



**Scottish  
Families**

Affected by Alcohol & Drugs

# Little Book of **CRAFT**

# Introduction

At Scottish Families, we use a method called CRAFT (Community Reinforcement and Family Training) in our support services. We believe it gives the best possible outcomes for anyone concerned about someone else's alcohol or drug use. It teaches the best ways to make small but powerful changes in your life.

CRAFT helps you to think of things in a different way. It teaches you:

- How to talk to someone about their alcohol or drug use
- How to communicate with each other more positively
- And how to set and keep boundaries for yourself

CRAFT is an intervention-based programme created by Dr Robert J. Meyers. Meyers began his work in 1976 and has since released many publications and is an internationally known speaker and trainer.

**‘CRAFT has two goals. One is to teach you how to encourage your loved one to reduce their drug and/or alcohol use and enter treatment, the other goal is to help you enhance your own quality of life.’** - Meyers





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Some of the content of this publication has been taken from  
the 20-minute CRAFT guide that can be viewed here -  
**<https://the20minuteguide.com/>**

**‘Family members who use CRAFT experience greater improvements in their emotional and physical health than do those who use confrontational methods to try to help their loved ones.’** (Miller, Meyers & Tonigan, 1999)

# Talking about alcohol and drugs

Talking to someone about their alcohol and/or drug use can be a difficult conversation for anyone. It can cause worry and stress and the person may not open-up or respond in the way you want them to which may make more arguments.

## How do I start the conversation?

### Prepare in advance

Plan and write down what you would like to say. This will help you be specific and clear when you are having the conversation.

Looking up information about alcohol and drugs may help you feel more confident to have the conversation.

You can find out information online and we also have information on our website [www.sfad.org.uk](http://www.sfad.org.uk).

### Choose the moment

Think of the best time to talk to the person – is it during the day? After work? When they are alone? Making sure the timing is right is important. If there are other people in the room, think about how it may cause more issues and embarrassment for the person. You will know them best so choose a place where they are relaxed and more likely to listen to you.

### Make sure you listen

Listening is just as important as talking. If you are open to what the person is saying and their thoughts and feelings, you will understand their point of view better, even if you don't agree with it.

'Although it may sometimes feel like right now is not soon enough for change to happen, small steps can make a huge difference in relationships.'

- Meyers

Using open questions and allowing and encouraging them to talk will avoid the conversation coming across as a lecture or as an attack.

Try and acknowledge how the person is feeling and let them know how you are feeling too. Pay attention to their tone and their body language because this can help you understand the feelings behind their words. Try and listen to what is being said without interrupting, even if it does become painful to hear.

Consider using 'I' statements:

When we use 'I' statements rather than 'you' statements, it can make a huge difference to our conversations.

'I' statements have three parts:

1. 'When...' – give non-judgemental descriptions of the person's behaviour
2. 'I feel...' – name how you feel when you see the behaviour
3. 'because...' – finish with what that behaviour does to you.

'When you use drugs in the house I feel sad and angry because I asked you not to use in the house.' - 'I' statement

You can also turn the statements around so that you say your feelings first:

'I feel sad and angry when you use drugs in the house because I asked you not to.' - 'I' statement



## What to avoid in the conversation

When you are having the conversation, try not to argue, even if you hear something you don't agree with. When the person is talking, listen and show that you recognise their feelings. Say things like 'you feel strongly about this' or 'you seem upset by that' then describe your feelings and reactions to their behaviour and how that makes you feel.

In the conversation try to avoid:

- Interrupting the person
- Raising your voice
- Being dismissive – 'I don't want to hear your excuses'
- Being an expert about everything – don't let your personal views take over
- Changing the subject because you are uncomfortable
- Blaming and finger pointing
- Being defensive
- Not listening to what the person is saying

We all go through different emotions and may end up saying things we don't mean or don't understand the effect they may have. It is best to avoid things like:

- 'You have to...' = **ordering**
- 'It would be best if you' = **advising**
- 'You were being stupid' = **judging**
- 'Do you realise...?' = **lecturing**
- 'I can't deal with this' = **avoiding**
- 'Why do you do it?' = **interrogating**

It can be hard to accept that someone you care about is making choices that worry you.

