



Front Cover

I HURT AND I DON'T KNOW WHY

The Mysterious Pain

There is a mysterious hurt felt by some members of ninety-seven percent of our families. Relationships are dysfunctional, our lives are out of control, and we feel physical and emotional pain. Most who are affected have no idea about the source of this monster that destroys lives, homes, happiness, friendships, and brings about the physical, mental, and emotional abuse of men, women, and innocent children.

Alcohol Abuse

There are eighteen million alcoholics in America who directly and adversely affect more than seventy-two million family members. One in ten Americans is an alcoholic, and one in four children have at least one alcoholic parent. Twenty-eight million children of alcoholics of whom seven million are under age eighteen, have been identified. Four million teenagers already show signs which may lead to alcoholism. One hundred twenty-five thousand people die in the United States from alcoholism annually.

Alcohol related motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of death among young Americans 15 to 24. It was reported 23,600 people were killed by drunk drivers last year.

In recent years, a growing number of gang rapes and other reprehensible acts have been reported on university campuses from excessive use of alcohol. Last year one out of every eighty-eight licensed drivers was convicted for driving under the influence of alcohol. More than half of these had consumed at least twelve drinks and twenty-five percent had drunk twenty or more. Alcoholism ranks fourth after heart disease, cancer, and mental disorders as a national health problem. If all of the suffering endured by those the alcoholic damages were considered, it would rank number one

Disease of Denial

Denial is the biggest thing about alcoholism. Then, most families make an effort to hide the problem. It is ignored and denied. We

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know that someone drinks too much, but are so baffled, ashamed, hurt, and in such pain that alcoholism is never faced. It is really the secret that everyone shares. Our attitude and our fears only make it worse, and we pass the effects of this destructive monster from generation to generation.

A child with one alcoholic parent is four times more likely to become an alcoholic than other children. With two alcoholic parents the odds are ten times greater. This must be coupled with the fact that sixty percent of the nations' alcohol abusers come from families with no immediate history of the disorder. It takes three generations of recovery from alcoholic dysfunction to give kids an even chance.

Is Alcoholism a Disease?

The American Medical Association labels alcoholism a disease. Alcoholics, support groups, and social workers use this label, with statistics to tell us that alcoholism is like "cancer." If accepted, the concept of predisposition and fate would remove all responsibility from the individual. The Supreme Court upheld the position of the Veterans Administration, who "deem that most alcoholism springs from willful misconduct." The justices added that, "the consumption of alcohol is not regarded as wholly involuntary."

It is true that alcoholism has many characteristics of a disease. There is, however, a difference. God has given each of us the right and ability to choose the course of our lives. If alcoholism is a disease, it is preventable, though not curable. Alcoholism as a disease affects body, mind, and spirit.

Alcohol is permanent and progressive. The alcoholic can choose a life of recovery with, with constant attention, is like remission. When the alcoholic stops drinking, that is only the removal of the last in a long line of symptoms. The dependent personality traits existed before the alcoholic started to drink and will continue after the alcoholic stops drinking. Alcoholism presents other health hazards.

Most alcoholics are also addicted to nicotine and are susceptible to respiratory illness and lung cancer. Many compound their addiction by adding drug abuse as a life-style. Barbara Starr,

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First Vice Chairman of the National Council of Alcoholism reported to John Glenn, Chairman, Senate committee, that drug addiction is seldom if ever isolated from alcoholism.

A new study indicates that even a few beers is enough to make people more susceptible to infection by the AIDS virus, and that moderate drinking will speed the development of full-blown AIDS in people already infected, but have not shown symptoms. The life expectancy of the alcoholics is fifty-six years or almost twenty years less than the average American. If liver damage has taken place, the figure drops to thirty-six years. Recovery is found in the life-long adherence to a program of spiritual development.

