Counseling the non-addicted Partner of an Alcoholic

An online CEU course offered at CEU-Hours.com
Material in this course is excerpted from:

GETTING THEM SOBER
Volume One 4th Edition
- - you can help!

TOBY RICE DREWS

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Preface by Michael Norgaard, LPC, NCC

Welcome to the Getting Them Sober continuing education course series. The professional continuing education is based on selected material from some of the titles in the famous “Getting Them Sober” series by Toby Rice Drews. These books are frequently utilized in clinical settings and the author has presented live workshops for helping professionals based on this material, including keynote speakerships at selected state NAADAC conferences.

There are two primary audiences for this material. It is intended to assist the helping professional in facilitating empowerment of the family member(s) of alcoholics. Many of the vignettes presented within and advice is in first person to those who are directly affected, but is equally valuable to the counselors, social workers, psychologists and other helping professionals providing care and assisting with these frequently emotionally charged issues. It is also intended to help family members of those in recovery and those in need of recovery. It is our intent for the learner to come away with an enhanced understanding of this disease and, more specifically, of it’s affects on the non-addicted individuals in it’s path. Application of the basic principals taught within should serve to enhance your clinical practice with individuals dealing with drinking alcoholics and recovering alcoholics and those that love them.

Introduction

Alcoholism isn't just drinking.

It’s a family disease. It causes the wife and kids to become as obsessed with the alcoholic as the alcoholic is with the booze.
While the alcoholic lies passed out, anesthetized, the family goes through the years of his drinking — stark, raving sober. Their world is like no sane family’s world. They believe lies, expect miracles, have him locked up, bail him out, wish he were dead, and pray that he gets home safely.

Sobriety, too, is a family affair.

Yes, it’s true that an alcoholic has to want to be sober before he or she will ever stay sober. But there’s a lot the family can do to help promote the best atmosphere to help the alcoholic to want sobriety.

Following the suggestions in this book won’t guarantee sobriety for the alcoholic -- but if the spouse of the alcoholic changes his or her behavior, as outlined in this book, the alcoholic has an 80 percent better chance to get sober than before.

Where does that statistic come from? This book incorporates the best of all known therapies for the family of the alcoholic -- therapies that have been tried and tested all over the world with over one million family members. These principles work. This book will show you how to handle hundreds of situations that come up in a relationship with an alcoholic -- situations that have always "thrown" you. And it will show you how to handle such circumstances in ways that eliminate your guilt, and yet take into account your very normal feelings of rage.

It will teach you how to cope, not just for a moment, but over a sustained period of time, and how to clear your head and begin to make rational decisions again. It won't tell you, perhaps like a well-meaning friend might do, to "throw the bum out." Only you know what you can live with and what you can't. On the other, I know you don't need any more outsiders telling you to "stop attacking the poor guy" and to "get yourself together."

You need support. You need information about what alcoholism is, and what it is doing and will do to your whole family. This book gives suggestions about what you can do in specific situations, step-by-step directions on how to accomplish your goals and the results you can expect when you begin to make these changes.

Your reading can open the way to a new beginning for you. The changes suggested here are difficult, yet simple. No one can do them all -- overnight. You can keep a record of your progress.

Learn to write down your feelings, your reactions, to be able to see them from a distance. Above all, be gentle with yourself. See every change you make in your behavior -- even if it only lasts five minutes -- as a building block. After making the changes outlined in this book, you will find yourself living a more peaceful life whether your alcoholic is still drinking or not. This is a promise.

NOTE: This book is written for men and women. We have not used both masculine and feminine pronouns throughout the book, however, because this would be impractical and distracting. Please substitute "he" for "she" (if necessary) for your particular situation, because the principles of this book pertain to individuals involved with alcoholism, regardless of their gender.

Chapter 1
No More Taking the Blame for Someone Else's Drinking!

You cannot cause anyone to drink.
You cannot control anyone’s drinking.
You cannot cure anyone's drinking.

You probably feel guilty or resentful so much of the time that it’s been a long time since you did not experience these feelings. These emotions are very normal for a person in your circumstances.
When the alcoholic acts rotten, you feel like a resentful saint. For example, sometimes out of the blue, when things are going well, you seem to say something that "triggers" the alcoholic to blow up and get a drink. Or you overreact all the time to everything he says or does because you've got so many pent-up feelings of frustration.

When this happens, the alcoholic reaches for the bottle or goes slamming out the door to the bar.

"It's all your fault!" he accuses. You've heard it so often, and more than likely you believe it by now. The alcoholic needs you to keep believing this so he can dump the responsibility for his drinking on you.

Are you responsible for the drinking?

Look at it in this light: Can you make a tubercular patient cough? Can you make him stop coughing? Tuberculosis is a disease. Alcoholism is a disease. You cannot cause, control or cure a disease. You cannot make your alcoholic drink; neither can you make him stop. He bends his elbow; he makes the choice. Always remember this.

What can you do when he accuses you -- or when his family accuses you of causing him to drink? When you feel capable of speaking calmly, say this (only once if they'll really hear you that way): "I am not responsible for anyone's drinking. If he chooses to drink, that's his business."

Then, simply be quiet. Leave the room if you have to, in order to avoid an argument. You don't ever have to discuss it again. They'll get the idea.

What will this accomplish? Once you really start to believe you are not responsible for his behavior, you will no longer be able to be emotionally blackmailed. You'll stop feeling guilty and you'll stop thinking you need to be punished for making your alcoholic drink.

And probably for the first time in his life, the alcoholic will feel that someone is saying, "I love you enough to let you grow up and be responsible for your own life."

God, give me the courage to cope with the situation that threatens to rob my peace of mine

Chapter 4
Don't Pour Out The Booze

He'll get more - doesn't he always?  
It costs too much to replace it. (It's your budget too.)

Mae was a tall, energetic woman who, even after twenty-five years of marriage to Phil, her alcoholic husband, had a great deal of enthusiasm for life. But she was beginning to look harried, drawn.

For the past five years, she had managed to do quite well, keeping an emotional distance from her husband. He was drinking in bars most of the time. Then Phil's condition changed, physically. His illness progressed and he couldn't get outside like he used to. He was too weakened, too tired. Besides, he had temporarily lost his driver's license after his third encounter with the police, "driving while drinking." And his favorite bars were too far away to walk to.

Years ago Mae had gone through her period of jealousy and feelings of deprivation and loneliness when her husband drank at the bars every night. But she adjusted, because she wanted to stay with him for various reasons at that time. So to not go crazy, she blocked out a life of her own and built a "bubble" around herself, emotionally, causing her feelings of anxiety and rage to be submerged. She channeled her energies into her kids, her job, her aging mother, her church
work. They lived a life of detente, a somewhat peaceful coexistence, accepting the fact that if she wanted him there -- and she did -- then it had to be on his terms.

Mae really did believe things would go on like this, forever. She always thought he would keep his job, drink, come home, pass out, and, if she stayed out of his way, there'd be some kind of animal comfort in knowing he'd be home at night, eventually.

She even stopped feeling jealous when she read about alcoholism and how most men, after drinking as long as her husband had, were much more interested in the bottle than a woman -- even when they acted like that wasn't so. And even if he did become interested in the female on the next bar stool, he probably couldn't stay conscious long enough to have a sexual encounter-- or even be potent enough to start one. Besides, he was really too afraid to even try, thinking he'd probably fail. That part of his life -- and his pathetic attempts to still try to occasionally scare Mae about the "other women" -- had long ago lost its effect on her.

But Mae forgot about the fact that the disease of alcoholism is a progressive one. She often thought about it being fatal, and she vacillated between sometimes wishing he would just die, so it'd be over with and she'd have some peace-- and feeling scared and sorry for him, that he would die if he didn't stop. She was frightened for herself at being left entirely alone, and experienced nagging guilt over her thoughts --and feelings. She knew alcoholism was progressive, but she didn't think it would happen so soon. You see, one of the illusions Mae swallowed when her husband acted like he was so powerful for so many years had the effect of making Mae believe her husband was as invincible to this disease's progression as he said he was. Oh, he often claimed if he didn't stop, it would "get him too." But he really didn't believe that, way down deep, most of the time. He was scared and he kept trying to convince himself -- and acting like - he had forever.

As the sign says in some alcoholism detoxification units, WE DON'T HAVE TIME TO TAKE OUR TIME.

An alcoholic often believes he truly has all the time in the world to finally make that decision to surrender his sickness, to give it up and get well. He often, when still committed to it, believes he can somehow finally outwit that very cunning, baffling and powerful alcoholism.

And wives often despair because they also have been deceived by this illusion. "God protects drunks and fools." so goes the old myth - the myth that perpetuates the idea that the alcoholic can slide by, can stay at one stage of the disease and just hide there indefinitely, can just hang in there without going further, without truly getting well.

That's the illusion May and Phil were living under. She even hoped, much of the time, that things would stay the same, not change, not get worse. She did not realize it might be good for him to "get worse" --then, hopefully, he might hurt enough to decide to get well. Both of their hopes in this area were understandable.

He was too scared to give it up -- yet. She didn't want the boat rocked ~ it had taken too many years to get this much peace in their home.

But now Phil was home a lot. Drinking at home -- at night and on weekends. Somehow, it had been easier on Mac when she didn't have to see it.

So it started driving her crazy, all over again.

She started to mark the bottles, pour them out, empty half of their contents, hide them, find them and scream and cry and beg him to stop. She stopped spending time with her women friends because she was too busy, always looking for bottles to throw out or pour out.

That's when Mae showed up at the therapy group.
"I thought I had this thing licked. I was coping with it. Our house was calmer. Why did he have to go and get arrested for drunk driving? Why does he have to get physically sicker? And now I have that extra worry about his health, about his ability to keep any job. I can't stand it any more."

