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Behavioral changes in your 14-year-old and are concerned that he/she may be using drugs or alcohol

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Dear Jessical hope and guess you are doing well in your new area and city, and your recent job is exciting as well. We are doing well here in Washington except for a few issues that have put me into a lot of worry and concern. I believe you do understand the challenges that come with adolescent children and the temptations that they face in life due to the different developments and changes that occur into them, as well as adventurous steps and ideologies that more often can lead them into great trouble and risk. My aim of writing you this letter is to share with you and seek your guidance and opinion about my son Joel, who turned 14 years two months ago. I am deeply worried and concerned that Joel might be involved or has started using drugs due to the differences that I have personally noted and observed in his behaviors and character in the last few months. I have been observing him, and I regret to tell you that this is not the child or boy that we knew him to be. My greatest worry is about his future that may be jeopardized and his education as well in the event that the boy is involved in drug abuse. I am certain that you as a parent you know and understand equally well the impact and pain that a parent experiences and faces seeing a loved one loose direction and ruining his or her future. As the old English adage says, blood is thicker than water; I have every reason to get worried. Joel has found new friends in the neighborhoods that are a little older than him and who are known to be using drugs as well as selling drugs in the

neighborhoods. I have warned him severally about that group but the “young man” seems to be ignorant of my advice. His school performance is also wanting in the sense he does not take school work seriously as he used to extent that he occasionally miss school with no valid and good reason to do so. The school administration recently called me up for a meeting to discuss the child, and they confessed to me that they are equally worried about the drastic change in character of the boy’s behavior as well, and the school counselor advised me to observe the child closely in the next few weeks and present to him a report and observations about my findings. Joel has turned out to be rude and does not adhere to instructions and advice as he used to. In the last two days, he came into the house very late and went straight into his room and locked himself up, and he refused us to have access into his room and talk to us. I am concerned that if this trend continues, the young man might turn and join gangs, and I am sure you know the relationship between drugs and gangs, and the danger that it presents to them with law enforcement agencies. I am observing the boy closely in his character and behavior to see any positive changes. Together with his father, we have planned to check and inspect his room for any clues and directions that might prove that the boy has turned to using drugs, and offer him the necessary support as soon as possible. We have also talked to his old friends to try and look him closely to ascertain if our worries and indeed true, and can be substantiated, and they have agreed to help us. In the event that we will find any prove or lead, we have to take him to a counselor soonest to get guidance and treatment. We have talked to him about the dangers of using drugs and alcohol and the negative effects that it

has especially to young children, and we have warned him not to dare. Feel free to give us any advice and steps that we might take to help him. Thank you for your time and looking forward for your response. Regards, Penninar.

Research: Numerous studies have been conducted about behavioral changes in young people and adults as well, and the relationship that it might have in regard to drugs influence. Many scholars have documented expected behavior and character of a normal human being during different stages of life. However, it is noted that during the adolescent stage of life, it is the stage that comes with numerous challenges not only to parents, but behavioral scientists as well. At this stage of life, young people are on the discovery stage in life turning them into adulthood, and therefore they experience a lot of challenges in terms of what to venture into or not, and the influence of peer pressure. It is for this reason among others that many ‘teens’ have found themselves into drugs and alcohol use, and therefore, this stage of life requires a lot of guidance to overcome the temptations of using drugs and alcohol that impacts on individual behavior and character.

