

# Coping with aggression, alcohol and drug use in the home:

A guide for teenagers



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(former Family and Community Services)  
Alcohol and Drug Information Service (NSW)  
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## Can you relate to any of this?

- Someone in your home gets angry when they drink alcohol or use drugs
- There's yelling or shouting and maybe people hurt you or someone else
- You don't feel safe at home all of the time
- You feel worried, scared, on edge, sad or alone and it's making it hard to focus on other things
- You want to talk to someone.

If you said yes, then this guide is for you.





## What you need to know

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- We all have the right to feel safe all of the time and there are laws to protect your safety
- Your parents need to look after you at home and make sure you have enough food to eat, and provide a safe place to live<sup>1</sup>
- When somebody hurts you or someone else it's not acceptable for any reason<sup>2</sup>, this could be
  - physical abuse (like cuts and bruises)<sup>3</sup> or
  - emotional abuse (like name calling and yelling and threats)<sup>4</sup>
- What's happening at home is not your fault and you need to tell a trusted adult about it
- No one should ask you to keep secrets about drug or alcohol use or violence
- You can get help to feel less worried and be safer at home<sup>5</sup>
- Nothing is off-limits to talk about.<sup>6</sup>

# Is it normal for people to get angry when they drink alcohol or use drugs?

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- Most people who use alcohol or drugs do not become angry or violent
- Drugs and alcohol don't cause people to be angry or violent, but using them can make things worse
- It's never ok for anyone to hurt you or someone else – either physically or emotionally – if it's happening in your home, you should talk to someone you trust.

## When should I call the police?

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- Are you worried someone is about to be violent?
- Is violence occurring now?
- Could someone get seriously hurt?

If you answer YES to any of these questions call **Triple Zero (000)** and ask for Police. If you are speech or hearing impaired – call the national relay service on 133 677.

## What happens when I call the police?

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When you call **Triple Zero (000)**, police will want to know:

- Where you are
- What is happening
- If anyone is injured
- If the person has a weapon or access to weapons.

# What can make things worse when people drink or take drugs? (increased anger or violence)<sup>7,8,9</sup>

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- If they've been aggressive or violent before
- If they're using a combination of drugs and/or alcohol at the same time
- When they've had a lot of drugs like alcohol, methamphetamine (speed, ice), or cocaine
- When the effects of a drug start to wear off (coming down)
- If they suddenly stop using a drug that they are dependent on (withdrawal)
- If they've got other problems in their life (e.g. financial worries, health issues and relationship problems)
- If they're also having mental health issues.







## How you might be feeling

Dealing with a family member who becomes aggressive or violent toward you or others is very difficult. You could be feeling many things about the situation including:

- Worried about yourself or someone else getting hurt
- Anxious or depressed
- Angry towards the person being aggressive
- Embarrassed about your family being different to others
- If it's your brother or sister being aggressive, you might feel forgotten about or not important if they are getting all the attention.

**Your feelings are important. Always remember, you are not to blame and it's not your fault. The person being aggressive is always responsible for their own behaviour, even if they are drunk or using drugs.**



## Who can I talk to about what's happening?



It's really important to find someone you trust and feel safe to talk to. If you can't find anyone in your life who will listen, call the Kids Helpline (1800 55 1800) and talk to a counsellor or chat to them online. Or check out the list of other services in the Help and Support section of this guide.

Here is a list of some people you could try talking with:

- Another relative or adult friend such as a neighbour or community member
- A youth worker, psychologist or social worker at a local youth centre or health service
- Your school counsellor or teacher
- A doctor or nurse
- A counsellor at Kids Helpline or eheadspace (online chat, email or phone them). It's free and confidential
- Youth ambassadors and members of online support forum Reachout.

Remember, if at first you don't get help, keep trying until you find someone you can talk to.

## What can I do to cope while this is happening in my family?

It is important to look after you! Making time for the things you like doing is important, like seeing friends, going out for a walk or watching a movie.