I made some suggestions to Mac:

1. Accept that this is a hard time for you. Be very gentle with yourself right now. Treat yourself very lovingly, nurture yourself. Give yourself little splurges - and big ones-- when you can afford them. But, certainly, at least, little ones.

2. Try to remember that it can be good that he's getting sicker, because it won't drag out forever. When alcoholics start getting sicker, they often start getting better. At least, when he's hurting so bad he just may decide he can't stand it any longer -- and decide to get help.

3. Group support is very important for you. You need regular reassurance that it's necessary for you to become detached from his problem. Try to not rescue him from the consequences of his disease. As Al-Anon says, let the crises happen. You will need support to prevent you from experiencing guilt and pity for him. Keep your compassion at a distance. "Remember, you can't save him, even if you want to," I told Mac over and over. Temporarily "saving" him was only postponing his final surrender to true recovery anyway. So it wasn't really helping him get better.

4. Finally, we gently, but firmly, told Mac: "Don't pour out the booze," I pleaded. "The next bottle you throw out might be just the one that gets him so sick that he will wind up in a hospital God forbid that you should prevent that from happening!"

Mae took a vacation at her sister's home, came back refreshed, and was able to leave his bottles to him. She gave up his problem and she kept her peace of mind.

Her husband? He got so scared by her lack of worry that he signed himself into a hospital!

He's been sober a month now.

_Cause me to realize thy loving kindness in the morning, for in thee do I trust._

**Chapter 6**

_Don't Be Afraid of Losing Him Because You're Changing_

_You're not as dependent as you think you are._
_Your alcoholic often needs you more than (s)he will ever admit._
_It's very hard to lose an alcoholic._

This chapter deals with what I call the "closet fear." If anyone were to ask me to name one thing that I believe stops most spouses of alcoholics from making changes in their relationships -- changes they know will help -- it's the fear that the alcoholic partner will leave.

I once heard it said most succinctly: "I was afraid of being rejected by a reject." Most of the audience winced when they heard that -- they thought no one else had ever had that terrible thought. It seemed so dastardly to think of the alcoholic in those terms—but that's one of the most natural, normal feelings the spouse of the alcoholic has. For years, the alcoholic has told you "you're the cause of it all," that you never do enough or do it right. You feel lower than a worm (except for the few times you feel like a saint). The alcoholic, on the other hand, is your tin god. _But not in society's eyes._ You know, and he knows, he is considered a reject. What could be worse than him leaving you, especially when you've invested all those years and expended your energy in an effort to help him?
And what do you get for it? He has you scared to death that he will leave you at the drop of a hat if you don't continue to do as he wants.

Now, most of the suggestions in this guide are deceptively simple; they seem "easy" to many people who do not live with an alcoholic, but any wife knows that as soon as she starts putting any of them into practice, her alcoholic will kick up a row.

Which brings us to an interesting point: Who is really controlling your relationship? I'll bet you've been called the manager – the mommy. And the poor alcoholic is just shoved around by you, especially when he's feeling ashamed of past acts and slinks around the house, "taking abuse" from you.

But let's take a second look. Who is controlling whom – from behind-the-scenes? Who has whom revolving her life around him twenty-four hours a day? Who is thinking, worrying, stewing about him all the time? Neglecting your children, your hair, your mental condition, your intellectual improvement- everything? Who has you thinking that a million women "out there" are waiting for him? One alcoholic's wife, Miriam, has this to tell: "I left Joe for ten whole days -- just to show him who needs whom. Do you know what? When I came home, he didn't even know I'd been gone!"

How do you deal with this?

First, you must remember two very important facts:

1. The alcoholic is an addict -- a very dependent person. His dependence is not just on alcohol -- he is very dependent on you. He needs you.

2. The alcoholic is a denier- he denies his alcoholism. He denies he is dependent on you. Instead, he says that you need him more than he needs you.

Knowing this -- internalizing these truths -- is very important, especially at the beginning of your recovery. It can give you the courage you need to start to make changes. I know the guilt you feel can keep you from changing: Are you thinking you are being "unfair" by "using" this knowledge of his dependency on you? Or are you saying to yourself, "He won't leave me if I make changes. He needs me!" GOOD! None of the changes you are going to make are unethical or vicious or wrong in any way. As a matter of fact, they are good for you, for the alcoholic and for the children. Understanding that your alcoholic needs you very much -- and using this knowledge to help you get stronger- thereby helping him to get well, is perfectly fine. After a while, when you are more able to, you will make changes just because they are good for you. But, right now, remember that he needs you and that you will probably not lose him -- even though he may threaten it -- as you grow.

What happens if you do lose him? Some alcoholics do storm out, calling your bluff, trying to scare you back into your place. Most come back, if you want them. But the way your relationship is now, you could probably replace your alcoholic with 1,000 others in one day by placing this ad in you Sunday newspaper: "Wanted: one mate; drunk 50 percent of the time; come and go as you please. Grateful family waits at home. All your housework done. Very few responsibilities expected to be met. You may interview family at your convenience to see if we meet your requirements."

You see, once you make these changes, you'll start to feel so good about yourself that you most likely won't worry about him leaving you. You will like yourself so much that the "new you" will know she deserves a husband who respects her, likes her and treats her well. And when you begin to believe that and act like you believe it, your husband will very probably treat you that way. I know it's difficult to believe that now; but it's true. I know it is - but you have to take a little step of faith and start making some changes and then you'll see that it's true.

God, help me to take my steps by faith and to keep on walking toward the wholeness you have for me~
Chapter 14
Don't Believe "Drunk Is Fun!"

He's absolutely crazy if he acts like it's fun.
Living with him is like living in an insane asylum- without doctor~
No one in the "outside world" who is not an alcoholic thinks his world is fun -- or sane!

Carol sat in my office with her brow wrinkled, trying to believe me.

I repeated, "He's not having fun out there!"

"But you've been telling me that for weeks and he comes in all puffed up and smug and gives me that horrible grin -- like he has the world all wrapped up just the way he wants it and like he has such contempt for me!" She was crying. The anguish had been going on for so long, and there didn't seem to be any hope that it would change.

Carol went on, "I know you told me not to talk to Ted about what we talk about, just to do the changes, but I got so mad at him. I yelled at him last week, fight after my therapy session. I told him I knew he wasn't having any fun. And I thought that would stop him from trying to hurt me with the idea that he goes out there where all the women want him, in those bars.

"But I was really thrown by what he said. I got so angry! He outsmarted me again! He acted like he knew what I was going to say and he knew just what to say to hook me into being afraid again.

"He became real serious-looking, like he was the sober one and I was the drunk. And then he started talking to me in that tone of voice I hate -- like he's a social worker. He sure can pull that one off when he's drunk -- and get me to react just as I would if I didn't know he was drunk!

"He told me, 'That's right, honey, I'm not having fun out there. What ever made you think otherwise? I've got a disease! And that's why you'll have to be patient!' And then he just grinned at me.

"I could have killed him!"

Not every alcoholic is like Carol's husband. He has a college degree and was a counselor at a halfway house for adolescent boys before his drinking grew worse. But there's one thing he does have in common with a lot of alcoholics: a knowledge of manipulation skills.

Let's take a look at the dynamics of that discussion between Carol and Ted. Let's see what really happened. Ted accomplished several things in one fell swoop:

1. He used his "social worker voice" on her, knowing it hooked into her feelings of inferiority about her own sanity.

2. He succeeded in making her temporarily forget that he is sick. Carol didn't fall for this again, though. She kept this analogy in mind when he tried to pull it off again. I asked her to think this way whenever he would try the I'm-the-doctor-you're-the-patient routine again: "Think, imagine, that he is where he belongs -- in the hospital, getting treatment for his very sick condition -- his physical and mental illness. Then, you visit him. You've been peaceful for a few days, because he is away from the house. You walk into the room and he pretends he's the gracious host and you're the patient, about to be admitted to the hack wards of a mental hospital. But he has the pajamas on!"
"Imagine the look on the real doctor's face when he happens to walk in the room at that time, seeing and hearing all this. The doctor confronts your husband with the reality that he's the patient and you are the visitor."

The next time her husband tried to make her feel crazy, Carol tried this. She "tuned him out," kept her mouth shut, and became very thoughtful. She thought about this imaginary scene of her husband being where he belonged: in the hospital. Then she looked at him very differently. She was shocked and horrified by his irrational behavior, but detached from it too.

And he saw her detachment.

But more importantly, Carol felt that detachment. That was the first time Carol was able to give his disease back to him, where it belonged.

Your husband probably uses the same kind of technique to make you blow up. Your husband may not succeed at making you think he's a doctor and you're a patient, but he probably does make you think you're a bad mother or too religious or a lousy housekeeper. What's his way of "getting to you"?

If your husband and Ted changed places for three weeks, Ted would find a way to make you explode with anger and/or fear, just the way your husband does now. Likewise, your husband would "get to" Carol. That's one of the horrible ways the disease of alcoholism works. When the alcoholic is still sick, he always does this to his wife. After that happened with Ted, he went out again that night, played his "games," and came in looking like he had had a good time. This happened in spite of the fact that he had just told her the day before, "It is true - I'm not having any fun. How could I? I have a disease."

What's really going on here?

Sure, Ted goes out to "have fun." But it's with hate and resentment and feat in his heart. He knows, no matter how much he denies it, that it's not at all as innocent as he says it is. No matter how much "Charlie down the street" says, "Ted isn't doing anything wrong." (That's one of the excuses Ted always gives Carol.)

But, is he having fun?