**You cannot change someone else but you do own what you say and feel.**

# Positive Communication

Positive communication does not mean only saying nice things and avoiding conflict. It's actually a lot more than that.

**'As you develop better ways to interact with your loved one, take heart when things go well, but do not be overly discouraged when they go poorly. The next word, the next day, the next interaction gives you another chance to make a positive change.'** - Meyers

## How do I learn to sound more positive?

### Be brief

If you haven't planned what you are going to say in advance, you may end up saying more than necessary, especially when nervous or angry. Try to plan what you will say ahead of time and stick to it. If you say more than is necessary or go off at a tangent, it will drown out the important parts of what you want to say.

### Be specific

It is easy to ignore or misunderstand something if it is not clear. Try to refer to specific behaviours instead of thoughts or feelings.

For example, instead of telling the person to 'be more responsible', say specifically what behaviour you want to see more of.

'On school days, I want you to get up when your alarm goes off.' **Or** 'On Tuesdays I want you to pick up the kids from school.'



## **Be positive**

Positive here means describing what you want instead of what you don't want. This shifts the conversation from critical and complaining to supporting and doable. It is easier to reward someone for doing something rather than not doing something.

Being positive in this way stops people from being defensive and rebelling and instead promotes motivation.

### **Example**

'You always embarrass me when you are drinking' becomes 'I love spending time with you when you are sober.'

## **Label your feelings**

When it is brief and in proportion, an emotional reaction to the problem can help with empathy and consideration from the person. Say how you feel in a calm and non-accusatory manner. Using 'I' statements can encourage them to think about the impact their behaviour is having on you. It is important that you are honest with your feelings and do not try to make the person feel guilty.

### **Example**

Rather than saying 'you are breaking this family up, you don't care about our feelings'

you could say

'I feel your alcohol/drug use is putting strain on the rest of us, I sometimes feel like you don't realise the affect it is having on us.'





## **Offer to help**

When phrased as a question, an offer to help can communicate non-blaming and problem solving support. Try asking 'is there any way I can help?' or 'how can I help?' A little goes a long way to improve communication – 'yeah, if you texted me a reminder, that would help.'

## **Take partial responsibility**

Sharing the problem, even a tiny piece of the problem, will stop the person being defensive. It shows the person that you are interested in solving what is going on, not finger-pointing and blaming.

**Accepting partial responsibility does not mean taking the blame or admitting fault. It communicates 'we are in this together'**

For example

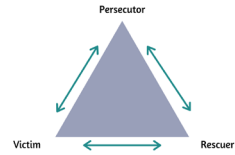
'I know in the past I have made things worse by arguing with you, but I want us both to start getting on better.'

## **Give an understanding statement**

The more the person believes that you 'get' why they are acting the way they are, the less defensive they will be. Because of this, they will be more likely to hear you, understand you, and oblige.

## Negative roles people fall into

### The Drama Triangle by Stephen Karpman



People in the **Persecutor** role are usually:

- Inflexible
- Blaming the person using alcohol or drugs
- Using alcohol or drugs
- Angry
- Accusatory
- Critical
- 'This is your fault.'

People in the **Victim** role are usually:

- Feeling guilty
- Feeling the need to help someone
- Giving help when it isn't needed
- Assuming others need them
- 'You need my help'

People in the **Rescuer** role are usually:

Feeling hard-done by

Feeling powerless

Taking the blame for what is happening

'Poor me, I give up'

People often start in one role and then move onto another.

**'I was just trying to help (rescuer) and they turned on me (victim) so I had to defend myself (persecutor).'**

Sometimes people will keep their role. For example, the person can always take on the role of **Persecutor** while you always stay the **Rescuer**.

