

Families and Feelings

....Growing up in an Alcoholic Family



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Have you ever wondered?

If someone in your family drinks too much, you probably spend a lot of time wondering.....why does he/she drink?.....why doesn't he/she stop?.....doesn't he/she love me?

HEALTHY FAMILIES
HEALTHY CHILDREN

People who drink too much may be suffering from a disease—alcoholism.

Their bodies and minds may be addicted to alcohol. This addiction causes them to act differently, and sometimes the way they act is hard to understand. You may notice

- ▶ **the broken promises.** Alcoholics break promises because they are ill – not because they don't care for you. Drinking becomes their main focus. They forget about everything but themselves. They may not remember promises they make while they're drinking. They may forget promises they made before drinking.
- ▶ **the personality changes.** A shy person may become aggressive. An outgoing person may become moody or violent. You may not understand or even know the person at times when he or she has been drinking.
- ▶ **the blackouts.** Sometimes an alcoholic just can't remember; this is known as a blackout. A blackout is like a blank spot in the memory. The alcoholic seems to act quite normally when drinking but later cannot remember what he or she said or did.
- ▶ **the relapses.** Relapse (falling off the wagon) often happens when the alcoholic is trying to stay sober. He or she may go quite a while without drinking and then suddenly start again. It's important that you realize that alcoholism is an addiction, that it's very hard for someone to give up alcohol once addicted to it.

So where does this leave you?

Growing up in a family that has an alcoholic member isn't easy. You may have had the following reactions:

- ▶ **it's all my fault.** Alcoholics drink because they have a disease and that disease has nothing to do with you. You didn't cause it and you can't cure it either. Most alcoholics need professional help to overcome their addiction.
 - **You can help by helping yourself.** Get more information on alcoholism; how it affects people around the alcoholic; how you can cope with the disappointments, anger, fears you may have. The Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, Al-Anon, and Alateen can help you understand and cope with the problem.
- ▶ **the great cover-up.** Have you ever made up excuses or covered up for the alcoholic in your family? Have you stopped bringing friends home because you're afraid of what they might see?
 - **This cover up or enabling reactions makes it easier for the alcoholic to keep drinking.** He or she doesn't have to face the consequences of drinking.
- ▶ **it really isn't a problem.** Perhaps you pretend that the alcoholic really isn't drinking or really isn't drinking that much. You may think that by denying the problem it will go away.
 - **When you recognize that there is a problem, you can start to deal with it.**
- ▶ **I'm all alone.** You may feel that your parents don't care about you, that you're all alone, that everything is hopeless. you may have already learned to live by keeping everything inside, by denying your feelings:
 - you don't talk about the problems alcohol is causing; you don't talk to your parents, your teachers, anyone.
 - you don't trust because you've been disappointed so many times.
 - you don't let yourself feel because it hurts too much.
 - **You don't have to carry the burden all by yourself.** The Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, Al-Anon, and Alateen all have people who know a great deal about drug dependency, about all the hurt and anger you may be feeling. They can talk with you about alcoholism and your feelings, so you can handle the problem in the best way possible. So you can be free to be yourself again.