

Friend asking for help with cocaine addiction ^[1]

Dear Alice,

My friend recently told me that she has a serious blow problem. She lives with her boyfriend and she said that all they do is work, sleep, and blow. By telling me this I understand that she has taken some very important steps into wanting to get better, but I'm completely useless in trying to help because I just don't know enough about the drug and rehab and ways to support her.

So far I've made the suggestion that she come spend some time with me and away from home so that the reminder of it is lessened, I can prevent her from bringing it in, and can try and keep her occupied to take her mind off it. What else can you suggest?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Far from being useless, it sounds like you are a valuable friend. Drug abuse can strain relationships, sometimes to the breaking point, so you deserve a big pat on the back for toughing it out with your friend. Even though you are uncertain about what to do next, your friend has shown that she trusts you and wants to get better. By learning more about the effects of drug abuse, offering encouragement, and gathering support from friends, family, and health professionals you can help your friend get back on track.

In addition to the support you are already giving, here are few suggestions for ways to help your friend:

- **Do your homework.** As you mentioned, it can be difficult to hold out a helping hand if you don't know much about your friend's problem. Cocaine, also known as coke or blow, is a stimulant that can induce a euphoric high, but also causes dangerous health problems. To learn more about the effects of using coke, take a look at the [Alcohol and Other Drugs](#) ^[2] section in the *Go Ask Alice!* archives. You may also want to read through the related Q&As for more information about ways to support friends and family with substance abuse issues and treatment options including rehab. Hearing from folks in similar situations may deepen your understanding of the challenges that users and their loved ones face. Also, your friend may be more likely to heed your advice if she gets the sense that you have taken time to

learn about what she's going through.

- **Just be there.** As you may have sensed, one of the easiest and yet most powerful ways to support your friend is simply to be there when she needs you. "Being there" may take on several forms... telling her she can count on you, waiting until she's ready to discuss her drug use, or waking up in the middle of the night if she needs to talk. Sometimes it may be difficult to strike a balance between being supportive and enabling your friend's drug use. For your sanity and her safety, you may want to set some ground rules. For example, is coke completely off-limits at your place? Do you want to hang out with her if she's high? How long is she welcome to stay with you? If you decide to put some limits on your generosity, stick to your guns. Be honest with your friend about your needs, and then be ready to hold up your end of the bargain if she slips up.
- **Help her steer clear of temptation.** Of course, it's really up to your friend to decide if and when she wants to stop or cut back on her blow habit. However, if she makes a choice to stop using, you can help her stay clean by offering encouragement and a drug-free friendship. Research indicates that for people struggling with drug addiction, risk factors like spending time with other drug users may outweigh the benefits of protective factors like support from family and friends. For that reason, some drug treatment programs encourage participants to dissociate from friends who use and invest in relationships with nonusers. Inviting your friend to spend time at your place is a good way to help her get some distance from her boyfriend and their apartment, situations that may entice her to blow.
- **Gather support.** Your friend is lucky to have an ally who's so supportive, but you don't have to go it alone. In addition to your one-on-one support, a large support network including friends, family members, teachers, or coaches may help your friend tackle her cocaine abuse. Before recruiting other folks, you may want to ask your friend for permission. If she says no but you're worried about her safety, it may be worth it to ask others for help. Also consider that most people who struggle with drug abuse need the support of rehab or a formal drug treatment program. While supporting your friend, don't forget to take care of yourself, too.

If you and/or your friend want to talk with someone, either of you can talk with a health care provider about your concerns or for a referral to a therapist or drug treatment program.

Confronting drug abuse is no easy task, but your friend already has a strong ally in you. By gathering support for both of you, you can help your friend kiss her blow habit good-bye.

Alice!

Category:

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[Cocaine, Speed, & Other Stimulants](#) ^[4]

[Helping & Getting Help](#) ^[5]

Related questions

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[Reaching out for help with a drug addiction](#) ^[7]

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Nose won't stop running [9]

Resources

Medical Services (Morningside) [10]

Medical Services (CUIMC) [11]

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[2] <http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/alcohol-other-drugs>

[3] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/alcohol-other-drugs>

[4] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/cocaine-speed-other-stimulants>

[5] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/helping-getting-help>

[6] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/supporting-loved-one-after-drug-rehab>

[7] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/reaching-out-help-drug-addiction>

[8] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/im-worried-about-my-friends-escalating-drug-use>

[9] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/nose-wont-stop-running>

[10] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/medical-services-morningside>

[11] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/medical-services-cuimc>