Supporting someone you love

Care, boundaries and support for you too

You matter in this too

Loving someone who is struggling with alcohol can be exhausting. You can care deeply and still need support, rest and boundaries. You cannot make another person recover by finding the perfect words.

Choose a calm, safe time

If it is safe, talk when the person is sober and you both have space. Use specific observations: "I am worried because..." followed by "Would you be willing to speak with someone?" Avoid arguments while they are intoxicated.

Offer a practical kind of help

You might help find a service, attend an appointment if invited, or listen without trying to solve everything. Ask what would be useful. You can offer support without covering up harmful behaviour or taking responsibility for their choices.

Set a boundary you can act on

A boundary describes what you will do: "If shouting starts, I will end the conversation and go somewhere safe." If you fear violence or retaliation, seek specialist safety advice before raising boundaries. Children should not be responsible for monitoring drinking.

Before you change your drinking

If you drink heavily or regularly, need alcohol to feel steady, or have had withdrawal before, speak with a doctor before stopping or sharply reducing. Alcohol withdrawal can be life-threatening. Shaking, sweating or feeling unwell after cutting down needs prompt medical advice. Call 000 for seizures, severe confusion or hallucinations.

Australia: Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline 1800 250 015 (free, confidential advice). Lifeline 13 11 14 (24/7 crisis support). Call 000 if there is immediate danger or a medical emergency.

Make it personal

Write a few words. You can leave questions blank or talk them through with someone.

What I have noticed and what worries me...

What I would like to say in a calm conversation...

Support I can realistically offer...

A boundary I need and the action I can safely take...

Support for me, and who I will contact...

You do not have to do this alone.

Australia: Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline 1800 250 015 (free, confidential advice). Lifeline 13 11 14 (24/7 crisis support). Call 000 if there is immediate danger or a medical emergency.

Safety and support sources: healthdirect.gov.au/alcoholism; adf.org.au/insights/safely-withdrawing-alcohol/; lifeline.org.au/131114; medicarementalhealth.gov.au/provider/national-alcohol-and-other-drug-hotline-16469. Checked 1 October 2026.