

ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE EDUCATION PROGRAM

STUDY MATERIAL

SECTION 2

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM DRINKER

PART 2

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM DRINKER

This is the second study section of a series covering study material on alcohol abuse, alcoholics, alcoholism and substance (drug) abuse. This part continues the coverage of the Introduction to the Problem Drinker. You will find this Section's study material divided into many "parts" for easy assimilation (comprehension/understanding).

After you read and study the material in the first part of this booklet, you may answer the study questions which follow. As you master one subsection, you should then go on to the next. Before you attempt to answer any study questions, however, you should understand these rules which will help you when answering the questions:

1. Some questions need a complete statement for the answer.
2. Other questions need a True or False, or a Yes or No answer.
3. When answering any "fill-in" questions, remember that a blank may stand for just one (1) word, for a few words (2 or 3), or for even part of a sentence.
4. When any study questions offer you from 2 to 6 possible answers (these are called "multiple choice"), only one of the answers given will be right.
5. There are no "trick" questions. All answers will be found easily in the appropriate study material.

Do not write in, fold or otherwise mutilate this booklet. Other people are going to be using it after you. You must return it in good condition before you will be issued a test. The test questions will come from the study material and study questions found in this booklet. Learning the study material and knowing the answers to all the study questions will help you prepare for and do well on the test. REVISED 05/20/94.

THE STORY CONTINUES

The third actor in **Act II** is a key person in the play. This is the person the problem drinker lives with. More often than not it is his wife, lover or mother. She has played her enabling role much longer than any of the others. This makes it harder for her to change the way she treats the drinker. She is hurt and upset by his drinking, but she holds the family together, even though he causes everyone around him so much trouble. She lets him know when she is angry, hurt and upset about his drinking. She tries to control him and force him to change. She never gives up trying to change him, never gives in to his drinking and never forgets what he has done to her and their family (Kellerman, 1980, page 8, para C).

The problem drinker or alcoholic feels that it is all right for him to fail her, but that his wife, mother or girlfriend must never fail him. He expects her to do just what he wants her to, but feels he can do just about anything he cares to. The wife, mother or girlfriend could also be

called the adjuster, changer or co-dependent. She thinks she must always adjust to or change the problems caused by him. Often she feels she must change to meet his crazy demands (Kellerman, 1980, page 9, para D/E).

The problem drinker knows he drinks too much, but he will refuse to admit it and that is the drinker's real problem. However, the problem drinker, alcoholic or drug abuser will blame his wife for his drinking... and everything else that goes wrong. She does everything she can to prove that it is not her fault. She even tries giving in to his demands by changing many of her ways to suit him. Soon she sees that nothing works, and he keeps drinking. Not only must she be a wife or mother, but she must also be a nurse, doctor, and any other person he needs. Many times she must take over as head of the household and earn enough money so the family can survive (Kellerman, 1980, page 9, para E).

Ironically, she rarely ever leaves the drinker. This means that he still has someone else to take care of him and his problems. While this is happening he still is not taking care of himself. Unfortunately, this enables him to continue drinking. No matter what he does, he ends up at home because he has nowhere to go. The wife often ends up taking care of him there, often because she does not know any better (Kellerman, 1980, page 9 para E & F).

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. The third actor in Act II is (a) the key person, (b) a person living with the alcoholic, (c) the alcoholic's wife or girlfriend, or (d) all of these.
2. The key person-wife, girlfriend, mother-may be _____ by his drinking, but she also holds the family together and tries to make him _____.
3. The drinker feels that while it is all right for him to fail, his wife or mother must _____.
4. The key person could also be called (a) the adjuster, (b) the changer, (c) the co-dependent, or (d) all of these.
5. Who does the problem drinker blame for everything that goes wrong? (a) himself, (b) his wife or girlfriend, (c) his nurse or doctor, or (d) all of these.
6. Many times the key person must take over as _____.
7. Which of the following statements is not true? (a) the drinker's wife may end up supporting the family, (b) his wife rarely leaves him, no matter what, (c) the drinker leaves home whenever he wants to, or (d) all of the above are true.

In time, the family gets used to their way of living together. They learn to live with the problems and the fighting the drinker causes. The problem drinker or alcoholic says that he will never drink again. Other actors in the play say that they will never help him again. But nobody does what they say they will do (Kellerman, 1980, page 10, para B).

The drinker becomes more and more helpless from the results of all his drinking. He depends heavily on other people to get things done for him. The more he has to depend on others the more upset he gets. The more upset he gets, the more he drinks to drown his troubles. The more he drinks the more helpless and more upset he becomes. To cope, he drinks even more, going round and round in a vicious circle. One of the things he feels most upset about is his feeling of helplessness. Because he feels so helpless, he tries to control everything he can. When his control slips, he takes it out on others (Kellerman, 1980, pages 10/11, para F/G).

Because he can't do anything to help himself, he takes comfort in the fact that he can control (boss) other people. The more he tries to control other people, however, the more they dislike him. They may even grow to hate him. The drinker is always hoping that he will be able to drink without getting into trouble. It never works out that way. The more trouble he gets into, the more he drinks. The more he drinks, the more trouble he gets (Kellerman, 1980, page 7, para E).

Now you have seen the whole play. But the play does not really stop here. It keeps going through all the acts over and over again. The only way to stop the play is to look at things in Act II and change them. Let us see what happens when everyone really changes (Kellerman, 1980, page 11, para D-E).

As long as other people do everything for the problem drinker, he will (1) continue to be helpless, (2) keep drinking, and (3) demand that others keep doing things for him. Why should he stop?, he thinks to himself, when everyone does everything for him and bails him out of the messes he gets into (Kellerman, 1980, page 9, para F, page 12, para A/D).