Ted is charming. But so are most alcoholics.
Ted is attractive. He has a way with words. Most alcoholics know how to make a surface connection rather quickly with people, especially with those members of the opposite sex who "hook" easily into their games.

But what happens after that? What happens when Ted begins talking? He attacks; he puts his wife down; he manipulates.

He thinks he has such great friends. And they're all as sick as he is, down at the bat N his drinking buddies. They make hearty promises to each other- break them and forget them. They have contempt for each other and for themselves. 

*Ted gets deeper into his sickness with every encounter he chooses to make in that bar atmosphere.*

Do other women "have" him? *Nobody "has" Ted -- except his sickness. That's what "has" Ted.*

Ted is too wrapped up in his fears, resentments, and hates to relate at all, in any appropriate way, for more than a short time, to anyone.

But Ted's denial system doesn't just mean he denies his drinking. He needs to deny -- because he is very, very ill -- that these other behaviors are sick. He needs to pretend to himself and his wife and *others-* that he is *in control.*

So, if Ted's not having fun, and if Carol is detached, she doesn't have to put up with his behavior.

If Carol is going to get her perspective back -- *if she's going to stop "hooking" into his disease ~ she's got to get away from his disease. She has to give his disease back to him. And that means he, not she, will then start getting the painful consequences of his actions.*

So, how does Carol do this? Some people can become detached, if their alcoholics aren't as cruel as Carol's, while staying with them, and not leaving them.

Other people find that living with someone who tries to emotionally threaten them ten times in one day is too much to live with. In such a situation, one must keep a guard up for so long that it's like living a lion tamer's existence.

Every woman has to find the right way for her to get out from under his disease. Read this book. Try using the ideas in it. Talk to a counselor. Reason things out. But remember: You do not have to be trapped.

*God is faithful. He will not allow you to be tempted above your capacities, but he will make a way to escape for you.*

**Chapter 15**

**Tell Your Families! Only If You Want To!**

*Both sets of parents are adults.*

*He does have a disease.*

*You are not a failure because your husband got sick.*
This is yet another problem that needs to be dealt with – how to handle the feelings of his parents and yours. Would they blame you – or feel you were a failure -- if he contracted diabetes? People don't often act rationally when it comes to alcoholism; but now that you have the facts, you can be rational and hope they will understand.

Here are the facts to keep in mind:

1. You don't owe the world an explanation.
2. You are an adult. You don't have to tell mommy or daddy everything any more.
3. If you're sure you're going to get a lot of flak about it - - why tell them? Forget it, unless, or course, you want to stew about it, and become exhausted and mad at yourself.

Drop the guilt feelings. Get into doing something enjoyable, If you do, you'll forget about your guilt, and when you do remember your worry, you'll be so refreshed, you'll be able to think about it rationally and finalize your decision. Remember also that your decision whether to tell the parents is just a choice, not an important life decision. Don't exaggerate its importance (In the alcoholic home, so much seems so important all the time. Everything is magnified out of proportion.) If it's not necessary to tell the parents, if it will just hurt them, if it will just have repercussions on you, then do the sensible thing and for everyone's sake, drop it. Give me the wisdom to be sensible in my decision-making.

Chapter 16
Mean What You Say and Say What You Mean

Think before you make a threat or a promise.
You can conquer your guilt feelings.
Learn to accept yourself as a human being.

One of my clients, Caroline, recently wore an outfit that seemed to blend with the decor of my office. She was wearing a Mexican poncho over a loosely fitting dress, and knee socks with sandals.

Near her, on the wall next to bamboo roll-up shades, is my favorite Diego Rivera print, framed in heavy fruitwood. But Caroline's words did not coincide with her appearance. She sounded scared, small, and was lacking in self-confidence.

Her husband, Josh, had just outmaneuvered her so well that her head was still spinning when she walked in.

"I decided to try to get courageous and follow through on your suggestion to just ask him to leave when he got nasty, instead of explaining and discussing," she started.
Caroline and Josh are separated. He visits her from time to time, when she can handle it. Someday soon I hope she will be able to go beyond simply "handling it" to creatively deciding what she wants from life. Then she will go after her goals B to be content, peaceful- instead of just getting through her husband's sickness and coping with cruelty.

Caroline continued, "So, Josh came in, looking crazy again m you know, with that same look on his face I have described to you. Well, he started trying to hurt me, emotionally, again. And before I even had a chance to ask him to leave- he turned around and announced he was going to leave because he realized he was intolerable again. Then he smirked and packed his bag- and before you knew it- I was begging him to stay!"

Caroline felt Josh was reading her mind. I countered, "No, Josh isn't Superman. We're dealing with a disease that's cunning, baffling and powerful. It's alcoholism that's powerful, not Josh." I told her this, knowing she'd have to be reminded of it for months before the impact of it would begin to sink in. Eventually, she will start to see the disease as powerful, instead of Josh. Then we discussed what she could have done instead of begging him to stay. She could have said simply that it was fine if he left. She didn't have to yell it, or repeat it.

When you're doing what's right for you, it's okay to say it once, simply, and then refuse to discuss anything further. If that's a new behavior for you, and it scares you, you can leave the house or room for a while, and ask him not to be there when you get back.

If you made a mistake and asked him not to leave, you can think about what you've said and say, "No, I changed my mind. You can leave. In fact, I'd prefer it."

You don't have to debate, discuss, or retaliate to "prove" you are sane when he accuses you of not knowing what you want. The quieter you are when you put this new behavior into practice, the easier it will be on you. Afterwards -- you will experience less guilt.

Most wives of alcoholics have more trouble dialing with their own guilt than with the pain from the battering they receive. That's what keeps them stuck in old behavior patterns. You must find ways to lessen your guilt feelings. If you don't yell, you will avoid or lessen the stomach pain and anxiety that accompanies guilt; you will be less afraid; you will know, in a very deep sense, that you have done what's been your best for you, and your family.

And that is why it is so important for the wife to try very hard to calmly state, "No, you cannot do this to me" or "You must leave" or whatever needs to be said. This will enable her to carry through emotionally.

If you could not manage to remain calm, it is very important that you learn to quickly accept your humanness, and just promise yourself to try harder to be calm, the next time. This will help you to get rid of that destructive guilt. You must
try to remember that God is not interested in hurting you, in punishing you -- your human reaction was very normal. So, take it easy on yourself. Be gentle with the person you are.

These changes are difficult, and they are going to be slow. They will be very hard at first. But it will get easier. Your guilt will ease.

Remember when the guilt sets in: You are helping your husband when you do what's right for you and him, when you say no to allowing his disease to hurt you. You are helping him not to sink deeper into his disease; therefore, you are helping him to stay alive, to get and stay sober no matter what he says. He's too sick to understand that, too disoriented to appreciate it. Please don't expect him to understand. In fact, expect him not to understand. It's a part of his disease. But, if you follow these ideas' you will get healthier and you will help him to make the choice to get well.

*When my emotions are in turmoil, O God, I pray that you will be there to speak peace, healing and hope.*

**Chapter 17**

**Deal With His Arrogance!**

*He is only a paper tiger.*

*The real worm sees him as pathetic.*

*You are a lot more powerful than you think you are.*

Eight of us sat in a circle in my living room, which also doubles as my office where I see my clients (families of alcoholics). Rosemary flopped herself in the rocker; Carrie sank deep in the wing chair. Both of them bolted straight up when Madeline said she wanted to talk about her husband's "incredible arrogance."

"He lost another job -- which, by the way, I had mixed feelings about," Madeline began explaining. "Of course I was upset that he was getting obviously sicker -- especially when I saw that he was denying the reason why he lost the job. He keeps saying, 'Accounting just isn't for me.' Well, he has been an accountant for fifteen years, on and off; and it's true that he didn't stay in one job -- he always seemed either to get fired or quit just before he would have gotten fired, on the pretext that 'it wasn't his kind of work.' Then he'd manage to find something else, lose that job, and it was the same thing all over again.

"And what's strange is that he'd go to an entirely different line of work, for a few years, anyway. Then he would say, 'it isn't for me,' and then he would go back to that first line of work he had left.
He kept up this same pattern for seventeen years! He lost nine jobs in seventeen years. It would seem fine if they were his choices, decisions he made to try to better himself, but, instead, they all seemed like frantic running all the time. "I guess what really bothers me now, though, is what I'm seeing as the reasons for all his jumping around. He lives with such hate inside him. All the time he tells me how he resents this and resents that. It really interferes with his work. He spends so much time doing what he wants on the job -- not following orders and even deliberately disobeying them because he thinks he knows what's right, or because he resents the boss for having money, that he doesn't spend his time doing his job right. When he gets told off, it increases his resentment, and then everything goes downhill real fast."

Madeline went on, "And to tell you the whole truth, I'm upset too, because whenever I've gone to those office parties with him, he has acted so weird with the women. It's kind of like a combination of being angry with them and fawning over them. He 'comes on' to them -- and it's so obvious to the women, to me, and every one else -- and he looks like a fool because the women are contemptuous toward him, but he doesn't seem to care. Then he gets mad because they won't play his game. He does that everywhere-- at all his jobs, with our friends, everywhere.

"Then this whole thing starts to affect his work too! He comes home, and in talking with me, he 'lets it drop' that he's mad at a certain woman at work because she won't look at him and he seems to spend a lot of his days just sitting at work, and being mad -- at her or somebody -- anybody!

"But one of the worst times of all for me, is when, after he's lost another job -- he begins a new one. For a while, at the beginning, when no one knows his game too well (he's quite charming, you know), he starts to act like he just doesn't need me around any more. He gets so puffed up! So arrogant!"

