



Dresden.  
Dresden.

Recognising addiction  
For addicts' relatives and friends

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# Are these thoughts familiar?



Someone close to you has problems due to drinking alcohol or taking drugs, medicines, etc. Or they are acting oddly when it comes to screen time, gaming, shopping or eating. And you are worried about it, but at the same time feel helpless, overwhelmed and afraid.

*What's going to come next?  
How should I deal with the situation?*

As a relative or a friend, you might be the first to see the change in the person in question. After all, the more important it becomes to them to use a substance or act in this damaging way, the more you fall into second place. Being rejected like that is painful and often leaves you with questions.

*Is it my fault?  
What can I do?*

You may know the feeling of calling for help inside, but without anyone hearing you. Or you might feel as if you cannot or should not talk about what you have noticed. The situation this puts you in is unpleasant to you, and you shy away from this topic.

*How should I behave?  
What step should I take first?*

Please don't ignore your thoughts and feelings! Addiction is a chronic illness. It is not a personality weakness and certainly nothing to be ashamed of. Addiction can have serious consequences for addicts' physical and mental health, but also has a huge impact on everyone around them.

So it is quite right and important to take action. If you notice that you are reaching your own limits or have already gone beyond them, please don't stay isolated. You, too, have the right and opportunity to seek help or to talk to other people in similar situations. You are not alone with this problem and are allowed to talk about it.

# What should I know?



*You think: if he or she just really wanted it, it would be no problem giving up and putting the situation to an end.*

Please remember: the addict often has an extremely strong inner urge to use the substance or continue the entrenched behaviour, and often cannot help it.

*You think: we'll manage it together, without any outside help, and things will soon be back to the old days.*

Please remember: addicts need to take action themselves and get professional advice and treatment. As a relative, you will find it hard to escape your role as a partner, daughter or son, mother or father. Relatives and close friends do not usually have an objective view, so all they can do is support the addict.

*You think: if I just try hard enough, I'll be able to get the addict to change his or her attitude and behaviour.*

Please remember: usually, well-intentioned help backfires, and a conflict escalates. Or the help and support you offer have no effect on the person. That will weigh down on you, and you should seek help.

*You think: I'm not entirely sure if the person is even addicted, so I don't want to seek help for that reason, either.*

Please remember: the transition from use to abuse, and from there to addiction, is fluid. Your doubt alone should not stop you from getting in touch and talking about what is bothering you. Please trust your senses!

*You think: I'm surely just blowing things out of proportion, and actually it's not that bad, it's nothing too unusual.*

Please remember: by trusting your senses and taking things seriously, you are already helping. After all, one of the symptoms of addiction is minimising and denying use and behaviour. Don't be confused or put off by that. Seek help!

# What signs should I look out for?



The first signs of problematic use or odd behaviour can include:

- a shift in the sleep-wake cycle
- serious mood swings
- denying or minimising use
- irritable or aggressive behaviour
- unreliability
- getting worse at or repeatedly failing to do important tasks and duties
- becoming isolated from important friends and joining a new crowd
- initial physical symptoms such as sleep disorders, trouble concentrating, lack of appetite, tremors, dilated pupils

# What can I do?



First of all, remember that the illness is the addict's problem, and he or she is responsible for taking action. But what you can do is find out about the illness so that you can better understand their behaviour and reactions. However, you cannot force them to change, or to want to change.

Nonetheless, it is important to

- try to talk with them openly and describe what you have noticed, without confronting them with accusations or insults. Talk to the addict in a moment when they are not using.
- express your own worries and what you think about the topic in "I" statements. Start sentences with: I can see, I feel, I think
- offer ways you can help. For example, you could suggest going to a counselling centre together
- neither trivialise nor dramatise the situation
- offer emotional support
- not help them with cash
- not be pressured into anything
- not make threats that you cannot follow up on
- support every step taken by the addict him- or herself

# What help is available for me?



## Addiction counselling services

Whatever is worrying you, you can turn to any of the following addiction counselling services. They are staffed by professionals who will listen to you and can help. The addiction counselling services and their staff are subject to confidentiality. They are not allowed to talk to anyone about the issues unless you want them to. The addiction counselling services do not give any information to the police, employers or health insurance companies.

