I suspect my son is using cocaine. I often find hollowed-out pens in his room and car. He often has flu-like symptoms for a few days, and then is OK again for a while. He’s constantly sniffing, rubbing his nose, and I see sores in his nose. He also has periods of severe insomnia.

When I talk to him about it he says I can take him for a test, but if it comes out negative he will never talk to me again. I am so worried. This has been going on ever since he met a girl older than himself, and I know for a fact that she, her ex-boyfriend, and all her friends are users. What other signs can I look for and how do I approach him in the most constructive way about this? PLEASE HELP!

It is very difficult to confirm when a person is using drugs and even more difficult to figure out exactly what drugs are being used.

Some of the symptoms you describe are consistent with the use of cocaine, sores in nose. However when you mentioned flu-like symptoms it made me think of opioids such as heroin or prescription drugs like oxycodone or hydrocodone.

Other signs of drug use include erratic behavior, severe mood swings, dishonesty, stealing, decreased work or school performance. Depending on the drugs being used, you may also see pupil changes (very large or very small), sweating, shaking or trembling, and anxiety attacks.

I do not know how old your son is and whether or not he still lives at home. If he is a minor and living at home, or if he is an adult living at home, you may want to require that he have an alcohol and drug
assessment as a condition of continuing to live there. This assessment would likely include a drug test. If your son is an adult and not living at home, it is more difficult to require him to do things.

In any case, the most constructive way to handle this is to express your specific concerns and let him know that you are worried about him. Invite him to get help. Let him know what the consequences will be for not following through, and stick with it.

It may also be helpful for you to access self-help groups like Alcoholics Anonymous to get more specific advice from others who have been through the same thing, or to get advice from a local doctor certified in addiction medicine.

Related topics: drug abuse, drugs, netwellness, youth
First of all, tell him that you will NOT be emotionally blackmailed into shutting up about a serious issue and you will also not be there to clean up his messes when the drug finally brings him down to the gutters.

Tell his grandparents and other relatives that he's using. Tell anyone that he likes and respects that he’s using. Tell him those friends are NOT welcome at your house, even to sit in the drive way in a car.

Tell him that no one who is successful or happy in life thanks their drug dealer. Tell them that either he quits using and gets help to determine why he does use, or he has to leave.

As a parent you still have leverage even with an adult child. Use it.