Everyone broke in at this point. One of the women said, "I know exactly what you mean! Every time a normally nice thing happens to my husband he acts like he's King Tut and he pretends I'm just not needed around any more!"

"My husband gets that way when a woman smiles at him. Or when a few of his drinking buddies talk about how they 'don't need their wives, any more!' Their arrogance seems to be infectious," another one wryly commented.

By the end of the session, we came up with a few guidelines that did work for them:

1. Remember that his period of "puffed-up time" doesn't last. It ends when his co-workers discover the "real" person underneath all the charm. It ends with the first order from authority figures being deliberately disobeyed. "I'll show 'em who's boss" behavior cannot last forever. It ends, in essence, when they see he's a trouble-maker, when he no longer can stand the strain of looking like a "nice person," when he drops his facade.
2. As his illness progresses, it takes a shorter amount of time for him to get arrogant. It's just like the drinking; he gets sicker quicker. Whereas, before, it would take several months until he would begin to experience personality-changes on the job -- now, it would take only a month or so, for those terrible mood-swings to begin to emerge again.
3. Why is it such a relief to the wife when her husband can't keep up his "act" as long as he could previously? It is usually because he is so obnoxious during all this time when things are going well for him. She is afraid people
think of her as less than she is because he looks so "terrific" and she is always so angry at him. His public image is so wonderful! She questions her own sanity -- is he that terrific? She wishes so much that she could be happy for him in his new job, but his behavior cancels that possibility.

4. Remember, you've been conditioned to know that if it's going to be nice for him - as long as he stays sick -- it's going to be hell for you.

5. Just knowing that this is "typical" of many alcoholics' behavior helps you not to feel you are rotten or crazy. Most wives of alcoholics don't get so angry from just the drinking. It's the related behavior that gets them mad!

6. Don't reveal your fears when he acts like he doesn't need you any more. Remember you are dealing with a paper tiger.

7. If he takes you to a social gathering and acts very puffed up and pays no attention to you, don't beg him for attention. Don't sulk and look like a victim-in-the-corner. Enter into the festivities and enjoy yourself. (two-to-one, your husband will be at your side within minutes, sulking that he wants to go home.) Don't Insist on staying while. Leave later-- slowly, reluctantly, with a lot of smiles.

These tactics are harmless in themselves, because you know your motives. You are not being cruel-- you're helping him. You cannot afford to be victimized any longer. It's not good for you, nor for him, if he succeeds in making a victim out of you. He has to see that the people he tries to smash won't stand for it any more.

Not every alcoholic is arrogant. But if yours is, his behavior in this area can be among the most emotionally painful ones you have to contend with.

Try to remember that everyone who lives with an alcoholic has areas that need to be dealt with. Some can't stand it when their husbands don't bring in enough to feed all the kids; others face the problem of other women; others must cope with gambling. In addition, many wives face arrogance and incredibly debilitating put-downs from their alcoholic husbands.

Realizing that these things are only symptoms of his disease does help. However, you don't have to learn how to "figure around it." Neither do you need to learn how to "cope" with his problem. Learn, instead, how to go beyond his problems, not taking the consequences of his behavior. Life is too short to be living in a practice-hell. You have a right to get his monkey off your back.

I pray for the realization that I can live no one's life but my own.

Chapter 18

Don't Change Your Address!
Booze is everywhere.
Running increases panic.
Running helps him to continue to deny.

One woman reports that her husband wants her to leave their "pesky" five-year-old with her folks and move to Alaska. This is his answer to losing his seventh job in five years.

Another wife tells me her husband says the answer lies in moving back to the hills of West Virginia where he was born. But she should move there and wait for him. He's in the navy for another three years, stationed in Hawaii. (I guess he's supposed to get sober through some kind of osmosis. If she's in them thar hills, he will get the message.) Still another wife of an alcoholic reports her hubby came home, after being absent without a word for five days, and proudly announced the purchase of their new house trailer, waiting on the shores of Virginia Beach. The only requirement? She must dump her job and their kids and move there with him.

Sometimes if the alcoholic is feeling generous, he doesn't mind taking the kids along. All you have to do, then, is leave your job, friends, family, roots -- in a frantic scramble for the "right" place for him to find sobriety. Wives often cry, "I tried so hard to eliminate all the things that make him drink!"

I know it makes you feel you're close to your husband when you both plan and work together to try to find out how to lick this drinking problem. But it's a false closeness. It's really a collusion to avoid the real help.

The outside world doesn't make him drink.

Problems don't make him drink. If they did, everybody would be an alcoholic.
In-laws don't make him drink. If they did, all married people would be alcoholics.
His being so "sensitive" doesn't make him drink. Yes, he's sensitive. He's sensitive to booze! He has an allergy and an addiction to alcohol, and that's what makes him drink -- his disease.
You can't kill off the world.
You can't destroy every bar.
You can't erase all his problems.'
The world is never "just right."
You can't be sure that if you move to the country, they won't someday rezone the region and build a bar fight next-door.
The sooner you get off this merry-go-round of trying to help him find yet another way other than A.A. for his problem, the sooner he will have a chance to get sober. Can you imagine a family with a father who has diabetes running around trying to find a place in which to live where there's no sugar, disrupting their entire lives, instead of just insisting that he must take his insulin?

Your husband's insulin is Alcoholics Anonymous.

Stop helping him to continue to deny. Moving to the country won't help.

_Let me see life more clearly by capturing the present moment._

**Chapter 20**

**You Have The Right To Get Sick Too!**

_He expects that he will always "make mistakes."
He expects that you will never fail him._

"Sobriety means getting rid of the bottle and the baby." Those words are from a physician who directs a fine alcoholism treatment center. What does he mean? The still-sick alcoholic not only has a problem with alcohol, but with immaturity - - to the point of infantile social behavior.

One of the ways this irresponsibility manifests itself is in the alcoholic's high degree of selfishness m an infantile narcissism which means that, after the booze, he is the important one. It's a long way down the line before anyone or anything else is truly important, except that which helps him get momentarily puffed up – serving his illusions of grandeur. This is not an exaggeration of facts, merely a statement of them as they are, part and parcel of his disease. So what does this have to do with why he runs off when you get sick? After all you've done for him -- through all the crazy behaviors of his illness -- he gets upset when you even get the _flu_! You worry, and with good reason: If you should _really_ get sick some day in your life -- who would take care of you?

Unfortunately, the facts don't seem to indicate he's going to, on his own, have a great change of heart and become a caring person. The facts say he is a very sick man, not just occasionally, but always, as long as he drinks -- and that his disease is a progressive one. This means he will most definitely be getting sicker if he does not get well. It further means he will be in even worse shape to help you, should you become ill.
There is one paradoxical fact that could, and would improve the situation for you. The sooner you stop centering your life around him; the sooner you give his whole disease back to him; the sooner you let go of his problem; the better chances will be that he will treat you well!

How do you get to that place where you stop being the caretaker? Start practicing the ideas in this book. Go to Al-Anon, a therapist, someone who’s going to help you to become the person you deserve to be! You don’t want to wind up embittered and possibly helpless.

_I am determined, O God, to make this day a happy one._

**Chapter 23**

**Let the Crises Happen**

_They might save his life._

_They will save your sanity._

Crises often occur in the alcoholic's life when: he can’t get up in the morning because the hangover’s too horrible, and he’s already on probation at work; your husband asks you to call in sick for him; it’s chilly outside and he has passed out on the porch; he’s in jail and wants you to bail him out; he promised something to the kids and forgot; he’s out of booze and wants you to go to the store.

There’s a lot more you could add to the list. A crisis occurs for the alcoholic when his disease is in trouble when his disease cries out for you to intervene and help. These crises happen so often that you probably live in a constant state of excited misery.

There was a time, several years ago, when authorities in the field of alcoholism believed that a family member had to "create the crisis." As professionals realized how frequently these crises occurred, beliefs changed to: Just let them happen!

What does happen when the wife lets a hurtful thing happen to the alcoholic, without stepping in and rescuing him, like she used to?

_She feels guilty._

_The alcoholic gets angry and threatens her._
That's when the real crisis begins--for her.

If she can go through with her plan to do what she knows is necessary for her, him, and the children, despite his threats, and despite her feelings of fear, anger and depression -- and act self-protectively in the process-- then the wife is well on the road to her own recovery from his insane behavior.

Karen is a client of mine who is so calm, now! She's a veteran of these "wars" with his disease.

Karen told the therapy group: "The main thing I think is important is that after you go through this the first time, and you think you'll never be able to do it ~ you'll never be able to get through the fears and the threats -- you find that you do get through it, that you get stronger, that it wasn't as bad as you thought it would be for you. The next time it's easier. And then, from then on, it gets so much easier, you can't believe it! Before you know it, you're detached from his problems, and you're living calmly, serenely, and you're not scared of him any more. All I know is that it does happen that way. It happened for me and you never met a bigger coward, a more scared woman who was afraid of losing her alcoholic husband to another woman, than I was. I lost my fears! I know you can!"

Karen's case is not unusual. There are over 100,000 Al-Anon groups around the world m plus other therapy groups for wives of alcoholics m with over a million women participating. All these wives have problems in common with yours. Almost without fail, if they keep trying, if they use the knowledge they've learned, they do not fail in getting healed from the wounds inflicted on them by their husband's alcoholism. They get stronger; they're no longer at the mercy of their husband's disease.

Let the crises (the consequences of his disease) happen to him -- not to you.

Don't pick up the pieces of his falling-apart life.

If he loses a job or his driver's license-- it can be a reason to rejoice! It means he's getting sicker, quicker. It means that maybe he won't be able to stand up to that disease much longer.

