

HAVE I GOT A FRIEND IN YOU?

The day started well enough for Malcolm who was with his group of friends at the skate park. The sun was glorious and much to their excitement, they had the entire park to themselves that day. As part of their weekend routine, they would try out the latest skateboarding stunts in the morning and head for brunch after that.

During the break, Malcolm and his friends moved to a bench at the side of the park and took out their energy drinks. At this moment, one of his friends beckoned him to peek into a bag. Inside the bag were small transparent packets of white powdery substance. "What are those?" asked Malcolm. "Good stuff. These drugs can make you high." Replied his friend confidently.

Malcolm had been with this group of friends for several months and sometimes, they had encouraged him to try alcohol and smoking while they were out. Malcolm was wise to refuse them but he was certainly shocked to be offered drugs this time. The pressure was mounting on him but he really wanted to gain the trust of his newfound friends.

WHAT SHOULD MALCOLM DO?

It may be stressful to reject friends for fear of being cast out of the clique but there are situations in life where you need to make a stand. This is especially so when you are being offered drugs. Saying 'no' is tough but here are some ways to cross the hurdle:

- Be direct and firm when saying "No" to the offer
- Repeat yourself and insist on your decision (Stand your ground)
- Changing the topic (Malcolm can change the topic by saying, "I'm hungry. Let's go grab a bite?")
- Remind the other party about the harmful effects of drug abuse to reject the offer
- Counter-challenge the offer (Malcolm can reply to his friend by saying, "We all know that drugs are addictive and dangerous, even from the first try. If you are really my friend, you should not be tempting me with drugs.")
- Walk away from the offer
- Be proactive and leave the situation without giving a chance for drugs to appear as a topic

It is obvious that Malcolm was under the pressure of his friends and he seemed to be crumbling. All of us experience peer pressure in one form or another and we may have grown to dislike it but if we look closely enough, distinguishing good friends from the less desirable ones is actually quite simple.

WHAT SHOULD I LOOK FOR IN A GOOD FRIEND?

Friends may come and go in your life but it is more important that they accept you for who you are. A good friend is someone who can provide a reliable source of support no matter the situation, someone who lends a listening ear and someone whose company you enjoy. Stay away from 'friends' who urge you to get involved in the abuse of illegal substances because it is your health that will be damaged.

But remember, friendship is a two-way thing. It is good to receive but it is better to give.

HOW CAN I BE A GOOD FRIEND?

Be ready to listen although you need not have all the answers. This is because sometimes, people just want somebody to talk to so that they can decide what is the next step to take. Positive gestures like smiling and hugging are great ways to show friends that you care and that they are not alone.

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TRUE FRIENDS STICK AROUND
IN GOOD AND IN BAD TIMES.
SEEK OUT THOSE WITH THE
RIGHT VALUES AND YOU WILL
HAVE FRIENDS FOR LIFE!
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