

Angie's Marriage Column ~ July 29, 2009

How Can I Stop Enabling Husbands Alcoholism?

Ask Angie: Angie, I found your ministry when searching for resources on dealing with an alcoholic partner. I need help, I am the typical enabler and victim and I do not want my life to continue this way. Please help!

Marriage Guidance: I know your pain and suffering first hand. My experience comes from both sides. I grew up with an alcoholic step dad. When I got married I was the alcoholic and my husband was the enabler. I can now look back on my behavior and see how sick mentally, emotionally and spiritually I really was. Only when my husband stopped enabling the addiction did I get help for myself. Praise God I have been sober for 15 years! My personal testimony is written in the book [*Journey on the Roads Less Traveled*](#).

All spouses of alcoholics are enablers until they realize that their behavior is actually keeping the alcoholic in denial. In fact sometimes the spouse or loved one of an alcoholic or drug addict is just as mentally and spiritually sick as the alcoholic because they allow the addiction to pull them in with it! But you have to come out of the [alcoholism trap](#) and start taking care of you! Ironically taking care of you is the only way to help your alcoholic spouse.

Your husband's alcoholism is not your fault and it is not your responsibility. The only time it becomes your responsibility is if you know the alcoholic is going to harm himself or someone else. Then you must take the needed steps from that happening. But no other time is alcoholism your responsibility! In other words, you still have the responsibility of being a parent, wife, or friend of the alcoholic but don't *do anything* that would take the problems associated with addiction from the addict.

You are not the victim of alcoholism unless you make yourself BE-come the victim. The only victim is the alcoholic himself. Alcoholics have a need to make everyone around them to become emotional basket cases with them, and they don't mean to do this, it is just part of the disease. Alcoholics usually carry around a lot of guilt and that guilt sometimes gets relayed back

to those they love. Alcoholism is cunning and baffling and it will lasso you in with it. Cut the rope—fast!

Don't let addiction rope you in with it! Every time the alcoholic wants to argue with you they are pulling you further into the addiction, deeper and deeper. Anytime the alcoholic abuses you with nasty words, they are pulling you emotionally deeper into the sickness of addiction. Cut the rope!

If you allow yourself to become the victim of your spouse's addiction then your actions, reactions, and behaviors will continue to fuel the addiction. The alcoholic feeds off of other people (enablers) to keep their addiction alive. Addiction is so cunning that the alcoholic can manipulate their way into your life in such a way to make you believe you are the victim instead of them! Cut the rope!

The best thing you can do for yourself and for the alcoholic is to cut the rope between you and the alcoholic. In other words, emotionally detach with love from the alcoholic and the alcoholic behaviors. Understand that cutting the rope is not mean or uncaring. On the contrary it is because you love them and want to help them! It is the only way for the alcoholic to help themselves. Remember...love the person and hate the addiction. Separate the two from each other.

How Do I Love My Alcoholic Spouse?

The best way to [love an alcoholic spouse](#) or loved one is with detachment towards the behaviors of the disease. Let the alcoholic know that you do love them but it is the addiction you hate. And because you hate the addiction so much you are unable to be around them when they drink. You don't have to take the abuse at anytime, ever! Become knowledgeable about alcoholism so you can better understand its cunning and baffling ways.

Separate the Person From The Addiction

Alcoholism is a sickness just like any other sickness. In fact a person with hypoglycemia would physically and emotionally feel much like a dry alcoholic would. Alcoholics almost always have hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) because of the adverse affects of alcohol on the body. When someone is sick with diabetes or hypoglycemia it is not the substance of "who they are" it is what has been created in their life because of

circumstances and triggers connected to them. It is the same way with addiction of any kind.

5 Triggers That Spark Addiction

Alcoholism is created in our lives because of underlying triggers and circumstances being present. These factors are physical, heredity, environmental, emotional and spiritual.