It's also good to keep exercising, eating well and taking time to meditate or relax.

All of these social and physical activities have really positive effects on your mental health, which will help you stay calm and cope when you're feeling stressed.

Websites like [reachout.com](http://reachout.com) or [headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au) also have some great tips and advice on coping and looking after yourself.



# Help and support services

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There are lots of services you can call or chat online to speak to someone about what happens at home. All of these services will keep what you say to them confidential (unless there is a risk of harm to yourself or someone else). You don't need to give them your full name if you don't want to.



## Emergency Call Service – Police, Fire, Ambulance

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☎ 000  
🌐 [triplezero.gov.au](http://triplezero.gov.au)

000 (also known as Triple Zero) is the primary national emergency number in Australia. [triplezero.gov.au](http://triplezero.gov.au) includes information on what to expect when you call.

## Kids Helpline

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☎ 1800 55 1800  
🌐 [kidshelpline.com.au](http://kidshelpline.com.au)

Kids Helpline is a free, private, and confidential 24 hours, 7 days a week telephone and online counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25.

## Lifeline

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☎ 131 114  
🌐 [lifeline.org.au](http://lifeline.org.au)

Lifeline is a 24-hours, 7 days a week free crisis support and suicide prevention service.

## Family Referral Services and Child and Family Health Services

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🌐 [familyreferralservice.com.au](http://familyreferralservice.com.au)

Family Referral Services (FRS) assist children, young people and families with the most appropriate support services in their local area.

## Headspace

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☎ 1800 650 890  
🌐 [headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au)

Headspace has centres located throughout Australia staffed with people who are trained and ready to help. They also provide eheadspace, a free online and telephone support and counselling service for young people aged 12 - 25 and their families and friends.

## ReachOut

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🌐 [au.reachout.com](http://au.reachout.com)

ReachOut is Australia's leading online mental health organisation for young people and their parents. They have a supportive, safe and anonymous forum space where people care about what's happening to you, because they've been there too.

## Children of Parents with a Mental Illness (COPMI)

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🌐 [copmi.net.au](http://copmi.net.au)

COPMI is an organisation promoting better outcomes for children and families where a parent experiences mental illness.

## Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)

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☎ 1800 250 015  
🌐 [yourroom.health.nsw.gov.au/getting-help/Pages/adis.aspx](http://yourroom.health.nsw.gov.au/getting-help/Pages/adis.aspx)

ADIS is a 24-hours, 7 days a week free, confidential and anonymous telephone service, providing counselling, support, referrals and information for those affected by alcohol or other drugs.

ADIS also provides [Web Chat](#) which is free, anonymous and confidential for people with concerns about alcohol or other drug use. Web Chat is available Monday to Friday 8.30am - 5pm (including public holidays).

## Open Arms Veterans & Families Counselling

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☎ 1800 011 046  
🌐 [openarms.gov.au](http://openarms.gov.au)

Open Arms provides support for current and ex-serving Australian Defence Force personnel, their partners, families and children with free, confidential counselling, group treatment programs including a community and peer network.

## NSW Mental Health line

☎ 1800 011 511

*NSW Mental Health line operates a 24 hours, 7 days a week mental health telephone access service. Anyone with a mental health issue can speak with a professional and be directed to the right care for them.*

## Family Drug Support (FDS)

☎ 1300 368 186

🌐 [fds.org.au](https://fds.org.au)

*FDS provides a 24-hours, 7 days a week free telephone support line for families and friends affected by alcohol and drug use.*

## CatholicCare Family Recovery services (CCareline)

☎ 13 18 19

🌐 [catholiccare.org/family-and-individual-services/counselling-and-relationships/drugs-alcohol-and-gambling](https://catholiccare.org/family-and-individual-services/counselling-and-relationships/drugs-alcohol-and-gambling)

*CatholicCare supports people impacted by alcohol and other drug or gambling use in their family including children (from 5 years), adolescents, parents, partners, grandparents and significant others. Support is available for individuals or families.*

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