



# Alcohol Abuse: How You Can Help a Friend

## You notice your friend:

- Has been drinking more often, in excess, and/or as a way to deal with stress or problems
- Has been unsuccessful in cutting back or quitting
- Has been experiencing repeated negative consequences from drinking
- Has been making excuses for, minimizing, or blaming others for negative outcomes from drinking



## Any of the following *signs* may indicate possible abuse of alcohol:

- Decrease in class attendance, study habits, and academic performance
- Weight changes
- Changes in usual activity level
- Anger in response to others' comments about drinking patterns
- Defensive when confronted about problematic drinking behavior
- Drinking is a prerequisite for most social interaction
- Bingeing is a significant part of weekly social activities
- USD policy violations and/or legal problems related to drinking behaviors
- Trouble with law enforcement officials because of drinking or drinking-related behaviors
- Blacking out and/or passing out
- Increase in both drinking and depression
- Becoming argumentative and/or getting into fights while intoxicated
- Increase in drinking and risky behaviors including driving under the influence
- Regretful and repeated "hookups" under the influence
- Lying, cheating, stealing
- Continued drinking despite having ongoing relationship problems that are caused or worsened by drinking behavior

## What you can do:

- Choose a *good time* to let your friend know you care and are concerned without blaming or judging
- It is not a good time to talk when your friend is drunk
- Use “ I statements” (e.g., “*I’m* concerned about you and want to make sure you’re OK”, instead of, “*you’re* drinking too much”)
- Provide your friends with details about what you’re noticing (e.g., “I’ve noticed you blacked out two weekends in a row and missed your classes on Monday morning”)
- *Listen* to what your friend has to say
- Educate yourself on resources to share with your friend
- Remind your friend of some of the risks, especially those
- most relevant for him/her
- Do not make excuses for his/her behavior; it would likely
- “enable” your friend and prevent change from happening
- Clarify your support by defining what you are willing to
- do to help; create opportunities to participate in social
- activities that do not include alcohol
- Offer suggestions and encourage your friend use resources
- including Alcohol & Other Drug Services (AODS) in UC 221 (x4618)
- \*Call AODS or another resource for guidance if you do not know what to do

Your friend may or may not be ready to acknowledge that his/her behavior is problematic, and is probably exhibiting behaviors reflective of being in a particular “stage of readiness to change”:

### Pre-contemplation

Your friend doesn’t acknowledge that a problem exists and, as a result, is not considering changing his/her behavior anytime soon (e.g., your friend says, “I don’t have a problem” or “I don’t drink too much”). However, other close friends may be aware of the problem.

### Contemplation

Your friend acknowledges the problem, and is considering changing, but has not made a commitment. Your friend is probably experiencing a significant amount of ambivalence and is weighing the pros and cons of his/her behavior (e.g., “I can’t believe I got a DUI, but it’s not that big of a deal” or “You might have a point, but I don’t have a problem”). Your friend may be over-estimating the pros or underestimating the cons.

### Action

Your friend is making positive changes and adjustments in his/her activities in order to decrease drinking and related destructive behavior (e.g., your friend has called AODS or has been drinking less often and having less to drink).

Thank you for taking the time to read this.  
Your willingness to confront problematic drinking behaviors may be invaluable to a friend in need.