Alcoholic Personality

The dependent alcoholic personality exists even among those who have never had a drink. Also, there are twenty million Americans not labeled as alcoholics, who drink fourteen or more drinks per week, and who help consume six billion gallons of alcoholic beverages each year. Thirty-four percent of our alcoholics are now women and fifteen percent are under the age of thirty.

Common Alcoholic Characteristics

The self destructive behavior of the alcoholic personality includes: low self-esteem, inability to tell the truth, broken promises, irrational thinking, estrangement from all but drinking partners, denial, "I am not as bad as people think I am." Alcoholics rationalize unacceptable behavior and blame someone else for their drinking. They are forgetful, disorganized, late, addictive, and compulsive. Psychologists believe that genetic makeup determines sensitivity to these characteristics.

Women Alcoholics

Until recently, most studies of alcoholics involved men. We now know that women react differently and have special problems. Women face greater risk as they become addicted sooner on less alcohol. This is due in part to the fat and water content of the body and to hormonal balance. Women suffer worse medical consequences and are more susceptible to cirrhosis of the liver.

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"Fetal alcohol syndrome" is one of the three leading causes of mental retardation and is the only preventable one. The safe alcohol consumption level for pregnant women is "none."

Sexual abuse is a key problem among alcoholic women. Many were abused as children. The figure is extremely high among "children of alcoholics." Many alcoholic women become "sexually loose" because of fear of rejection unless they are sexual.

Why Do They Drink?

The alcoholic drinks to float way troubles, feel better, melt fears, reduce tension, remove loneliness, and solve problems. It is self destructive escapism. The alcohol offers a euphoric feeling of independence, self-sufficiency, and well being.

The "Gamma" Alcoholic

The "Gamma" type of alcoholic cannot control drinking once started. He may drink daily or infrequently binge. The desire to escape and kill emotional pain becomes an obsession. Most alcoholics would like to be what they term "normal drinkers."

Much time and many methods are employed in this form of self deception.

Common Form of Attempted Control

There are hundreds of forms of attempted control. Most often used are: drink only beer, never drink alone, never drink before noon, drink only at home, never drink at home, never during business hours, only at parties, only on weekends, changing drinks, swearing off forever, never drink on an empty stomach, more physical exercise, reading inspirational books, saying they have a problem, seeing a counselor, going to health spas, not drinking for a couple of weeks, etc.

Circle of Alcoholic Symptoms

Basic to every full-fledged alcoholic is: (1) loss of control, (2) progressive deterioration, (3) withdrawal symptoms, (4) personality change, and (5) blackouts.

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Grandiosity: This is an exaggeration of one's own importance. It can take two forms, both are self-seeking and self-serving. Putting oneself in the center as the "Big Me" with all of the answers, or the other side is the "Poor Me," who gets attention through self-pity. Most alcoholics are adept at switching roles.

Judgmentalism: This causes the alcoholic to judge himself and sometimes others unrealistically. These judgments reflect degrees of truth.

Intolerance: This trait does not allow for the delay of the gratification of personal desires. A passing whim is often given more importance than real needs. Foolish compulsive spending and immoral conduct are common. Deep financial problems haunt the families of alcoholics because credit cards are often used without regard to the ability to pay. This and other forms of impulsiveness cause the alcoholic to engage in unrealistic and irresponsible behavior, which also leads to much of the child neglect and abuse that is very often present.

Indecisiveness: This difficulty in making decisions, causes irresponsible actions by the alcoholic and reactions from the family. The alcoholic will delay or may refuse to share in major decisions like vacations or family outings. When other proceed with the plans, the alcoholic may be critical, become hostile, irrational, and refuse to participate. These traits together or separately, lead to mood swings, inability to demonstrate emotions, refusal to look at self, constant dissatisfaction, nostalgia, and escapism.

The Delusional Defense System

The self delusion of the alcoholic is a result of a unique defense system, in which rationalization, projection, and denial become a way of life.

Rationalization: is making crazy behavior seem normal by inventing excuses.

