



# Here for you in your loved one's recovery

A guide for giving support

Are you concerned someone you care about is living with a mental health and/or substance use concern and is not getting effective care? Rest assured, people can and do engage in successful treatment for behavioural health disorders. And support from family and friends can make a significant difference.

## Here are some ways you can help:

### Talk to them and show compassion.

Express your concern in a non-judgmental way and tell them you're there to help. Create a supportive environment to foster conversation and openness. For example, start by saying something like this:

- 'I've been worried about you. Can we talk?'
- 'If not, who are you comfortable talking to?' And 'How can I help you?'
- 'I see you're going through something. How can I best support you?'
- 'I care about you and am here to listen. Do you want to talk?'
- 'I've noticed you haven't seemed like yourself lately. How can I help?'

### Acknowledge their feelings.

Listen openly, actively and without judgment.



### Be open.

Discuss your family history of mental health or substance use concerns, if relevant. It may help them feel less alone.

### Offer to help seek support.

Provide reassurance that their condition is treatable. Help them locate resources and connect to treatment services. For example, visit [findahelpline.com](https://www.findahelpline.com). Find a Helpline is a free online tool that easily connects people to helplines in over 50 countries that provide immediate support, counselling and information. Encourage calling a helpline to explore what the best next steps might be.

### Be patient.

Helping someone get engaged and on the recovery path takes time. Continue reaching out with offers to listen and help.

### Remember to take care of yourself too.

Being a carer can be stressful and emotionally draining for you. Take time for your own mental health and wellbeing.



# Recovery. We're in this together.

## Signs and symptoms

It's important to remember that mental health and substance use disorders are not character flaws or signs of weakness. They are common, often serious conditions that affect millions every year. It's also important to remember that just like other health conditions, mental health and substance use disorders are treatable.

### Substance use disorder

A substance use disorder can occur when drugs and/or alcohol are used repeatedly or to excess. The continued use causes significant negative effects on a person's life, including health problems, disability and a failure to meet major responsibilities. Substance use disorder is a medical condition and can include the following:

- not being able to quit or control your use of drugs and/or alcohol
- making mistakes or not being able to do your main tasks at work, at school or at home
- putting yourself in dangerous situations to use drugs and/or alcohol
- being arrested or stealing to afford access to drugs and/or alcohol
- being hospitalised for drug and/or alcohol use
- developing a tolerance and needing larger amounts of drugs or alcohol to feel the same physical effects
- experiencing relationship difficulties with significant others due to drug/alcohol use

### Mental health disorders

Mental health disorders involve changes in thinking, mood and/or behaviour. These illnesses are medical conditions and are a product of the interaction of biological, psychological and social factors. Some of the feelings and behaviours that may be experienced with a mental health condition include:

- changes in eating and sleeping (eating too much or too little, sleeping too much or unable to sleep enough)
- withdrawing from the people in your life
- no longer finding interest in things you once enjoyed
- feeling confused, forgetful, angry, upset or on edge more than usual
- feeling anxious, worried or scared more than usual
- hearing voices
- thinking of harming yourself or others, or not wanting to live anymore

A complete evaluation conducted by a qualified mental health or substance use disorder specialist is important, as many different conditions can display similar signs or symptoms.



## Need help now?

If you are in immediate danger or having a medical emergency, **call the local emergency services phone number or go to the nearest accident and emergency department.** If you are in a crisis or thinking about suicide, get in touch with someone immediately:

**Find a Helpline** is a free online tool that easily connects people to helplines in over 50 countries. [findahelpline.com](https://findahelpline.com)

**Befrienders Worldwide – Volunteer Action to Prevent Suicide** is a global network of 349 emotional support centres in 32 countries. Members and volunteers around the world provide confidential support to people in emotional crisis or distress, or those close to them. [befrienders.org](https://befrienders.org)

**For more information about recovery and resilience, visit [livewell.optum.com](https://livewell.optum.com).  
Log in using your company access code:**

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