

# CLARENCE STREET

## Working with Parents and Carers affected by alcohol and other drugs in a COVID-19 world



### Key messages for Parents/Carers

**Remember it's not uncommon for young people to experiment with drugs.** Using drugs does not mean that your child will become 'addicted' or that they will move from one drug to another.

**Give your child space** – When we love someone and are worried about their alcohol and/or other drug use it's easy to increase monitoring and try to stop them from harming themselves. This behaviour can push young people/young adults away rather than keep them close. Try to be patient and supportive to keep them close.

**You can influence change** - You might not be able to control what your child decides to do about drug use. But you can influence change by how you behave and how you go about supporting your child with this problem.

**Take notice of your own behaviour and emotions** - It's important to remain calm in front of your child because otherwise anxiety and worry can take over and interfere with how you communicate with your child/family member.

**Maintain open, honest communication with your child** - Listening is critical. You don't need to have all the answers. Talk to your child and try to be open and honest in discussing their alcohol or other drug use. **Become curious** and seek to understand what is happening from your child's perspective. Let them know they are not alone in these difficult times.

**Remember that no-one is to blame** - Blaming yourself or others can be unhelpful to everyone in the family. This kind of problem affects many families of all backgrounds and socio-economic levels.

**Remember there's no right or wrong** way to go about solving alcohol or other drug problems. It's a complex problem that takes times to fix.

**Be cautious** - About the sources of information you access. The internet for example can be overwhelming or misleading. Whether you are gathering information about alcohol and other drug use or the COVID-19 ask yourself, 'how do I know this is a reputable website'?

**Gather facts and tell them to your children** – This will be helpful to you and your child who can feel anxious and depressed about the world around them especially in these uncertain times of COVID-19. Your child may turn to alcohol and other drugs or, their alcohol or other drug use increases as a way of coping with world events.

**Reach out for support** – It can be very hard to reach out for support around the topic of alcohol and other drugs but it's a great move. When we are uncertain or, when we have tried to solve the problem and find little change has occurred then, reaching out for help is important. Remember that help seeking behaviour is a sign of strength and courage and when you reach out for professional help you are modelling for your child that sometimes we all need support.

**You are the expert on you, your child and your family** - And health professionals have expertise in alcohol and other drug use so, working together on how best to deal with this situation is helpful.

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## Focus on what you can control –

- Only listen to the news once or twice a day
- Stay positive e.g., focus on recovery rates of COVID-19 as well as on reducing risk through social distancing
- Limit social media (where there is a lot of misinformation communicated but there are also many stories around the world about people coming together in genuine and creative ways)
- Be kind to each other
- Follow Queensland health guidelines around COVID-19

**Practice self-care** – the more you practice self-care the better you will cope with the situation and you will be modelling for your child what a healthy life looks like. Self-care in this COVID-19 world includes activities like:

- gardening at home, reading, writing, colouring in, completing a jig-saw puzzle, baking, listening to music or singing, exercising, eating healthy food, resting and sleeping, drinking alcohol responsibly

## Where to go for support and information?

- Clarence Street, Mater Health (young people 13 – 25 years seeking support around alcohol and other drug use, family support)  
<https://www.mater.org.au/health/services/mater-young-adult-health-centre/what-we-do/clarence-street>
- Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS) - 1800 177 833
- Headspace - in your local area
- MH Call - 1300 64 22 55
- Family Drug Support - 1300 368 186
- Beyond Blue - 1300 224 636 <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>
- Lifeline - 13 11 14 [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)
- YODDA - 1800 458 685 or <https://www.ysas.org.au/articles/yodaa-youth-drug-and-alcohol-advice>
- Youth Advocacy Centre - [www.naclc.org.au](http://www.naclc.org.au) (provides up to date general legal information about COVID-19)
- Download the Australian Government Coronavirus (COVID-19) app.
- Contact your GP or 13Health 13432584