

ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE EDUCATION PROGRAM

STUDY MATERIAL

SECTION 12

TYPES OF ALCOHOLICS & STAGES OF ALCOHOLISM

INSTRUCTIONS

This is the twelfth part in a series of 14 Study Sections covering alcohol abuse, alcoholics, alcoholism and substance (**drug**) abuse. This part is an introduction to the **Types of Alcoholics & Stages 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 subsection you may answer that subsection's study questions. As you master one subsection, 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 to answer the study questions:

1. Some questions need a complete sentence for the answer.
2. Other questions require 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 correct.
5. There are no "trick" questions. All answers will be found easily in the study material.

Do not write in, fold or otherwise destroy 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.

Since the test questions will come from the study questions found in this booklet, learning the answers to the study material will help you prepare for and do well on the test.

STUDY MATERIAL FOR UNIT 12
THE EFFECT OF ALCOHOLISM AND OTHER SEDATIVE HYPNOTIC
DRUGS ON THE FAMILY AS AN ORGANISM.

Alcohol, Valium, Librium, and Librax are Sedative Class drugs. They all have similar effects on the user and the user's family (Gorski, T., & Miller, M., 1986, *Staying Sober* page 38). With increased usage of any of these drugs, very big individual and family problems result. How one person abusing a sedative drug in a family affects the entire family is particularly interesting. This section deals with the effects that an alcoholic or alcohol abuser has on his or her family. The use of any drug is not a personal matter. The entire family is affected and often suffers along with many people around the abuser (Wegscheider, S., 1981, *Another Chance*, page 46, para 1-2). It has been estimated

that for every alcoholic there are, up to 25 other people are effected in a bad way by his behavior. The ones who suffer the most are often the family. Lets take a closer look at what happens within the family when one member is abusing a sedative type drug.

When people meet a family with a problem drinker or drug dependent person (a person under the influence of a drug) in it, people have a tendency to try at first to list the family's problems. Then, they try to solve them one at a time (Family As An Organism, page 2, para 1). It would seem logical (sensible) that once all the individual (separate) problems have been solved, the total problem would be gone. If all the little problems were solved one at a time, it would seem logical (reasonable) that the family would then be happy and healthy. However, with alcohol and drug dependency, getting to the root of the problem is not as easy as solving (getting the answer to) one problem at a time. This is because the individual problems work together to make other new kinds of problems. Even though you solve the little problems, a much bigger one still exists. For example, if a part breaks loose in the engine of a car, and you replace that particular (single) part, there is still damage to all the other parts caused by the loose part smashing around in the engine. Replacing (returning) only the part that broke loose will not fix all the other parts that were destroyed (wrecked) at the same time (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 46-47).

When one member of a family is a drug abuser and upsets the family, the family acts in ways that create (make) new problems that have to be solved (The Family As An Organism, page 2).

To try and treat the substance abuser without treating the family would be like treating cancer with an aspirin. This is treating only the symptom (sign) and does not get at the real cause. Understanding and working with the family as a whole is necessary (essential) for successful treatment of the chemically dependent person (The Family As An Organism, page 2).

Each member of the family effects every other member. Each family has a life and identity (personality) all its own. The family has a different personality (individual identity) than the personality of each of its individual members (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 46-47) (The Family As An Organism, page 2). Each member of the family adds something to the family. If a member of the family dies, the family changes and is no longer the same as if that member was still around. If one of the members of the family is abusing (misusing) alcohol or drugs, the family will change for the worse. When one person in the family gets sick with a drinking or a drug abuse problem, all the other members of the family get sick along with him. This is because of their common emotional (feeling) family bonds or feelings. Understanding the family, and how the family members interact or work together as a whole, is necessary for the successful treatment of the alcoholic or drug abuser (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 46-47).

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Alcohol, Valium, Librium, Librax are Sedative Class Drugs. They all have similar _____ on the user and the user's family.
2. When people meet a family with a problem drinker or drug dependent person in it, one of the first things that they try to do is _____ the problems.
3. To treat the chemically dependent person, without treating the family would be like giving _____ for _____.
4. Each member of the family _____ every other member.
5. When one person in the family gets sick with a drinking or a drug abuse problem, all the other members of the family get _____ along with him.
6. When one member of a family is a drug abuser and upsets the family, the family acts in ways that create new problems that have to be solved. The entire family gets _____ drug abuser.

STUDY QUESTIONS

7. Understanding the family, and how the family members interact or work together as a whole, is necessary for the _____ or drug abuser.