Don't get scared if he seems to recuperate quickly from his crises and "looks good" afterwards, like nothing's happened. He may even smile and whistle and act like he's getting better instead of sicker! Don't be fooled by that! It's all part and parcel of his denial system. Inside, he's scared to death, because his disease is progressing, if he isn't recovering. Stop believing his bluffs -- they are just "his disease talking."

What do you do when other people rescue him after you've stopped?
This commonly happens! Doctors, ministers, counselors—unwitting enablers—very often feel sorry and believe the lies his disease creates. His mother, sister, brother, his boss, his "friends" who drink with him—many people get sucked in and cooperate with him, not realizing they are being manipulated and are helping to keep him sick. The alcoholic usually has a whole string of patsies who believe his half-truths, his innocent understatements of what he really does, his denial system.

What can you do?

1. If any one of them is willing to calmly discuss the problem with you privately, give them this book to read, ask them to attend Al-Anon and/or therapy with you, to truly learn how to help the alcoholic.

2. Try to remember that if those others must—for their own guilt or need to control or rescue your husband, they will probably get tired of his "junk" just like you did. They will probably see through him eventually, especially if you keep your hands off! Nothing seems to "fire-up" a new rescuer more than an irate wife who insists that the person is a fool! Don't give such people a chance to get mad at you and to try even harder, therefore, to show that they're right—not you!

3. His disease is getting worse and more people will see through him quicker—despite seemingly occasional bursts of his "looking so good."

4. Don't expect his other rescuers to like you or approve of you when you stop rescuing him.

Remember these things. They'll help calm you when you're furious and scared. Do what you have to do. You do not have to discuss, explain, or defend your behavior to others, no matter what their "credentials" are! Just do your part, and you'll feel good about yourself. And if he chooses to get well, he will drop all his sick friends and be your husband, not a cripple who needs twenty mommies.

If a crisis happens, help my perspective to remain clear and my emotions to be strong.

Chapter 26
Stay with Him or Leave him "Just for Today"

Don't be angry with yourself for not having left him before.
You have more options than you think:
- You can stay, and leave the room or the house for a while.
-- You can leave for a few days.
- You can leave for weeks or months and see your spouse when you want to.
You'll think of many more choices when you remember that your alcoholic needs you very much, even though he denies it.

Marsha used to leave Phil all the time, in order to punish him. She'd wind up scared, depressed, and go back in worse shape than when she left. It never worked the way it was supposed to. It didn't make him "act right," and since Marsha didn't carry through with her threats, Phil became more arrogant and Marsha felt furious, terrified and trapped. Sharon never left. But she always threatened to leave. Her alcoholic husband "upped the ante" and left her for a while. He came back, but it scared her so much that she never threatened or did anything again that crossed him. Needless to say, he got worse and left more often, enjoying her fear of him and his sense of power. Sharon didn't know about alcoholism; she didn't realize her husband only acted so independent because he was so terrified of his really dependent nature. He knew he was more dependent on Sharon than she was on him. Keeping her scared was his way of trying to smash her down enough so she wouldn't find out she didn't need him as much as she thought she did.

The maddening fact in the alcoholic family is that the spouse seems so vulnerable to the alcoholic's threats, and the alcoholic seems so invulnerable to hers. Most of the threats seem to get down to this basic one: abandonment combined with humiliation. What can the spouse do? Here are some sanity-saving suggestions:

1. **Make yourself emotionally comfortable.** This takes courage, for if you make 'yourself comfortable, your alcoholic will start to make those "little" threats again. But he will do it anyway. You can't please him. It's a no-win situation. If you try to please him, you'll get hurt by him anyway -- and have a resentment which only hurts you: "Afar all I tried to help him, he turned around and hurt me anyway when he promised he wouldn't!" Even if your alcoholic wants to be nice to you for a time, his sickness makes him stubborn too. He won't please you and he will tell you again that "no one's going to tell me what to do!" (Telling him what to do usually entails asking him to be nice to you, not to hurt you.) But every time you beg, threaten, or connive to get your alcoholic to make you happy, you are giving him the power to make you unhappy. The truth is he won't use that power to make you happy -- he'll use that power to make you unhappy. Take that power back. You're not the frightened child who is at his mercy that you think you are; and he is not the tin god that you think he is. All those thoughts are part of the insanity in an alcoholic home. How does he lose his power to hurt you? Sometimes, if all other suggestions in this book don't work for the immediate crisis and fear, remember you have a right to walk away from threats, embarrassment and the ever-present insecurities that your alcoholic husband makes you think you should learn to live with. A normal husband doesn't act that way: he tries to make his wife feel cherished and secure. (You need to hear this, for by now you probably think it's the other way around: that you've got to make everything all right all the time so he won't hurt you again.)

2. **Act as if you are not scared of his retaliations.** ("I'll never let you back in the house again"; "I'll see other women"; "You'll be sorry -- I'll get well and make another woman happy.") Act unafraid long enough, and you will become unafraid.
3. **Remember it's just his disease talking.** If you have left him for a while and are wanting to see him (you feel you can handle it), and if he gets arrogant and tells you he's not sure he needs you anymore, remember it's just his disease talking. Pretend he's a casual friend who's busy when you called her to go shopping and answer him the way you would answer her: "Okay. See you!" Wave off; be breezy and nice and don't act devastated. Eventually, you will actually feel that way! And your husband will have a new respect for you.

Sophie left her husband eight months ago. She sees him now, when she wants to, and not always when he first asks to see her. If she anticipates more pain than she thinks she can handle or wants to deal with, she just tells him she can't make it that particular time. She sees her husband as a date for that day or weekend. If he is good to her, fine; if he is nasty to the point of exasperation for her, she merely leaves. Then she goes on with her life, thinking of her needs and doing what is good for her, blocking out thoughts of her alcoholic. She enjoys the peace in her alone life now. Sophie has lost her fears. When her Harold makes the ultimate threat of finding "someone else," (even in subtle ways, he has threatened this), she told me that she tells herself, "If my Harold had any other disease T.B., for instance-- he would not threaten me that when he gets well and gets out of the sanitarium, he will leave me. That's all part and parcel of the insanity of his disease."

When Martha temporarily left her alcoholic, she started to be with him some weekends. Sometimes her husband would get to be "too much" for her; he would play his usual games and she would react. When she fearfully called him during the week, he announced that he didn't know if he "could take" her yelling when he hurt her; "he would only see her if she shaped up." Well, Martha was getting well, despite temporary setbacks; she thought about his crazy threats, and she decided not to beg for a weekend with him. She began to realize she wasn't losing anything; if her husband was still sick enough to play these games, the old fears she used to have of losing him to other women seemed silly. What would they be getting? (Her insanity, she began to see, was in believing he could be crazy with her one-minute and a wonderful and good husband to another woman, the next minute.) She kept telling herself. "Sane men don't emotionally threaten their wives all the time; and if he's acting insanely, why do I see him as a god, instead of a man who's ill and not powerful at all?"

4. **Do what is good for you.** You can stay; you can leave; you can go back; you can leave again; you can do anything that truly makes you and your children feel safe and comfortable. You have that right. If you can get calm in your home, fine, if you can't, fine. Very few people could stay sane in your home. You are not a failure.

5. **Use your today.** The next time you feel trapped in your situation, ask yourself, "Do I want to stay with my husband, just for today?" Then, whether you stay or leave, use your today. Do one thing~ today, that will get you closer to peace. Go back in the book and choose one thing you couldn't do before, one thing you think you might be able to do, at least partially. If you try to do this today and every day, whether you stay with the alcoholic or not, you will become less and less afraid, and then you will not be afraid of what he will do, any more.
Help me to no longer be manipulated by the needs of another. Let my compassion guide me to make good decisions.

Chapter 27
Break Out of Your Isolation

It will help you get an emotional distance.
You'll start to be able to make rational decisions again.

The craziness starts in different ways. Often, it appears in a loving guise: your alcoholic husband suggests that you go live in the country, just the two of you, in a cabin with a fireplace and no telephone. Very romantic. You cry, out of joy. "He really does need me!" "He says it will help him stay sober!" That's the clincher.

Maria and Cliff did just that: they scrimped and saved for twelve years -- him working, her working, six kids, him drinking so that any extra money went down the drain-- and all her paycheck went toward that cabin. She hated her job at that time; she resented that they made so much money that "normal" couples would be able to get decent furniture and go to the movies regularly-- but not them. It went down the toilet for booze. But that cabin got paid off.

So how did it turn out? It's a lovely place; it's worth five times what they paid for it now. But Cliff goes there every weekend to drink.

And he "upped" the demand -- it got crazier. Now he wants her to dump the kids and just come to live with him in the cabin. She thinks he's insane. "Dump the children?!" Those are the words he used when he snarled resentfully, talking about their teen-agers. He claims he's only saying it because "they're so ungrateful anyway." Cliff often tells his wife he doesn't need her (when things go well for him for a few days or weeks); it's just as often that he can't even share her with their children, because he feels so threatened that he will lose her.

Howard is like that with Sarina, except that they don't have kids around any more. Their children are grown. Sarina would love to get a dog, maybe two. She would like to see a lovable animal cheer up their tension-filled home. For years Howard had said he wouldn't have a pet because it cost too much, and what would they do when vacation time came-- or even when they wanted to get away for a weekend? He later told her he was too upset at the idea of sharing her even with an animal.
Marvin tried a different tack with Corinne. They had seven children and she wasn't about to dump them for anybody! Nor was she going to give up their wonderful, big Old English Sheepdog. Or the five cats. Corinne was a pretty feisty lady. R took a lot to get to her "jugular," her vulnerability. But Marvin got there- and most alcoholics are able to find the vulnerabilities of their spouses in an effort to manipulate them.

