Rebuilding trust, one day at a time

Honesty, consistency and realistic expectations

Trust can take time

Your loved ones may feel hopeful and cautious at the same time. You can work on your actions without asking them to feel differently before they are ready. Sobriety matters, and repairing relationships may need additional work.

Make promises you can keep

Example: instead of promising "Everything will be different," say: "I will attend my appointment on Tuesday and let you know if the plan changes." Small, consistent actions are easier to assess than big promises.

Listen and take responsibility

Try: "I understand that my actions hurt you. I am working on changing them." Listen without immediately defending yourself. Taking responsibility does not mean accepting threats, humiliation or unsafe treatment.

Ask what support would help

Discuss practical expectations together when it is safe and calm. Family or couples counselling may help where appropriate and safe. Respect another person's boundaries; they may need distance, and reconciliation cannot be guaranteed.

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.

An action I need to take responsibility for...

What I can acknowledge without defending myself...

One realistic commitment I can follow through on...

A boundary or concern my loved one has expressed...

Support we may need, and my next action...

You do not have to do this alone.

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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.