Chemical dependency, (alcoholism or drug abuse) in one member of the family is not just one problem in the family. Chemical dependency is a family problem and a family disease (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 58). If one person in the family becomes chemically dependent, soon his problem becomes a problem for each member of the family. A drug abuser in a family causes many changes in the way each member acts and reacts to the other members of the family. A chemical abuser in the family usually effects everyone in the family in a bad way (The Family As An Organism, page 2-4). The more a dependent family member uses drugs, the greater the problems and the bigger and more terrible are the changes that occur in that family (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 58).

As the drug dependent person slowly gets worse, other family members are often forced to pick up the responsibilities (duties) that the chemically dependent person will not, or cannot handle. As the abusers disease gets worse, the entire family gets sicker and sicker (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 79, para 2-3) (The Family As An Organism page 3).

In order to understand the entire family picture, we must look at how the whole family gets sick together when one member is chemically dependent (The Family As An Organism, pages 3,6) (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 80). One of the most surprising things that we find, is that even though it is possible to treat only the chemically dependent person, the rest of the family will remain sick without treatment. If the recovering substance abuser does get treatment alone and then goes back to live with the sick family, the chances are that he will begin using alcohol or drugs again to cope with the sick family. Without treatment, the family will remain sick. Treating only the alcoholic is not enough to get the job done. The family needs help and treatment also (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 80) (The Family As An Organism, page 3).

The family is effected very badly by the chemically dependent person. The way the alcohol and drug addict behaves adds to the entire family's sickness (The Family As An Organism, page 3).

On the other hand, the way the family acts toward the dependent or abuser can make the entire situation (condition) either better or worse (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance).

To fully understand how chemical abuse changes the entire family for the worse, we must take a closer look at what a family is and how it works (The Family As An Organism, page 6).

The family is a whole unit, or a living being in and of itself. Each family has its own personality. Even though the family is made up of many different members, the whole family itself is much different than any of the individual members. The family has an identity (personality) all its own. In a like manner, your body is made of many different cells, however, you are not your cells. You are more than the combination (union) of your individual cells, much,---more. Just as a family is much more than a combination of its individual members (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 80-81) (The Family As An Organism, page 3).

Just as you depend on your individual cells and organs to work as a team to keep you alive, so a family depends on each of its members for the family's survival. The members of a family work together as a system, just as all the cells and organs in your body work together as a system. A system is a lot of parts that work together for a common purpose (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 80). The parts may work together for peace or harmony (agreement). However, they may also work together in bad or destructive ways. Cancer is when a group of cells in the body go wild and act without taking into account the good of the whole body. If these cells work on their own long enough without taking the other cells of the body into account, (consideration) the entire system breaks down and the person will die. Likewise, when one member of the family starts abusing drugs or alcohol, the entire family starts getting sick and breaking apart. Another way of looking at this is to imagine a part breaking loose in the engine of a car, flying around and tearing up many other parts of the engine. Both the car and the family will start breaking down when one member breaks loose and crashes against other members. When a chemically dependent member of a family breaks loose due to alcoholism or drug dependency, he is Controlled by the drug and can cause the breakdown of the entire family. This can be seen in the large number of divorces, separations and broken homes found among chemically dependent families. Physical abuse and psychological damage are other types of damage that may effect other family members for a lifetime even after the abuser is gone. At worse, someone could end up getting killed.

Most murders are committed (pulled off) when one or both people are under the influence (power) of alcohol (The Family As An Organism, page 3).

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Chemical dependency is a _____ problem, and a _____ disease.
2. As the drug dependent person slowly gets worse, other family members are often forced to pick up the _____ that the chemically dependent person will not, or cannot handle.
3. In order to understand _____, we must look at how the whole family gets sick together when one member is chemically dependent.
4. If you treat just the Chemically Dependent person, the rest of the family will remain _____.
5. If the recovering substance abuser does get treatment alone and has to go live with the sick family again, chances are he will _____ to cope with the family.
6. When a chemically dependent member of a family breaks loose due to alcoholism or drug dependency, he is _____ by the drug and can cause the breakdown of the entire family.
7. Physical abuse and psychological damage are other types of damage that may effect other family members for _____ even after the abuser is gone.

In order to more fully understand the family, and how the family balances itself when one member gets out of control, we would like to use the example of a model. A mobile is an art form made up of rods and string, upon which are hung various parts (The Family As An Organism, page 3).

When the wind blows the mobile around, it will sway wildly for awhile. When the wind stops however, the beauty of the mobile is that when left unto itself, it will eventually (at some future time) balance itself into the same position (place) it had before the wind started (The Family AS An Organism, page 3).

The mobile has a way of responding (answering) to disturbing (moving) forces, wobbling for awhile and then re-balancing itself to the same place it had before the wind started.

