

HOW TO HELP A FRIEND WITH DRINKING OR OTHER DRUG USE

Have you noticed things about a friend's behavior that have you wondering what's going on? Do you think your friend may have a problem with alcohol or other drugs? By looking for help, you're already doing something valuable. Read on...

Some of the more common signs of an unhealthy relationship to substances are:

- Changes in mood, behavior or appearance
- Sleeping or eating too much or too little
- Grades slipping, attendance problems
- Nodding off or displaying manic behavior
- Defensive or secretive affect

It's important to remember that a number of things could cause the above, including depression. For more information about depression, contact [Counseling and Wellness](#): 212-998-4780 or call the [Wellness Exchange](#): 212-443-9999.

PREPARE

- Educate yourself about the substance(s) being used and addiction. Good sites are [Rethinking Drinking](#) and the [National Institute on Drug Abuse](#).
- Gather referral information for your friend. There are some helpful resources for NYU students [here](#).
- Practice what you want to say - the main thing is to state what you have noticed and that you're concerned and want to be supportive.

REFLECT

- Be clear about your motivation for expressing concern. If you are actually annoyed with your friend about something other than their substance use, discuss that.
- Be clear with yourself about what your expectations are. It's natural to hope that your concern will result in something positive for your friend. That can and does happen, but it's really important to remember that people change at different rates, if at all.

SHARE

- Wait until your friend is sober
- Make sure there is enough time for a talk
- It's okay to be nervous, but try to stay calm
- Use first person pronouns to avoid putting your friend on the defensive. For example: "I feel like you're acting different lately. I've missed you in classes and it seems like you've been going out a lot. I'm just wondering if everything is okay."

KEEP PERSPECTIVE

Your friend may say that everything is fine. Use your instincts about whether to push more or back off. There is no one right answer.

Remember, even if your friend seems to have completely ignored you, your effort still has value. You have done what is called "planting the seed." You have articulated a concern and while it may not produce an immediate change, your words may resonate with your friend over time. You may not be the only one to raise a concern – the effect may be cumulative.

NEED MORE SUPPORT?

For further advice, you can always call the [Wellness Exchange](#) at 212-443-9999. Counselors are available to talk 24/7/365.