Alcohol and Other Drugs: Tips for Intervening

When someone that you know and care about is struggling with their alcohol or other drug (AOD) use, it can be a challenge to know what to do. Fortunately you do not have to figure it out on your own. Here are a few ideas and suggestions to help you along the way.

1. State your concern.
   a) Give them a pamphlet or brochure (e.g. AOD information card).
   b) Even if they have not "hit rock bottom," it is important to intervene when someone is struggling with their use.
   c) Wait until they are sober to discuss your concern with them.
   d) Tell them that you are concerned about what you have seen, or how their use is affecting them.
   e) Consider the environment; allow for enough time and privacy to talk with them.
   f) Stay calm; don't argue with or try to convince them.
   g) Be aware of potential resources for help, or where you can learn about options for help (e.g. Social Services at the Tang Center, 510-642-6074).
   h) Consider how your own AOD use may affect the message you are trying to convey.

2. Be mindful of your actions in relation to their use.
   a) Refrain from using with someone whose use concerns you; think of other activities to do with them.
   b) Don't buy alcohol or make other drug connections for someone whose use is concerning to you.
   c) If someone can't remember what they did the night before, it is important not to joke about it; let them know that this is scary or concerning.

3. Allow them to experience consequences related to their use.
   a) Paying for tuition, books, bail, lending them money, etc. doesn't allow someone to experience the consequences of their use
   b) Don't cover up or make excuses for someone when they are in trouble; instead intervene before they suffer so many consequences that they can't recover.
   c) Set boundaries; if you are usually the one that takes care of someone each time they go out, tell them this is not working for you.
   d) Let them clean up their own mess the next day; however, if you are concerned about their health or safety, get medical attention immediately by calling 911 (landline), UCPD at 510-642-3333 (cell phone), or BPD at 510-981-5911 (cell phone).
   e) Take care of yourself; get the support that you need to maintain your own well-being!

Remember: Intervening is a true act of love and caring. If someone does not make changes, or is not receptive to your concerns, it is still worth it to have done something. People will have a range of responses, but the goal is to offer support and "plant seeds" for change.