It is important that we recognise where we are on the triangle so we can get ourselves out of it. The cycle will continue until someone moves to clearer and healthier ways of communicating.

## The Winner's Triangle (by Stephen Karpman)

People who are **Assertive**:

- Accepts other's values and integrity
- Knows their own feelings, wants and needs
- Is non-judgemental



People who are **Caring**:

- Accepts other's ability to think for themselves
- Gives help when it is asked for
- Cares and understands
- Doesn't need to feel needed by others

People who are **Vulnerable**:

- Accepts themselves
- Shares real feelings
- Does not need to feel like they are in control

The Winner's Triangle shows us how we can change our role to encourage more positive communication and to break away from the Drama Triangle.

If you recognise yourself as a **Persecutor**, try to be honest with yourself about what is making you angry. Anger is a secondary emotion that happens when someone cares deeply about someone else. Think about how you are feeling

and try to talk about that – it is okay to be and feel **Vulnerable**.

If you see yourself as a **Rescuer**, you care for the person but also like to feel needed. Does the person actually want or need your support?

A **Caring** role is about the development of listening skills, sometimes listening is often the only caring response that is needed.

Being **Assertive** is about getting your needs met without punishing and becoming a **Persecutor**.

Self-awareness is essential in all three roles.

Positive Communication can help you to set boundaries that are healthy to all relationships. Using the seven components of Positive Communication that we have written about in this chapter can help with this.

# Setting Boundaries

## What is a boundary?

We describe boundaries as a limit on what is reasonable. They help us develop trust, stability and respect. You can set boundaries to limit the impact of the person's behaviour. They help to assert needs to make you feel more secure and respected.

**You can't change someone else but what you can change is your response to a situation. This change may in turn invite a change from the person using alcohol or drugs.**

### For example:

Emma has been a heroin user for nine months. She funded her use by borrowing money from her family and then later stealing from the family home. Her parents were unaware of this until her arrest of possession of a Class A drug. They then spoke to her about her drug use.

Emma's parents do not want her to steal from the family again and do not want to lend or give her money for drugs.

So two boundaries need to be set:

- Emma is not to steal from the family
- The family are not to lend Emma money for drugs

## How to a set a boundary

There are three stages to setting and keeping a boundary:

1. Defining the boundary
2. Setting the boundary
3. Keeping the boundary

A boundary may often need changes and resetting.

These three changes repeat a process. They start off by defining, setting and keeping. Then you learn from the boundary, what happened, how it was met, did it work, and then redefine, reset, re-keep and so on.

## Defining a boundary

Before you make a boundary, ask yourself:

- What exactly is the issue I want the boundary to deal with?
- What do I need to achieve?
- Why am I setting this boundary? Is it because I'm angry or have I thought about it?
- Would I accept this behaviour from someone who doesn't use alcohol or drugs? Is it necessary to treat them differently just because they use alcohol or drugs?

**Tip: You should define the boundary by the person's behaviour, not them as a person.**

For example:

You could set a boundary about them using drugs in the house.

'I don't want you to use in the house'

Rather than

'I don't want you in the house when you are using.'

The boundary here is asking the person to not take any drugs when they are in the house and it is being said in a positive way – the positive way being that you are not telling them to leave the home, you are asking them not to take drugs in the home.

## Other things to ask yourself:

- Does the boundary encourage the person to be responsible for their life? Their behaviour? The choices they make? Or does it treat them as if they were a child?
- What are the risks of the boundary for both the person and the whole family?

For example, if they use outside the home, your family may not be at risk from paraphernalia like needles but will the person be at an increased risk outside?

- Set clear consequences for what will happen if a boundary is broken. Consequences need to be appropriate and manageable so that you can carry them out if it is broken.
- How will you measure if the boundary has been kept?
- How long is the boundary to be? Do you need to set a deadline?
- When will the boundary be reviewed?
- Can the boundary be easily changed if something happens?
- Who else is the boundary going to affect? Does all of the family agree?
- Is it appropriate to give a reward if the boundary is kept?

