

Possible Reactions

In the best case scenario, addressing the issue with your friend can be the first step in getting your friend help. However, sometimes despite your best efforts, you may not get the response you were hoping for.

Here are some reactions you may get:

- Relief
- Admission/Agreement
- Anger
- Denial
- Defensiveness (“It’s none of your business.”)
- Turning the Tables (“What about YOUR problem?”)

Remember...regardless of the reaction you get, your intervention *will* have an effect on some level.

Resources

University Counseling.....540-458-8590
Student Health.....540-458-8401
Office of Health Promotion.....540-458- 4501
Peer Counselors
RAs

Other Student Groups Knowledgeable about Resources

24 • Active Minds • LIFE • One in Four • SPEAK

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FRIENDS HELPING FRIENDS

**Practical suggestions
on what to do,
what to say, and
where to go for help
if you are concerned for
someone you care about**

Student Health & Counseling



It's natural to feel afraid, angry, and helpless when you're worried about someone you care about. You're being a great friend by learning how you can help. Many people who struggle with high-risk health and safety issues say that talking with their friends helped them to seek professional help or gain better control of their behavior.

An **INTERVENTION** is a constructive, empathetic way to reach out to a friend to show your concern and to help them recognize their problem(s).

Step 1: Organize the Intervention

- Where, when, and how will your friend be approached.
- Sometimes a team approach is helpful.
- Select a team leader.

Step 2: Gather the Data

- Make written lists of specific incidents and their negative consequences to legitimize your concern.
- Be very specific about each incident including dates, places, times, etc.

Examples:

- Last Wednesday - threw up on the new carpet in the house;
- Last Thursday morning - missed class;
- Refuses to eat breakfast or lunch almost every day;
- Had to take car keys away Saturday night because drank six mixed drinks in two hours;
- I lost time at library on Sunday because had to clean up their mess.

Step 3: The Intervention

- Choose a private location, but not your friend's home turf.
- Choose a time soon after a concerning incident.
- Talk only when everyone is sober.
- Make sure there will be plenty of time with no interruptions.
- Ask your friend to listen to your concerns. State your concerns clearly without being judgmental.
- State your awareness of your friend's behavior, using your detailed list of incidents.
- State the effect your friend's behavior had on you (anger, shame, hurt, fear), using "I messages." *"I was scared for you when you told me you couldn't remember anything after midnight." "I was angry when I had to clean up after you." "I was worried when you told me you weighed yourself three times a day." "When I hear you throwing up in the bathroom, I feel concerned/angry/afraid."*
- Present your documentation without any value judgments, generalizations, or subjective opinions...just stick to the facts while showing your concern.
- Make your responses realistic and firm. *"I will not cover for you anymore when you vomit after meals." "I will not drive with you anymore when you have been drinking." "I don't think it's funny when your date treats you that way."*
- Do not accuse or argue. Stay calm, stick to your list of evidence, and focus on your concern for your friend's well-being.
- Provide resources, referrals, and an offer to further help the person. *"I will walk with you to the Health or Counseling Center." "Would you like me to go with you to your first appointment?" "What can I do to help you?"*

Step 4: Follow Up

- Check in with your friend after the intervention.
- Acknowledge their positive efforts to address the problem.
- If you remain concerned and plan to involve administrators or parents, let your friend know in advance.