



## FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF PROBLEM DRINKERS

Are you affected by the problem drinking of a spouse or family member? Alcoholism is frequently referred to as “a family disease” – not just because there is a genetic component but because the denial and unpredictable behavior of problem drinkers create physical and emotional pain for those near them. For one thing, it is painful to realize that alcoholics place a higher priority on drinking than on their relationships with loved ones.

In many cases, family members and friends of alcoholics suffer from forms of warped thinking and unhealthy behavior that are just as serious as alcoholism. They exhibit denial about the problem and an obsession with controlling the person’s drinking behavior. Studies show that those living with alcoholics often suffer increased health, emotional, and productivity problems.

If you are uncertain about the impact someone else’s drinking has had on your life, you might ask yourself some of these questions:

1. Do you worry about how much someone else drinks?
2. Do you have money problems because of someone else’s drinking?
3. Do you tell lies to cover up for someone else’s drinking?
4. Do you feel that if the drinker loved you, he or she would stop drinking to please you?
5. Do you blame the drinker’s behavior on his or her companions?
6. Are your plans frequently upset or canceled, or meals delayed because of the drinker?
7. Do you make threats – for example, “If you don’t stop drinking, I’ll leave you?”
8. Do you secretly try to smell the drinker’s breath?
9. Are you afraid to upset someone for fear it will set off a drinking bout?
10. Have you been hurt or embarrassed by a drinker’s behavior?
11. Are your holidays and gatherings spoiled because of drinking?
12. Have you considered calling the police for help because you fear abuse?
13. Do you search for hidden alcohol?
14. Do you often ride in a car with a driver who has been drinking?
15. Have you refused social invitations out of fear or anxiety?
16. Do you sometimes feel like a failure when you think of the lengths you have gone to in order to control the drinker?
17. Do you think that if the drinker stopped drinking, your other problems would be solved?
18. Do you ever threaten to hurt yourself to scare the drinker?
19. Do you feel angry, confused, or depressed most of the time?
20. Do you feel there is no one who understands your problem?

If you have answered “yes” to three or more of these questions, the Al-Anon program can offer hope and help. Founded over 50 years ago by the families of problem drinkers, Al-Anon is adapted from the program of Alcoholics Anonymous and uses the same 12-step model of recovery. The only requirement for membership in Al-Anon is that a relative or a friend is an alcoholic.

Al-Anon can be important even after the alcoholic goes into treatment or gets involved in a re-

covery program like AA. That is because the thinking patterns and adaptive behavior formed in reaction to the alcoholic are developed over months and years and do not disappear overnight. Frequently, family members have lingering feelings of anger and resentment toward the person in recovery.

In Al-Anon, those affected by the drinking of another person learn that they are powerless over the drinker and his or her alcoholism. As they gain acceptance, they progress in the Al-Anon program. When they stop trying to control the drinking of their loved ones, their frustration diminishes.

A noon meeting for those affected by the drinking of a friend or family member will take place at the OAAP on Mondays beginning February 4. For more information, call the OAAP at 503-226-1057.

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