This is a lot to take in and you don't need to check off every single thing. **Remember you can't change someone else but you can change your response to them.**

## Setting a boundary

Once you have defined a boundary, it is time to set it with the person. This happens through negotiation so that the boundary is agreed by everyone involved.

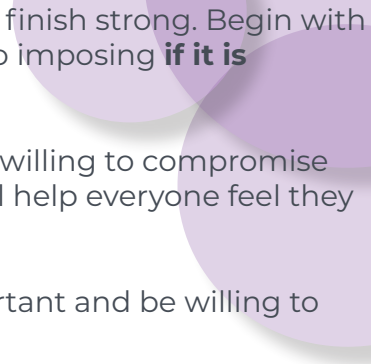
When you are setting the boundary it is best to:

- Listen to each other
- Be open and honest about how you feel
- Respect the other person by accepting and understanding their point of view even when you don't agree with it
- Start what you say with an 'I' statement like 'I feel that...'
- Take responsibility of your part of what has happened
- Avoid taking responsibility for the person's behaviour and their choices
- Acknowledge how you feel and how the other person feels
- Express feelings like saying you feel angry rather than being abusive
- Collaboration is much better than confrontation.

## How do I negotiate the boundary?

- Ask for what you want not demanding or avoiding
- Check with the other person what their response is to what you ask for and avoid making assumptions



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- Start easy and (if it needs to be) finish strong. Begin with negotiation and only move onto imposing **if it is necessary**
  - Collaborate and be flexible and willing to compromise to reach an agreement. This will help everyone feel they have gained something.
  - Hold out for what is most important and be willing to compromise on lesser things.
  - Agree the terms of the boundary. Such as when it will start, when you will talk about it again and the consequences if it is broken.

### If negotiation and talking doesn't work

If it is difficult to talk to the person and to negotiate a boundary, your first boundary is for there to be more talking and negotiating. You can do this by either speaking to the person or in writing:

Example of a parent writing to their child who is using drugs:

'I notice that whenever I try to talk to you about your drug use in the house you avoid talking about it. When you do this I feel angry and frustrated. I ask that you don't use drugs in our home. I am breaking the law by knowing it happens and not reporting you to the police. I believe it is a risk to the health and safety of us all. If you choose to continue to use drugs in the house and not talk about this, I'll assume that you have stopped cooperating. I will stop cooperating by not buying food and not preparing meals for you. I don't like that it has come to this and I'd prefer if we could talk about your drug use and the impact it has on your family. I want to end by saying that I still love you and want to know you.'

Note the following about the example:

- It talks about the person's behaviour and not them as a person.
- It shows the impact the broken boundary has had.
- It asks for the boundary to be respected. It does not demand it or avoid the question.
- It is open, honest and direct.
- It is balanced between saying what is difficult and what is liked about the person.
- It sets out what the boundary is and the consequence of breaking it.
- It gives the person the responsibility for their behaviour and the choices they make.

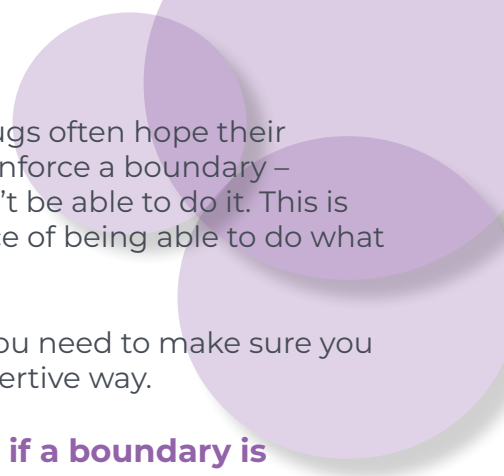
## **Keeping the boundary**

To keep the boundary, you need to make sure that you:

- Notice any changes in the boundary.
- Acknowledge when the boundary has been kept or has been broken.
- Respond to the broken boundary by choosing how to react to it.

