



A FAMILY PROBLEM

Alcoholism affects everyone around the alcoholic. Loved-ones are hit especially hard, but no one is hurt as strongly as you: an alcoholic's son or daughter. You're not alone. All children of alcoholics and problem drinkers have a lot to deal with: a parent that's not really there, fits of rage and sorrow, the pain of watching a loved one hurt him or herself and the guilt of thinking that it's somehow their fault.

It's not your fault.

You didn't make your parent an alcoholic.

You didn't cause them to drink.

There isn't anything you can do to stop them.

face facts, but the truth is that you have accept the things you have no control over, and one of those things is what someone else does.

Addicts will do anything to further their addiction, just like a person in the desert will do anything to get water. Addicts don't want to admit that they have a problem and will lie to themselves as much as they will to anyone else. It's very tempting to try to take care of an alcoholic parent. To make excuses or lie for them, clean them up and act like you're their parent. But that's not really helping them; it's only helping them stay alcoholics. And it's even worse for you. It makes you think even more that their disease is your responsibility. It distracts you from your life and frustrates you because you cannot truly help them.

TO FIGHT IS TO LOSE

Fighting a parent's alcoholism is very tempting. You don't want to see them hurt. You love them and want to help them get better. It's hard to

The only person that can modify an alcoholic's behavior is the alcoholic. They have to make the decision to change, and they can only be helped by those they allow to help them.



RESOURCES

Looking for more information? Visit the following websites:

Children of Alcoholics Foundation

<http://www.coaf.org>

National Association for Children of Alcoholics

<http://www.nacoa.org/>

Coping With an Alcoholic Parent

<http://www.kidshealth.org>

Al-Anon/Alateen

<http://www.al-anon.alateen.org>

in the know

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**DEALING WITH AN
ALCOHOLIC PARENT**
you are not alone





Not all problem drinkers are alcoholics. Problem drinkers are people who use or abuse alcohol too frequently. They usually realize they have a problem. An alcoholic is someone who is addicted to alcohol. Despite being legal for adults, alcohol is one of the strongest, most addictive drugs there is. Just like addicts of other drugs, alcoholics give up control of themselves to their drug of choice. Alcoholism is a disease that requires professional medical treatment.

Alcoholism means that the drinker is **physically** dependent on alcohol. Without it they feel physical pain. No amount of willpower will allow them to stop using alcohol; they need professional medical help. A problem drinker also may need medical help to stop using alcohol.



PROBLEM DRINKERS

- Understand they drink too much.
- May make alcohol a priority.
- Often feel guilty about their drinking.
- Feel angry, annoyed or hurt when their drinking is criticized.
- Drink to escape problems or bad feelings.
- Often lie about drinking.

Problem drinking hurts, but problem drinkers do not need as much help to modify their habits as alcoholics.



ALCOHOLICS CAN HAVE ANY OF THE ABOVE SYMPTOMS, PLUS:

- Being unable to slow down or take a break from drinking.
- Feeling physically horrible when they are forced to stop drinking.
- Never going a day without drinking.
- Inability to stop drinking once they start.
- A very strong craving to drink.
- An inability to turn down the offer of a drink.

WHAT CAN I DO?

You can feel happiness. You can enjoy your life. You can allow yourself to have fun, make friends, trust people, succeed in school and projects and grow because you're growing all the time whether you let yourself do it well or hold yourself back.

Learn the facts about alcohol and drugs, and addictive behavior. Knowledge is empowering.

EMERGENCY

Alcoholics can be dangerous. Being around them can sometimes be very uncomfortable. There are some precautions you can take to prepare for unexpected, dangerous or uncomfortable situations.

Know emergency telephone numbers for fire, police, ambulance, doctors and crisis help lines. Know when to use them.

Always carry extra money to make a phone call for a ride home so you do not have to get into a car with a drunk or high driver.

Have a list of safe places to stay in case home is not safe or is too distracting. Get these people's permission ahead of time, and memorize their addresses and phone numbers.

Have a secret hiding place or way out of your house, such as a bathroom window. If things look like they're about to get out of control, excuse yourself to the bathroom and get out.

You do not need to be imprisoned by someone else's alcoholism even if that person is your mom or dad.

It isn't easy to help yourself, but you do need help and there are plenty of ways to get it.

Talk about it. Alateen and Alanon organizations exist as places where people who have alcoholic loved ones can talk. You can learn from others as well as share your experiences. This can really help you feel better.

Enjoy yourself. Get into your life. Focusing only on the negative aspects of life, whatever they are, just hurts and seems to make them worse. You might feel guilty about having fun when your parent is suffering from the disease of alcoholism, but that alcoholism is not your fault and they can get better if they choose.

You do not have to be a victim of another's addiction. You can grow up strong, healthy and happy and avoid becoming a substance abuser yourself. Choose now. Choose life.

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choose life