

Angie's Marriage Column ~ January 13, 2010

How to Deal with an Angry Alcoholic

Ask Angie: Dear Angie, I have been married to an alcoholic husband for eight years now and we have two young children together. We have taken marriage courses and I have been reading the Love Dare. I have tried the detach method but it is difficult since he starts drinking every day at around 9 or 10 in the morning (since he was laid off over six months ago) and drinks until he goes to bed which is usually midnight. If I don't talk to him when he's drinking he gets angry. How can I make the detachment work in this situation and how can I protect our children from his anger?

Marriage Guidance: My first suggestion would be for you to talk with your husband when he is sober and let him know in a polite but assertive way that you are not going to interact with him when he is drinking. Explain that if he would like to have family interaction with you or the children he must not be drinking.

Explain to him that this is how you are protecting yourself and the children from the affects of addiction. The alcoholic needs to be left to themselves while drinking so they can see that no one is going to enable any of the alcoholic behavior. You may have to set personal boundaries for yourself and the children.

Remember that setting boundaries for you is not a threat or a way to control the alcoholic. On the contrary, your boundaries have nothing to do with them, and everything to do with you! The alcoholic may not like your new attitude and that is why you explain to them *why* you have set boundaries. Explain to them that you will not be around an argumentative or abusive alcoholic, but when they are sober, you would love to talk with them. Tell them, "I Love you, but I don't love the disease."

As most of us know we can't *make* an alcoholic stop drinking—we are powerless over all aspects of the addiction. But we certainly do not have to

entertain alcoholism in any fashion. When your husband is sober let him know that you “love him” but “hate the addiction”. Separate the person from the addiction as much as possible. Tell him how much you enjoy being with him when he is sober, but when he drinks its like being with a different person and you are uncomfortable.

One reason why an alcoholic would get angry when you detach from him is because it get to his conscience and lets him know that his drinking is not appropriate behavior for a father and husband to be partaking in every day. He is feeling guilty about it. You see as long as his wife enables the addiction he doesn't have those feelings about himself and everything is ok. But is it really ok? Not really.

Detaching from the alcoholic is not only a good and reasonable choice for your personal spiritual and emotional wellbeing but also for the alcoholic. Your detachment “when he is drinking” is what helps him to take responsibility for the addiction. He has to make choices for himself, not you for him. Only when we stop fighting with the addiction and trying to control every aspect of the addicted person do we find solace and comfort, and will the addict come out of denial and seek healing.

Don't drown with the alcoholic. You need to rescue you! Here is a chapter I selected from our book on the alcohol addiction called [The Alcoholism Trap](#) that I hope will encourage you to take the steps needed to take care of you and your family while living with an alcoholic.

Stop Rescuing The Alcoholic And Start Rescuing You

17

You're so busy throwing out the lifeline trying to rescue the alcoholic that you didn't notice that you were drowning with them. How does it feel? It does not feel very good, does it? You have been giving all your strength in the saving and rescuing the alcoholic in your life that you don't have much strength left for yourself.

Here's what I want you to do. Next time you feel like throwing out a line to the alcoholic, don't do it. Let him or her figure out a solution on their

own. This gives the alcoholic a big wakeup call. It may even get them all angered up, but **hello!** They need to wakeup out of their slumber. *“Oh, okay, maybe I do drink too much”*.

The alcoholic will not like it at first that you're leaving them to tend to their own miserable lives by themselves, but, later they will be glad you didn't keep rescuing them. They may even dish out a lot of mean and hurtful words, but hey, so what. You know what you need to do when the alcoholic starts to attack. They are just words and you know how to detach from the abuse of an alcoholic and still live with them and love them, right? As a matter of fact the more you learn to detach, the better you will feel about yourself.

Be Nice To Yourself

Remind yourself periodically that it's not your fault the alcoholic drinks. The alcoholic has a compulsion to drink, which has nothing at all to do with you. So you should not feel guilty, remorseful, angry, or depressed. If you allow these kinds of negativities to control the way you think and feel, it will eventually impair your own mental and spiritual well-being. When you are feeling lonely, frustrated or mentally drained from the day, do something about it. Take care of yourself! What do you like to do for fun? Don't sit around watching the alcoholic drink; it is going to drive you crazy. Take up a hobby. Go see a movie or a play. Go out to dinner with a friend. Take a long walk in nature. Take the kids out for ice cream. You get the picture, right? You do not want to be cooped up watching someone else drown in their sorrows, or inflict abuse upon you. Why? Because you have better things to do than sit around brooding with an alcoholic. Sound ruthless? Well it is not.

Don't Allow Yourself to Become A Victim

. It's very important to understand that loved ones of alcoholics unintentionally make themselves become victims by the way they think and position themselves with the alcoholic. *Oh poor me, I'm having to put up with this drunken behavior every single day; I just can't take it anymore!*

The alcoholic is the only victim here when you come right down to it. They are the ones addicted and controlled by alcohol, thus, they are the true victims. Although, they, unbeknownst to them, would love to bring you into the alcoholic sickness with them, so you must be aware of when this is happening.