His method was so bizarre that Corinne could see through it but it didn't stop her from hurting and reacting and falling into his trap. What did he do? He called her best girlfriend -- whom he never had met-- under the guise of finding out what to get Corinne for her birthday -- and talked real chummy. This caught Corinne's girlfriend off her guard. Marvin then called Corinne into the room to join in the "funny" conversation, and he proceeded to bring the subject around to sex in general, then to his sexual experiences in particular. From that point, the conversation turned to the girlfriend's problems while Marvin listened under the guise of help and sympathy. Marvin then got off the phone and told Corinne he was so turned on to the girlfriend that he had "this irrational, irresistible, yes, shamefaced urge to go to bed with her."

Corinne, dignified, "liberated," tough lady that she was, "understood" him. She tried to "discuss" with him the "why" of this attraction.

What's the point? Marvin's method worked. It was four months before Corinne called her girlfriend again. Alcoholism is called the lonely disease.

But most people think only the alcoholic is lonely. If they think the wife might be lonely, they usually only think of her loneliness as occurring because of her "not wanting the neighbors to find out," so she keeps the curtains drawn, keeps her head down and doesn't talk, just mumbles hello at women down the street. They usually think she's just lonely because he's out drinking, or on one of his "vacations" that he just "spontaneously" takes, refusing to include her or the kids. They think she's just lonely when he doesn't show up at the maternity ward, at the children's weddings, at family reunions.

They don't realize that even though she is lonely at these times, she is also lonely because she has isolated herself. She has cut herself off from others because he told her he would get sober if she got rid of everyone and everything else in her life but him.

The horrible irony of it all is that the more she did these things to try to please him, the more contemptuous he became toward her for being such a so easily-pushed-around person. And when he couldn't stand his own guilt any more for what he knew he was doing to her, even though he outwardly denied it, he dumped her. And by then, he
had to deny his contempt for himself, so he believed he had all this contempt for her, for putting up with all his "stuff." But the problem for Maria, Sarina and Corinne was that they didn't understand all this. They only believed they were the failures. They saw the alcoholic's contempt, but they didn't see that it stemmed from his contempt for himself first. They swallowed the big lie: the illusion that alcoholics and wives of alcoholics often live under -- that if she tries real hard and can't please him, and if he leaves her subsequently, she is a terrific failure m a wreck of a woman – a rejected wife of an alcoholic.

She takes all the blame: she was supposed to hold this marriage together, she thinks. She forgets he's crazy. She forgets his cruelty. She forgets she's attractive, nice, intelligent. She only believes what this alcoholic is telling her in so many words: you are worthless as a woman. She lets a crazy man determine the way she values herself. Things are that much out of proportion.

If it's reached this stage, or if you're getting hints that "your marriage will be saved if you just do-" (one of these self-isolating things), stop now. It's never too late for the spouse to regain his or her sanity; to start to learn how to feel worthwhile. But first get off that treadmill of isolation. And don't be scared that he will leave you, even though he threatens it. Remember: if you do what the alcoholic says, all those crazy things, because you're scared of abandonment and/or humiliation, you might wind up without him at all-but if you follow a sane course and do what regular, normal people do: keep the kids, get dogs, see your friends ~ then, paradoxically, your chances of losing him greatly diminish! Most important, you won't lose your self-respect. And if you just act one time out of self-respect instead of fear, you will feel more terrific inside than you've probably felt in years. And this assurance will build. You will want to act that way again. You will eventually get to the point where feeling good about yourself will be much more important than keeping insanity going.

Show me how to regain my self-assurance and to be happy with the uniqueness of me.

Chapter 31

Don't Feel Guilty When You're Mad!

Angry thoughts don't hurt people. (They only hurt you, if you “hang on” to them)

Anybody who's normal would want to thrash him.

This is not one of those preachy articles that tell you not to be angry at that poor, sick guy. And it doesn't help you to hear: Your anger isn't doing you any good. Let's follow through on some thoughts that underlie many counseling sessions that get nowhere.
"You know, Mrs. X, it does no good to be angry at him."

"I know." (But she doesn't really believe the counselor or care. She just wants her husband to "not get away with any more of his abusive behavior." So she screams and yells. What else?)

"Mrs. X, if it's so terrible, why don't you leave? Why do you keep taking it?!"

"I don't know. You're right." (That's as silly as asking the alcoholic why he drinks. She stays because, right now, anyway, she needs to.)

"Mrs. X, don't you know that your anger is just hurting you?"

"I guess so." (Big deal. It hurts him more. And that's what matters.)

Mrs. X walks out of there even more depressed than when she went in. She feels the counselor's despair and frustration. It just makes her think her situation is as despairing as she thought before she went to see the counselor. But now she thinks she's nuts too. It's been confirmed by a professional. Many counselors do this. Unfortunately, sometimes, families of alcoholics go to counselors who don't have one inkling of the dynamics in an alcoholic household. They can't understand how she can feel so angry with him -- and yet stay in that situation.

The answer? Simple. The wife of the alcoholic is as addicted to the alcoholic as the alcoholic is addicted to the booze. That's why she stays. And that's why she's so angry. She's mad at him -- and at herself-- for staying. She's also mad at herself for being so scared to leave him that she thinks she will just die if she goes.

Why is it so important for the wife to deal with her anger? (Notice I didn't say, "Stop being angry." I said, "Deal with it.")

If you don't deal with your anger, you'll very possibly stay stuck in your situation.

What does "deal with it" mean?

1. **Accept your anger.** It's totally okay--and you'd be abnormal if you weren't angry under these circumstances. It's a sign of your health that you are angry for being treated the way you are.

2. Accepting your anger means dropping your guilt about it. If you did anything "wrong," it was not your "being mean" to the alcoholic. It was, instead, your babying him and putting up with his junk.

3. Go beyond your anger, once you've accepted it as being okay for yourself. What happens if you don't? You go from "pity" to "punish" and back again. How does that work?

You get mad at him. You yell, you strike out. He blows up. Drinks. You yell more. He "remorses" (cries like a baby and tells you how rotten he is). You feel sorry for him, and feel rotten about how "bad you made him feel!" (the "pity him" stage). Next minute -- he's back, doing it again! You get furious all over again. It just goes on and on.

What would happen if you stopped yelling, hitting, screaming? You'd stop feeling guilty because you didn't do it. Not that you don't have a right to yell or scream. But right now, the main problem that's keeping you from doing
what's good for you is your guilt from feeling you're rotten to him. Do everything you can to eliminate that guilt so you can get on with becoming a whole person.

"But," you say to me, "then he will get away with it." Get away with what? Alcohol is its own punishment. What is he "getting away with"? He's dying from alcoholism.

Now, don't go feeling sorry for him! That's not the medicine he needs. He needs tough love. He needs you not to give him tender, loving care. He needs to feel enough pain from his sick behavior that he will hurt enough to get help to live.

But what do you do the next time you want to yell and scream? Remember, he's not getting away with anything. And remember, if you yell at him, then it's easy for him to say he drinks because you yell. Take away that excuse! And what about your anger about his not paying the bills? Or keeping up with his other responsibilities to you and the children? You have the right -- and the duty to yourself and to your family -- to not accept unacceptable behavior. Continuing to excuse him from his responsibilities because he drinks is helping him to stay sick.

Of course you're angry when he doesn't pay the bills he's supposed to! But just being mad isn't going to change one thing. Just screaming and begging, like you've done all these years, won't change anything.

If you are emotionally comfortable, let some of the bills go unpaid. Of course, if they are the gas and electric bills, and if you, rather than he, would get most of the painful consequences of that, then I would pay it and be comfortable in my own home. But if it's a bill he incurred and it's not something that would jeopardize your family's financial future, let it go.

And think about dropping your anger, after you've made constructive changes, Because all it does is tear up your stomach. It give you migraines. It gives you a spastic colon or colitis. Or chronic gynecological problems. While he lies there, passed out under his anesthesia, oblivious.

Guide me not to neglect my own duty to myself while taking on the responsibility for another.

Chapter 34
Stop Telling Him How to Get Sober (Don't Talk to Brick Walls Either)
He will do what he wants to do, anyway.
He will probably do just the opposite of what you ask him to do just because you asked him to.
Once you take your eyes off him, he will just revert back to his sick behavior if he intends to stay sick ~ so, it's a futile effort.

"It all sounds so hopeless, so depressing," Nancy told me.
"It is, if you take the short-range look at things, instead of the long-range look," I explained.
Nancy remembered, then. We'd had lots of talks about this, but as is often the case, it takes hearing something many, many times before you can really "hear" it. You're so confused, so panicked, to depressed so much of the time.
Nancy remembered how keeping in mind the long-range effects of his sick behavior helped her very often get over her desperation feelings quicker. She calmed down; right then, when she started remembering the facts about alcoholism--when she started remembering that:

1. The nature of the disease means that he can't--even though he seems like he will and he often says he will--go on, forever, like he's doing. If he continues to stay sick, he will get sicker until he dies or goes insane. He must make a commitment to true sobriety and stick to that commitment -- in order to get well.
2. She is truly powerless over him and his disease. What does this imply? She, the wife, can scream, yell, be nice, be surly, whatever ~ and if she is truly powerless -- and she is then, it doesn't matter what she does. He will get well if he wants to and he will stay sick if he wants to.

So her having guilt when she yells at him for hurting her again is silly because what she does is irrelevant to what he will do. She can't make him drink or not drink. She can't make him compulsive, impulsive, or allergic to alcohol, no matter what she does. This disease is much bigger than both of them.