Projection: In unloading unacceptable thoughts, feelings, and attitudes about self, and attributing them to other people. It is common for alcoholics to lie about other people to justify their

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own behavior. They will accuse their spouse or alcoholism or immoral conduct.

Denial: refuses to accept the truth about the reality or severity of one's condition, thus "I can handle it, I don't need help," or "It did get out of control at one time, but now I am OK."

The Faulty Memory System

The faulty memory system of the alcoholic is most bewildering. The alcoholic blackout represses facts and is selective in remembering things talked about or done. This drives friends and family members up the wall. A blackout is a chemically induced loss of memory for a period of time, while functioning in an otherwise normal fashion. The alcoholic discredits or minimizes first hand accounts of behavior during a blackout.

Often alcoholics do not remember or are incapable of understanding the damage they have done to their children, and just shrug it off with an apology. These children are shaped by this sustained negative behavior over a long period of time more than by the isolated abusive incidents.

Alcoholics Protect Themselves and Drinking Buddies

Alcoholics are easy to believe because they are usually the life of the party, outgoing, friendly, easy to talk to, and magnetic. They are the worlds' most successful con artists. Commonly they will have two sets of friends. A nice group they use to construct a front of decency. These unsuspecting people are never permitted to see the alcoholic's other side. The other set of friends are alcoholics, drug addicts, and often criminal types. These are the ones with whom the alcoholic feels most comfortable and to whom they feel superior. Alcoholics can be flippant about massive traumatic experiences. They will disappear for days, neglect or abandon their children, and when they do show up, wonder why the family is concerned.

Alcohol Addiction

Addiction follows a familiar pattern. Sometimes the order changes or the behavior is temporarily suspended, then resumes.

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The pattern is one of loss of control, alibis, social pressures, grandiose behavior, aggression, guilt, and remorse, on the wagon, changes in drinking pattern, social relationships decay, problems on the job, importance of alcohol increases (will steal and sell anything to get a drink), family problems, seeks help (usually from a counselor instead of Alcoholics Anonymous), unreasonable resentments, escape, protects alcohol supply, chain drinking, ethical breakdown, jealousy, loss of logical thought process, jealousy, decreased tolerance, indefinable fears, tremors and shakes, psychomotor inhibitions, religious needs (drunk going to church or calling a preacher), bankruptcy of alibis, admission of defeat, seeking a helping hand. Most die without getting the spiritual help that will put them in recovery.

The Codependent

The spouses and some associates of alcoholics are labeled as codependents. They, as well as the alcoholic, become very unattractive people. It is horrible living with an active alcoholic. One must cope with outrageous circumstances. Codependents, without a spiritual program of recovery, are barely surviving. They have been doing all the wrong things for years, even for the right reason. Most do not realize the mistakes they are making. Before circumstances can change, there must be an awareness and acceptance of their part in aggravating the sad scenario.

Codependents Need Help

The codependent who seeks a support group is most often looking for help in getting the alcoholic to stop drinking. He is at that point, still deluded into thinking that if the loved one will just stop drinking, everything will return to normal. Years of playing games, building defenses, and trying to control another's drinking have put the codependent in a position to need a vital spiritual program of recovery.

What Must You, the Codependent, Learn?

First, you did not cause it, cannot control it, nor can you cure someone else's drinking. You cannot and do not have the right or the responsibility of controlling another human being, or keeping him from the path of self destruction.

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How Do you, the Codependent, Feel?

Codependents become basket cases. Your world becomes a world of craziness. You face one crisis after another. You feel frustrated, angry, used, fearful, rejects, sad, anxious, guilty, depressed, rigid, controlled, trapped, threatened, abused, victimized, distrustful, ashamed, withdrawn, and isolated. You carry an almost unbearable pain in your chest or in the pit of your stomach. You feel lonely and alone, have difficulty enjoying anything, do not get close to people, lie and cover up for the alcoholic. In fact, as a codependent, you do not know how you feel and move through life in a numb existence. Often you are able to function on the job or in circles away from the home environment.

What Is A Codependent?