Here is how it works, when the alcoholic feels like they are sinking further and further into the addiction, they will grab onto you to keep themselves afloat, but that will only pull you both under. This happens in very subtle ways. The alcoholic may pick a fight with you. They expect you to fix everything that goes wrong in their life. They may drive you to drink with them, or they may try and accuse you of bad things and tell you how immoral and awful you are. When the alcoholic gets a reaction from you, it is their safety line, giving them justification for drinking and continuing in their alcoholic behavior.

Some rescuer type people are more susceptible to being pulled under than others. Did you know that a rescuer will always look for someone to rescue, even though they constantly get pulled under themselves. It might have something to do with the environment they grew up in – maybe they had an alcoholic parent or sibling they always rescued, and so they end up marrying someone they can continue to rescue, like an alcoholic or other addict. It is a subconscious thing.

I think it is important for you to know what your responsibilities are as a loved one of an alcoholic.

Take Responsibility for Your Well-Being

Who is going to take care of you? Not to offend anyone, but no one really cares about your health and well being more than you, except for God, your heavenly Father. That means if we seek out God for our life's troubles, such as issues with alcoholism then *that* is taking responsibility. Why is it, we always feel like we have to DO something ourselves? Isn't asking God for help enough? I think it is, but too often we want to control the outcome of events and issues in our life, so we take steps that we feel will control those issues, but most of the time nothing changes, and sometimes we make things worse. Why can't we just settle for God?

God is wisdom – wisdom comes from the Father who created us, therefore, if and when we allow God into our life and we begin exploring

the realms of spiritually, that is when we become filled with God's wisdom and guidance for us. **God is our safety line**, and you are the safety line to the alcoholic until they have spiritual clarity enough to reach out for God on their own. The alcoholic has a difficult time grabbing onto God for their safety line because there are too many hurdles in the way, as we all know, but through you, they can come to see and know God for themselves. Do you see how that works?

The wiser and more knowledgeable you are in God, the more secure you will feel about your position as a loved one of the alcoholic, thus making you feel better spiritually, emotionally and mentally. Remember what I said earlier? Don't deprive yourself of health and well-being just because you live with someone who doesn't give a darn about their health. It will be your wellness that brings the alcoholic to their senses.

Respect Yourself

Don't beat yourself up over the issues of addiction. Respect and love the person you are and take each day one day at a time, and go from there. Don't look back and don't look forward more than what is absolutely necessary. The more you think of what next week, next month or next year will bring with the alcoholic, the more overwhelmed, depressed, and awful you will feel inside. You don't know what tomorrow or next month will bring, so stay tuned only to today and what you can do today for yourself.

The more you love and respect yourself, the more you will be helping the alcoholic. How can that be, you might ask? Well, the more you respect yourself, the less likely you are to succumb to the control and manipulation of the addiction. Remember, you are NOT the one with the drinking problem, so don't disrespect yourself by the way you think, behave or in any other way as if you did have addiction to alcohol.

Get yourself healthy in mind, body, and spirit, and see to it the alcoholic knows you are taking care of you! Let him or her know you are not in the alcoholism trap with them.

Don't Become Controlled By the Alcoholic

According to Alcoholics Anonymous, alcoholism is an insidious disease. That means whoever abuses alcohol will most likely become insidious in behavior. The devil himself gets to the non-alcoholic through the addicted person. You don't ever have to take a drink in your life, but somehow the alcoholic ensnares you in with them and you begin to have an alcoholic mind with the alcoholic. That is if you let him or her do that to you.

Understand this, the alcoholic most likely does not even realize they are doing this, it is just another part of the addiction that seems to sweep whatever is in its path into a sickness, which actually keeps people further away from God. If you think about it, addictions are but one way in which satan deprives people of God. Don't let this happen to you.

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks; and to him who knocks, the door will be open. Mathew 7:7-8 NIV

[Read all 22 chapters \(205 pages\) of The Alcoholism Trap](#) – Understanding why the alcoholic drinks and what you can do to help the alcoholic you love achieve total sobriety.

The main thing here to remember is to take care of you and the children. Don't allow yourselves to be taken down [into the addiction trap with the alcoholic](#). Depending on how old the children are, say over the age of six or so, you can talk to them about their dad's sickness so they may be aware of his emotional outbursts and behaviors. You will be pleasantly surprised to know that children have great natural compassion and understanding about such matters—more than we often give them credit for.

Pray for your husband. Pray for guidance, faith and strength to get through this trying time in your life. God will answer your prayers if you wait on Him for the answers. Whenever you feel emotionally out of sorts, get out your bible and pray about it. This always gives us a sense of closeness with God and comforts us in time of need.

Many people do not know that diet has a lot to do with many health afflictions that consume our body, alcoholism being one of them. Of course,

there are many triggers that predetermine alcoholism in a person but sugar imbalances are the reason why *physically* alcoholics are addicted to sugar in the alcohol. This is just another area that you may want to check into if you love and live with an alcoholic.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways *acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.* (Proverbs 3:5-6)

God Bless!

In Christ,

Angie and Frank

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