



When a member of your congregation needs support these **Conversation Starters** can help.

Understanding the signs and symptoms of opioid misuse is the first step to ensuring you are able to provide the type of support and guidance members of your faith community may need. Review some of these signs and symptoms below along with dialogue tips and potential conversation starters to help you start a dialogue that can help someone consider a path to recovery. If you need additional resources or information, you can visit [www.realhelpbr.com](http://www.realhelpbr.com) or contact us at (225) 925-1906.

## Signs and Symptoms of Opioid Misuse and Abuse

- Isolating oneself from friends or family members
- Noticeable changes in personal appearance, such as weight loss or changes in hygiene
- Sudden, unprovoked outbursts
- Quickly changing moods
- Depression
- Poor performance at work or duties
- Poor motor skills and coordination
- Recent financial troubles
- Being overly energetic and talking fast
- Frequent flu-like symptoms

## Dialogue Tips

- **Prepare for the conversation by doing the proper research.** Gather enough information to ensure that you understand what kind of substance they may be using and the effects.
- **Avoid being judgmental or confrontational.** Avoid using terms like “addict.” Those terms may be a trigger and can result in a negative reaction.
- **Communicate that change is possible.** Provide support and guidance needed to help them realize that they can change. Inform them about resources available to help with opioid misuse.
- **Before starting the conversation, make sure the person is sober.** It is difficult to have important conversations when a person is under the influence of drugs due to difficulty concentrating and impaired judgment.
- **Create a space for an open and honest conversation.** Let them know that you care about them and their health. You should also emphasize that you are here to listen and provide any support they may need. Remain calm and share facts and information while encouraging them to open up about their struggles.

## Conversation Starters

Use some of these conversation starters from [StartYourRecovery.org](http://StartYourRecovery.org) that you can use to begin a discussion about opioid misuse.

- I wanted to check in with you because you haven't seemed yourself lately.
- I've noticed you've been acting differently lately, and I'm wondering how you're doing.
- I've been worried about you lately.

Once you've started the conversation, you can ask some of these questions:

- Do you feel like you're trying to escape or forget something?
- What can I do to best support you right now?
- Have you thought about getting help?
- When did you start feeling like this?

Remember, you're there to provide support, not to fix the situation or dominate the conversation. It's important to listen and respond, when appropriate, with encouraging words, such as:

- I want you to know that you are not alone—even if that's how it feels to you.
- I am here for you, and I want to help you in any way that I can.
- It may not seem like it right now, but you can be in control of your life again.
- I may not be able to understand exactly how you feel, but I'm concerned about you and want to help.