

The Power of Friendship

Working up the courage to confront a friend about his or her drinking or drug use is very difficult. In fact, it may be one of the hardest things you'll ever have to do. But part of being a good friend is recognizing when your friend needs help — even if it wasn't asked for. After all, you'd help your friend out and give him advice on other stuff like family, dating and school, so why wouldn't you talk to him about drugs? Sometimes, just bringing up the subject with your friend is the wake-up call that's needed.

Did you know that 68 percent of teens said they would turn to a friend or brother/sister about a serious problem related to substance abuse? This means that when you talk, your friends will listen — even if you've tried drugs or alcohol yourself. Don't underestimate your own power to influence your friend and explain to him how you see his drug use getting out of hand. Sure, it may have been his choice to start using drugs in the first place, and you may be scared that your friend will get mad at you and tell you that his choices are none of your business. But if you really think your friend needs help, you have a responsibility to him — and your friendship — to step up and say something. By not talking with your friend about your concerns, you are only sending him the silent message that his drug or alcohol problem is no big deal.

Friends often know about drug use before there are signs and symptoms that are visible to others. And if you see yourself doing some of these things, you may want to evaluate your own relationship with drugs and alcohol by going online at www.checkyourself.org.

> She is using regularly and has to use drugs or alcohol to have a good time or cope with everyday life.

> He starts hanging out with new friends who will do drugs with him or who can score drugs for him.

> He's broken plans with you, or showed up late, because he was getting drunk or high.

> She shows little interest or drops out altogether from activities she once enjoyed, like sports or music.

> He borrows money from you to buy drugs or alcohol, or asks you to hold his drugs for him.

> She shows up at school drunk or high or has skipped class to use.

> She has driven a car while high or drunk or has ridden with someone who was high or drunk.

> He uses drugs or drinks when he is alone.

> You feel like you must babysit her when she is drunk or high to keep her from doing things she might regret, like having sex or getting into a fight with her parents.

> He's having difficulty with family relationships and letting his family and friends down.

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