

ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE EDUCATION PROGRAM**STUDY MATERIAL****SECTION 4****THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ALCOHOLISM****INSTRUCTIONS**

This is the fourth part in a series of 14 parts covering study material on alcoholics, alcoholism and substance (drug) abuse. This part covers the Psychology of Alcoholism. You will find this Section's study material divided into many "subsections" for easier understanding.

After you read and study the material in the first part, you may answer the study questions which follow. As you learn each part, you should then go on to the next. Before you try to answer any study questions, you should understand these guidelines. They will help you when answering the study questions.

1. Some questions need a complete sentence 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 or more words).
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 can be found easily enough in the study material.

Do not write in, fold or otherwise wreck 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 multiple choice 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 will help you prepare for and do well on the test. REVISED 05/9/94

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ALCOHOLISM

Have you ever heard the story about the six blind men and the elephant? Each man was led to the elephant and felt some part of the elephant's body. No two men felt the same part of the elephant! The first man felt the tail and said, "The elephant is like a rope". The second man bumped into a leg and said, "No, the elephant is like a tree". The next man grabbed an ear and stated that the elephant was like a fan. Then one man held the trunk and said the elephant was like a snake. Another man felt the tusk and said it was a stick. The last man sat on the elephant's back and said the elephant was like a big, flat rock. All the men were a little right, yet all of them were a little wrong.

The alcoholic's problems are much like an elephant. Everyone looks at the problems and says they are caused by drinking too much. This is right. If the alcoholic did stop drinking, he would most likely get along much better. He would be able to take the money he used to spend on liquor and pay other bills.

People forget to ask, why does the alcoholic drink in the first place? They are so busy looking at just the drinking that they find it hard to look at and see the whole problem (like the whole elephant). What this means is that everyone is looking for the reasons WHY the alcoholic drinks, but the problem is not that simple (Nakken, C., 1988, *The Addictive Personality*, Hazelden Foundation, page 65, para 1-2-3). There are many parts to the problem. All of the parts add some to the reasons why an alcoholic drinks. The alcoholic himself does not even understand all of the reasons. He does not know that alcoholism is genetically predisposed. That means that if someone in your family is alcoholic, the chances you will be also are very high. Very often the parents or relatives of the alcoholic were alcoholics themselves. If one of your parents or close relatives is or was an alcoholic, the chances of you becoming an alcoholic are as high as (50) fifty times greater than average (Kinney, J., Leaton, G., 1987, page 71, para, 71). This means that if even one of your parents had a bad drinking problem you are at a very high risk of becoming an alcoholic. The safest thing you can do is not to drink alcohol at all (Kinney, J., & Leaton, G., 1987, *Loosening the Past*, page 198, para C/D)

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. People forget to ask _____.
2. People are so busy looking at the alcoholic's _____ (which is like the elephant's trunk) that they find it hard to look at the whole _____ (or the whole elephant).
3. If one of your parents or relatives is or was an alcoholic, the chances of you becoming an alcoholic are as high as _____ times greater than average.

Alcoholics are not all alike (Encyclopedia Britannica, page 446, A-B-C). Many times, they have the same kind of problems (Kinney, J., & Leaton, G., 1987, page 57, para A-B-C). For instance, the alcoholic never thinks of himself as anything but just a problem drinker (Goode, E., 1984, Drugs In American Society, pages 76, 77, para B, C, & D). He may never see himself as a father or husband. He may at times forget about and ignore his children and his wife. He does not feel good about himself as a person. If he were to tell someone about himself, he might start by saying that he drinks too much. Then he might have a hard time thinking of what else to say. If he sees himself as unlikable, he will then do things to make that belief about himself come true. This is called a self-fulfilling prophesy. He will find evidence to support the bad ways he thinks about himself and his world.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. The alcoholic never thinks of himself as anything but a _____.
2. In fact, he may at times forget about his _____ and his _____.
3. If an alcoholic were to tell someone about himself, he might start by saying that he drinks _____.

