



Parental Drug and Alcohol Problems

Home and school

- [Why doesn't my dad stop my mum's drinking?](#)
- [What if my mum and dad both have alcohol or drug problems or I only live with one parent?](#)
- [I am worried about what is happening at home when I am in school.](#)
- [People are giving me a hard time in school about my family, what can I do?](#)
- [My dad is in recovery; what can I expect?](#)

Q. Why doesn't my dad stop my mum's drinking?

A.

It is always good to have a parent who does not have problems with drugs or alcohol. This parent can be the main carer who can keep a good routine at home, make important decisions and help to keep things going even if there is pressure at home.

Over time, however, living with a partner who is engaging in harmful drug or alcohol use can wear a person down and they can become tired and unable to cope themselves.

They can be under a lot of stress trying to manage life and provide for their children while their partner continues to use drugs or alcohol.

Sometimes they are directly affected and become caught up in the problems caused by the drug and alcohol use, for example money problems.



Harmful drug and alcohol use will involve all of the family and may cause damage to relationships between other family members. But no one can make another person get help or change, except themselves.

It is not possible for your dad to 'fix' or control your mum's drinking. It is only possible for him to control and manage himself and make his own decisions for the family.

There is help available for your dad to support him with living with your mum. He needs to talk to someone who can help. Other family members such as an uncle, aunt or grandparent can encourage him to get help or he can talk to his GP to find out where to get more help.

You can try to tell your dad how you are feeling at a time when things are not too stressful at home. If you cannot do this yourself then maybe someone you trust will do it with you or for you.

Q. What if my mum and dad both have alcohol or drug problems or I only live with one parent?

A. This is a very difficult situation for you. If both your parents have alcohol or drug problems or you live with just one parent who has these problems, it is important that you find another adult who is not living in the situation who you can trust and talk to about what is happening at home.

Children and young people can also be affected by a parent's harmful drug and alcohol use even if they do not live with them. The information in this section is to help all young people who have experienced problem parental drinking or drug use.

Q. I am worried about what is happening at home when I am in school.

A. Your time in school is very important for you. If you are unable to get to school because of alcohol or drug use at home, you really need to talk to someone about this. Every child and young person has a right to an education.

If you are not getting to school or are arriving late or tired you could fall behind in your school work. There are staff in school who are there to help you in this area so try to discuss this with a teacher you get on well with or a counsellor in school.

It is very hard to put what is happening at home out of your mind when you are in school. It can feel like there is so much else on your mind. You may be distracted and worried about your family at home with thoughts spinning around your head...

- Is my mum safe? Has she started drinking?
- Is my little brother ok? Did he get any breakfast this morning?
- Is my mum out of bed yet?
- Are my mum and dad fighting?
- Is there any money left to pay the gas bill?
- What will things be like when I get home?

Remember

You can't control what is happening at home and even if you were there you would probably not make any difference to the situation. It is not your job to look after your family. It is your job to **care** for yourself and make healthy **choices**.

You need to have time away from the situation and experience 'normal' teenage life.

Because alcohol and drug problems are common, there are many different agencies available who give support to the whole family. These professionals know that it is important for children and partners to get help as well as the person who has the problems. Go to the [Finding Help](#) section for more information.

Q. People are giving me a hard time in school about my family, what can I do?

A.

Some young people find that they are being picked on or bullied by others in school. They feel this is because of their family situation and that others are singling them out for being 'different'.

If this is happening to you, it is not ok and you need to get help. It is never ok to be bullied.

The section on [Bullying](#) on this website may be of help to you.

It can be very hard to tell anyone in school, but the school is there to help. You will not be the only student in the school with this problem.

Q. My dad is in recovery; what can I expect?

A.

Being in recovery means a person is sober or drug free and will not be drinking or taking drugs. It's a big step for your dad to have made the choice to get help for his problems with drugs or alcohol and it is the first step in his recovery. Recovery is a journey as beating addiction is a long and difficult challenge.

Because drug and alcohol problems affect the whole family, it is not just the addicted person who needs to recover but the relationships within the family. This will be hard for everyone as so much has happened and things can't be put right quickly. However, it is possible to recover and for family relationships to change over time.

People have a lot of catching up to do with each other. As part of his recovery, your dad might want to talk about the past while you might want to just forget about it and move on.

It is important to discuss what has happened and how it felt for you but make sure that you do this at your own pace and when you feel comfortable.

It will also be important that you remember that with recovery comes the risk of relapse. Relapse means the person goes back to drinking or using drugs and needs help again to get back on track with their recovery. This is a common occurrence in recovery and can be very disappointing for family members who were really hoping things were changing.

Remember

**It is not your addiction
and you are not responsible for it.**