

Summary:

It can be tough to know when someone needs support for their use of grog or drugs.

This resource provides you with some signs to look out for, tips on how to have a yarn if someone in your community is struggling, and some services you can lean on for support.

Signs someone might need support

Are they:

- no longer hanging out with Mob?
- missing things they enjoy?
- not responding to messages?
- in a bad mood or seem sad a lot?
- always asking to borrow money?
- having relationship or family issues?
- late to work or missing work?¹

Or maybe they have shared with you in a yarn that:

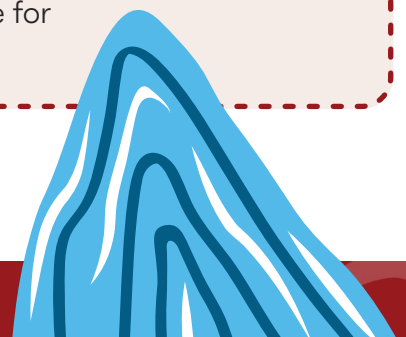
- they've been drinking or using drugs more
- they need more of a drug to get the same effect
- they keep using so they don't feel sick when they stop (going through withdrawal).

There might be other Mob who are also worried about them. Often it's family and friends who are the first to notice when someone they care about has an issue with grog or drugs.²

Having a yarn with someone who is struggling

Some of the issues mentioned above can happen for many reasons. They aren't always because someone has an issue with grog or drugs, so try not to jump to conclusions. It never hurts to have a yarn with them anyway, and these tips can assist you:

- Plan a good time for a yarn when you won't be bothered.
- Focus on their wellbeing and what you've noticed, rather than their use of grog or drugs.
- Be ready for a bad reaction. They may not see their grog or drug use as something to be worried about.
- Try not to judge or tell them off – we're all less likely to respond if we think someone is judging us.
- Offer options for support – there are some good options provided on the next page.
- If they're not ready to reach out for support, let them know you're here for them if they change their mind or ever want to yarn.^{2,3}



If the person you care about decides they are ready to get some support, you can walk alongside them on their healing journey

- **Celebrate** – notice and celebrate positive changes they make, no matter how small. This might include using grog or drugs less, using in a safer way or improving their health and wellbeing.⁴ You could celebrate the fact they are making an effort to change.
- **Be patient and understanding** – cutting back on grog or drugs can make people feel sick, easily annoyed, have bad sleep, or feel sad and stressed. Try to be understanding while they are going through this change. Avoid judging, telling them off or making them feel guilty.^{4,5}
- **Encourage healthy habits and healthy coping strategies** – like going on Country, connecting with culture, eating well, exercising, and spending time with people who make them feel good.⁴
- **Look after yourself** – it's OK to set limits with the person you are supporting. Remember to make time for yourself and the things you love doing.⁶

Where to get support

National Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline (24/7): 1800 250 015

You can speak with a counsellor over the phone, get information on drugs and links to support services. They speak to family and friends too.

13 Yarn (24/7): 13 92 76

If you need some crisis support, you can get free assistance from this Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander crisis support line.

Brother to Brother (24/7): 1800 435 799

Free 24-hour crisis line to support Aboriginal men experiencing issues relating to relationships, family violence, drugs and alcohol.

Yarning Safe and Strong (24/7): 1800 959 563

A service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. You can get free counselling over the phone. They can also support friends and families who need to have a yarn with someone about their wellbeing.

Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS): 03 9419 3000

Provides a wide range of in-person health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Victoria. You can find similar services in different locations across Australia using HealthInfoNet's resource: [Map of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health/medical services](#).

References

1. Positive Choices. How can I tell if someone is using drugs? 2021 [05.07.2023]. Available from: <https://positivechoices.org.au/parents/how-can-i-tell-if-someone-is-using-drugs>.
2. Better Health Channel. Alcohol and drugs - dependence and addiction 2019 [05.07.2023]. Available from: <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/servicesandsupport/alcohol-and-drugs-dependence-and-addiction#bhc-content>.
3. Positive Choices. Starting the conversation when you are concerned about drug and alcohol use. 2022 [05.07.2023]. Available from: <https://positivechoices.org.au/parents/starting-the-conversation-about-drug-use>.
4. Breakthrough for Families Queensland. Concerned about a family member's substance use? Get the facts, develop strategies and find out where to access more help: Queensland government; [05.07.2023]. Available from: https://adis.health.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/resource/file/BFFQ_A4_Breakthrough_for_Families_Master_Revised.pdf.
5. healthdirect. How to help someone who is misusing drugs or alcohol 2021 [05.07.2023]. Available from: <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/help-someone-who-is-misusing-drugs-or-alcohol#support>.
6. Turning Point, Self Help Addiction Resource Centre, The Bouverie Centre, Victoria State Government. BreakThrough Ice Education for Families Handbook. 2017.

This resource has been developed in collaboration with



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