

Angie's Marriage Column ~ April 14, 2010

Helping You and Your Children to Detach from Alcoholic

Ask Angie: Hi Angie, I was reading your article titled "[Do You Love an Alcoholic - Setting Boundaries for You](#)". I'd like to follow these suggestions, but I have some questions. How long should I detach myself before I should move out? We have two kids (3 and 5). How do I go about detaching when we all live together? Should I move me and my kids out for a while? How do I explain to them what's going on?

Marriage Guidance:

How Long Should I Detach Before Moving Out?

Detach for as long as you need to. Detaching is not for the alcoholic but is for YOU and your spiritual and emotional well-being. Scripture clearly tells us to "Bear with each other ([Colossians 3:13](#)) and share in each other's burdens" ([Galatians 6:2](#)) and I believe that this extends to a sick spouse, whether alcoholic or diabetic.

We BEAR with each other by detaching with love. We are able to detach because of God's love for us and the Holy Spirit within us. We would not be able to detach properly if it were not for Christ protecting us and giving us the peace within to continue in the suffering that comes with living with and loving an alcoholic.

We certainly cannot BEAR with each other or CARRY each other burdens if we do not make use of the spirit of Christ within each and every one of us. "I will ask the Father and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you." ([John 14:16-17](#))

Too many times spouses and loved ones of alcoholics become just as emotionally and spiritually sick as the alcoholic. This is not right! This is not going to help you or the alcoholic. It is important to ALWAYS remain close in heart and mind with Christ, always praying... so He will intervene for you and give you the peace you need as you live with an alcoholic.

"In the same way, the spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will." ([Romans 8:26-27](#))

We do not advocate moving out or divorcing the alcoholic, unless there is physical and or ongoing mental abuse from the alcoholic, and then you may have to separate yourself from the alcoholic. But scripture reveals that God intends marriage to be permanent and

in that case, we do not advocate divorcing an alcoholic spouse. Marriage is a lifetime commitment, through the good as well as the bad times.

We realize alcoholics can be verbally abusive and this is why we like to explain to the loved ones of alcoholics [how to detach from that abuse](#), and it usually ends up subsiding because of the new reaction and treatment to the alcoholic when they get abusive. In other words your detachment, whatever that may be, will actually help the alcoholic too.

[How to Detach from an Alcoholic Spouse](#)

This eBook will help you detach from the alcoholic and give you back peace of mind.

“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: if one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and no one is there to help him up!” (Ecclesiastes 4: 9) Who is going to help the alcoholic—who will he be accountable to if you move out? It is never a good idea for an alcoholic to live alone for an extended period of time because they may feel they are not accountable to anyone and may never get sober. Even so, even unbelievers will be accountable to God one day and in marriage, a husband is accountable to his wife and a wife is accountable to her husband.

How Can I Detach When We All Live Together?

The article you read “Do you love an Alcoholic” describes ways in which you can detach but is more for setting boundaries for yourself in the home when living with an alcoholic. Detaching from the addiction is [not enabling the alcoholic in anyway](#). You must learn to stop rescuing and enabling the alcoholic when it concerns anything at all to do with alcohol. This requires discernment from you because alcoholics can manipulate you when you least expect it.

Every circumstance is different for each family member, so you have to evaluate your situation and then do what you need to do for yourself and any children in the home. As the sober parent you will need to protect young children in the home from the abuse. First it is a good idea to let the alcoholic know what you are going to do, so they will not be surprised at how different you react to their abuse.

Explain to him that you will be staying out of his way when he is drinking because you do not like being around them when they are drinking; you need to protect yourself and children from any verbal abuse. Let your husband or loved one know that you love them but, you do not like what the addiction does to them when they drink. ***In other words you love him but hate the disease!***

Our soft copy book [The Alcoholism Trap](#) specifically goes into detail about detaching, and not enabling or rescuing and setting personal boundaries in the home. This book also offers much encouragement for the alcoholic. I recommend this book to those who love and or live with an alcoholic—it will give you the peace you need and the faith to continue doing what is right for yourself and for the alcoholic.

Talking to the Children about the Alcoholic Parent

I grew up in an alcoholic environment, but no one ever told me that my step dad was an alcoholic; I thought it was normal for people to drink 10 beers every night. After all he went to work every day, early in the morning and never missed a day of work. How can that be an addiction? Many alcoholics get up early every morning and go to work, have families, and even go to church and profess to be Christian, but none of that can take the addiction away from them—it only gives them justification to continue to drink.

Talking to the children in the home is an absolute must. If the children are very young, as in your case, it is wise to not go into detail. Tell your children something they can imagine in their own minds. Their dad is allergic to alcohol and when he drinks it makes him sick. Tell them dad loves them very, very much and the reason dad yells, screams or ignores them is because of his sickness.

For a child to continually see an alcoholic parent drunk, angry, and or abusive with his mother it will cause emotional damage in that child. Some children of alcoholics grow up being an alcoholic or abuser themselves or marry an alcoholic because of the abusive environment they grew up in. This is why you need to explain to the alcoholic, when they are sober, what his drinking is doing to the children. Children also tend to blame themselves for the problems of their parents so it is important the sober parent reinforce in the child that it has nothing to do with them or anything they have done or said. Daddy is sick and that's that.