Although the mobile changes position, it keeps the connections (joints) between each of its parts on the string. When the disturbance stops, each of the parts returns to its original position. The art form is then in perfect balance again. A similar type of balancing takes place in a normal family (Wegscheider, 1981.). When there is stress, the whole family shifts, bounces around and then brings itself back into balance. This is one way the family survives the turmoil of life and does the types of things a family has to do to survive. Each member of the family plays a balancing or an upsetting part in the family (The Family As An Organism, page 3).

All of the family members are strongly effected by the growing problems and instability (shakiness) of the chemically dependent person (The Family As An Organism, page 3-4).

In a family where one or more of the members start abusing drugs or alcohol, the entire family becomes unstable or shaky. The abuser alone throws the entire family badly out of balance. In reaction to the problems the substance abuser causes, each family member tries to adjust by developing (forming) behavior that gets them by as smoothly as possible (workable) (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance) (The Family As An Organism, page 4).

The one thing both the alcoholic and the drug addict have in common is that they will not take responsibility for the problems they are causing for themselves or others. The abuser will also make many excuses for using alcohol and drugs but he will take no responsibility for the

problems he is causing. The more drugs he uses, and the more excuses he makes and the sicker both he and his whole family become. The more crazy the family gets, the more the abuser will blame other family members for all the problems that he causes. His drunken behavior throws off the balance of the entire family. Not wanting to face either his own feelings nor all the problems the drugs are causing, the abuser tricks himself into thinking that everything is okay. According to him or her, all of his problems are caused by someone else, anyone else except him. The abuser does not want to face reality, he will not admit that he is the cause of most all of the family's problems. The alcoholic will often blame his drinking on his wife or husband; the pot smoker will blame others for not getting his work done, or for doing a poor job at work. Since they refuse to take responsibility for controlling (directing) their lives, the chemicals they are abusing control their lives for them (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 82).

The abuser is so insistent (pressing) that other people are the cause of all the problems that after awhile other people may start believing maybe they are the cause of all the problems. This especially becomes a problem with people with weak egos. They allow the alcoholic to convince them that they are the problem. This has a very bad effect on their mental health. They start getting depressed, feeling worthless and start to hate themselves. Again, often the people who falsely accept responsibility for all the problems are the ones who love the alcoholic or drug abuser the most (Staying Sober, Gorski, 1986.). This is another way that the drug dependent person destroys those closest to him (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 82).

As the abuser continues to drink or drug, the family becomes more and more hurting and confused. The abuser continues to deny responsibility for any of the problems that he is causing in the family. The stress within the family builds and family members may begin arguing and fighting viciously among themselves. The fights go nowhere and only make things worse. As the disease progresses (advances) the family problems only get worse. Unable to cope with the sick family as a whole, each family member begins withdrawal and starts to hide his or her feelings about the alcoholic and the family's problems. To confront the alcoholic often automatically starts a fight (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 83). To bring up problems in the family only seems to cause more frustration (tension) and bad feelings. Nobody really wants to face how bad things are. At the same time there is a secret rule that nobody in the family is supposed to talk to anyone else outside of the family about family problems. Everyone in this sick family is supposed to put on a front to the outside world. This front is supposed to show the outside world that this family is just as good as any of the others around. You might call this the family ego. It is very dangerous, as it prevents family members from getting outside help. It kind of traps them in a pressure cooker with nobody to turn to. Since these unwritten secret rules do not allow them to talk to others about family problems, each member in the family has to find his or her own individual way to cope with having to live in such a sick family. Often, so as not to cause more fights and problems for themselves, each family member begins to hide their true feelings about the abuser. The more they stuff their feelings, the more and more tense things within the family become. If something is not done, the situation will either explode, or the individuals will make themselves physically or mentally sick (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 83) (The Family As An Organism, pages 5-6).

When any of these things happen, this puts other members of the family under even more pressure. Another secret rule in these types of dysfunctional (sick) families is that as long as nobody gets angry or displays fits of anger, the family fools itself into thinking everything is okay. Behind the emotional fronts, things are starting to boil. Family members get very angry with each other. Others may get very depressed and even suicidal. Since there is no way for any single individual to deal with the family as a whole, the members start to build up a wall of defenses to protect themselves against the alcoholic and from each other's pain and anger (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 86-87).

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. When there is stress, the whole family shifts, bounces around and then brings itself _____.
2. Each member of a family plays a balancing or an _____ role in the family.
3. In a family where one or more members start abusing drugs or alcohol the entire family becomes _____.
4. The more crazy the family gets, the more the abuser will blame other family members for _____.
5. The greater the abuse of chemicals by the dependent, the more upset and unstable the family becomes. The more crazy the family gets, the more the abuser will _____ other family members for all the problems he is causing.

