

---

# ADVICE FOR FAMILY MEMBERS AFFECTED BY SOMEONE ELSE'S DRINKING

---

## For Family Members Affected by Someone Else's Alcohol or Drug Use

Whilst alcohol and drug misuse and addiction cause significant problems for the individual, there is another side to this that is far too often hidden: **the effects on the family**.

*"The most destructive element in addiction is its steady erosion of family unity, stability, security and predictability." -Jim Orford*

The impact can be particularly negative for children and young people. Exposure to excessive alcohol and drug of a parent or family member during childhood is considered an Adverse Childhood Experience and can have lasting effect on a child's life. This [leaflet](#) has been designed to support parents to consider the impact of their drinking on their children.

### Coping: A Dilemma for Family Members

Coping with any extreme stress, including living with excessive alcohol or other drug misuse is challenging. There are no rules on how to cope and there is no one right way to cope. There are different styles and techniques for coping and it can take trial and error to identify what works for you.

*"Coping may not mean being resilient. It is how you tend to respond to what you are living with. For some, it may mean doing what you have to do to get by."*  
*Silent Voices, 2012*

Research into styles of coping in families says they can have both benefits and added strain:

#### **Tolerance: Putting Up with It**

- Being lenient, accepting and self-sacrificing: i.e. cleaning up messes, fixing problems the drinker/drug user caused.
- Shielding the drinker or drug user from the harm they do themselves.

#### **Engaged: Trying to Regain Control**

- Trying to change the drinker or drug user and their behaviour.
- Trying to control their drinking or drug use.
- Taking charge of the family.

#### **Withdrawal: Withdrawing or gaining independence**

- Putting emotional/ physical distance between themselves and the drinker/drug user.
- Being independent and doing something for themselves.

#### **Can you relate to any of these ways of coping?**

Family members are often caught between caring about the person with the alcohol or drug problem and struggling to cope. Constant and corrosive worry is one thing so many family members experience when living with excessive alcohol or drug use and addiction.

---

## Help and support

There is help and support available for families that are affected by someone else's alcohol or drug use.

For families living with excessive alcohol or other drug misuse, these are some key messages:

**Help is available for you.**

**You deserve help, and there are people who can help.**

**You didn't cause this.**

**You cannot control or cure it.**

**It is not your fault.**

**You are not alone.**

**It is important and good to talk.**

**It is OK to feel your feelings.**

**Treatment can be effective.**

**For young people: you can live a good life, even if your parent continues to drink or use drugs.**

**You can and need to take care of yourself and in doing so you may influence others around you in a positive way.**

## Where can I get help and support?

[Family Intervention Services](#): All five Health and Social Care Trust areas have dedicated for support for adult family members and intensive support for families.

[Steps to Cope](#) is an evidence based early intervention for young people affected by parental substance misuse or mental health issues.

There are a range of services to support [young carers](#) across Northern Ireland.

[Al-Anon](#) is a fellowship for family members of someone with an alcohol problem.

[Talking the Lid Off](#) is a self-help booklet for family members and a version for [young people](#)

[Bend Don't Break](#) offers guidance on building strength and resilience.

# covid**wellbeing** — — — — ni.info

This information was provided by



Discover more from this series on our website:  
[www.covidwellbeingni.info](http://www.covidwellbeingni.info)