Older children can detach with the parents by not having anything to do with the parent once they start drinking—that means even sitting in the same room with them. No one should be around the drinking alcoholic. The best-case scenario in this instance is having a basement, bonus room, or other room you can go into when the alcoholic starts drinking, so you do not have to be around the alcoholic if and when they start to get abusive, which usually begins once they start drinking.

Have all of the amenities one needs in this area of the home, such as television, small refrigerator with snacks, music, desk, paper, pens, books, games, toys, etc. Fix and organize this area geared to your particular circumstances. If you have small children have toys and games, for older kids have computer, laptop, cell phone, music, food and snacks. You get the idea right?

Teach older kids, 10 years and up to reinforce in the alcoholic (when they are NOT drinking) they love them but hate the addiction. Here are some things you and the children can say to the alcoholic when they are not drinking. The goal here is to separate the person from the addiction. They need to know they are worth loving and are still loved even though they are alcoholics.

* “I love you dad, but I don't love it when you drink”

- * “I love you mom, but I don’t like what you do or how you behave when you are drinking”.
- * “I love you, I do not love the disease”.
- * “I really enjoy your company, but when you drink I do not enjoy your company and I can’t be around you”.
- * “Dad, you know I love you, right? I just want to say that it is how you behave after drinking that I do not love”.
- * “I cherish the moments of your sobriety because it is when I feel close to you, but when you drink I don’t feel close to you anymore”.
- * “I love you more than words can say but I hate it when you drink.”
- * “I married you because _____ but when you drink you become a person I do not know.”
- * “I’m sorry, mom, you know that I love you but I will not be able to come over and visit with you anymore as long as you are drinking”. I will do anything you want, take you to the store, cook for you, read to you and keep you company, but the minute you start drinking I will have to leave.”

These are not threats but the only way you can keep your emotional sanity intact while living with the alcoholic and they need to know how you feel and what to expect every time they begin to drink.

Always separate the addiction from the person. Alcoholism is something made that some people have chosen to dwell in, but if an alcoholic truly wants to get sober they will! **God is our Healer** and He will give the addict a new heart, a new mind, and a new spirit, but the alcoholic has to be willing—they must trust God enough to have the faith that God will do what He says He will. **“Come near to God and he will come near to you.” (James 4:8)**

The loved one of an alcoholic can help the alcoholic by reinforcing the goodness of God in their lives. Loved ones of alcoholics can also be the [Light of Christ](#) for the alcoholic, not in a self-righteous way but in a loving way. Never demean, belittle, or look down on the alcoholic—this is not going to help them but keep them addicted! Be supportive of the spouse or loved one who wants to get sober, but still detach and bring in tough love when needed. Remember: Alcoholism is a sickness that can be healed.

Affirmations for Helping the Alcoholic You Love

Write down these and other affirmations you can make up with your older children and paste them around the home, on the bathroom mirror, on the refrigerator, above the coffee pot, on the bedroom door, in a picture frame on the nightstand, on the table in the living room, anywhere you see fit.

- * “God did not make you an alcoholic, it is the path you have chosen for yourself. Just as easily you became an alcoholic, just as easily you can get sober. God will heal you if you allow Him into your heart.”

- * “People like to blame God for their problems, but it is not God, it is the choices we have made for ourselves that make the problems we have in life.”
- * “Alcoholic is NOT who you are, it is only a hurdle in your life that needs jumped; let Jesus help you jump it.”
- * “God loves you even though you don’t love yourself, but God shows us how to love ourselves properly so we can love others too. You are worth more than rubies to God, so let Him show you the way into His kingdom today!”

Alcoholism can be healed in mind, body, and spirit by taking the necessary steps to healing the mental, spiritual and physical aspects of addiction. We have experienced first hand the [devastating affects of what alcoholism can do to a family](#). We have also seen and experienced God’s awesome healing powers and miracles work in our own family!

Never give up on the alcoholic and always keep God first in your life, whether [you are married to an alcoholic or have an alcoholic parent or child, these principles work in the same way](#). Remember for total sobriety the alcoholic needs to look at all [three areas of their being \(emotional, physical and spiritual\) to be healed, or the chances are they will drink again](#).

[Sugar Overload Syndrome](#): This book shows you how to heal your body from the physical cravings of alcohol. This books talks about poor diet linked to the physical cravings for alcohol and what to do about it nutritionally. This book also talks about how depression is linked to alcoholism and why. In my study for writing this book I realized that a big part of becoming addicted to alcohol is because we are hypoglycemic from a sugar overload.

Study after study has demonstrated that the vast majority of alcoholics are hypoglycemic. In one conducted by J. Poulos, D. Stafford, and K. Carron, fifty outpatient alcoholics and fifty halfway-house alcoholics were compared with a control group of one hundred nurses and teenagers. Of the one hundred alcoholics, ninety-six proved to be hypoglycemic; only fourteen of the nonalcoholic controls were hypoglycemic. A three-year study by Robert Meiers, M.D., in Santa Cruz, California, found that more than 95 percent of alcoholics studied suffered from low blood sugar.

[The Alcoholism Trap](#): This book is written for the loved on of the alcoholic and the alcoholic. A great book for anyone who loves an alcoholic and wants to help themselves and the alcoholic towards sobriety.

“I may have big troubles but I can, if I will, make them less painful by turning any thoughts to happier things. I will not isolate myself in my problems. I will observe and enjoy what is good and pleasant in the world around me.” ALANON Book – One Day at a Time.

*And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.
(Matthew 28:20)*

In Christ,
Angie and Frank
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