So the wife might as well save her energy. She might as well spend her time making herself happy and thinking of ways to do that. Life is so short! As Nancy wearily realized, whatever mood he was in, no matter what she did or did not do, because his illness made him so self-centered, he was not even that aware of what she did.

The only thing he was really pretty much aware of was when he needed, in his sickness, to hurt her emotionally. He was aware of when she was hovering over him too much and worrying about him and afraid of him. Then he'd feel really powerful and contemptuous of her, instead of grateful that she cared about him being so sick. So, instead of saying "thanks," he hurt her more.
Finally, Nancy got so fed up that she just couldn't take one more minute of that kind of caring about him, anymore. She'd had it. And that was good. For it did no good anyway. All it did was make Nancy sicker, worrying about him, getting scared, angry, fearful for him, for her. So, out of exhaustion, Nancy stopped trying to find ways to get him sober. Most wives of alcoholics go through trying to get him sober two, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty times. Back and forth, back and forth, emotionally. From "I've had enough," to forgetting the pain; forgetting that his few good days don't mean he's well forgetting it does him no good -- forgetting her peace of mind when she could truly tune him out of her life for a while. Then, the fear of loneliness, her forgetting that he's an alcoholic, the fear that she's really the crazy one, the fear that it's probably true that he takes care of her emotionally and that she will fall apart without him -- all that takes over, for a while and she gets re-involved with him. Until it becomes unbearable again. And it's over and over and over.

But you can make a decision to get off that merry-go-round that insanity-go-round. You can decide to not go through it for another month, year, or years.

Just knowing he will get sicker if he continues to do sick, hurtful things, including drinking, in his alcoholism; just knowing that you have choices, can calm you down a lot in the next time you get panicked, furious, enraged, when he says that he will do what he wants to do when he wants to do it.

*Help me, God, to let you speak through me.*
At first, just act like you're not reacting.

The worst thing you can do is to let an alcoholic think you're afraid of him.

You will get to the point where you just don't care if he threatens or not.

Carolyn told me she never would have thought she'd get to the point of not caring whether he threatened to drink, leave, or do or not do anything. She had been making progress in a lot of other areas, trying hard to grow, get more centered, but she still needed to react to his threats. He would sometimes just imply that he would be in a drinking situation and that would cause her to bum with anger. She just had to explode, when he would do that. Often, he'd feign innocence by widening his eyes, and claiming he didn't think she'd be that upset by what he said, and he certainly didn't mean to upset her -- and of course he wouldn't do anything to upset her. And then he'd grin knowing he "had" her, knowing he could make her react to him as surely as a puppeteer pulls on a marionette's strings. And Carolyn knew it and hated him for it, knowing she couldn't stop.

And then, one day, the incredible happened. Carolyn didn't realize it, but while she was getting stronger in other areas, and despairing about this one habit she couldn't break m this habit, too, was unknowingly being whittled away at, very slowly. (The process of getting well is often a hidden one.)

One evening she felt a peace, a calm, for six or seven hours, that she hadn't known before, when she thought about things that used to upset her. That day, she even had passed bars and liquor stores on the street. They used to frighten her. She didn't care.

She passed people in bars, saw men and women drinking and flirting, and didn't care.

Carolyn started to live her life in a way that always spoke to the alcoholic: I am not afraid of you or of your threats.

When he said to her: you only look good in black, and implied he would flirt with another woman if she wore bright colors, she bought a shocking pink outfit. If he said he beat up his last wife, she let him know, looking him dead in the eye, that if he ever even threatened to hit her she would have him in jail before the count of ten! The more you act afraid of his threats, the more arrogant he becomes, and the more he threatens. Conversely, the less importance you attach to his threats, the less likely he will be to use them, because they will have become ineffective.

There are various methods one may use in order to render the alcoholic's threats useless. If being "passive," and not
reacting rankles you m if you still react inside m you may be able, yet, to let it pass. The only way it truly works to let it pass is if it really doesn't bother you. You have other choices: you may make the consequences of his threats more painful to him than pleasurable. Whenever he threatens to drink, or to do anything that is hurtful to you and your children, you may leave for a few minutes, an hour, a day, a week, or whatever. You may do anything that makes you comfortable; that restores your dignity to you m that says to you and to him, "I do not have to be humiliated and I do not have to live like that." You have the right to remove yourself from any situation that is painful, that is not life-enjoying.

You can call his bluff: You can really do it up and bow graciously to the door, and say, "Be my guest" and smile ~ or laugh! It is good medicine for you to laugh at threats. It will also take the wind out of his sails. If he goes out to drink, don't be there when he gets back. Go out to a movie, get in later than he does, glow with the good time you had m in contrast to the beaten-wife image you used to project. Smile; tell him you had a great time. Ask him how his evening was. Look sad for him, in a distant kind of way, when he says, "terrible," or if he bluffs that it was great. Then, look distracted and go about some business, like brushing out your hair, removing your makeup. Act like you are on your mind m not him.

As you may have gathered, the whole idea is to take the power to hurt you out of his hands. It is very bad for him to have that power (or rather, to think he has it). It will keep him arrogant. But, his arrogance-needs, his power-needs are his problem. Your task is to get up off your knees and stop begging him not to hurt you. Stop begging him not to drink. Stop panicking when he threatens to kill himself. (If he does threaten that, call "911" on your phone emergency hospital or police services m and tell them about it. They will take him to the hospital. If he is serious and does need help to prevent him from committing suicide, he will get that help m and maybe also begin the road to recovery from his addiction. If it was just a ploy to get you upset, he will probably not repeat that manipulative behavior again ... and you will have responded responsibly, instead of just being reactive like he wanted you to.)

Whatever your methods to stop being afraid of your husband use them. Don't be discouraged when you fall back a bit. Old habits are hard to break, especially when they're built on illusions.

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind (2 Tim.1:7).
Chapter 37
Don't Expect Him To Be Sober

He does mean it when he promises he won't drink again, but he probably can't keep that promise -- and he doesn't know it.

The paradox is: when you truly stop expecting him to be sober, he has a better chance to be sober.

Janice, who has been a member of Al-Anon for thirty years, and whose husband has been in Alcoholics Anonymous for twenty-five years, tells this to people frequently: "My insanity was that for all of those years of his drinking, I believed my husband when he went out the door in the morning and told me he would be coming home sober. I spent the day half-believing, half-fearful; when he came home drunk, I screamed as usual, and fully expected that it would make him come home sober, tomorrow."

What can you do? First, remember the facts. Alcoholism is a disease; your spouse is addicted, not from a lack of will-power, religion, or love for you; he is addicted to alcohol.

Try to remember that drinking is only one symptom of alcoholism. Another symptom is the alcoholic's desperate attempts to patch up his life by making promises he cannot keep. One of these is his promise to stop drinking. "Okay," you say, "now what? Then it's hopeless. If you're right, and he can't stop, I can't accept the fact that he will come home drunk. I could only continue with this marriage on the premise, the hope, that he really meant it -- that he will straighten out. If what you say is true, there's no chance of our marriage even working."

Is there hope?

Paradoxically, when you truly stop expecting it, and start believing in the reality of his illness, start losing your personal anger towards him, get a distance on it all, and plan your life for you then, your whole behavior, your attitude, your voice, your actions towards your spouse will all change. He will sense that change. He will see, without your having to say it, that the problem is his- not yours. It won't even be anything you'll have to discuss. Both of you will know it even though he may deny it. You'll have found your serenity; and he will have a chance to choose recovery.

Help my expectations to be realistic but never pessimistic.
Chapter 39
Don't Beg Him to Stay

You're not as vulnerable as you think you are.

Don't come down on yourself because you're "the kind of woman who married an alcoholic" and who wound up begging her husband to stay. You've got a good chance to get over your vulnerability- because you can admit to it. Therefore, you can deal directly with it.

Why start this chapter off this way? Because there's often a lot of shame involved when one is very vulnerable and possesses low self-esteem. Why? Because "clinging" people are often the object of scorn by others who have a tougher shell.

Stephanie told me, "Many of the other women I know who are married to alcoholics tell me I'm so much more vulnerable to him than they are to their husbands. They say they can see the hurt on my face when I walk into a room. They can read me like an open book. They even get contemptuous of this frailty- I can see it.

"But do you know what? I don't believe they're that invulnerable. They just don't admit to it. One of them keeps herself busy to the point of exhaustion every day, to avoid telling herself that she's in pain. But that's just running- not facing and dealing with your issues. Another one screams at her husband behind closed doors and then acts like I'm weird when I admit that I do the same thing!"

Stephanie has a point there. To deny you're being hurt isn't doing any good -- whether you run or act tough. It isn't healthy to learn to adjust to abuse.

But what makes the "Stephanies" take abuse, and then deny it so much that they beg their husbands to stay when they threaten to leave?

It's simply a well-established pattern of denial and turnaround. She denies he has a bad problem; then she turns it 180 degrees around and says it's her problem.
But the pain gets worse and eventually it cracks through. And then Stephanie wants to stop it all. That's a good time to try these suggestions:

1. When he threatens to leave, show him the door.
2. Offer to pack his bag for him.
3. Don't raise your voice.
4. Remember that this will scare him so much that he will threaten he will never be back, or threaten to go to another woman. He will tell you you're bluffing, then go out and come fight back, or go out and ask to come back that night. He will say he has changed his mind, and he may do all of this within fifteen minutes!

Remember, too, that it's very hard to lose an alcoholic- even when you want to.

I asked Stephanie to spell out her fears exactly. What kept her locked into this sick way of relating to him?

Stephanie and her husband had separated, but still she saw him regularly. She was the one who asked for the separation. ("It wasn't strength," she told me. "It was just that I couldn't take it any more.") But even though she was the one who had asked for this separation, she got terrified when they argued and she begged him not to leave her. He had finally agreed to stay, and then she had thrown him out again, feeling still more abandoned.