However, this paper presents the relationship that exists between behavioral changes that arises out of drugs and alcohol use, and how it can be addressed. It is asserted that an individual background in terms of parenting and the society that one comes from will shape greatly the behavior of that person. As human beings, we learn by copying and imitating those around us. What might be seen as a good behavior in one part or family might be regarded in the opposite view in the other. Conversely, irrespective of the stated or agreed standard behavior and character in any family or society, drug use contributes in many cases to a deviation from the norm, and in

many cases presents a negative picture and character that if not tamed can result to bad consequences not only in the present times, but future as well (Scheier & Hansen, 2014). It is clarified that in life stages, adolescent stage in which most young people are presents a challenge that in many occasion has led young people to using drugs without knowing the real effects and consequences that such action presents in their lives, and therefore the society as a whole has the responsibility of protecting them by using all the available means and resources including education, proper parenting and counseling as well among others. Drug use and alcohol it is asserted makes people make impaired judgments and decisions that in many occasions put their lives at risk and those of the society at large. For instance driving under the influence of alcohol is a crime because it is viewed as putting your life in danger as well as those of other users of the road and the public in general. This is because drugs affect the way the brain functions and the decisions one make, therefore affecting other people in the society and putting them at risk as well (Butts & Roman, 2004). This is among other reasons that teenagers who under the law are viewed and treated as minors must be guarded against drug and alcohol use as early as possible. It is documented that drugs and alcohol affect the level of reasoning and thinking, and this for students it affects their education as well jeopardizing their future and the future of the nation at large and their behavior. Dishion and Kavanagh (2003), in their piece Intervening in adolescent problem behavior: A family-centered approach noted that drug and alcohol use are addictive to those who use them making them rely on them for their daily lives. This addiction is challenging to address due to the costs that are involved and the danger

that it presents to the individual and the society at large. Young people therefore have to be cautioned and guarded against the use of drugs and alcohol by parents and society at large because of the many negative consequences and vulnerability that it presents in their lives. Drugs and alcohol compromise the health of those who use them as in many occasions continuous use leads to diseases and illnesses that are expensive and costly to treat such as cancer and diabetes among others. Use of drugs does not add any value to the individuals lives, but instead in makes them vulnerable to infection and diseases that will not only prove to be expensive to treat by families, but also it will be a burden to the country's economy as well, especially to the health sector of any country. This is one reason as to why health sector departments have been in the forefront campaigns against drug and alcohol use and abuse. As the adage goes, prevention is better than cure, such health professionals normally envision the consequences and impacts that use of drug and alcohol has to the society. Once one is addicted, rehabilitating an individual is very expensive and time consuming. In a situation where one has no means to acquire the drug or alcohol, it has forced some to enter into criminal acts in order to get money to fulfill their urge of addiction. This has led to many people losing their lives and confronting the law enforcement agencies ending up in jails and prisons, therefore, parents have to worry when their young ones are displaying behavioral characters that might link and suggest those using drugs and alcohol. It is reaffirmed that a strong relationship exists between crimes and drug use, and over forty percent of the people prosecuted and in prison in many jails have a history of using drugs (Reiman, 2013). The issue of drug

and alcohol use has become a worldwide concern and in the recent times a number of international bodies and organizations have come up that try to fight and advocate against drug and alcohol use not only by young people, but the whole society as well. Many nations and governments across the globe have also come up with rules, laws and legislations that try to caution use of drugs and alcohol especially by underage people and in some instances stiffer penalties and hefty fines have been placed for those who are found trading and selling such kind of drugs and alcohol to under age children. Institutions that try to help the victims and those affected are noted to be on the increase in many regions. This is because many have realized that it is a societal problem and not an individual as it was seen earlier by many. Parents are encouraged to note and report any behavioral changes that might indicate their children have turned to drug use and abuse.

Prevention is better than cure, any change in behavior that deviates from the norm need to be noted and addressed as soon as possible to the authorities including schools and institutions of learning that their children attend. It is also cautioned out that parents in one way or the other contribute to their children using drugs and alcohol. Proper parenting should be encouraged that is free from abuse. Studies show that children from abused backgrounds especially by parents and adults around them have a higher chance of ending up using drugs and alcohol; therefore, parents have a great role to play as is stated in Wolfe, Jaffe and Crooks (2006) article titled Adolescent risk behaviors: Why teens experiment and strategies to keep them safe.