## **If a boundary is broken**

Boundaries are often broken by drug and/or alcohol users, especially when they are first put in place. The person often reacts to the changes made by returning to their previous behaviours. They are often unwilling to change themselves too.



People who use alcohol and/or drugs often hope their family or friend will be unable to enforce a boundary – meaning they hope that they won't be able to do it. This is often based on previous experience of being able to do what they want.

If the person breaks a boundary, you need to make sure you respond in an appropriate and assertive way.

## **How to respond appropriately if a boundary is broken**

The first step is to acknowledge the broken boundary and then consider your response. Be realistic about what has happened and avoid making excuses for people. Take your time to choose your response and try not to react based on your current feelings of frustration and anger.

Some responses could be:

- Saying the boundary you both agreed on has been broken
- Saying how you feel
- Giving an action-based response e.g. 'When you break our agreement not to use drugs in the house, I feel angry with your behaviour. I'll ask again that you respect what we agreed on.'
- Renegotiate – this may include saying again what you want and need. This is a learning opportunity for next time.
- Carry out the consequence of the broken boundary.
- Being a 'broken record' and repeating what you want. Do not let yourself be side-tracked away from it.

- Comment on the person's behaviour and how it is different from what they say they would do e.g. 'I notice every time this happens you say sorry and then carry on as if we hadn't agreed on anything.'

### **Tips:**

- Making boundaries may seem difficult to do but with any skill we learn it takes time and will develop.
- Prepare how to be assertive when you talk to the person.
- Remember to hold eye contact, sit and stand straight, avoid finger-pointing, and speak clear and firm.
- Think about how they may manipulate your feelings. Prepare yourself for how much you will/can cope with this.

**You are not powerless, but you are not able to make someone do something they don't want to. You do have influence, you can ask for what you want, and you can invite someone else to do something.**

### **Is sorry really enough?**

There is no right or wrong answer. What matters is that you choose each time whether it is enough for you.

People can say sorry to express their genuine regret for how they have behaved and feel guilty. But they can also say sorry to invite us to feel sorry for them, or to invite us to believe they respect us when they may not.

Consider both what the person says and how they say it. Consider too if they really are sorry or whether a part of them is and another part isn't.

**Remember, actions speak louder than words.**

## Support for yourself

Setting boundaries and changing your relationship with someone is difficult. It can be much harder if you feel isolated and unsupported.

Many support groups are now peer-led by people who have similar experiences to you. There are also many services and organisations/charities in Scotland that have groups and services to support you.

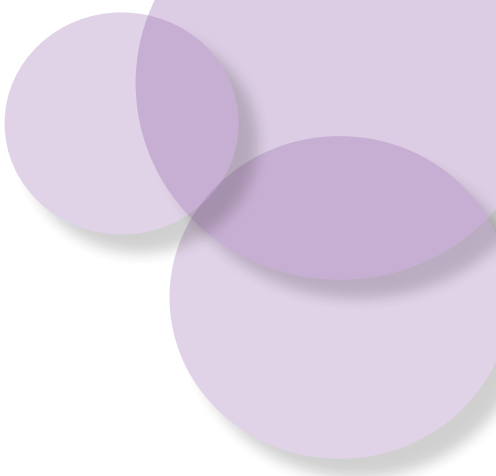
Visit our website **[www.sfad.org.uk](http://www.sfad.org.uk)** for more information.

‘This service (Telehealth using CRAFT) has been a lifeline to me through a very challenging time in my life. It has helped me to focus and make positive decisions for me which can only help no matter what the future brings. I’ve learned to trust myself again which has been a huge step.’

– Family Member

# My Notes

# My Notes



**Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs**

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