

If you live with someone who has an alcohol problem, you may wish to consider some of the following ideas and strategies. Not all of them will apply to you, but you will almost certainly find some of them helpful. They have been drawn from the experience of many other people over the years.

Should I be worried?

If you are worried about somebody's drinking, you are probably right to be concerned. Even if the drinker says there is nothing to worry about, find out all you can about alcohol and its effects. They you will have a much better idea whether you are right to worry or not.

Should I cover up?

You may have tried to cover up for someone else's drinking. You may have made excuses for the drinker to family, friends or employer. By doing this you are protecting the drinker from the consequences of his/her drinking.



Living with a drinker

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Whose responsibility?

The drinker is responsible for the consequences of his/her drinking - you should not take on this responsibility yourself. Talking to people you trust and explaining that there is a drink problem will lessen the burden you carry.

What about my feelings?

Anyone involved with a drinker will feel at times anxious, guilty, fearful, lonely, helpless, depressed, angry or worthless. These are very common feelings - and common for the drinker, too. Try to keep your own life going and do not allow the drink to isolate you as well. Care for yourself, and keep your own interests going. You owe yourself love and concern too.

Saying 'no'

Don't buy alcohol for the drinker, or finance the drinking. You are only giving permission for it to continue. Refuse quietly but firmly. counting bottles, or hiding them, or throwing the contents

away will be playing a game you will never win. The drinker will always get some more somehow.

Talking about the drinking

Choose sober moments to talk about the drinking. Don't threaten to do anything unless you mean to carry it out. You may need to talk to the drinker about your feelings over and over again before you are certain you have been heard.

Dealing with violence

Arguing with someone who is drunk can be dangerous. Violent behaviour cannot be ignored. It may be necessary for you to seek legal advice urgently, and to take yourself and other members of the family to a safe place.

Protecting the children

If you have children, you will probably have done everything in your power to protect them. Children of all ages need to talk about what is happening and, above all, to understand that they

are not responsible. Try to see that the family is not isolated or cut off, and encourage outside interests and friendship. Never let children travel in a car with someone who has been drinking heavily.

Remember the good times

Remind yourself of the good times and make sure that the drinker knows that you still care. See the actions that you must take as 'tough love'. Remember that people are responsible for their own lives and, however hard it seems, we are all capable of making choices.

When people do make changes, they sometimes do so for apparently small reasons. If you alter the way you behave, you will alter things for the drinker. You may need to seek help for yourself to get things straight in your own mind. Please don't hesitate to make an appointment to come and talk to one of our counsellors if you would like to.