

How to deal with a drug-addict friend

AFM

Substance abuse has always been there. Most drug addicts in Bangladesh are in their early 20s; many of them start using because their friend(s) do too. Access to drugs may be difficult at times but not impossible. Often drugs are used as a means to escape everyday monotony; it becomes a release from the pressures of family, studies, and relationship problems. Pop culture often makes drug use seem “cool” – look at that rockstar snorting that white powder; how awesome is that lead character selling drugs in that superhit TV show?

Even if you're not partaking, there's a high chance that you know someone who is. This friend probably does not understand the severe repercussions coming about from heavy drug use or, like most, might be in denial. Now you can be either an enabler or a true friend to that person. The enabler is the person who either turns a blind eye to increasing drug use or creates situations in which the addict needs drugs. It is fairly easy for an addicted person to give in to temptation. As a friend it's best to actively try not to put that person under such circumstances. You have to understand how difficult it is for a person to stay away from drugs once they're addicted, and should help that person stay away. The process will be long, emotionally draining, and in certain cases may need intervention from proper authorities. Ultimately it's your friend alone who can help himself, but it's not always easy for

him to get to the point where he'd want help. Many people try to avoid this due to the social stigmas; there is always concern about the family and one's reputation. However, prioritising reputation will just end up in you losing that friend while also aiding in ruining his or her life.

It's never easy being a friend to a drug user; their perception of the world becomes distorted, and their ideologies change to help them cope with their addiction. It can get to a point where that person cares about nothing else in their life other than the need of the drug. Your friend may even turn on you, but that's the most crucial point where you need to be patient. Do not give up on that person; get help from professionals and your other friends. You, as the friend, need to be strong because, at that point, your friend won't be. Neither can you let yourself be swayed by the friend to take drugs yourself.

Most people have at least one family member or friend who is dealing with some sort of addiction, and they turn a blind eye to it, hoping that the person will come to their senses. But that is not something the friend can achieve on his or her own. Drug addiction is not a condition that only happens to a friend of a friend or a distant family member. It can happen to those we love. The harsh truth is, addiction will not go away and being in denial about these issues only makes things worse. Better to talk about it and learn more, rather than let pop culture monopolise the conversation.



The Art of Self-appreciation

MARISHA AZIZ

Self-appreciation: it isn't rocket science, as many may feel, but that doesn't make it any less complicated. It's easy to constantly feel inferior to others – whether it's about looks, or grades, or personality – and overcoming it is tough.

There is an abundance of phrases like “You hold the key to your own happiness” and “No one will love you if you don't love yourself”, but acting on those words is difficult. There is no magic switch you can flip to shut down your insecurities. There is no shortcut to learning how to value yourself. The path to self-appreciation is a long, tricky one, but there are definitely ways to make the journey easier.

The first step is a very obvious one: stay away from toxic people. There's often someone in your circle who constantly makes you think less of yourself. Either through words or actions, these people will relentlessly drill into you that you are not good enough. Whether they are friends or family, you need to get as much time as possible away from them. Forget the “sacred bonds” of friendship or blood. If they can't let you be you, they're not worth your time.

“Alone time” can be immensely helpful. It would give you the chance to understand yourself better. Take time to figure out your strong points instead of your weak ones. Everyone has some kind of talent – focus on yours. Sing. Dance. Paint. Sketch. Write fan-fiction about K-Pop singers, if that's what you feel confident with. The aim is to use your time to do something you genuinely enjoy. That way, you will go to bed at night knowing you are good at something, if not a lot of

things. It may not be a long-term solution, but it helps combat the negativity one day at a time.

Talking to someone is a crucial, albeit difficult, step. It takes a lot of trust to open up about your insecurities to others. Also, if you talk about it with one too many people, you will be labelled as an attention-seeker by the highly intelligent members of society. So, explore your options. Talk to your parents, if you are comfortable enough with them. Talk to a close friend, an older sibling, maybe a cousin. And if you don't feel like sharing with anyone you know, there's always the Internet. There are forums with expert listeners who can give quite helpful advice. Also, you can always talk to random strangers and online friends on social media such as Twitter or Tumblr. As long as they don't make any bizarre requests or ask for pictures, the “don't talk to strangers” rule doesn't really apply to the interweb anymore.

When things get too dark to handle, remember, someone out there smiles at your joy and cries for your sorrows. They may be a parent, a friend, a sibling, a significant other – someone out there loves you unconditionally. To be able to inspire such a fierce, raw emotion in a fellow human being is in itself a great accomplishment, one you should be proud of. Again, there is no straightforward road marked with neon signs that will get you straight out of the great vortex of self-hate and right into a world full of sunshine, daisies, and contentment.

There will be many obstacles in your way, but instead of despairing at the sheer number of them, practice ways to combat them one at a time, and you will definitely make progress.