The alcoholic usually has low esteem. This means the alcoholic doesn't like himself or think much of himself (Kinney, J., & Leaton, G., 1987, Loosening the Grip, pages 157-58, para A, B) (State Of Florida, June 1977, On The Road To A Drinking Problem, page 9, para D). He may put himself down. The more other people stay away from him and tell him he is a drunk, the more time he may spend telling other people how great he is. He often TRIES to fool them into thinking that he is a great person. If he acts this way all the time it often means that he has a poor image of himself. While he needs to have other people tell him he is o.k., it will not stop his drinking. He is addicted, and his body craves alcohol like a Heroin addict craves Heroin. The more he drinks, the worse he feels about himself and the more addicted he becomes. When he sees for himself that he can't get anything done because he is sick or has a hangover, he starts to see himself more as a failure (Encyclopedia Britannica, page 446, para D).

If he gets into fights with others due to his drinking, he will feel like a failure around other people. Because alcohol has such a bad effect on him, people and relationships come to scare him more. Why?

After awhile, he finds it easier to just avoid people. He then becomes very lonely and lives a life of quiet isolation (aloneness) and desperation. All the while, his drinking keeps getting worst. The more he drinks to cope, the worse his coping skills become. The worse his coping skills become, the more trouble he gets into (Goode, E., 1984, Drugs In American Society page 77, para B).

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. The alcoholic usually has a _____ ego.
2. He may spend the time telling other people what a great person he is to try to (a) fool them, (b) impress them, (c) both a & b, or (d) neither a nor b.
3. When an alcoholic cannot get things done, he thinks of himself as a (winner, failure, lover, fool). (Pick one)

The alcoholic may not know much about who or what he is. Of course the alcoholic knows things like his name and who his parents were. Often he doesn't know much about his feelings or what makes him do what he does. If he is often lonely he looks for other people to drink with. He may be the kind of person who hates to be alone with himself, (except when he has a hangover). He can't say WHY he drinks because he hasn't thought about it. Alcoholism has caught up with him. In order to keep on drinking comfortably, he has to fool himself into thinking that he-and not the alcohol-is in control of his life and his drinking. It is amazing how long an alcoholic or problem drinker can keep this game up. Sometimes the game lasts for many years.

No matter what anyone tells him, he keeps denying that he has a problem with alcohol. Denial is the single biggest symptom of an alcoholic who has lost control (Gorski, T., & Miller, M., 1986, Staying Sober pages 47-48 para B, A) (State Of Florida, June 1977, On The Road To A Drinking Problem, page 11, para D). He does not want to understand that alcohol is controlling him. He does not want to listen to anybody who can clearly see what is happening to him. He would rather stay blind as to what alcohol is doing to him. He may do some very strange things to try to convince himself and other people that he is o.k. and in control of his life. Eventually his games have to crash, as they are not the truth.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Often the alcoholic doesn't know much about his _____, or what makes him do what he does.
2. An alcoholic may be the type of person that hates to be _____ with himself.
3. An alcoholic (a) knows why he drinks, (b) knows the alcohol is in control but doesn't care, (c) plays foolish games to keep on drinking, or (d) none of the above.

The alcoholic may have feelings of worthlessness (Kinney, J., & Leaton, G., 1987, page 209, para B). Often he may feel that he is good for nothing (State Of Florida, June 1977, On The Road To A Drinking Problem, page 12, para 1). He may get to the point where his only

interest in life is alcohol. He often has lost his family, friends, hobbies, even his job because of drinking. When he looks at his life, there may be very little for him to be proud of. The more he drinks, the more he comes to believe his worth is small. The worse he feels about himself the more he drinks. Often he tries very hard to convince others that he is someone important. People can see right through his little game, though. They know that all he is just an alcoholic telling lies. They have stopped trusting him because he has broken almost every promise he has ever made to them. He has lied, cheated and stolen from others. All the bad things that others tell him about himself just reflect back on him and what he has become. He hates what he has become, he hates himself and drinks even more. The problem keeps getting worse (State Of Florida, June 1977, On The Road To A Drinking Problem, page 12, para A).

Sometimes he ends up in prison. He tries to be macho-in and out of prison-as if prison doesn't really bother him. But it really does. He looks at other prisoners around him and has a hard time believing that he has now become like them. How could this have ever happened to him, he thinks to himself. But it has! Now he has to wake up, take a good look at himself.

Sooner or later he has to face the realities and problems of his drinking. Often being in prison allows a person to take a good, long sober look at his life and where alcohol has got him. It helps him understand that he really does have a bad problem. It is pretty hard to deny barbed wire and guards with guns.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. An alcoholic may get to the point where his only interest in life is _____ .
2. The more he drinks, the more he believes that his worth is _____, and the harder he tries to convince other people that he is someone _____.
3. Often, being in prison allows an alcoholic to take a good, _____ _____ _____ at his life.
4. People who know an alcoholic (a) cannot see him for what he really is, (b) can trust him when he's sober, (c) both a & b, or (d) neither a nor b.
5. Sooner or later, the Alcoholic has to face the _____ and _____ of drinking.