You can talk about any of your problems related to the use of alcohol and other drugs, or to gambling, and tell them what is troubling you. Even if it is about relatives or friends. You will get help whether or not the drugs are allowed or prohibited in Germany.

Your visit is free of charge. The City of Dresden pays the addiction counselling services for their work. The addiction counselling services also help find medical help to treat the addiction. You alone decide what schemes and support you will accept.

You will find the addiction counselling services' addresses, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses on their websites, along with the opening hours during which you can phone to make an appointment. When you make one, please mention whether you will need an interpreter and if so in which language.

### **Caritasverband für Dresden e. V.**

[www.caritas-suchtberatung-dresden.de](http://www.caritas-suchtberatung-dresden.de)

### **Diakonisches Werk – Stadtmission Dresden e. V.**

[www.diakonie-dresden.de](http://www.diakonie-dresden.de)

### **SZL Suchtzentrum gGmbH addiction centre**

[www.suchtzentrum.de/horizont](http://www.suchtzentrum.de/horizont)

### **Jugend- und Drogenberatungsstelle**

**(Public Health Department youth and drug counselling centre)**

[www.dresden.de/drogenberatung](http://www.dresden.de/drogenberatung)

### **GESOP gGmbH**

[www.gesop-dd.de](http://www.gesop-dd.de)

## Self-help groups for relatives in Dresden

Perhaps you would like to talk about your problems with someone who knows what the situation is like for themselves. In a self-help group especially for relatives, you can break the taboo and talk about your worries, problems and feelings. Equally, you can take the opportunity to ask questions or simply listen. Visiting a self-help group is free of charge.

### **Al-Anon family group for relatives and friends of alcoholics**

KISS, Room 3, Ehrlichstraße 3 (via Freiberger Straße 18), 01067 Dresden  
every Monday, 7 pm  
Phone +49 176 53 62 03 40  
E-mail gruppe.dd@gmail.com  
[www.al-anon.de](http://www.al-anon.de)

### **Relatives of addicts**

Addiction counselling and treatment service, Caritasverband Dresden e.V.,  
Görlitzer Straße 18, 01099 Dresden  
every 1st Monday of the month, 5.30 pm

### **“Anker”, parents and relatives of addicted children and adolescents in Dresden**

KISS, Room 3, Ehrlichstraße 3 (via Freiberger Straße 18), 01067 Dresden  
every 2nd Tuesday of the month, 7 pm  
E-mail AnkerDD@gmx.de  
[www.anker-dresden.de](http://www.anker-dresden.de)

### **Addiction**

Addiction counselling service, Stadtmision Dresden e. V  
Glacisstraße 44, 01099 Dresden  
every last Wednesday of the month, 6 pm, except in December  
Phone +49 351 8 30 04 84

## Further information about self-help groups

[www.dresden.de/selbsthilfe](http://www.dresden.de/selbsthilfe)

### **KISS – the City of Dresden’s contact and information centre for self-help groups**

Ehrlichstraße 3 (via Freiberger Straße 18), 01067 Dresden  
Phone +49 351 2 06 19 85  
E-Mail [kiss@dresden.de](mailto:kiss@dresden.de)

Here, you can find information about the various self-help groups found in Dresden, contact details, advice on which group would suit you and help starting a new group.

## Further information on the topic of addiction

[www.dresden.de/sucht](http://www.dresden.de/sucht)

### **City of Dresden coordinator for addiction support / prevention**

Braunsdorfer Straße 13, 01159 Dresden  
Phone +49 351 4 88 53 58, 4 88 53 57  
E-mail [suchtkoordination@dresden.de](mailto:suchtkoordination@dresden.de)

Here, you will find information on addiction prevention, contact details and advice on Dresden’s addiction counselling services. These also offer group therapy for relatives, plus the chance to make use of personal counselling.

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[www.dresden.de/sucht](http://www.dresden.de/sucht)