

Friend's Drug Use

I have a good friend who has kind of started living the party life. Long story short – he confided in me that he sometimes does drugs. I'm really scared for him and want to help, but I don't even know where to start.

I wish there were an easy one. It must be hard to watch your friend do things that you know will hurt him in the end. The hard thing in your situation is that there is no way that anyone can make your friend change unless he wants to. The best thing that you can do is to talk to him about why you are concerned, and then see what happens from there. Saying nothing is only avoiding the problem, and problems rarely, if ever, go away on their own – especially in the case of drug abuse.

I would encourage you to ask your friend questions. Try to find out why he is doing drugs. Is it because of other friends and pressure coming from them? Is it a social thing? Is he doing it to fit in? Is he doing it to avoid pain? If so, what pain is he trying to avoid? Most of the time, drug use is a cry for help, and sharing his drug use with you was a cry for help. He obviously trusts you, since he shared this with you. Remind him that he is cared for by you because of his uniqueness and value as a person, and that he doesn't need to do drugs to prove anything or fit in. Challenge him to have the courage to stand up to peer pressure. Find out what is going on under the surface...

Let him know that you will stand beside him as a friend, but that you do not agree with what he is doing. Let him know that you will help him do whatever it takes to get out of the drug use, if he is willing to. I don't want to mislead you into thinking this is going to be easy. You might make your friend mad and he might not talk to you for a while if you confront him, but he needs to know that you care enough to confront his damaging behavior. You care, and you don't want to see him hurt himself.

Do your friend's parents know what is going on? If not, think about talking to them (or another caring adult if his parents are not very involved in his life). Drugs are very serious, and perhaps his parents need to be brought into the situation, so they can deal with it. This is especially true if you believe he is addicted or have seen signs of physical or psychological harm. Again, he might be mad at you for a long time and might not even talk to you for a while, but at least you did everything you could to protect him. The loving choice is not always the easiest. Sometimes when someone's judgment is affected by drug use, they can't think rationally on their own. They need friends and family who really care to come along side them and help – even if they don't want it. You might also want to talk to a school counselor or youth pastor so that they can help you decide how to handle it.

I would also encourage you to remember that you can't control his response. If he doesn't want to quit doing drugs you will not be able to make him stop. You can show him that you care and are concerned and you can bring others into the situation to help you deal with it, but you can't control what he will do with all of this. The choice is ultimately up to him.

It's hard seeing someone you care for making poor decisions. But remember, the loving choice is always the best. A final caution... it sounds like you are opposed to drug use and I'm glad to hear it. But if your friend starts pressuring you to do drugs, don't even entertain the thought. If you find yourself in a situation where there is drug use occurring, the best advice is found in an old proverb – "Flee!" Also, these quotes might be good ones to hang in your school locker or just keep in your thoughts...

We gain the strength of the temptation we resist. – Ralph Waldo Emerson

It is easier to stay out than get out. – Mark Twain

Articles are written by Bob Lenz, Tiffany Thompson and other national youth communicators with Life Promotions Inc., a non-profit youth organization committed to instilling hope, worth and value in youth.