6. The Chemically dependent person _____ himself into thinking that everything is O.K.
7. The abuser is so insistent (pressing) that other people (specially the enabler) are the cause of all the problems that after awhile other people may start _____ are the cause of all the problems.
8. Unable to cope with the sick family as a whole, each family member begins to _____ and starts to ____ his or her feelings about the alcoholic and the family's problems.
9. To confront a Chemically dependent person _____ starts a fight.
10. If anyone confronts (faces) the alcoholic or drug abuser about his drinking or triggers his messed up feelings, he becomes explosive and starts a fight.

As mentioned earlier, in order to survive in such a family, each member of the family builds up a unique (matchless) defense system to protect him or herself from the others. The drug abuser is out of control and the family members do not know what to do. In too many cases, instead of working with each other to solve the problem, the family starts pulling apart. It is each man for himself. Family members start withdrawing (pulling away) from each other building defenses. They act more like enemies than family members. This makes everyone more miserable and on edge. Each family member depending on their place in the family develops their own particular type of defenses. These defenses are surprisingly (strangely) similar even in different families (The Family As An Organism, page 4) (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 86-87, bottom top).

The chemically dependent person (alcoholic or drug addict) develops a unique defense system to protect himself from his own painful feelings that sometimes get out of control. **The dependent person also develops defenses to keep other people away from him. Some of his main defenses are anger, hostility and aggression.** His purpose is to make everyone around him so miserable that they keep their distance and do not bother him. All he wants is his bottle. After awhile, nobody wants to get near him, and that is okay with him. If nobody gets near him, nobody can hurt him (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 88).

Other defenses the drug dependent person often uses **to cope with his feelings are grandiosity** (acting like a little god) and **righteousness** (being right all the time and acting like he can do no wrong). These are all forms of defense. He starts acting like a little dictator, thinking that everyone else is wrong, and that he is always right. By acting this way he actually protects himself from how wrong and guilty he feels inside (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 73-83) (The Family As An Organism, graph page 4).

By acting like a little God, the alcoholic is also protecting himself from the rotten things that other people tell him about himself. He acts like he is above criticism (being noticed for doing bad things).

All the while deep inside he knows something is terribly wrong. The substance abuser can't handle his own feelings. When other people get close to him, they often do or say things that force the alcoholic to take a look at their own bad feelings. After awhile, the alcoholic or drug addict figures this out and starts backing away from other people. They don't want anyone to get too close to them but they want everyone to do things for them and bail them out of trouble. A bad combination (mixture) for human relationships. If someone does manage to get close to the alcoholic, it is hard for them not to be concerned (worried) about what they see happening. If they try to talk to the abuser about what he is doing to himself, it brings up all the rotten feelings that the alcoholic or drug abuser is trying to hide from himself. Needless to say, the chemically dependent person becomes very self-centered. His whole life revolves around his drug and himself. After awhile, he isolates himself and becomes very lonely. Then he drinks to cope with his loneliness. There are only a few things that he knows to do to get them off his case. He can run off somewhere and hit the bottle again, or he can get angry with them, start a fight and drive them away. His other friends and other members of the family eventually (sooner or later) learn to leave him alone. He uses people to get what he wants with little regard for them. He fools himself into thinking that he really does not care what others think. Nobody sober wants to be around him. No one in the family will dare say anything to him about his drinking, or about his shirking of all his responsibilities. They are in dire fear that he will become abusive or violent. Others around him start fearing him, and eventually may even grow to hate him. As long as he has his alcohol or drug, he doesn't seem to care too much about how other people feel, as long as they leave him alone. The only people who can stand him are those guys who are as drunk or drunker than he is. You cannot really call his fellow alcoholics friends, as they are only concerned with alcohol (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 71).

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. As mentioned earlier, in order to survive in such a family, each member of the family builds up a unique _____ system to protect him or herself from the others.
2. The chemically dependent person (alcoholic or drug addict) develops a unique defense system to protect himself from his own painful _____ sometimes get out of control.
3. The dependent person also develops defenses to keep _____ away from him. Some of his main defenses are anger, hostility and aggression.
4. The Chemically dependent person's main defenses are anger, hostility, and _____.
5. Other defenses the drug dependent person often uses to cope with his feelings are _____ (acting like a little god) and _____ (being right all the time and acting like he can do no wrong).
6. All the while deep inside he knows something is terribly wrong. The substance abuser can't handle his own feelings.