The alcoholic has many problems that he faces due to his long term drinking. Not being able to put off reward is a big one. This means that most alcoholics want everything **RIGHT NOW**. If his day at the office was bad, he wants things to change right away. He becomes frustrated very easily. He feels so out of control with his own life that he wants to control everything around him. This is impossible. In order to cope with his feelings of being out of control he drinks. He often starts drinking even before he gets home from work. If things were good, he'll drink to make sure they stay that way. He may start drinking just to keep feeling

good. If things are bad, he will drink to blot out his problems. This means that an alcoholic drinks whenever things are good and when things are bad. The alcoholic can find an excuse to drink whenever he wants to, and as much as he wants to. The more he drinks, the more he weakens his natural coping mechanisms for dealing with psychological pain. He puts his mind in a chemical cast. His ability to cope with problems gets worst and worst, until he ends up using alcohol to cope with everything. This is because alcohol makes you feel good at first very quickly. It seems to blot out all a persons problems. Using alcohol to cope with problems is a lot like drinking salt water, the more you drink, the bigger the problem you have. (Nakken, C., 1988, *The Addictive Personality*, Hazelden Foundation, page 42, para 2-3).

People don't realize that, at first, alcohol makes you feel relaxed; but, after that it affects your nerves in a bad way. After several drinks, you will feel nervous, jumpy and irritable for long periods of time after the alcohol leaves your body (Inaba, D. & Cohen, C. 1990, *Uppers, Downers All Arounders*, page 123, para D). For each drink you take, your nerves will be upset for ten hours after the alcohol leaves your body.

Most drinkers do not know that this is a long term effect of alcohol. Since the alcoholic can't figure out why he is so edgy, several hours after drinking, he automatically thinks that other people made him that way. He blames other people for his nervousness. A very nasty, nervous edgy feeling is the main feeling that the alcoholic is left with when he sobers up. (Kinney, J., & Leaton, G. 1987, *Loosening The Grip*, page 120, para C).

In order to cope with this feeling, he often drinks even more. The more he drinks, the more nervousness he has to suffer through when he stops drinking. Because he stays drunk much of the time, he cannot stand the pain of withdrawal (Kinney, J., & Leaton, G., 1987, *Loosening The Grip*, page 120, para B).

He just keeps on drinking not thinking about what he will face tomorrow. The more he drinks, the more nervous he will feel when he stops. The more nervous he feels, the more trouble he runs into with other people.

When he blames other people for making him nervous, he gets into much more trouble. Other people know that it is his problem, not theirs. They try to stay away from him because he is so grumpy. He becomes a lot of trouble to be around. Other people start to avoid and dislike him. The only people who can stand being around him, are those people who drink as much as he does, and are so drunk they don't care. When the alcoholic sees that normal people don't like him, this helps to convince him that he is a bad person. He avoids people who don't drink a lot. All his friends are heavy drinkers. It now appears normal to him to drink large amounts of alcohol. The more he drinks, the more he feels like more and more normal people do not like him. What he doesn't really understand is that it is the alcohol that is affecting how he sees and gets along with others. It is alcohol which is in control. Since he does not want to look at the problems that alcohol causes him, he thinks it is easier to keep on blaming other people for his problems. Other people respond by blaming and avoiding him. After awhile, the only friends he has are rogues and drunks.

(Nakken, C., 1988, *The Addictive Personality*, Hazelden Foundation, pages 37, 38, para 5, & para 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6).

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Most alcoholics want everything (a) slowly, (b) right away, (c) anytime, or (d) none of these.
2. Why would an alcoholic drink on a day when things were bad?
3. Why would an alcoholic drink on a day when things were good?
4. Alcohol may make you feel relaxed to begin with, but later on you may feel (better, happier, nervous). (Pick one)
5. Which statement is wrong? (a) Alcoholics blame others for their nervousness. (b) Others know that it is his problem. (c) An alcoholic may realize that no one likes him. (d) Alcohol has no effect on how he gets along with people. (e) All of the above.

