

Raising a concern

Change takes time. People rarely change their behaviour all at once. Experts describe stages: "It's not a problem", "I really should, but ...", "I'm planning something", "I'm changing something right now", "I'm sticking with it". Relapses are part of it. Anyone who only argues for change often achieves the opposite.

The right moment. You are both sober, it is calm, you have time, and you have thought about what you want to say. Bad times are straight after use, during an argument or with other people listening.

How to raise it.

- Use I-statements to describe what you observe: "I'm worried because I've noticed that you hardly go out any more."
- Address the behaviour, not the person.
- Ask open questions, listen, let them finish. No lecturing, no diagnosis.
- Ask before you give advice.
- Expect defensiveness and do not take it personally.
- Acknowledge what is going well and offer support. The decision rests with the person.

Your limits. Say clearly what you will not go along with, and stick to it. Covering up, playing things down and taking over the other person's tasks tend to support the use. Get support for yourself.

Help, also for family members. Addiction counselling is free, confidential and anonymous on request, even if the person concerned does not want help.

- DROBS Dortmund, Reinoldstraße 17-19, 0231 477376-0
- Social psychiatric service of the City of Dortmund, Hoher Wall 9-11, 0231 50-22534, with groups for family members
- DigiSucht: online counselling by message, chat or video, free and anonymous
- Addiction and drugs hotline (Sucht & Drogen Hotline): 01806 313031, daily 8 am to midnight, €0.20 per call

Key points

- Sober, calm, prepared.
- I-statements and open questions.
- You do not have to carry this alone.

Sources: DHS (2021), Manual for telephone counselling; DigiSucht (2024), Addiction problems around you, tips for a successful conversation; drugcom.de (BIÖG), Help for family and friends.

More detail: csc.do/en/prevention/knowledge/raising-concerns/ ·

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