

The wife says, "If only you were a better provider, or a more aggressive personality, or a smoother lover," "If only you didn't spend so much time away from home," or "If you just wouldn't hang around here all the time," or "If you would help me more," or "If you would just get out of the way . . ."

The alcoholic child says, "You never have time for me," and then, "Leave me alone." The alcoholic says, "You should help me more," and then says, "Mind your own business!" Do you get the picture? YOU LOSE. We can't win if we play the alcoholics' game because they make all the rules and change them faster than we can keep up with them! The alcoholic will always find something else to justify drinking, because drinking is the real name of the game.

It's a pretty bad blow to the ego to have to admit we don't have control over someone else — that we can't make them want to stop drinking for any of our reasons. It's not easy to admit defeat and give in to that powerful foe, alcoholism. Yet, this surrender is absolutely necessary if we are ever to have sane, happy lives again, if our relationships are to be saved from the ravages and destruction of alcoholism.

Sobriety, too, if it is to work, must be the alcoholic's responsibility. We are asking for trouble when we butt in and try to protect those we love from temptation, or try in any way to control them. As one man's angry wife put it in the middle of an argument: "I'm damn mad. But I'm not going out and hit the bottle! Is that what you're worried about? Well, let me tell you something. You can't make me drink! No matter how much you want to, you can't drive me to drink. That's my decision, and mine alone. So stop worrying."

Time spent trying to control another person's behavior is time wasted. So many more useful things can be done. We can join an Al-Anon group where an ever-growing number of men are turning to the Al-Anon program for help in coping with the effects of alcoholism in their lives.

SERENITY PRAYER

God grant me the Serenity
To accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
And Wisdom to know the difference.

The Al-Anon Family Groups are a fellowship of relatives and friends of alcoholics who share their experience, strength and hope in order to solve their common problems. We believe alcoholism is a family illness and that changed attitudes can aid recovery.

Al-Anon is not allied with any sect, denomination, political entity, organization or institution; does not engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any cause. There are no dues for membership. Al-Anon is self-supporting through its own voluntary contributions.

Al-Anon has but one purpose: to help families of alcoholics. We do this by practicing the Twelve Steps, by welcoming and giving comfort to families of alcoholics, and by giving understanding and encouragement to the alcoholic.

*The Suggested Preamble to the Twelve Steps,
Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc.*



Approved by
World Service Conference Al-Anon Family Groups

This pamphlet is also available in:
Spanish, French, Norwegian

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Al-Anon Is For Men

Al-Anon
Family
Groups



Al-Anon Is For Men

Husbands, fathers, sons, brothers or friends of alcoholics, who feel their personal lives are, or have been affected by close contact with a problem drinker, are eligible for Al-Anon membership.

The Al-Anon Family Groups is a fellowship of men and women who are making an effort to achieve a comfortable way of living by sharing their experience, strength and hope with one another. Members meet informally to discuss how their attitudes and reactions to the disease of alcoholism may be aggravating their situations.

The Al-Anon program based on the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous offers both men and women a way to find serenity and build self-confidence.

WHY IS AL-ANON FOR YOU?

When you read the First Step of Al-Anon, "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable," you may say, "This program's not for me! I manage my life all right. Don't tell ME I'm powerless over alcohol! You must have me confused with the alcoholic!" That's a usual reaction of the non-alcoholic to the First Step — due to a misinterpretation of its meaning. Actually, a correct understanding of this Step is the key to learning to live a serene life.

Let's start with the second half of the First Step, "... our lives had become unmanageable." You may think you are managing very well, but ...

If you have been affected by someone else's drinking —

How well are you managing those social occasions when your wife gets falling down drunk?

How well are your children being cared for?

Do you find you're forcing your children to take sides, even though you have the feeling it might be wrong?

Do you think your children have been affected, that they might need help?

How well are you managing the budget? Do you find that money which should have gone to pay bills has gone to buy liquor?

How well are you managing to control yourself when you find your wife's drunk again despite her promises? Are you crushed?

Do you find yourself taking on all the responsibilities for family life?

How well are you managing to maintain a loving relationship with the woman you married, based on mutual trust and respect?

Do you resent the fact that drinking has made your loved one quiet, passive, or withdrawn?

How happy are you with yourself?

Do you find you can't sleep nights, worrying about the future?

Do you find yourself worrying about other family members when you are away from home?

Do you find you're losing your temper over trivial things?

Do you find you're having trouble concentrating on your job?

Do you feel uncomfortable covering up for somebody else's behavior?

Did you say your life had not become unmanageable? — and if you're thinking about Al-Anon because the problem drinker is one of your parents, or children, a close member of the family, a loved one or friend, — are some of these problems *yours*, too?

You probably think alcohol is the cause of all your family problems. You may question the need for you to get help for yourself when it's obviously the alcoholic who is making your life miserable.

Thousands of other men have wondered the same thing. They say, "I'm good at my job, provide for my family, fulfill all my responsibilities at home. If only the alcoholic would learn to manage her/his affairs without causing so much chaos, everything would be O.K." You may enjoy a few drinks now and then without overdoing it, so you can't understand how

someone can lose control the way your loved one does.

"O.K." you say, "but it's not MY fault my life is unmanageable. If she/he would straighten out everything would be very manageable again.

Stop kidding yourself. How much time are you spending worrying about the drinking? Do you think you would spend less time worrying about sobriety, if there were some? You've become obsessed with drinking. Yes, obsessed. Most loved ones of alcoholics are; it's a natural reaction. You spend your time trying to prevent it, cover up for it, pay for it and do two jobs — your own and the alcoholic's, or you try to force the alcoholic to do what you think ought to be done.

Perhaps, all of a sudden, the drinking stops. Then you spend as much time and energy second-guessing as you did trying to force sobriety. If your loved one were to find sobriety, wouldn't you react the same way: Don't you think you'd walk on eggs, fearful of saying the wrong thing? — that you'd make sure the alcoholic didn't get over-tired or didn't drink when tempted? — that you'd make sure the alcoholic was busy every minute so she/he wouldn't think about a drink?

And if the alcoholic isn't your wife — isn't the story familiar even if the main character is different?

Are you starting to see that an awful lot of what YOU DO is being determined by what SOMEBODY ELSE DOES? That certainly isn't managing your life. How did you get into this bind in the first place?

Let's go back to take a look at the first part of the First Step. We get into trouble when we fail to realize we are "powerless over alcohol." We're powerless over who drinks it, when they drink it and what it does to them. We're powerless to make them stop, and we're not responsible for their becoming alcoholic either, no matter what they say. Alcoholics, in trying to excuse their drinking, very often blame whoever is handiest — spouse, father, mother, boss, friend.