STUDY QUESTIONS

7. Needless to say, the chemically dependent person becomes very self centered. His whole life revolves around his drug and himself.
8. After awhile he isolates himself and becomes very lonely. Then he drinks to cope with his _____.
9. He _____ people to get what he wants with little regard for them. He fools himself into thinking that he really does not _____ what others think. Nobody sober wants to get around him.

It takes an average of 7 years for a person to turn into an alcoholic. That is a long time and contributes (adds) to the drinker feeling that he has not really caused any problems at all. By this time, the alcoholic has built up a very thick wall of defenses to cover up his true feelings. The alcoholic has a deadly disease. It is estimated that 90% of alcoholics die of alcoholism, even though the death certificate may say heart attack, or cirrhosis of the liver or motor vehicle accident. This disease follows the same pattern as many other physical diseases, and can be described in the same way. The disease of Alcoholism has many stages and can be described as:

1. **Primary**(The main problem being the use and abuse of substances. Other problems come from using the drug.) (The Family As An Organism, page 6).
2. **Progressive**(The problem grows worse) (The Family As An Organism, page 6).
3. **Chronic**(The problem is long-term and does not occur in or over the span of just a few days. Often it takes years. The problems will not go away very quickly.) (The Family As An Organism, page 6).
4. **Potentially fatal**(The dependent is likely to die from the disease if he does not stop abusing drugs.) (The Family As An Organism, page 6).

They see the alcoholic's inside feelings of pain, fear and shame. They have to live with his defenses of anger, attack and arrogance (pride). Other family members become very uncomfortable and confused.

Everything they have tried to control the alcoholic or drug abuser has not worked. They get to the end of their rope, and do not know where to turn. The whole family starts to feel crazy. They don't know what to do, and most likely they have not heard about ALANON, where they can get free help. That is if they can ever admit to themselves that they have a bad problem. Many times they go on faking it. The more defenses that are put up, the more out of touch with reality both the family and the alcoholic become.

Putting on their fronts to their neighbors and going through the motions just like they are a normal American family. Although the family keeps trying to balance itself, no matter how hard they try, the alcoholic keeps them all upset and angry.

Since they can not cope with the alcoholic as a family, each member of the family begins to respond to the dependent or alcoholic in new and different ways in order to keep their own sanity (mental health). Both the alcohol addiction and the changes in the family usually happen very slowly. Matter of fact, they happen so slowly that no one realizes exactly how much they have changed for the worse. Slowly, the family members, just like the alcoholic, begin to hide their feelings so they won't get hurt (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 56) (The Family As An Organism, page 6). They start to develop a set of their own defenses to protect them from further pain that the alcoholic or drug addict is always causing. Both the family and the dependent grow more and more out of touch with reality. Each family member finds their own survival role. As the addiction grows, so does the craziness between the dependent's actions and the family reactions. He has been drinking for a long time and things have never been this bad. All the problems must be somebody else's fault. As the family changes, each child and every member of the family develops (forms) a certain defense pattern in order to survive. Unfortunately, these are not always positive adjustments. Once these defense patterns are established, they are very hard to get rid of (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 102) (The Family As An Organism page 17). The children of an alcoholic or drug addict will often go through their entire lives recovering to one degree or another from the damage done while being raised in an alcoholic family. Once developed (formed), these are patterns (ways) of behaving toward people that may stay with a child for life even though they do not apply outside of the family (The Family As An Organism, page 18) (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 84). This means that often, the family member of an alcoholic family will also react to healthy people like he does to other sick members of the family. Other people wonder why this person is so mistrustful, suspicious, and nasty. Being unable to switch out of this mode of behavior causes much trouble in life with relationships. Normal people who are not used to being treated like the members of an alcoholic family treat each other. People outside the family not being used to be treated like members of an alcoholic family treat each other is not the main problem. The biggest problem is that they will not tolerate being treated like members of dysfunctional families treat each other. This causes a lot of graduates of alcoholic families to lose lots of jobs every day of every year.

In order to survive as a member of a family with an alcoholic in it, each child will develop a certain type of psychological defense. The first child will develop a certain type of psychological defense in most all alcoholic families (The Family As An Organism, page 10).

All the defense patterns or personalities for the first child in most alcoholic families will be amazingly (surprisingly) similar. The defense pattern or personality for the second child in a dysfunctional (sick) or substance-abusing family will be different from that of the first, third or 4th children. The defense patterns will however, be amazingly similar for all of the second, third or fourth children in different families who have grown up with a substance abuser in the family. So as you can see, the alcoholic or drug addict not only messes up his own life up, he messes up the lives of all of his family (The Family As An Organism, page 6) (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 80). As this disease process slowly becomes worse and worse in the alcoholic, other family members slowly get sicker and more upset also. The people he loves the most are the ones who pay the highest price for his drinking or drugging (Wegscheider, S, 1981, Another Chance, pages 84-85).

