

Friendship is Growing Distant

I have this friend that I used to do everything with. She was very into her faith and we did many "religious" things together. She was the type of person that was very easy to talk to, and she was always there for me. This past summer, however, that all changed. She started hanging out with some of our other friends. The friends that always go to the parties that usually have alcohol at. We do so little together anymore, and it feels a little weird when we do. I want her to know that I am there for her, and really want to help. What would the best approach be? What can I do so I don't just push her farther away?

It sounds like you're really hurting over the changes taking place in your friendship, and you are right, you need to talk with her. While your concerns over her behavior need to be addressed, the best approach is to not start out with what you see wrong in her behavior, but to simply express your feelings of sadness over the distance in your relationship.

You've committed to being her friend which is great. The biggest thing you can do when you talk with her is, ironically, listen. Start the conversation by expressing your feelings and that you simply miss her friendship. Don't condemn her actions, but let her know that her actions concern you. Chances are, she's fully aware of any poor choices she's made and is struggling with them herself. Ask questions. Has anything changed in her life that has caused her to seek out other ways to fill a void? Ask her what's going on in her life. The issue is really not about her hanging out with the wrong crowd and maybe drinking. That is only a symptom of something deeper going on. Try to flesh that out with her in a loving and non-judgmental way. Ask questions about her feelings and try to understand her circumstances. Constantly encourage her by telling her you care and will be there for her. Assure her that you love her and that because you love her you don't want to see her making poor choices.

You mentioned that you and your friend have shared in faith-based activities together. Since you have that in common, I'd encourage you to remind your friend that no matter what she has done, God loves her. She may have feelings like she has let God down and that he doesn't want anything to do with her now. But God loves her just as much now as he did when she was living a cleaner lifestyle. It's easier to imagine God loving us when we're doing things that we believe are in his will, but when we mess up, it's even easier to think that God will somehow turn his back on us in disgrace. But God longs for us to return to him. He will never leave you or forsake you. He loves you and your friend no matter what you've done.

Don't expect for things to get better overnight, and don't put too much pressure on yourself to "fix it". I know it's hard to see a friend going astray, but she is still ultimately responsible for her own decisions and choices. You can only be responsible for your actions and response towards her.

And although I'm listing this last, consider it as a first approach. Pray. Ask God to help your friend and to give you the words to say to her. Also ask your youth pastor or someone you trust for advice too.

For Youth,
Life Promotions
Bob Lenz & Tiffany Thompson

Articles are written by Bob Lenz, Tiffany Thompson and other national youth communicators with Life Promotions Inc., a non-profit youth organization committed to instilling hope, worth and value in youth.

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