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Growing up in a small suburb and attending a Catholic school, I feel that I have been sheltered and protected. However, I was introduced to new people, a new atmosphere, and new things when I entered high school. All of my friends were from different towns or cities and I thought they were all like the average teenage girl. That is why I was shocked to find out that one of my close friends was depressed, suicidal, and a drug addict.

I had never expected that one of my good friends would be under these serious conditions since all of my other friends seemed to be fine. I was confused, petrified, and felt helpless because I had never been exposed to a severe problem like this before. The scariest thing was that my close friend, Tamara, and I were the only ones who knew. I started to lose contact with my other friends, and my schoolwork suffered because I was incessantly wondering about my friend. At times I felt as though I was insane because my conscience would tell me to find help for her, but other times it would tell me to keep it to myself. My friend tried to convince and manipulate me by telling me that she was fine, but I knew she was suffering inside and that she was emotionally distraught. Being exposed to my friend's depression, drug addiction, and suicide attempts all at once overwhelmed me. I thought to myself, I am sixteen years old; I should be talking to my friends about school, sports, and boys; not talking about depression and drug addictions. I was in the hardest position I had ever been in, and I knew I had to make a difficult decision. I realized that I needed to find her help as soon as possible, even if she would never speak to me again. I knew I needed to have the power and the courage to speak with a counselor in order to help my friend and myself with this situation. I finally convinced myself to see someone, and she was able to help my friend and myself. The cooperation of my friend's

parents and herself enabled her to gradually get better. After talking to a counselor I felt as if a thousand pounds had been lifted off of my shoulders. I knew I had made the smart and mature decision of asking for help. I was risking my friendship; however, I was saving my friend's life.

I never thought I would ever be put in this situation, but I was and in away I am glad that it happened. It has enabled me to become more independent and mature. Although it was extremely difficult for me to ask someone and deal with this by myself, I learned a lot from this experience and I will never forget it. I know I can take this experience and share it with others, so they can go and help their own friends, before something serious happens. All I wanted was for my friend to be safe and alive, I was only concerned about getting her help. Being exposed to this opened up my eyes to reality and showed me how precious and important life is.