Several words are used to therapeutically describe the codependent. Synonyms would be rescuer, caretaker, or enabler. Rescuing and caretaking are doing for the alcoholic those things that keep him from meeting his own responsibility. Enabling is destructive helping, which either aids the alcoholic in continuing the drinking or prevents them from suffering the consequences of their actions. Codependents try to control people. Controlling includes belittling, second guessing, criticizing, "one-up-manship," and harassing. As a form of control, rescuers pick up on everything the alcoholic does and constantly tell them how bad they are.

Codependents Are Not Nice

Codependents get mad after a rescue; they become the victim, then turn and persecute the alcoholic. They nag, lecture, scream, cry, beg, coerce, hover over, protect, accuse, chase after, try to talk to, try to talk out of, attempt to induce guilt, entrap, check up on, demonstrate how they hurt, hurt back so they will know how it feels, pour out bottles, disable cars, scold, lock out, lock in, do not trust, are impatient, use sex as a weapon, snarl out demeaning names, and hundreds of insane attempts to control another's drinking. The methods are endless, the goal is always the same: make the alcoholic do what you want them to do. In time, the codependent realizes that neither the drinking nor the controlling behavior is normal.

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The Codependent Contributes

The codependent helps increase family anxiety, family anger, and family denial. The most detrimental effect is on the innocent children caught in the middle. Children sometimes turn to the alcoholic as a role model because the codependent's actions are, on occasion, more bizarre.

The Children of Alcoholics or COA's

The bad and sad news is that the effect of the alcoholic dysfunctional home on the children is much worse than previously suspected. These are the innocent victims of this insidious drug.

Most Common Traits of COA's

Children of alcoholics guess what normal behavior is, they follow a project from beginning to end with difficulty, they lie when it is just as easy to tell the truth, judge themselves without mercy, struggle to have fun, take themselves very seriously, shy away from intimate relationships, over react to changes over which they have no control, constantly seek approval and affirmation, feel different from other people, are either super responsible or super irresponsible, are loyal even

when it is underserved, frequently lock themselves into a course of action without giving consideration to consequences. They become isolated and afraid of people and authority figures. As approval seekers they lose their identity.

COA's are frightened by angry people and react in the extreme to criticism. Most become alcoholics, marry alcoholics, or both. Some find another compulsive personality to fulfill abandonment needs. They live life from the viewpoint of victims and are addicted to excitement. In the suffering from traumatic childhood they lose the ability to feel and express feelings because it hurts too much. Being out of touch with how they feel is basic denial. COA's are terrified of abandonment.

Child Abuse

The alcoholic often abuses and neglects the child or children. These children are so marked that without patience, support groups, and counseling, they perpetuate the vicious cycle.

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These children are ashamed of the alcoholic and deeply angry with a rage fueled by fear. They are unable to trust anyone, and grow up with unhealthy attitudes about men or women. They have little self-esteem, and feel a crushing disappointment that Dad or Mom is not what they thought he or she was. This heavy burden gives cause for the nightmares, denial, trauma, terror, grief, and anxiety that haunts them. Often they vent the anger they feel toward the alcoholic on other people. Learning to cope depends on adopting a spiritual program of recovery. The road is long and hard is marked by sections of progress and areas of slips.

Continuing the Insanity of Alcoholism

The progression of alcoholism makes it self-destructive. If the alcoholic is left along, most would hit bottom very soon, and many could then be encouraged to seek help.

Stop the Slide

There are others around who jump in and prevent the alcoholic from reaching the inevitable gutter. These loving, well-meaning folk, prolong the agony and help destroy the alcoholic and themselves. These enabling codependents have no idea that they are hurting and even killing a loved one.

On to the Rescue

The rescuer may be the spouse, parent, brother, sister, aunt, friend, or boss. Sometimes the role is played by another alcoholic either in or out of the family.