The Enabler (Helper) - who feels that he or she must help the drinker - should really let the drinker help himself. This is so even when it means he will suffer by bailing himself out of the situations he gets into. There is no other way for him to learn from his mistakes than by forcing him to take care of them himself. The Victim - who ends up covering for the drinker at work - must learn to tell him that (1) the alcoholic needs to stop depending on him (the Victim) to do his job, (2) the alcoholic needs to stop drinking, (3) he should change jobs, or (4) he should go in for treatment (Kellerman, 1980, page 13, para A).

The person who has the hardest time in changing is the wife, mother or girlfriend. It is very hard for them to stop helping the alcoholic. If she tells the problem drinker or alcoholic that she will no longer do things for him she may feel very guilty for not helping. What they all must realize is that the only way he can really be helped is when he starts taking care of himself. He must learn from and fix his own mistakes. Having to fix his own mistakes will make it very clear to him that drinking is a problem. He will not understand this if everyone is always bailing him out. He'll just keep right on drinking. Why shouldn't he? (Kellerman, 1980, page 15, para E, page 16, para A/B).

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. (Nobody, Everybody) does what they say they will or will not do. (True or False)
2. One thing the drinker feels most upset about is his feeling of _____.
3. The only way for the alcoholic to stop the play is to (a) depend on other people, (b) control other people, (c) change things, or (d) cut down on drinking.
4. What must the other actors do to really help the drinker?
5. Who has the hardest time changing? (a) the Victim, (b) the Enabler, (c) the Alcoholic, or (d) all of them.
6. The drinker can really be helped when he starts _____ of himself.

First of all, the biggest mistake made by women who are looking for help for their husband's drinking problem is: **WANTING TO BE TOLD WHAT THEY CAN DO TO STOP THE ALCOHOLIC FROM DRINKING**. They expect a quick solution. What they do not understand is that it may take a long time to learn to change the way they behave toward their husband. Secondly, they must stop bailing him out. They must learn to completely change their "bailing out the husband" role in the family and they often find this very difficult. Because they do not understand these things, they tend to drop out of Alanon or therapy which is often their only hold on sanity (Kellerman, 1980, page 14, para B-BA, page 15, para E).

Months or years of **ALANON**, counseling or group therapy may be needed before a wife learns to change her feelings and actions toward the alcoholic. Everything she thinks she should do is usually the wrong thing to do. One of the best ways for her to learn what she can do to help her alcoholic husband - **AND SAVE THE MARRIAGE OR RELATIONSHIP** - is for her to go to a group called **ALANON**. This group can be found almost everywhere, and it is free. It can help her keep her sanity and learn how to help her alcoholic family member (Kellerman, 1980, page 14, para C, page 17, para C/D).

The wife or Adjuster needs to learn **BETTER** ways of acting toward the alcoholic. Sometimes the Enabler may need to remain in **ALANON** for years before her feelings will let her change roles. Remember, **ALANON** is free therapy for her and it can be found in almost

every town. The trouble is that many wives look for a "quick" answer. Sadly they drop out of the **ALANON** group if their problems have not been solved very quickly. It took years for the problems to build up. It may take months for the situation to start getting better, even with the help of **ALANON** (Kellerman, 1980, page 14, para C, page 17, para B/D).

When a wife finds out how to change to help the alcoholic, she will be better able to help herself and her children as well (Kellerman, 1980, page 14, para D).

There are two things that may stop the wife or girlfriend from changing her role or the way she behaves toward the alcoholic in her life. First, how her husband feels about her new role may be anything from simple dislike to a serious threat of hurting her. He still wants a wife who will do everything for him. He does not want a wife who will tell him to take care of his own problems and then go on with her own life. Second, if there are young children at home, it is difficult for the wife to go to **ALANON** meetings and leave the children by themselves (Kellerman, 1980, page 15, para E).

She may feel - and justifiably so - that the drinking husband is not well enough to care for the children (Kellerman, 1980, page 15, para E).

Often it seems harder for a wife to change to what the drinker wants her to be than it is for her to keep on fighting with a drinking husband. In the long run, though, if she does not change her way of acting toward the drinker - and make him do for himself - he will destroy her, himself and the family (Kellerman, 1980, page 15, para E/F).

From this play, it can be seen that an alcoholic must learn to take care of himself in order to stop drinking. He will continue having a drinking problem as long as other people do those things for him that he should be doing for himself. This means that people around him must learn to **LET THE ALCOHOLIC TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR HIMSELF** and grow up (Kellerman, 1980, page 16, paras A/B).

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. The biggest mistake women make when looking for help for their husband's or son's drinking problem is wanting to be told what _____ can do to stop the _____ from _____.
2. What are the biggest mistakes made by wives of alcoholic husbands?

Why do wives of drinkers drop out of therapy or groups such as ALANON which may be their only grasp on sanity? (a) Therapy takes time and she wants quick solutions, (b) She cannot afford the therapy fees. (c) it's too far to travel to, or (d) She feels she can change him herself. [e] She wants to be told what she can do to stop her alcoholic husband from drinking. [f] They expect the B.U.D. to take care of itself.
3. What two things may stop the wife from changing her role or the way she behaves toward her alcoholic husband or boyfriend?
4. If she does not change her way of _____ toward the alcoholic, he could _____ her, himself and the entire _____.
5. The drinker in the play is really an _____.

REFERENCE:

Hazelden Education Materials, Kellerman (1980). A Merry-Go-Round Named Denial: A Program with the roles the family play in a dysfunctional family. Center City, Minnesota: The Hazelden Foundation.