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. It takes an average of _____ years for a person to turn alcoholic. That is a long time and contributes (adds) to the drinker feeling that he has not really caused any problems at all.
2. It is estimated that ___% of alcoholics die of alcoholism, even though the death certificate may say heart attack, or cirrhosis of the liver or motor vehicle accident.
3. What are the four stages of alcoholism?
4. What is ALANON?

5. The more defenses that are put up, the more out of touch with reality both the family and the alcoholic become.

STUDY QUESTIONS

6. Both the alcohol addiction and the changes in the family usually happen very slowly. Matter of fact, they happen so slowly that no one realizes exactly how much they have changed for the worst.

7. To protect themselves from the alcoholic, family members build their own _____.

8. Once these defense patterns are established, they are very hard to get rid of. The children will often go through their entire lives to one degree or another recovering from the damage done from living in an alcoholic family (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 88) (The Family As An Organism).

9. As this disease process slowly becomes worse and worse, in the alcoholic, other family members slowly get sicker and more upset also (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 88) (The Family As An Organism).

Now that we have established (shown) that the different family members do build up defenses to protect themselves from the alcoholic or drug addict, lets look a little closer at the kinds of defenses that they build (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 88).

SPECIFIC DEFENSE PATTERNS OF FAMILY MEMBERS

THE CHIEF ENABLER

The **chief enabler** is most often the spouse, wife or the girlfriend of the alcohol or drug dependent person. The Chief enabler however, can be a parent, friend or co-worker of the chemically dependent person. One of the most dangerous things that the Enabler does which only makes problems worse is to keep bailing the alcoholic out of the problems he gets into with his drinking (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 90, top). By fixing things up for the abuser, he or she is free to keep using all they want and they do not have to pay for the problems they cause. In reality, the enabler is doing the abuser much harm by taking over his responsibilities and bailing him or her out of trouble. The abuser learns that he does not have fix the messes he makes, someone else will do that for him. Once the chemical abuser figures out that he has an enabler to do things for him, he will demand that they keep bailing him out of trouble. If everyone keeps taking care of the abusers responsibilities, then he does not have to suffer any of the consequences (effects) of his behavior (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 98).

Guilt is one of the main weapons the alcoholic uses against the enabler if they do not come to his rescue. If they continue to bail him out of all his problems, the addict soon becomes helpless and dependent (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 94-95) (The Family As An Organism, graph page 9).

Although he demands that others do things for him, deep down he hates and resents being dependent. The more dependent he becomes the more he grows to hate himself. The more he hates himself, the more he hates those around him. This is true even though the enablers think that they are helping him. The more helpless the drinker becomes, the more he demands that others take care of him. It does not take long before family members start to hate him and each other (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 97).

Often it is the enabler who is closest to and the most depended upon by the abuser. As the addiction grows, the enabler finds him or herself picking up more and more of the abusers responsibility. The more responsibility they (enablers) accept for all the problems the alcoholic or drug abuser is causing, the more they hate themselves and eventually the alcoholic. Since the alcoholic becomes totally undependable, the

role of the chief enabler in the family system is to provide for, and take responsibility for the family and the abuser. The enabler is under a lot of pressure to take care of both the family and his or her own needs. This can be very painful and enablers eventually develop a special set of defenses in order to keep their sanity. As the chemically dependent person increasingly loses control, the chief enabler does more of the jobs and makes more of the choices that the drug abuser should be making for him or herself (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 95).

The Enabler does not know it, but all he or she is doing is helping the abuser to keep abusing. The enabler (helper who enables the drinker to keep drinking) suffers badly for all their efforts. Because the alcoholic uses and abuses them, enablers hide their feelings because of the pain they are suffering (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 98).

Feeling helpless, they become more and more depressed. Since their lives are not much fun, the enabler also becomes more and more **serious** and eventually nothing is funny anymore. The alcoholic or drug addict blames the enabler for everything bad that is happening to both him and the family.

The alcoholic is so strong with his blame, that often the enabler begins to believe that he or she might indeed be the cause of all the problems. The enabler wonders how anyone could rave on and on about how terrible they are unless there was really some truth to the matter. Sooner or later, to different degrees, enablers begin to **blame themselves** for the problems that the alcoholic or drug addict is causing (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 94-95) (The Family As An Organism, page 9).

They think that if they somehow had done things differently everything would be better and the alcoholic would not be so angry all the time (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 97).

