

Alcoholism: A Disease that Affects the Entire Family

admin · Monday, December 29th, 2008



Alcoholism is an illness that involves every member of the family; a case in point is the fact that kids who come into [Alateen](#) rooms generally report that they have more problems dealing with the non-drinking parent than they do the alcoholic.

What? I don't have a problem! He... him... he's the alcoholic! He's the one who is in trouble all the time! He's the one who causes all the problems...

This might be true, but the alcoholic is also predictable. Kids can read an alcoholic like a book. Kids know when it's the right time to ask for extra money, or if they can go out with their friends; they also know when it's time to make themselves scarce and get out of the way. As far as the alcoholic is concerned kids know the routine. However, they never know where the bedraggled non-drinking parent is coming from next.

One minute the non-drinking parent is screaming at the alcoholic and the next minute she may be compassionately rescuing him from the consequences of his latest episode, i.e. dutifully cleaning up his messes, making excuses for him and accepting an increasing degree of unacceptable behavior.

The truth of alcoholism affects the entire family's life, the attitudes and thinking of everyone changes perhaps more dramatically than it does for the drinking spouse and is often hard to recognize. Why? Because it creeps up slowly.

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