With his coping skills gone and all his friends drunk, the alcoholic's drinking is the way he takes care of all his problems. If he has been drinking for a very long time, he uses alcohol as the ONLY way to solve his problems. If his boss chews him out or his wife makes life hard, he takes a drink. Even if things have been going well, he still takes a drink. No wonder he has a hard time stopping! (Nakken, C., 1988, The Addictive Personality, Hazelden Foundation, pages 31-32 para 4,5 1,2).

When someone uses a "relationship with alcohol" as the answer to all of his problems, it takes a lot for him to give it up. The drinkers ability to handle his problems on his own continues to deteriorate. The more he depends on alcohol to cope with his problems the worse his problems become. On the surface, it appears that alcohol helps relieve the pain of emotional problems (Nakken, C., 1988, The Addictive Personality, Hazelden Foundation, pages 57/58, top to bottom). It drugs the brain, and its effects are immediate. When a person is in psychological pain, the quick relaxation that alcohol brings appears to be a miracle relief, and drinking alcohol does at first bring quick relief. At first drinking alcohol will relax you for the first few hours, but after the relaxation wears off, the after effects of the alcohol will leave you nervous and irritable for ten times longer than it gave you the relaxation effect.

If you are drinking to relieve psychological pain, in the long run, alcohol leaves you much worse off than when you started. It only provides temporary relief, and then you pay the price in the irritability and grouchiness the alcohol leaves you with several hours later. The more the alcohol abuser drinks, the more nervous and edgy he becomes in the long run. The more nervous he gets, the more trouble he gets into with people and the more he drinks. The drinker gets into trouble with other people because he blames the people around him for his nervousness (Nakken, C., 1988, The Addictive Personality, Hazelden Foundation, page 57, para 1-2-3-4).

He does not understand that alcohol will leave him nervous after he drinks. The more he blames others, the more his negativity comes back on him and then he becomes even more nervous and irritable. He is caught up in a whirlpool that will eventually destroy his life... as well as everyone else who loves him. Alcoholics can and must learn other ways to handle or solve their problems besides turning to alcohol. This is very difficult for them as they have used alcohol to cope with everything for many years (Gorski, T., & Miller, M., 1986, *Staying Sober*, page 43, para C).

Alcohol for an alcoholic has become a very dangerous and addictive drug. The more alcohol that he drinks, the worse his addiction becomes (Nakken, C., 1988, *The Addictive Personality*, Hazelden Foundation, page 54, para 2-3-4-5).

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. If an alcoholic has been drinking for a very long time, he uses alcohol as the _____ way to solve his problems.
2. Can an alcoholic learn other ways to solve his problems? (Yes or No)
3. When an alcoholic drinks more and more he (a) gets into trouble, (b) gets nervous and edgy, (c) gets caught up in a self-destructive whirlpool, (d) destroys his loved ones, or (e) all of this and more.

Born alone + don't want to be alone + don't want to change

**(leads to)
Upset, Anxious**

**(leads to)
Symptoms = Drinking**

The drinker must be willing to accept change in order to get better. He must stop lying to himself about his drinking and admit he has a problem. Everyone is born alone and by himself. Other people are around, but even a baby has to do something to get other people to pay attention to him. Crying works fine for a baby. It is a sure way to get other people to hold him, and do other things with him (Gorski, T., & Miller, M., 1986, *Staying Sober*, page 34-35, para D/E).

As a child gets older, he must work harder at getting other people to notice him and be around him. He must do more to please other people, to get attention. Yet, some children don't want to change their baby ways. They want everything without giving anything to other people. They don't understand that you get what you give. (Nakken, C., 1988, *The Addictive Personality*, Hazelden Foundation, page 59, para 3-4-5).

An alcoholic has a very serious problem. He will have to change his self centered ways if he is to be a real friend to other people. Both the child and the alcoholic must either change or be lonely. The alcoholic doesn't really want to do either. Worrying about only his needs makes him upset and anxious. He started as a baby, totally self centered. Then he was just an upset child. Now he is an adult who is still self centered and upset. Not understanding that giving and receiving are the same, that you get what you give, the alcoholic continues to act like a self centered child. The alcoholic still wants to be friends with other people. He does not however want to give and share with his friends (Kinney, J., & Leaton, G., 1987, Loosening The Grip, page 79, para A/B) (Nakken, C., 1988, The Addicting Personality, Hazelden Foundation, page 91, para 1-2).