Some parents use drugs too and introduce the same to their children which is against the law, and the society should intervene in such cases to protect

children and help such parent's access help. There are several behaviors that can help parents try to identify early signs of danger in the mentioned concerns. Secretiveness by their children may indicate that probably there is something wrong they are doing, and therefore try to hide it from their parents. Parents should encourage their children to be open to them. Moodiness is also noted as an indicator as well as physical appearance. Physical appearance in terms of dressing and general appearance should be observed closely too. Changes in a relationship and interest of the children as well as bad behavior have to be probed closely by parents to unearth the causes (Richards-Gustafson, 2014). It is encouraged that consultation from behavioral experts should be encouraged at the earliest time possible for guidance and actions. In conclusion, behavioral changes in teenagers have to be observed closely with a lot of caution. Parents ought to understand that at this stage of life, their children are undergoing changes both physically and mentally and this reality has in one way, or the other made it difficult for parents to note in the eventuality that their young ones have started using drugs and alcohol. Parents therefore have to monitor their children behavior closely right from childhood, and encourage an open relationship that facilitates communication in the family set up. If one is unsure of the steps and measures to take, it is encouraged that they should seek consultation from the many organizations that are involved as well as experts in behavioral science. It is also noted that in the family set up parents need to talk more and a lot with their children about the negative effects that drug and alcohol have, and why it should be avoided at all costs. Information is power and therefore they have to empower their children with the right

information, and this can only be realized in an environment that encourages dialogue and communication between parents and children; thus proper parenting is vital in determining and controlling behavioral challenges.

Solution: In dealing with the challenge as noted in the first case above, in the event that my son is found to be using drugs and alcohol, I would be compelled to seek professional advice from state and private agencies around. In this case, I would have to talk to the child and reiterate to him the dangers that such action pose to his life, and how important it is to consult and get help from the professionals to help him overcome the challenge and problem as soon as possible. The following two agencies in Washington, DC can help provide information, training and support for the problem of behavioral changes and drug abuse. National Institute of Drug abuse (NIDA) is among the many community centers in Washington DC that is involved in helping people and the community at large address the problem and challenge related to drug use and abuse. Contacting NIDA is easy and they can be reached through calls as well as mails and letters, and their contacts are displayed in their websites. NIDA is involved in many services that include but not limited to developing new approaches to treatment and prevention, public education as well as supporting research and training. The services offered at NIDA in rehabilitation and behavioral changes are offered free because it is funded and managed by the government. They also work with other agencies, and therefore, can direct somebody to either of their partners that offer similar or related services not only in Washington, but other states as well. The Psychiatric Institute of Washington (PIW) is another relevant institution that has turned around the lives and behavior of many

individual with challenges. They provide comprehensive behavioural health care for children, adolescents, adults, and senior adults suffering from mental health and addictive illness. PIW can be contacted through calling or writing to them and their contacts are found in their website, and they operate in a 24 hour basis. PIW offers its services at an affordable cost that in many occasions is subsidized with the objective of reaching out and helping many people as they can. By reaching out to the two mentioned institutions and describing them the challenges that I face as a parent, I will be guaranteed of getting relevant information that will help me address the situation to the best of my ability using the available resources and means. I will confidently walk with the child to the said facilities to try and help the child as well as try to find out where the problem might have arisen. I would seek advice and knowledge on how best to help the child, and how the child can help himself too and keep off completely from using drugs and alcohol. While seeking services from the professionals, I would also continue counseling the child at the same time telling him the negative effects that alcohol and drug use have, and how it can interfere with his future and compromise his education, health and possibly bring diseases to him. This information about the negative effects of engaging in such acts will empower the child and change him. I would also encourage open relationship that encourages communication between the parent and the child therefore making the child free and communicate any worries and concerns that might tempt one to turn to drug and alcohol use at a young age that in turn affects their behavior not only in the present times, but also in the future as adults.

Frequent consultation from experts and early intervention has to be encouraged at all times and good parenting to prevent all possible causes.

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