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“It’s Not all It’s Cracked up to Be”

Kylie slid onto the picnic table bench and opened up her lunch bag. “I’m so glad it’s lunch time,” she said to her friend Jackie. “I’m starved!”

“Me too!” Jackie agreed. “That history test was so hard and I didn’t get breakfast before I came to school. So how are things at your house?”

“Do you mean since Erica came home?” asked Kylie.

“Yeah, how’s she doing?” said Jackie. “Is it weird having her back home?”

Kylie played with her straw in her drink and looked across the schoolyard.

“Erica’s doing okay and I’m glad she’s home,” said Kylie. “Our whole family has been through so much. It’s kind of nice to be together and trying to be normal again.”

Kylie thought about everything that had happened during the past year. Her mom and dad had known something wasn’t right with Erica, Kylie’s sixteen-year-old sister, but weren’t sure what it was. Then they discovered she was using cocaine and it was ruining her life. Kylie was sure it was going to ruin her family too. There had been lots of arguments and Erica had screamed at everyone all the time. She’d had been out of control and Kylie felt sick inside. It hurt when she saw her mom cry, but it devastated her when she saw her dad cry too.

“I haven’t told anyone this,” said Kylie, “but our whole family had to go to a counselor while Erica was in rehab.”

“That’s nothing to be embarrassed about,” said Jackie. “What was it like?”

“Oh, I’m not really embarrassed,” said Kylie. “I just don’t talk to people about it. Actually, the counselor was really great. There were a lot of things that I didn’t know about Erica’s cocaine habit and it helped me understand what she went through during rehab. I’ll tell you right now, I’m never going to use drugs.”

“So why was it so hard for Erica to quit using?” asked Jackie.

“Erica was snorting coke instead of shooting it,” said Kylie. “She’d heard that the high lasted longer when you snorted. Her high would last for about 15 to 30 minutes, but then she’d need another high. It kind of became a vicious cycle.”

“What happened when she wasn’t on a high?” asked Jackie. “Was she just her normal self?”

“I wish!” said Kylie. “Erica would get really depressed and couldn’t sleep. If you tried to talk to her, she’d be really crabby. One time she even had a panic attack. That was really scary because my parents couldn’t get her calmed down.”

“Sounds awful,” said Jackie.

“What’s really awful is withdrawal and what happens to your body if you don’t quit,” said Kylie. “The first four days after Erica quit, she crashed. The counselor told us that she was really agitated and depressed but was also exhausted. She got through that but it wasn’t over.”

“What happened next?” asked Jackie.

“Then she went into withdrawal,” said Kylie. “She could be up one minute and really down the next. There were times when we would visit her and she’d be happy to see us but other times she’d be angry. Sometimes she really craved some cocaine but of

course she didn't get any. It helped that the counselor had told us to expect it but it still hurt to see my sister that way.

“Wow! That sounds pretty awful,” agree Jackie.

“The awful thing would have been if Erica had kept using,” said Kylie. “The counselor told her that if she kept snorting, there were really gross side effects. I guess you get pimple-like things in your nose. They can become raw sores and then turn into holes. Eventually, the holes eat away at the nose cartilage and eventually your nose will collapse.”

“Eww-www, gross!” exclaimed Jackie.

“Yeah, it's gross,” agreed Kylie. “What was worse was when the counselor told Erica that she'd likely die from a heart attack, a stroke or respiratory failure if she didn't quit using.”

“So what happens now?” asked Jackie.

“We're trying to get our family back,” said Kylie. “Erica knows that for years she could still have something trigger her desire for coke again. But knowing that will help. We still keep seeing the counselor and take one day at a time. I'm just glad I've got my sister back!”

Thought Questions

1. What were some of the symptoms that Erica had when she was using coke?
2. How did Kylie feel when her sister was using drugs? Why do you think it hurt when Kylie saw her parents cry?
3. Why do you think Jackie told Kylie she shouldn't be embarrassed to see a counselor?

Activity

Write a short skit about the dangers of cocaine. One suggestion would be to use two people for the skit. One should be a reporter gathering information, the other can be a drug abuse counselor who is giving the information to the reporter.. Use this website to get more information for you skit. <http://www.salvos.org.au/need-help/drugs-and-alcohol/dangers-of-drugs-booklet.php>. Download the pdf file on cocaine. Ask a teacher at school if the skit can be performed for your class.