Of course, the alcoholic or drug addict is more than willing to let the enabler take the blame for everything. Matter of fact the alcoholic will do everything in their power to keep the focus of blame off themselves and on the enabler. As long as the enabler thinks that many of the problems are his or her fault, the alcoholic can not only go on drinking, but they do not have to face themselves or their problems. Since nothing they do is good enough, and they cannot figure out a way to get out of their dilemma, they develop feelings of powerlessness. They do not feel that they have any control over anything that is happening to them. Usually, it is the enabler who is one of the last people in the world who still loves the alcoholic. Notice how the alcoholic repays them for their love and devotion. Not only is the alcoholic destroying himself, he is also taking down with him one of the few people in the world who cares about him at all (Wegscheider, G., 1981, Another Chance, page 92). Alcoholics will continually (without a break) blame the enabler for all the problems, day after day, night after night, month after month and year after year for all the problems that alcohol is causing (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 95 bottom). Eventually the enabler gets extremely (very) worried and depressed. In addition, enablers become very **fragile, weak and helpless** and they fill with **self pity**. They feel trapped in a nightmare and do not know what to do about it (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 95-96, bottom) (The Family As An Organism, page 9).

Feeling helpless and trapped, not knowing for sure if the problems are their fault or those of the alcoholic enablers get worse and worse. They walk around feeling helpless, brooding and feeling sorry for themselves. They are not aware that there is a free organization out there which will help them through their problems. ALANON, a wonderful, non-profit organization are experts at helping enablers cope with the terrible problems they are facing. Often with the help of ALANON, marriages which otherwise would have broken to pieces a long time ago can be saved (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 18-19).

If the enabler does not happen to discover ALANON, he or she will develop an additional damaging psychological defense. The enabler will become extremely **manipulative** (conning). They think, "maybe if I do this or that differently, the substance abuser won't get angry or drunk. Often, the enabler will at one time or another try to hide the bottle or throw out the drugs, but nothing like this works. The alcoholic gets angry because the enabler poured out good liquor.

The only thing left is for the Enabler to do the best they can to develop good strong psychological defenses to keep from going crazy. These defenses serve the purpose of covering up many painful feelings that belong to the enabler (See Diagram on next page) (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 92-93, top-bottom).

Diagram of Enabler

*THE WAY THE ENABLER LOOKS TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD *		
1. Super Responsible	3. Manipulative	5. Blaming
2. Serious	4. Helpful	6. Martyr
INSIDE FEELINGS OF ENABLER		
Fear		Guilt - Anxiety
Resentment		Self-Pity
Sadness		Hopelessness
7. Righteous	9. Protective	11. Fragile
8. Punitive	10. Caretaking	12. Tough

(The Family As An Organism, page 9).

In order to cope, the enabler stores up many strong feelings inside and buries them alive. They are not worked through or processed. These buried feelings cause much turmoil, (unrest) physical and mental illness. These feelings include hurt, anger, fear, guilt and pain. It is interesting to note that these feelings are almost exactly the same as the feelings that the alcoholic or drug addict bury and hide deep inside themselves. Nobody in the alcoholic or drug dependent family is looking at his or her true feelings. As you can see, this is not the picture of a healthy individual or family (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance page 97).

Although the enabler is only covering up his or her terrible feelings just to get by, this wall of defenses is often the only thing that other people see. All they see is the wall, a hard, bitter person. They can't see the pain that the wall covers up deep inside the enabler or helper (Wegscheider, 1981.).

STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1.The _____ is often the spouse, or girlfriend of the Chemically dependent person.
- 2.Who is an enabler and what does he or she do?
- 3.In reality, the enabler is doing the abuser much harm by taking over his responsibilities and bailing him or her out of trouble.
- 4.The more _____ the drinker becomes, the more he demands that others take care of him. It does not take long before family members start to hate him and each other.
- 5.As the chemically dependent person increasingly loses control, the _____ does more of the jobs and makes more of the choices that the drug abuser should be making for him or herself.
- 6.The Enabler is actually helping the abuser to _____.
- 7.The alcoholic or drug addict blames the enabler for everything bad that is happening to both him and the family. The alcoholic is so strong with his blame, that the enabler begins to _____ that he or she might indeed be the cause of all the problems.
- 8.Since nothing they do is good enough, and they cannot figure out a way to get out of their dilemma, they develop feelings of powerlessness. They do not feel that they have any control over anything that is happening to them.
- 9.The enabler often feels fragile, weak and _____.
- 10.The enabler can become very _____.

Despite all the pain, often Enablers continue taking responsibility for the drinker. A wife is allowing (letting) her husband to keep on drinking when she bails him out of jail and brings him home.

