

For partners



Adfam

Families, drugs and alcohol

Living with a drug user



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3. What about me and my needs?

A great many people in the world lead productive lives whilst still regularly using drugs be it cigarettes, alcohol or cannabis. Although it is understandable that you may be unhappy about your partner's choice of lifestyle, there is no formula which can be applied to make someone stop using drugs. It's important to let your partner know how you feel about their continuing to use drugs and to see what, if any, room there is for compromise in your situation if you are to continue to see them or live together for the time being. You may need to decide whether you are willing to accept your partner's choices or not and this may ultimately come down to you thinking about whether you wish to continue with the relationship or not.

If you do not feel ready to make this decision yet, then it could be helpful to put your energy into thinking about how your living situation can be made more bearable. What sort of changes need to be made to the situation in order for you to be able to continue to be with each other? Can you talk with each other about what you both see are the problems and how they could be sorted out?

It is worth thinking first about how you have been communicating with each other. It is very easy to get into the habit of shouting at each other and making threats. When we're angry or upset it's often difficult to do more than just focus on expressing our feelings. Obviously you need to let your partner know how you're feeling about the situation, but sometimes it's difficult to do any more than that in the heat of the moment. What do you feel are the issues that need to be sorted out? What do you need from your partner? What do they need from you? These are the things that we often never get around to talking about when we're feeling emotional, especially if our feelings are rebuffed because then we can end up never getting past how we're feeling.

Sue said of her relationship with Matt,

"I was so sick of talking about what seemed to be the same old things. I thought that I was being very clear about what I saw were the problems -why does he get so stoned all the time? Why was he never at home? Why did he have no consideration for my feelings? It wasn't until I was talking to somebody and I was asked how Matt's behaviour was really affecting me, that I realised how long it had been since we'd actually talked to each other about what our problems really were. I sobbed my heart out for a good 15 minutes and told the counsellor that I was so tired of the whole situation that I guess I'd given up on Matt and just used to shout at him for being such a