise that they may need help.

You don't have to deal with the issue within the family. Getting treatment for the person may help speed up the process of recovery.

Talk to your brother or sister about using drugs more safely. Ask them about risks and safe use – what steps are they taking? For ideas on safer drug or alcohol use, see the drug specific fact sheets or call Family Drug Help.

Research the treatment options. You could start with your GP. Treatment can include (1) counselling, (2) short-term private or public detox (where the person aims to get off the drug), (3) long term residential rehabilitation (where the person learns life skills and aims to get their life back on track), or (4) alternative drug therapy (like methadone). Remember, you cannot force someone into treatment, and treatment probably won't work if your brother or sister is at all reluctant. Have a read of the 'treatment' fact sheet or call Direct Line or ADIS and they'll help discuss the options with you (numbers at the end of this fact sheet).

Set some rules with your brother or sister.

Try your best to work out what you're not willing to do, like lending money, and draw the line. Don't do things for your brother or sister that they should be doing themselves. Setting boundaries will help them to develop a sense of responsibility and realise how unacceptable and inappropriate their behaviour is. Your family does not have to tread on eggshells. You can find a list of common boundaries

at the end of this sheet. Making it easier for your brother or sister to keep using drugs or alcohol usually does not help them in any way.

Helpful phone numbers.

Directline/ADIS, Drug advice –1800 888 236.

Family drug helpline, Support and Advice – 1300 660 068.

List of common boundaries/rules.

I won't lie for you.

I won't put up with you stealing from me.

I won't lend you money.

Don't threaten me.

Don't ask for unrepaid favours, like driving to the bottle-shop.

Don't borrow things without asking.

Don't yell in the house.