



Milwaukee School of Engineering Counseling Services Newsletter

Volume 2, Issue 4

December 2005

Talking to a Friend about His or Her Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Guest Author:



(414) 276-8487 • www.impactinc.org

SHOW THAT YOU CARE ABOUT YOUR FRIEND

Be caring, thoughtful, and understanding. Never accuse your friend of being an alcoholic or a drug addict. Emphasize your concern, talk about your feelings, and listen to what he or she has to say. Let your friend know that he or she is important to you. Avoid blaming, confronting, and forcing. Maintain good eye contact and be direct: "I would like to take a few minutes to talk about your alcohol or drug use." "I don't want anything to happen to you or for you to get hurt."

GIVE SPECIFIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROBLEM

Give feedback: "You seem more depressed (upset) (unhappy) lately and I am worried about your drinking." Talk about the times your friend acted different from his or her normal behavior. Mention specific incidents. Point out some of the changes that you've seen in your friend. What did you see or hear that caused you to be worried?

IDENTIFY A WILLINGNESS TO CHANGE

Does your friend see that he or she has a problem? Would your friend like to stop drinking or using drugs? "On a scale of 1 to 10 how ready are you to change your drinking patterns?" Be prepared for anger, avoidance or denial.

RECOMMEND ACTION IN A NEUTRAL WAY

Here is a phone number to call. Just dial 2-1-1 for help. It is a 24-hour telephone service that can provide information on family, health, and social services in Milwaukee County. "Would you be willing to call it?" "Would you be willing to talk to a counselor or social worker?" If your friend is not ready to take action ask if you can talk about this again in a week or two.

TRY TO GET A RESPONSE

“How does this sound to you?” If your friend seems angry, say “I’m sorry for upsetting you, but I care about you and don’t want to see you risk your health and happiness.” “What will you do now?”

CLARIFY AND CONFIRM ACTION

“I am really worried about your drinking. Because I care about you, I think it would be helpful if you talk to an alcohol and other drug counselor. I know that cutting back or not drinking alcohol is hard to do by yourself. I’d like to help you. Can I call right now for an appointment?”

CHANGE CAN HAPPEN

Remember that the earlier a problem with alcohol or other drugs is acknowledged, the better the chances for successful change. The task is not to force your friend to get help, but to create possible options that he or she can choose. Change can happen. The following are six steps you can take to help a friend:

1. Be informed. Know the signs and symptoms of problem alcohol and drug abuse.
2. Choose the time and place carefully. Before you begin to talk with your friend, make sure he or she is sober or straight. The best time to talk is when your friend is feeling bad from using too much alcohol or drugs – the morning after a party, for example.
3. Keep the talk short and free of feelings, accusations, and threats.
4. Let them know what you will do to support them. What are you willing to do? Go with them to seek help from someone else? Be available to talk at another time?
5. Remember that helping a friend with a drug or alcohol problem is hard work. You may feel a great deal of pressure to get your friend to stop drinking or doing drugs. Your friend’s drug or alcohol abuse is not your fault. It is up to your friend to change their behavior and you can’t do that for them.

To schedule an appointment, or for more information:

IMPACT Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services
2266 N Prospect Ave # 324
Milwaukee, WI 53202
(414) 276-8487
<http://www.impactinc.org>

Hours: Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

MSOE Counseling Services is located on the Second Floor of the Kern Center (K-230). To Schedule an appointment with a Counselor, call (414) 277-7590. For more information, visit Counseling Services at: www.msoe.edu/st_life/couns