

Substance Abuse: Determining If There is a Problem

How can you tell if a friend has a drug or alcohol problem?

To assess whether or not someone has a problem with alcohol or drugs, it is important to consider answers to the following questions:

- How is alcohol/other drug use affecting their life? Why are they using?
 - Is their substance use leading to:
 - Missing classes due to having a hangover
 - Drinking/using and driving
 - Declining grades
 - Neglecting obligations to family, work, school, etc.
 - Fights or arguments under the influence
 - Accidents, injury or risky behavior while under the influence
 - Legal problems (DUI, OWI, possession, disorderly conduct, etc.)
 - Mood disorders (i.e. depression, anxiety)
 - Health or medical problems
 - Increased tolerance (needing to use more to get the same effect)
 - Blackouts (not remembering parts or all of an evening while using)
 - Withdrawal symptoms
 - Failed attempts to cut down or control their use
 - Are they using alcohol or drugs to:
 - Cope with stress
 - Deal with a loss (i.e. a break up with a significant other)
 - Help them meet and be social with others
 - Increase their self confidence

People may demonstrate a few or many of the symptoms listed above. Even individuals who use alcohol or drugs infrequently can have problems. It's important to remember that you don't have to be an alcoholic or addict to have a problem with alcohol or drugs.