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## **I found white powder — Is my loved one doing cocaine?** <sup>[1]</sup>

1) Alice,

I found a white powder in my friend's car and I think it might be cocaine. I'm not sure if it is or not. I don't know if I should confront him with it or what I should do. I don't want to see my friend get hurt, but if I'm wrong, I don't want to falsely accuse him of something like this. How should I go about handling the situation?

2) Dear Alice,

I am a first-year business student and have a little sister who is a junior. I think she is doing cocaine because I found some "paraphernalia" in her room last week. What can I do without damaging my relationship with her?

— Big brother

### **Answer**

Dear Reader and Big Brother,

Talking with friends or family members about drug use can be tricky! Folks' feelings about substance use (including alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs) vary widely and are often strongly held. Especially when discussing illegal substances, such as cocaine, there may be a stigma or fear associated with acknowledging use. When considering what either of you might do next, it may be good to consider what might be behind your assumptions around use and how you might approach it if you choose to talk further with the person you care about.

With there being uncertainty of knowing if they're using cocaine, do you have other reasons that support this assumption? Folks may have different attitudes about drug use than you, which is their prerogative. Some people may feel that experimentation or occasional use is okay, while others may believe that any use of drugs is risky or unhealthy. It can be difficult to judge what is unhealthy or harmful for someone else. Substances such as cocaine can be highly addictive and with continued usage may result in unwanted consequences or difficulty discontinuing use. To read more about the side effects of this substance, check out this response's related Q&As on cocaine.

Reader and Big Brother, it sounds like you're coming from a place of concern for your friend and family member and want to support them. Though it might be perceived as an accusation, perhaps the discussion can be framed in a way that makes it clear that you aren't trying to find fault or be judgmental. It may also make the person feel more comfortable when talking about this if you assure them that the conversation will be completely confidential. Details will only be revealed to those who absolutely need to know about it, such as health care providers or mental health professionals if they decide to seek treatment.

It may be helpful to remember that they may feel embarrassed or not want to admit to using drugs. Expressing your concern and providing resources to let them know that they have options for seeking help can open the door for further discussion even if they don't want to talk about it in this moment. Being prepared with this information and sharing it if the person is open to receiving it may be a way you can show support. An example of one resource could be to give a number for a local support group like [Narcotics Anonymous](#) <sup>[2]</sup> (NA). You can find more information about NA and a listing of meetings in different cities online. In the end, it's each person's responsibility to make their own choices.

It can be upsetting if someone you care for struggles with their drug use. Additionally, if you would like to get support for yourself, you might consider talking with someone you trust, such as a mental health professional. Privacy and confidentiality are often essential in maintaining trust among friends and family members, so you may want to think carefully about what kind of information you share and with whom you share it, if you aren't talking with a professional about your friend.

Alice!

Category:

[Alcohol & Other Drugs](#) <sup>[3]</sup>

[Cocaine, Speed, & Other Stimulants](#) <sup>[4]</sup>

[Helping & Getting Help](#) <sup>[5]</sup>

## Related questions

[Cocaine](#) <sup>[6]</sup>

[Feeling 'dope sick' from cocaine use](#) <sup>[7]</sup>

[Friend asking for help with cocaine addiction](#) <sup>[8]</sup>

## Resources

Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) (Morningside) <sup>[9]</sup>

Mental Health Services (CUIMC) <sup>[10]</sup>

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