



**How to  
get  
through  
this**

# Bros & Sis

## How to get through this

Having a drug or alcohol using brother or sister can really affect you. It can make you feel overwhelmed, angry and scared. It can interfere with your family life, studies, work and friendships. Here are a few tips to help you get through this.

Don't go through this alone. People can be far more understanding than you might think. Get advice and support from a trusted friend, family member, support group, psychologist or counsellor. You could also try posting something on the discussion board or join one of the online support groups. It's also quite normal to call a support line, like the Family Drug Helpline to get ideas from other people who have been through similar experiences.

Take this one day at a time. Try not to lump all of life's events together, as this can make things feel even more overwhelming. Know that you are not alone. Strong emotions can seem overwhelming and frightening, but they will pass. Most people eventually learn to live with this situation. Crystal ball-gazing and imagining a bleak future doesn't achieve anything and can fill you with unhelpful despair. You can get through this and everything will probably work out.

Focus on your needs. Look after yourself so you don't get overwhelmed by everything. Take time out. Do things that you enjoy or have enjoyed in the past - coffee with a friend, going for a walk, hobbies, sport - anything that helps you relax or distract yourself. Try to keep to your normal routine.

Try not to blame anyone. Blaming is unproductive. People use alcohol and drugs for many reasons. Analysing why this happened gets you nowhere. Understand that addiction is like a disease or a chronic illness. It can happen to anyone.

Dealing with conflict:

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'.

Make sure they're not running rings around you. Be careful that they're not manipulating you at all.

Set some rules with your brother or sister.

Try your best to work out what you're not willing to do, like not 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.

If you feel unsafe, walk away. It's not worth sticking around when people are aggressive. Work things out when everyone's calmed down.

Many siblings experience drug and alcohol problems. You are definitely not alone.

For your support:  
Family drug helpline - information, help and referral service especially for families - 1300 660 068.

List of common boundaries/rules.  
I won't lie for you.  
I won't let you steal from me.  
I won't lend you money.  
Don't ask for unrepaid favours.  
Don't borrow things without asking.  
Don't yell at me.