

Healthy Living <https://health.gov/myhealthfinder/healthy-living/mental-health-and-relationships/alcohol-use-conversation-starters>

Alcohol Use: Conversation Starters



It takes courage to talk to a family member or friend about their alcohol use. These tips can help you start the conversation.

Be prepared.

Get ready for the conversation:

- Before you talk, take some time to accept your own feelings. It's normal to feel nervous or upset.
- Practice what you'll say. Try writing a script or roleplaying the conversation with a friend ahead of time.
- Plan to keep it brief. Try focusing on just 1 change that could help your loved one.
- Find a good time and place to talk. Wait until you're both feeling calm and you can focus on the conversation without distractions

Keep it positive.

Try to:

- Use positive language and avoid judging. Instead of "I wish you wouldn't drink every night," try "How about trying a few alcohol-free nights each week?"
- Focus on the benefits of making a change. For example, you can say: "It would be great to spend more time together as a family."
- Emphasize that quitting drinking or drinking less is possible. You can say: "Lots of people have struggled with alcohol. You're not alone, and it can get better."

Get specific.

For example, you can:

- Give specific reasons for your concerns based on what you see and feel. You can say, "I'm worried about your drinking because I've noticed you've been missing work."

- Make specific suggestions. Try saying: “Let’s do things that don’t involve drinking. How about seeing a movie?”

Offer support.

Try to:

- Show that you understand. Say: “I know that drinking less is hard for you. How can I support you?”
- Be available for your loved one. You can say: “Talk to me when you want a drink. Whenever you feel the urge to drink, you can call or text me instead.”
- Take a break and give your loved one space if the conversation isn’t productive. You can say: “I can see that you’re not ready to talk about this yet. I’m here for you whenever you **are** ready.”

Make a plan together.

You and your loved one can:

- Work together to make a list of goals. Choose 1 goal as a first step — like taking 2 nights off from drinking each week. Make sure it’s something you can measure easily.
- Set a date to talk again and see how it’s going. Offer encouragement if it’s going well, and set different goals if it’s not working.

Get help.

You can:

- Encourage your loved one to visit the doctor. Offer to make the appointment and go along for support.
- [Use this tool to explore alcohol treatment options together](#) if your loved one is ready to get treatment.

Content last updated **January 19, 2024**

For more information about alcohol and health, check out:

- [Rethinking Drinking: Alcohol & Your Health](#)
- [Alcohol Use and Your Health](#)

You may also be interested in:



Drink Alcohol Only in Moderation

<https://health.gov/myhealthfinder/health-conditions/heart-health/drink-alcohol-only-moderation>



Keep Your Heart Healthy

<https://health.gov/myhealthfinder/health-conditions/heart-health/keep-your-heart-healthy>



Use Medicines Safely

<https://health.gov/myhealthfinder/healthy-living/safety/use-medicines-safely>

This microsite is coordinated by the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Last updated: March 29, 2024

[U.S. Department of Health and Human Services OASH - Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion](https://www.hhs.gov/odphp)