

# How to stay connected with a loved one who's struggling

When a loved one struggles with substance use, like drugs or alcohol, you might wonder how to best support them. Read on for tips on staying connected with a family member or friend who's going through a hard time.



## Share your desire to stay connected

Explain to your loved one that you want to **stay connected**. Tell them that you are there for them and **follow through**.



## Check in regularly

Ask questions, such as **"How have you been feeling?"** or **"What did you do today?"** that show your interest in your friend's life. Make sure to keep in mind the things that spark your connection.



## Avoid being judgmental

**Be mindful of the words you use** to describe your family member or friend's conditions and behaviors. Use first-person language, like **"I" or "me,"** which can help your loved one feel more accepted.



## Talk openly about your own experiences

Loved ones don't always ask for help when they need it because they feel embarrassed or uncomfortable. **Talk about difficult emotions openly and honestly** to let them know they're not alone.



## Ask how you can help

It can be hard to know how to help someone who's going through a difficult time. Ask them questions as simple as, **"I noticed you're feeling a bit low, what can I do to help you?"**



## Make plans

**Actions speak louder than words.** Struggling with a difficult time can cause your loved one to feel stuck. Asking them if they would like to go on a picnic or a walk is a **great way to connect**.



Sources: UT Austin, The Positive Side of Interpersonal Communication, Proceedings of the 11th International ACM SIGACCESS Conference on Computers and Accessibility, Current Environmental Health Reports, Psychological Science, Journal of Research on Adolescence, The Washington Post