

Mitch

During my coaching career there have been several students, unfortunately, that I've had suspicion of drug use, and what's interesting for me is to look back on the different ways I've approached it from when I was a very young coach to now, where I am a not-so-young coach. I think probably the first incident was probably about 15 years ago. It was my second year of coaching, and I actually saw one of my players at a bus station on the way home, and, as he lifted his arm to wave hi to me, a bottle of beer dropped out of his coat. And my approach was to give him a severe tongue lashing, tell him not to do it again and suspend him from playing for two weeks, which was following all the rules, but that's about where I left it. Years later, now in the last couple of years, I've had some more severe incidents where kids' academic performance or athletic performance was signaling me to the fact that there was a serious problem with substance abuse and what I've tried to do in those situations, with some more experience under my belt, is sit down and speak with a kid at length in as non-treating way as I can and express to them my concern primarily for their well being and health, and secondly for anything to do with their athletic performance. What that involves at some points has been referring them to treatment, referring them to some sort of community support groups involving their guidance counselors and, usually, as well as involving the parents.