Since the alcoholic has become so self centered, other people often do not want to be friends with him. The drinker then pretends he doesn't need other people. As long as he can fool himself into thinking that he does not need other people, he does not need to change. His only true friend becomes the bottle (Nakken, C., 1988, The Addictive Personality, Hazelden Foundation, page 45, para 1-2).

Ending up alone and apart from other people, the alcoholic often ends up taking care of all his problems by drinking. His drinking is a wrong answer to his problems. He feels that all he needs is a bottle. Deep down inside he is hurting very badly. He won't admit this to himself or to anyone else. He serves his ego and tries to act cool, even though he knows that alcohol is destroying him. He knows that it doesn't really feel good to be alone (State Of Florida, June 1977, On The Road To A Drinking Problem, June 1977, page 10, para B) (Nakken, C., 1988, The Addictive Personality, Hazelden Foundation, pages 58-59)

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. The alcoholic must either change or be _____ and he doesn't want to do either one.
2. If he can't be close to other people, he will find a way to pretend _____, so he won't have to change.
3. The alcoholic's drinking is a _____ answer to his problems.

You may feel that all of this really has nothing to do with you. Maybe you sincerely cannot remember ever feeling upset about relationships with other people due to your drinking. Would you admit to the problems that alcohol caused you in your relationships with other people to yourself? Most alcoholics would not. They do not want to see any problems that alcohol has caused them at all. Remember, denial of the problems that alcohol causes is one of the biggest symptoms of an alcoholic (State Of Florida, June 1977, On The Road To A Drinking Problem, page 11, para C) (Nakken, C., 1988, The Addictive Personality, Hazelden Foundation, page 29, para 1).

Ask yourself how many real friends you have who do not drink all the time. Would these people still be your friends if there were no alcohol involved. It is very difficult for man to live alone with no friends. No man is an island. If the alcoholic can't be close to other people, he will find a way to pretend that he does not need them. The alcoholic tries to be an island so he can keep drinking. The alcoholic must face the fact that he is lonely and that no one can really live without friends. Many alcoholics think that going it alone is a sign of a strong mind. They feel very strong if they can keep control over their feelings. No one can do this for long and still be mentally and emotionally healthy. You already know that going it alone feels bad and that everybody needs somebody. "You cannot recover in isolation" (Gorski, T., & Miller, M., *Staying Sober*, 1986, page 168, para B) (Nakken, C., 1988, *The Addictive Personality*, Hazelden Foundation, page 102, para 2-3)

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. The truth the alcoholic must face is that _____ .
2. Remember, _____ of the problems that alcohol causes is one of the biggest symptoms of alcoholism.

STUDY QUESTIONS

3. Which statement is true? (a) Every man is an "island" to himself. (b) Alcoholics try to be an "island" to stop drinking. (c) "Going it alone" will make you feel good. (d) It's easy to be the "life of the party" when you are drunk. (e) None of these. (f) All of these.

The only way for the alcoholic to recover is to admit that he has a problem and that he needs to change. He must WANT to change (Gorski, T., & Miller, 1986, *Staying Sober*, page 50-51, para B-C-D) (Nakken, C., 1988, *The Addictive Personality*, Hazelden Foundation, page 36, para 1-2).

If the alcoholic really wants to change he must be willing to accept the fact that drinking is not the right answer to his problems. He must start working on other ways to make good friends and get along with himself. He will then be on the road to getting well (Gorski, T., & Miller, M., 1986, *Staying Sober*, page 54, para B) (Nakken, C., 1988, *The Addictive Personality*, Hazelden Foundation, page 36, para 1-2).

The biggest problem the alcoholic faces is that he lies to himself about not having a problem. He even tries to convince everyone else around him that he doesn't have a problem. Deep down inside he knows that he is only fooling himself. He really isn't fooling anyone else, for everyone else knows that he has a drinking problem he won't admit to (Gorski, T., & Miller,

M., 1986, page 49, para C) (Nakken, C., 1988, The Addictive Personality, Hazelden Foundation, page 29, para 1).

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. The only way for the alcoholic to start getting well is to (a) admit that others are at fault, (b) see a doctor and get some medicine, (c) have one more drink because it will make him feel better, or (d) admit to his problem and want to change.
2. An alcoholic will _____ to himself and state that he doesn't have a _____, knowing he is only (helping, fooling) himself.

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