



## Family needs to be treated along with alcoholic

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Looking through the eyes of a therapist as well as the child of an alcoholic, I have both compassion and empathy for the alcoholic and the family. Every individual who is active in alcoholism/addiction is impacting so many others in his life.

It not only is important for the alcoholic to get help but also the family. Until this happens, life will never be quite the same and, for some, the damage may take more time to heal. Do know that the toxic environment alcoholism creates for a family does not have to stay this way.

The ramifications of alcoholism can be plentiful. Family, friends, employers, co-workers and many others are affected. When a family is dealing with alcoholism it is important for everyone to seek help together. The stress from living with someone who is actively drinking can be overwhelming. However, as the problems did not occur overnight, it is going to take time, patience and effort from all who are involved.

Even if the alcoholic does not seek help, the family can get on the road to recovery. It is important to put supports in place and stop enabling the problem. Without recovery, all will continue to experience negativity in their lives. Children could grow up to become adults with significant issues themselves if their emotional problems go untreated through the years. There also could be guilt, anxiety, depression, distrust and loneliness that continue to thrive in those who do not seek treatment.

It is important for those involved in

the alcoholic's life to develop an understanding of this disease. Without knowledge, we become angry, resentful and depressed. Out of love, we try to fix the problem even though it is out of our control.

Like the alcoholic, families also can be in denial. We tend to lose perspective of our own lives as we get so wrapped up in the alcoholic's and become preoccupied trying to control him. Often times we become a part of the problem rather than a part of the solution.

There are three things we can do to help ourselves:

- Families need to learn about alcoholism and how best to deal with the disease.
- Families need to realize it is not their fault. They did not cause it nor can they cure it.
- Families need to get help in order to create a normal existence for themselves.

Through support groups offered by Al-Anon and Alateen and other local service providers in our communities, families can learn to cope with their environments and the negative consequences and can learn ways to move forward with their lives.

Never forget that we have the choice to make changes in our lives, and we need to take responsibility in making positive, constructive choices, the same as the alcoholic.

Always remember:

- I did not cause it.
- I cannot cure it.
- I cannot control it.
- I can take care of myself/family.

- I can celebrate being me!

For more information regarding support groups available for families, visit [www.al-anon.alateen.org](http://www.al-anon.alateen.org).

For those suffering with alcoholism, it is important to seek professional help and to attend support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org), to assist with the path to recovery.

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