1. The craving for alcohol is the physical aspect of addiction, and has a lot to do with diet. (My new book, [Sugar Overload Syndrome](#) talks a great deal about physical addiction to alcohol and the connection the alcoholic has to hypoglycemia.)
2. Past baggage is the emotional, mental, and sometimes spiritual aspects that can often trigger addiction.
3. Environmental is people we are close to that are alcoholic or were alcoholic. For instance, if a person grew up with an alcoholic parent, that person is more likely to become an alcoholic or marry an alcoholic.
4. The spiritual is the connection the alcoholic has with God.
5. Heredity is genes from an alcoholic parent or grandparent.

All of the above are major triggers that reinforce addiction in a person. But these triggers can be healed and that is how the addict becomes sober and stays sober. The alcoholic can't just stop drinking and think they are healed; there is more to it than that. If the alcoholic just stops drinking and does not take action to heal and or change his circumstances then he will most likely not stay sober for very long.

Stop Putting Band-Aids on the Alcoholic's Wounds

Every time the enabler kisses the boo-boo and puts a band-aid on the alcoholic's wounds, they will never fully realize they are sick and need healing. For example, if a person continually gets bad headaches and they cover up the pain with aspirin, they will never understand the root cause to "why" they keep getting headaches. They keep covering up the symptoms with aspirin.

"Why does the alcoholic drink? What circumstances and triggers are present that can be eliminated from the alcoholics life. All triggers can be healed and

done away with for good with the right addiction counseling, intervention and Godly support, expect for the heredity factor.

You have to allow the alcoholic to tend to his own wounds for a change.

If the enabler keeps covering up the wounds the addict will never take charge of his own behavior, reactions, and circumstances. Covering up the alcoholic's behaviors with band-aids only reinforces in the alcoholic more denial that he or she even has a problem.

You help the alcoholic best by pulling yourself away emotionally and that takes effort on your part, but you can do it. Love, support, and encourage the alcoholic when they are NOT drinking. *Cut the ropes to the disease but love the person.* Do not become trapped within the sickness of addiction anymore. You have to start rescuing you for a change and you can only do that by letting it go.

Ask Jesus to help you to detach with love from the alcoholic. Never underestimate the power of prayer in your life. Keep praying for the alcoholic because God does hear your prayers. He may not answer them right away or in the way you are expecting but He will be there for you. He knows the suffering and pain you are going through every day. This is precisely why you need to go to Him and ask Him to give you the strength and faith you will need daily to cope with [loving an alcoholic](#).

Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long. (Psalm 25:25)

Before I end this marriage column I would like to leave you with some encouragement from the book of ALANON.

Why do I waste my precious time and energy trying to figure out what makes an alcoholic drink—why he doesn't consider his family, his obligations, his reputation? All I need to know is that he suffers from a disease—alcoholism, the compulsion to drink. Why shouldn't I have compassion for him and his illness when I am so ready to feel sorry for people who have other diseases? Do I blame *them*? Can I cure him by reproaching him? Can I look into his heart and realize the true nature of his sufferings?

Today's Reminder

The fact that I am the spouse, child, parent, or friend of an alcoholic does not give me the right to try to control him. I can only make the situation worse by treating him like an irresponsible naughty child.

“On this day I promise God and myself that I will let go of the problem which is destroying my peace of mind. I pray for detachment from the situation, but not from the suffering drinker who may be helped to find the way to sobriety through the change in my attitude and the love and compassion I am able to express.”

ALANON – One Day At A Time.

**Blessings,
Frank and Angie
Heaven Ministries
<http://heavenministries.com>**

Book Resources

[The Alcoholism Trap](#) You Can Help The Alcoholic To Get Sober—But First Take Care of You!

“Angie gives practical step-by-step help for those caught in its ugly snare and explains how to be "free" once and for all. Her book is both biblical and sound and very practical for either the Alcoholic or for those who live with the pain and experience of Alcohol in the life of a loved one close to them day by day. A must read for anyone seeking help and understanding from such addiction.” -- Dawn Elliott Professional Organizing Consultant
www.elliottville.ca