She is also allowing him to keep drinking when she pays the bills for him, or lies to the boss about him missing work. These actions all enable the drinker to keep drinking. They are all the wrong things to do. Picking up the dependents responsibilities for him or her hurts everybody. Why should the abuser stop drinking or taking drugs when an enabler is around to bail him or her out of all the trouble they get into. Why should they stop drinking everything is done for them? If the drug abuser is not allowed to face all the problems he or she has caused, why should they change? (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 98).

For a teenage alcoholic or drug abuser, it is the parents who are enablers. They enable the teenager to keep on drinking when they get him or her out of jail, pay bail or rescue the child from trouble in school. It is virtually impossible to be an alcoholic or drug addict and be a responsible husband, wife or employee at the same time. When the enabler helps the substance abuser out, he is not doing anyone any good (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, 101-102).

In many cases, the only way an alcoholic or problem drinker can learn that his drinking is destroying him and his family is when he is in trouble and feels it. He has to learn to bail himself out and not depend on others to do it for him. Usually, the trouble has to be pretty bad to even get his attention. His thinking gets so screwed up that anyone living with him or working close to him needs all the help they can get. Letting the alcoholic or drug addict experience (feel) the natural consequences of their screwed up behavior is one of the best therapies possible. Indeed, it is the only reasonable thing to do. Never bail a drinker out of trouble he or she gets into when drinking (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 100).

Mother Nature has a way of teaching alcoholics that they are way off base. It does this through making the alcoholic or drug abuser face the natural repercussions (results) of their irresponsible behavior. Don't interfere with the experiences that Mother Nature has in store for these people. If you were an alcoholic yourself, you know what we are talking about here. The more you drank, the crazier you got, and the more intense and terrible life got for you. Bad things started happening to get your attention let you know you were way off base. Instead of facing up to them, you looked for someone else to bail you out and to do all your work for you.

As long as others were bailing you out of trouble, you just kept right on drinking. Often, life has to get pretty terrible to get the attention of an alcoholic or drug abuser. Many times they have to watch drinking or drugging friends die around them, or kill others in traffic accidents.

Many alcoholics have lost everything, their houses, their wives, their cars, all their friends, and sometimes even all this is not enough to stop their drinking. Eventually, if the alcoholic keeps drinking, it will not matter whether there is an enabler around or not. He or she will get themselves into so much trouble that no enabler will be able to bail them out. Then they will really have to pay the piper. Alcoholism is a terrible disease.

Remember, there is free help for the family members of alcoholics. ALANON is an organization which will help the enabler, or the spouse of an alcoholic. ALATEEN is for the teenagers of an alcoholic family. Both organizations are free, and are more than glad to help families regain their sanity after having to deal with an alcoholic or drug abuser. A.A. is a free organization designed to help alcoholics. A.A. is the most successful organization in the treatment of alcoholism in the nation. A.A. helps more people, more successfully than any other treatment program going. It is a world wide organization (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 18) (The Family As An Organism, page 16-17).

Before joining any of these groups, remember that each A.A., ALANON and ALATEEN group has its own personality, just like any other group. If you or your spouse attend one of these groups and do not like it, you can always go to one which better fits your personality (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 18-207) (The Family As An Organism, page 16-17).

Often, A.A. groups change according to the length of sobriety their members have. Groups which deal with drinkers who are just trying to get sober are very different from groups which are more mature (older and wiser) and deal with alcoholics who have been sober for many years. The more mature groups deal more with life, spiritual matters, and personal growth, where the newer groups may spend a lot of time with "war stories" or trying to convince each other that they really do not want to drink because alcohol has completely destroyed their lives (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 216-217) (The Family As An Organism, page 16-17).

If you have any of these groups available to you, use them. Ultimately, you are responsible for your own sobriety (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 207). Nobody can do it for you, but A.A., ALANON and ALATEEN can go a long way toward helping you cope and understand the massive (gigantic) problems caused by alcohol.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What effect does the enabler have on the drinking of the alcoholic.
2. Letting the alcoholic or drug addict experience the _____ of their screwed up behavior is one of the best therapies possible.
3. Remember, there is free help for the family members of alcoholics. The name of the group where free help for the family is available is called _____.
4. _____ helps more people, more successfully than any other treatment program going.
5. Before joining any of these groups, remember that each A.A., ALANON and ALATEEN group has its own _____, just like any other group. If you or your spouse attend one of these groups and do not like it, you can always go to one which better fits your _____.

REFERENCES:

Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance: A hope filled book about what has seemed like a hopeless problem for many. The alcoholic family. Science and Behavior Books Inc. Palto Alto, California 94306.

PAMPHLETS:

The Family As An Organism.