It's not as contradictory as it sounds. They both lived under a lot of illusions: that he was the strong one, that he supported her emotionally, that she was more dependent on him; that he had abandoned her, even though she had asked for the separation; that it was also her responsibility to make the marriage work; that "if only she had faith in him" it would all be okay.

Stephanie tried to double her efforts to get honest with herself in order to stop feeling so hurt. When she had facts she could understand, she seemed to be able to dispel the irrational fears more quickly. "Lloyd needed to hurt women -- emotionally hurt them, that is- way before he met me.

"I used to think that if only I changed my behavior, he would treat me differently. When I did that, it did mean that I didn't allow him to hurt me any more. But it also meant we had to separate, because Lloyd still had his sickness and didn't get the help he needed. Actually, he went for help, but he just wanted to hold on to his sickness more than he wanted me, I guess, rd better not take that personally. He's had one other wife and two women he's lived with-- and they've all had the same problem with him. Oh, none of them had my particular kind of vulnerability. In fact, each of theirs was different. But, he managed to switch tactics with each of us and "get us" just where our "jugulars" were. "Lloyd knows all the reasons for his behavior. God knows, I've heard about his childhood enough. But a lot of people have rotten childhoods. So what? That doesn't give you the right to hurt everybody when you become an adult. In fact, if you know how much it hurts, by being so hurt, and if you're so very sensitive, like he is, you'd think that just the
opposite would happen -- that you'd work real hard to learn how not to hurt people, because you know that pain for yourself and wouldn't want to have it happen to others.

"Last night I told him calmly that I couldn't see him for a while, not even on weekends, and I felt proud that I could love him and feel compassion and still not want to live in insanity. I was finally detaching!

And then- two hours later- I was on that phone, calling him, asking him if he loved me, and I was terrified. I kept calling him back all night, begging him not to leave me. Crazy, isn't it?"

Crazy? Maybe to other people, but to anybody working with families of alcoholics, with people who try to learn to live in that insane world, it seemed par for the course, not at all "insane."

Stephanie and I talked about some ideas that might help her -- and you:

1. Try to, from your head, not your heart (from your mind making the decision, not your fears), make a long-range decision that will help you. If it helps you, it will help him. Then stick to it "against all pressures and persuasions," as they say in Al-Anon. Expect pressures and persuasions from your husband. They're all part of his sickness. 

   Do you want to be living like this ten years from now? When thinking about wavering from your decision, remember this question, and your emphatic "NO!!" will help you to stick to your decision.

2. If you steadfastly act from your mind, not your fears, no matter how lonely you get, you will be a changed person. You will have started to love yourself, respect yourself- and be able to love in a healthy way. You will be more able to sustain a comfortable relationship. You won't miss the excited misery. You will be repulsed by it.

3. Remind yourself that if you want to kid yourself into acting from your fears again-- all you have to do is to tell yourself that "it wasn't so bad" or "I'll learn to adjust to it." Things won't get better that way. You will just get more depressed and you will go deeper into your own denial.

4. Even if you could succeed in learning how not to "feel the blows" from his constant emotional battering that is not the way to learn how to live. You owe it to yourself: emotionally, and morally, to learn how to get the most out of life for yourself, the best from all your situations. And to learn to live like you are very precious.

   And even if you "learned" how not to feel the blows, it is not good for your husband to get away with being able to continue to hurt you. If a person is sick enough to want to compulsively hurt others, letting him get away with it does not help him to get well. It just drives him deeper into his illness. "Turning your back" on it- i.e., if you don't say (whichever way you can) "you cannot do this to me"- then you are denying that it is happening to you. It just adds to the craziness.
5. You don't have to "settle for" anything the alcoholic chooses to hand out: cruelty, or crumbs of affection. Don't be so scared of losing someone who is almost just animal-comfort, by this time. If you act as if you're not scared, you'll wind up not scared!

6. Okay, he has the right to do as he pleases. But, you have the right to do what you need to do in order to make your life calm and peaceful.

7. If it's good for you, it's good for him.

8. It's okay and normal for you not to believe or feel any of this, yet. You will. You don't now only because you've believed the distortions and lies of alcoholism for so long.

9. Alcoholics are told to call another alcoholic when they feel they're "building up to a drink." You must learn to do the same. I suggested to Stephanie: "Call me when you're 'building up to a call' to your husband m one of those 'fear calls.' " It's hard to break out of an addiction to an alcoholic.

10. When he calls, and threatens, remember it's the disease talking; that his words will change tomorrow -- and his actions. Don't be bluffed by his disease!

11. Speak as kindly, and as little as possible on the phone, so that you can control your temper as much as possible. Because wives of alcoholics often get back "hooked into" him, when they've built up their irrational guilt by yelling, again. So, avoid having to drop that irrational guilt: by not yelling. Hold the phone away, and say, "Detach! Detach!" over and over to yourself again instead. You're detaching from his disease talk.

12. When you "slip," if you do, and you go back to acting in the old way, quickly forgive yourself, and get back to your new way of acting. You're only human! Remember you're dealing ~ and you're new at it, at that! -with an awfully powerful disease.

If you're like Stephanie, and you've learned to beg your alcoholic not to leave you -- whether you're with him or separated just look at learning not to beg as a learning process. Try the ideas in this chapter. You don't want to wind up two, five, ten, twenty years from now saying, "I wish I had."

*Help me to take life one day at a time, and to conquer the habit of worry.*
Chapter 40
Don't Be Scared That He Will Leave If He Gets Well

Well men don't do that!
There's a big difference between "dry" and "sober."
If he threatens this, he's still very sick.

The ultimate threat in an alcoholic family is abandonment, combined with humiliation.
Very often the threat comes many ways. Everyone in the family labors under the illusion that the alcoholic is very powerful, very important, a little tin god. You'd better do what he wants – or you'll lose him. And-- if you're this scared of losing him when he's still a drinking alcoholic m what a prize you'd lose if he decided to get sober!

See how distorted everything gets in the alcoholic home?

What things can you try to remember when you're starting to panic again m when you're afraid of losing him if he gets sober?

1. An addict who does not want to give up his habit does an interesting trick: he scares you into thinking he will be so sexy, so irresistible to the opposite sex, when and if he decides to get un-anesthetized, that you might lose him. So he gets you to help him stay drunk! It's like the woman who says she wants to lose weight, but really doesn't, so she makes subtle hints about how incredibly desirable she will be when she's thin, over and over. Her husband runs to the store and buys her a gallon of chocolate ice cream! Then she blames him. "How can I lose weight when he's always buying me ice cream?" she wails.

Don't join with the alcoholic in this old self-sabotage game.

2. Remember: if he doesn't get sober, he will either die or go irretrievably insane from a wet brain, spending the rest of his days in the back wards of a mental hospital.
I do understand when you feel you'd sometimes rather he be dead than "soberly" leave you and humiliate you -- after all the years you have stood by him. Your feelings are normal; there's nothing to feel guilty about. I'm just saying you'll feel much less scared when you start to see him in perspective, when you start to see him as being very unpowerful, when you start to see yourself as a nice, deserving, intelligent person who does not need to put up with anything a sick man hands out in order to keep him with you.

3. This threat of abandonment is used by almost all alcoholics.
4. You can't please an alcoholic. What you do is never enough. He's probably got you convinced that you're a lousy lover, a lousy mother, a rotten cook, a terrible partner in some way, a very undesirable woman, too pushy, a wet blanket, too loud, too timid, too religious, or a screaming fishwife. You've probably already started to believe him and this means you're trying *harder* to please him. This makes him even more arrogant. He's really cracking the whip- and convincing you that you're the one doing all the controlling! Your problem is only that you believe him!

His expectations of you continue to build. And you also expect more of yourself. Both of you wind up expecting you to always be strong, to always be able to put up with anything -- to be superwoman. But he is always allowed to fail you. This whole mess sets you up for failure, for feeling like a failure, for believing that you deserve to be abandoned, if you can't deal with him and his disease.

5. You may even start to feel terrified when he decides to get sober. You can't tell anybody because you believe they'll think you're rotten, maybe, for not wanting him to get sober – because it's hard to put into words, his subtle threats that he might leave you because he will "be too well" for you.

6. If he threatens by saying that you'd better "shape up" and accept his behavior just because he's not drinking any more, *then he's not sober: he's just dry.* All he's done is remove the booze. True sobriety does not behave like that. *Sober people are sane people.*

They don't threaten their families with abandonment just because they have stopped drinking. *As a matter of fact, they do just the opposite; they are so grateful to their families for sticking with them that they try very hard to make amends to them for all the grief of past years.*

7. Why do you believe these threats are anything but sick? Because you have lived with his sickness, his distortions of reality for so long, that you have come to believe them as truth.

8. How should you act if he gets sober? Certainly you should not become scared of losing him! Remember: if he chooses to treat only one-third of his disease -- the physical addiction -- instead of his whole disease-- the mental and spiritual parts as well, the problems that make him selfish and rotten to his loved ones -- then he is the one who will suffer. He is the one who is playing Russian roulette with his life. A person can't go on for long, treating only one-third of the disease of alcoholism, and stay sober. He can be dry for a time, yes. But sober for life? He must learn to change his whole way of treating his family; that's part of his *sobriety* program.
9. You have nothing to lose. If he not only gets rid of the booze, but of that rotten behavior -- you've got a nice, regular husband!

But if he chooses to just get rid of the booze and continues to threaten you with abandonment-- it's his loss -- not only of you, but maybe of his life.

God, thank you for helping me live more fully. I feel you are opening a new fife for me.