



Moments that matter

– everyday actions we can all
take to make a difference in
the lives of children whose
parents have drinking issues.

**BARNDOM
UTAN BAKSMÄLLA**

Dare to care when it matters the most

Every child has the right to a safe childhood.

And yet, 320 000* Swedish children are negatively affected by their parents' drinking habits. Furthermore, too many children are not sufficiently seen or helped by adults outside the immediate family as they go about their everyday life. If we truly believe that the drinking issues of adults should never become children's problems, more people need to do more.

Together, we can make a difference in the lives of children today – simply by making sure that all of us who haven't opened our eyes to these issues before do so now.

In this folder, we have collected advice and contact info to increase the knowledge and courage that may be needed in order to make more people ready to act in the moments that matter.

It's often easier than one may think to make a difference and help a child.

The different pieces of advice have been created in collaboration with children's rights associations.

The advice stem from children's stories about what they wished grownups would have done.

Barndom utan baksmälla is an initiative that aims to make a difference for children who are negatively affected by adult alcohol consumption.

* According to Report 185 from The Swedish Council for Information on Alcohol and Other Drugs, (Stockholm 2019).



Be someone who acts

Don't assume that someone else, perhaps someone closer to the child, has already reacted or done something about the situation. Even if that should be the case, it doesn't hurt if one more adult show the child that they care.



You don't have to solve everything

What the child needs most might not be so dramatic. For you to simply be present in a child's life can make a world of difference. To be asked how things are and to really be listened to is vital for the child to feel seen and heard. Don't know what to say?

"Hi, how are you?" is as good a start as any.



Dare to ask (and ask again)

Dare to ask how the child is doing. If you don't get an answer right away, ask again a little later or at a different time. Many children find it hard to share their stories on the spot. It is also common for children to have feelings of guilt associated with the adult's drinking. Children often want to protect their parents by not sharing with the outside world what it's really like at home.



Involve the child

Talk to the child directly about how they would like things to be and what kind of assistance they think would be most helpful. Involve the child and his or her ideas instead of coming up with your own solutions.



Be the calm in the storm

Many children say that the unpredictable nature of everyday life is one of the scariest parts of growing up close to someone who drinks too much.

You can make a difference simply by being you – a trustworthy and stable adult. Likewise, it's imperative that you keep your calm when and if the child decides to tell you how things are at home.



Small acts of kindness are no small things

Many children carry too much responsibility at home because of their parents' drinking habits. To ease the burden, practical efforts are worth a lot. It doesn't have to be that complicated. Ask a child to come over for dinner or a playdate with your kids, ask if a kid needs a ride home from practice, buy a few extra toothbrushes in the case of spontaneous sleepovers and lend clean clothes to children who have stayed the night.



Don't expect a whole lot in return

You can make a difference. Even if you don't notice any change: stick around and show that you care over time – day after day, month after month, year after year. It's the most important thing you as an adult can do for a child who grows up in the shadow of alcohol.



Talk to a friend

Dare to discuss your worries with your own friends in order to find your own support. It's not uncommon for adults to worry about a child, so help each other out. Discussing your concerns may well boost the courage needed for you to dare to ask the child.



Seek help to help

You can receive professional advice through both social services and organizations who support and help children on a daily basis. Turn to them for guidance if you are concerned about a child's wellbeing. You can also tell the child you worry about that these organizations exist and what they do.

If it's an emergency (or after office hours) call 112.



Report a concern?

If you are worried that a child is at harm, you should report a concern (anonymously if you like) to social services in your local district. Keep in mind that you're not reporting the child's parent. Instead, you are reporting your concern regarding the child's wellbeing. Once you've filed a concern, it's up to social services to investigate if the child or family are in need of support.

Tell the child if you plan to make a report so that he or she don't feel like you're acting over their heads. Stick around for the child even after the report.

If you'd like more advice about reporting a concern, please contact Bris adult section.

Here to help

People working for the following organizations are experts on helping children and young people. Several of the organizations are also happy to give advice if you, as a fellow human and grown-up, are worried that a child or adolescent suffers from an adult's drinking habits.

Bris – Children's Rights in Society Bris – Children's Rights in Society is a children's rights organization that supports children, mobilises society and influences decision makers by making sure children's voices are heard.

Bris offers children and adults a variety of support services online, over phone or mail and through support groups.

To discuss how to best help a child that you worry about, call Bris adult telephone: 0771 50 50 50, www.bris.se

Maskrosbarn (for teens) Maskrosbarn supports children whose parents have addiction problems, mental health issues or who are physically abusive towards their children. Maskrosbarn give young people the tools, knowledge and network needed to break with their social heritage and shape their own future. www.maskrosbarn.org

Trygga Barnen (children, teens and young people up to 25 years old) Trygga Barnen is a foundation that helps children and young people who grow up in homes marked by addiction and / or mental illness. Trygga Barnen informs children and others about children's rights as family members and further supports and amplifies the target group's voice and presence in society. www.tryggabarnen.org

Childhood Childhood promotes the right of every child to a safe and loving childhood, free from violence and sexual abuse.

Childhood supports children and their families through partner organizations but doesn't offer advice or support to individuals. www.childhood.se

IQ IQ is an organization that works to promote a smarter take and perspective on alcohol. At the IQ site, you can find hard facts, figures and useful advice on how to best respond to an adult whose alcohol consumption is cause for alarm. www.iq.se

Systembolaget Systembolaget is the initiator of Barndom utan baksmälla. To supply information about the risks and consequences related to alcohol consumption is part of Systembolaget's public service mission. www.omsystembolaget.se

Trust your gut and listen with your heart

It's very rare that a single instance makes it clear what life is really like for a child growing up in a home with problematic drinking.

Instead, it's when you put together observations over time that you may really understand that a child is negatively affected by adult drinking. Trust your gut, be observant and kind and make sure that you are present and available for the child in any and every way you can. If the child chooses to tell you something, listen carefully.

After listening, ask if the child has any suggestion on how you best could make a difference – if there is something you could do or if it is enough for the child to know that you are always available for a chat or support. It is also important that you check back and take charge of the contact instead of expecting the child to get in touch if needed.

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