

## Angie's Marriage Column – July 15, 2009

### Dealing with a Mentally Abusive Alcoholic

**Marriage Questions:** I have a question - what if you're in a position where the only place your spouse can safely drink is in your home. I have tried the detachment thing only to have my drunken partner stalk me around the house and badger me with his stupid behavior. He's not physically violent but mentally abusive and I would like to ignore it but the words hurt. The only thing I can think of is an ultimatum to not drink in my house. Any suggestions would be helpful... and yes I do ignore him when he's drunk at least 99% of the time... I can't always do this when I'm being verbally attacked or things are being thrown around the house.

**Marriage Guidance:** The home is usually the only safe place for an alcoholic to drink for obvious reasons. You're doing the right thing by trying to detach from the alcoholic behavior

Understand that most of what an alcoholic says when drunk they don't really mean. The alcoholic is angry inside-they are holding in a lot of resentment and emotional demons that come out in angry words of abuse to whoever happens to be in earshot. The alcoholic is sick emotionally, spiritually, and physically. You have to tell yourself this every time he or she gets in your face. Understand too, when you detach it not only helps you but will also help the alcoholic. Why? Because then they will have to take responsibility for their addiction!

If they aren't physically abusive then the best thing you can do when an alcoholic gets abusive is to **have your own space** in your house with some useful essentials. By all means make yourself comfortable. Your space, which we will call your boundary should have a computer, TV, DVD's, books, cell phone, writing materials, music with headphones, hobbies, crafts, small fridge, snacks and whatever else strikes your fancy.

Never talk to an abusive drunk. Instead, simply go to your space. Let the alcoholic know ahead of time (when they are not drinking) that you WILL NOT be a part of their drinking. Let them know that you aren't doing this *to them*, but you are doing it for yourself—for your own emotional and mental well being.

Also let your spouse know that you love them. Tell them "I LOVE YOU, but I DON'T LOVE what the addiction is doing to you. Separate the person from the addiction. Tell them things that would offer encouragement WHEN THEY ARE SOBER. Remember, don't talk to someone who is drinking, it will most likely back fire on you.

1. I love being with you when you are sober.
2. You are such a good dad/mom when you are sober.
3. I married you because you are so understanding and loveable, but when you are drinking you are a different person.
4. I love you, but I don't love the disease.
5. I love who you are not what alcohol does to you

The next day when your spouse is sober tell them that it is NOT ok to call you names, it is NOT ok for him or her to abuse you with angry words, and so you have set boundaries for yourself. Write down these boundaries and have them posted in the home where they are clearly visible to see every day. Every home and circumstance is different. You need to make your own boundaries that pertain to your own circumstances. Ask yourself these questions to help you create boundaries for yourself.

1. What do I need for myself?
2. How can I derive some peace for myself when the alcoholic is drinking?
3. What actions and behaviors can I do for myself that will help the alcoholic?
4. In what ways can I detach emotionally?
5. Would I be enabling if I did this for/with my alcoholic spouse?
6. What can I do for the children?
7. What do I need to make my alcoholic spouse aware of ahead of time?

The best thing you can do when dealing with an alcoholic spouse is to detach from the abuse of the alcoholic. Stop rescuing and enabling! You can do this if you truly love your spouse and want to help them to possible sobriety. The more you focus all your energies on the alcoholic, the less likely he is to get sober. There are ways you can detach and remain healthy mentally. You have to rescue you!

### **Don't Make Alcoholism Your Problem**

If you have never read any of the Al-anon material then you probably don't know that you are making the disease of alcoholism YOUR problem. One of the sad facts of living with an alcoholic is we become just as mentally and emotionally sick as the alcoholic. This happens because every step of life we take, and every breath of air we breathe has some involvement with the alcoholic.

Our emotions overtake our own mental health as we try and cope with the [deterioration of the alcoholic in our life.](#) **What are we doing wrong? We are concentrating too much on the disease, instead of concentrating on our mental and emotional health.** We may as well be tipping the bottle for them. Better yet, we may as well be drinking with them!

### **Stop Enabling the Alcoholic**

Most spouses of alcoholics don't realize they are helping their spouse drink just by a few simple behaviors and actions. Several ways in which you may be enabling your spouse to drink is by buying them alcohol, drinking with them, calling the boss and or family members for him because he is too hung over or too drunk to do it himself, lying to friends, boss, family and co-workers about him and his drinking problem. Also driving them to the store, arguing with them, cleaning up after them and behaving like a victim are all ways in which we enable the alcoholic.

You are not the victim of alcoholism until you make yourself BEcome the victim. Once you stop doing all of these things for the alcoholic then the alcoholic will realize he has a problem!

## **Get Off the Pity Pot**

Get off of the pity pot and begin living for yourself, instead of living for the alcoholic. "Oh poor me, everyday I am suffering and I can't take it anymore" attitude won't get you anywhere. You need to take care of yourself and that cannot be done if you are focusing all of your attention on the alcoholic and what he is doing or what he isn't doing. ***Start focusing on what you can do for yourself.*** Get out of the house, don't hang around the alcoholic, and don't let them abuse you with their words. Go to your personal space. If you care about the alcoholic in your life, this is what helps them more than anything else.

## **Detach With Love – Set Boundaries FOR YOU!**

You are powerless to getting your loved one to stop drinking. The first step in being able to detach is by realizing that the shenanigans of the alcoholic is not your problem. Don't try and fix their messes for them. Not only does this enable them to continue drinking, but also it justifies their drinking. Don't have any interaction with the alcoholic while they are drinking; that includes, talking and arguing with them. Why fuss and fight with someone who has lost the ability to make any sense? Don't become ensnared in the alcoholic trap with them. Stay out of the trap, so you can help them. Ninety-five percent of what an alcoholic says is manipulative and hogwash anyway. Don't start believing in the lies of the disease. Separate yourself from the antics of the alcoholic.

## **Pray For the Alcoholic**

I can't tell you how important the process of daily prayer can be. Not only does it bring you closer to God but it will also get you into the habit of going to God with your life challenges. God does hear your cries of pain and He will give you the answers you need to get through your trials and tribulations, even if your spouse continues to drink. Be patient and remain faithful in the Lord and He will deliver you from your suffering. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:6)

Take care and God bless!

Angie and Frank

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### Book Resources

[The Alcoholism Trap – Are You Trapped With the Alcoholic?](#)

Do you want to take care of you?

Are you tired of taking care of everyone else?

Do you want to really help your spouse with addiction?

[Order The Alcoholism Trap!!](#)

This book will help you understand how to deal with alcoholic in your life.

This book is available as an instant download or hardcopy.

[THE ALCOHOLISM TRAP!!](#)

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