Preachers, lawyers, doctors, counselors, and social workers do their share, also. Everyone joins in to teach the alcoholic that he or she is not responsible for actions or behavior. Many of these enablers are just as addicted to rescue work as the alcoholic is to drinking.

Victims of Alcoholics

There are always victims in the wake of an alcoholic. This person takes up the slack and does the work to cover for the alcoholic when functioning is impossible. This person allows and sometimes promotes the alcoholic to continue irresponsible drinking without losing the job.

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The Provoker

The provoker is usually the spouse or mother. This study soul holds the family together in spite of repeated drinking episodes. Now hostile, the provoker feeds back into the marriage, bitterness, resentments, fear, hurt, and anger. There is an unending attempt to control, force changes, adjust, and cover up. In spite of the sacrifices this provoker never forgets the wrongs done by the alcoholic and seldom loses an opportunity to lay a few stripes on his back. This feeds the low esteem of the alcoholic and recycles the sickness of the relationship.

The alcoholic in turn blames the provoker for drinking binges. He feels justified in drinking to escape because of the hounding questions and back-riding.

Changing roles

If someone gets off the downward spiral, the roles will usually be picked up by someone else, so that the cycle is not broken. Alcoholics are attracted to codependents because they need them to survive while drinking. Codependents are attracted to dependent personalities because they can feel comfortable and justified in being an active caretaker. This unconscious attracting is so compulsive that eighty-five percent of those freed from a mate by death or divorce will seek out and become involved with another alcoholic personality. All of this suspends the process and recovery is delayed.

Where Do You Look for Recovery

Recovery demands awareness, acceptance, detachment, willingness, humility, and repentance. We discover recovery through our faith in a loving God, and our willingness to turn our lives over to Him to be fashioned in the image of His will. We must both give and receive forgiveness. We must allow Him to guide us past anger, hate, and resentment. We must open His word and pray without ceasing.

How to Change and Stop the Pain

God, in His wisdom, has revealed a path through life that offers hope, happiness, purpose, and eternal communion with our

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Maker. In our foolish pride we leave the path He established through Christ, refuse to walk in His steps, and then, when entrapped in pain and a cesspool of human degradation, cry out in anger, "about a God who could do this to us."

Where Do I Begin

I do not have power over another human being. I cannot control an alcoholic or the drinking. I can do nothing to force another to seek sobriety. False hopes and crazy efforts toward that end, turn my life into disaster which daily compounds itself.

God alone can help me make order out of my chaotic life. I need a daily message from God that says, "Dear _____, I do not need your help today." I must release my alcoholic into the hand of the man who stilled the waters. I can benefit from the words of the old black preacher who said, "Before I goes to bed, I tells the Lord all my troubles, then I goes to sleep and lets the Lord sit up and do the worrying." This is detachment.

Once I have turned the alcoholic over to God, I can seek God's will for me. No longer can I tell God what I want Him to do or offer Him suggestions. I have given up my control and my burden. I have cast all my cares upon Him knowing He cares for me. I can now conform my will to His. The time is now ripe for me to search my own life, my motives, and my actions. Am I in the faith? Is my heart right with God? I have become transparent and can show others the real me. I can admit to myself, God, and to others my mistakes, my character flaws, and the weaknesses of my wrecked being.

True confession means honest disclosure without regard for, or manipulations of, possible consequences. A forgiving God will wipe the slate clean and make all things new. The old things have passed away, and I can once again breathe the clean fresh air of purity. My repentance includes seeking reparation or making right the wrongs committed toward another human being.

Once I walk the road of recovery, and remove the beam of blindness from my own eye, I can lend a helping hand to those still be wildered by this cunning, baffling, destroyer of life and happiness.

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The Codependent Contributes

I can help those who hurt, and don't know why. There are recovery support groups all over the world. Sometimes these groups can be found in the phone book or by calling information. Helpful names and addresses are listed below:

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

box 459

Grand Central Station, New York, New York 10163

Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc.

P.O. Box 862, Midtown Station

New York, New York 10018-0862

800-344-2666



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