

WHEN SOMEONE YOU CARE ABOUT WON'T SEEK SUPPORT

Most people who use drugs only use them occasionally for a short time in their lives and don't go on to develop any serious issues. For some people though, drug use can become a problem and can sometimes lead to dependence.

It can be hard to see someone you care about using crystal methamphetamine ('ice'), especially if it negatively affects their life, work or relationships. So, what do you do when you've raised your concerns but your loved one chooses not to seek support?

First off, it's important to understand there are several reasons why someone might not want to seek support for ice use. Someone might...

- Not think their use of ice is a problem
- Not believe there is anything that can help
- Not be able to imagine getting through the day without using ice
- Or feel too embarrassed to seek help

Although the responsibility for seeking help lies with the person who is using ice, you can still play an important role in supporting them. How and how much you help your loved one is up to you.

Here are some ideas that might help you approach the situation:



REMEMBER THERE IS NO RIGHT OR WRONG WAY



- 1 **Remember there is no right or wrong way.** It's important to know that there isn't a specific way that these situations should be managed. Everyone's circumstances are different. Understand that you are doing your best and seek additional support from experts/doctors when needed.

- 2 **Do your research.** Read up on the **effects of ice** and **why people use it** to better understand the potential problems your loved one may be experiencing and the reasons why they may be using ice.

DO YOUR RESEARCH



- 3 **Start a dialogue.** Start with a general conversation with your loved one. Be mindful of timing these conversations so they are not when the person is intoxicated or in withdrawal. In these conversations it's important to show you care about them and are there to support them.

Here are some tips for approaching these conversations:

EXAMPLES OF HOW TO START A CONVERSATION ABOUT HELP SEEKING

We don't have to talk about ice, or even quitting... there are lots of ways to help you feel better than you do now... can we talk about that?



I know you're not ready to get help now, but when you are, I'll be here to help in any way that I can. Until then, what can I do to help you?



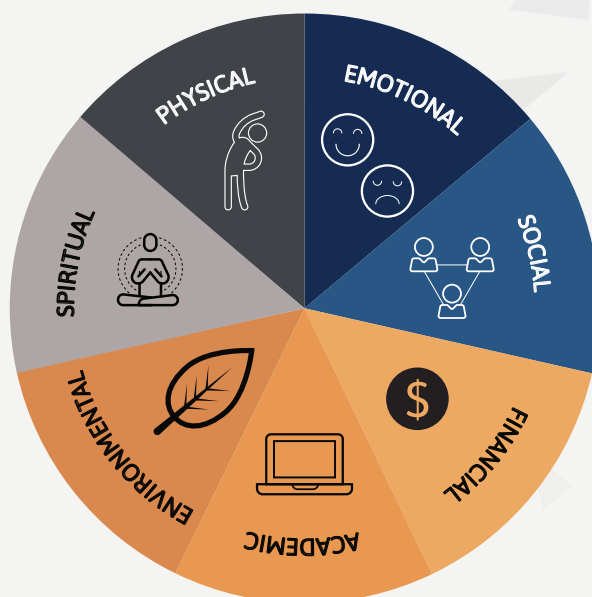
I can see that there are lots of things going on in your life right now. Is there any part of that I can help with or that we can get you help with? [prompt for anxiety, depression, or other 'reasons' why the person may be using ice, rather than the ice itself].

I know it's your life, and you can make your own decisions, but I'm really worried about your health. Would you consider coming with me to the doctor just to get checked out?

- **Play the long game.** It may take a number of conversations, over time, until someone is ready to start talking about their ice use with you and then a bit more time for them to start thinking about getting support. Check in with them regularly so that they know the door is open if they want to talk some more.
- **Be vulnerable.** You don't want to make the conversation about you, but sometimes sharing some of your own hard times and how you got through them can make it easier for your loved one to do the same.
- **Talk about life, and how their ice use is affecting you.** Helping them understand the impact their ice use is having on your life and theirs can assist in building motivation to change things.
- **Talk about harm reduction.** If they are going to continue using ice, then encourage them to do so safely. Suggest they consider staying hydrated, take time out to rest and avoid using alcohol or other drugs at the same time as ice.
- **Try not to be judgemental.** It's important to understand how things feel from their point of view, rather than to judge or criticise them for using ice. Also let them know there's no shame in seeking help.
- **Mix it up.** If your approach isn't working, try changing your communication style. If you're usually firm, try being softer. If you're normally more sensitive, try a direct approach. Another option is to talk about other things that might be concerning the person using ice that don't actually involve ice. For example, people may be willing to seek treatment for issues associated with their ice use such as mood problems or stress.
- **Be humble.** Is someone other than you be better placed to have this conversation? Is there someone who the person might be more comfortable talking to?

4 Stay connected anyway. Don't make your relationship with them conditional on them seeking support. Continue talking to them about other things in their life while staying open to talking about their ice use when they are ready. Try to also encourage them to engage in activities with you and others that don't involve alcohol and other drugs.

5 Take care of yourself. It's normal to feel worried about your loved one. Supporting someone before, during and after treatment for ice use can be stressful and can take a toll on your mental and physical health over the long term. It can also affect your involvement in your usual activities like work, friendships, family relationships and hobbies, so it's important that you take time out to focus on your own wellbeing. There are also [confidential support services for family and friends of people who use ice](#) that can provide information and advice.



- 6** **Think about your own needs and set boundaries if necessary.** It's important that you remember to prioritise your own needs and set personal boundaries so that you can take care of yourself at the same time as providing support to your loved one. Stay involved in your usual activities as much as possible and keep in contact with other family and friends. It's also okay if helping them becomes too much for you and if you need to take a step back.



Following these tips will help you show your loved one that you care about them and that you are willing to help them get support when they're ready. It's important to remember that people are in charge of their own life. The responsibility of seeking help and support lies with them. So be patient and present until they're ready to make a change.

KEY SOURCES

- Beyond Blue. (2018). **When someone you care about won't seek support**
- Jensen, C. D., Cushing, C. C., Aylward, B. S., Craig, J. T., Sorell, D. M., & Steele, R. G. (2011). Effectiveness of motivational interviewing interventions for adolescent substance use behavior change: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 79(4), 433-440. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0023992>
- Positive Choices. (2016). **How to help a friend or family member with a drug problem.** National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales.