



Living with an Addict - Alcoholic



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Short Communication

Living with an addict can be a living hell, Unpredictable and dangerous, yet sometimes exciting and romantic. Never knowing when we'll be blamed or accused. Not being able to dependably plan social events. As the addict becomes more irresponsible, we pick up the slack and do more, often becoming the sole functioning parent or even the sole provider; yet we're unable to lean on our partner for comfort or support. Meanwhile, we rescue him or her from disasters, medical emergencies, accidents, or jail, make excuses for no-shows at work and family gatherings, and patch up damaged property, relationships, and self-inflicted mishaps. We may also endure financial hardship, criminality, domestic violence, or infidelity due to the addict's behavior.

We worry; feel angry, afraid, and alone. We hide our private lives from friends, co-workers, and even family to cover up the problems created by addiction or alcoholism. Our shame isn't warranted; nonetheless, we feel responsible for the actions of the addict. Our self-esteem deteriorates from the addict's lies, verbal abuse, and blame. Our sense of safety and trust erodes as our isolation and despair grow. My focus is on alcoholism, but many of the feelings partner's experience are the same, regardless of the type of addiction.

Alcoholism is considered a disease. Like other addiction, it's a compulsion that worsens over time. Alcoholics drink to ease their emotional pain and emptiness. Some try to control their drinking and may be able to stop for a while, but once alcohol dependency takes hold, most find it impossible to drink like non-alcoholics. When they try to curb their drinking, they eventually end up drinking more than they intend despite their best efforts not to. No matter what they say, they aren't drinking because of you, nor because they're immoral or lack willpower. They drink because they have a disease and an addiction. They deny this reality and rationalize or blame their drinking on anything or anyone else. Denial is the hallmark of addiction.

Drinking is considered an "Alcohol Use Disorder," when there's a pattern of use causing impairment or distress manifested by at least two of the following signs within a year, when the person:

- a. Drinks alcohol in greater amounts or for a longer period than was intended
- b. Has a persistent desire or has made failed attempts to reduce or control drinking
- c. Spends great time in activities to obtain or use alcohol or to recover from its effects
- d. Has a strong desire to drink alcohol
- e. Fails to meet obligations at work, school, or home due to recurrent drinking
- f. Drinks despite the recurrent social or interpersonal problems caused or worsened as a result
- g. Stops or reduces important activities due to drinking
- h. Drinks when it's physically hazardous to do so
- i. Drinks despite a recurrent physical or psychological problem caused or worsened as a result
- j. Develops tolerance (needs increased amounts to achieve desired effect)
- k. Has a withdrawal symptom from disuse, such as tremor, insomnia, nausea, anxiety, agitation.

Alcoholism is "a family disease." It's said that at least five other people experience the effects of each drinker's alcoholism, coined "secondhand drinking," by [Lisa Frederiksen](#). We try to control the situation, the drinking, and the alcoholic. If you live with an alcoholic, you're affected most, and children severely suffer because of their vulnerability and lack of maturity, especially if their mother or both parents are addicts. It's painful

to helplessly watch someone we love slowly destroy him or herself, our hopes and dreams, and our family. We feel frustrated and resentful from repeatedly believing the addict's broken promises and from trying to control an uncontrollable situation. This is our denial. In time, we become as obsessed with the alcoholic as he or she is with alcohol. We may look for him or her in bars, counts his or her drinks, pour out booze, or search for bottles. As it says in Al-Anon's "Understanding Ourselves," "All our thinking becomes directed at what the alcoholic is doing or not doing and how to get the drinker to stop drinking." Without help, our codependency follows the same downward trajectory of alcoholism.

There is hope, and there is help for the addict and for codependent family members. The first step is to learn as much as you can about alcoholism and codependency. Many of the things we do to help an addict or alcoholic are counterproductive and actually can make things worse. Listen to the experience, strength, and hope of others in recovery. [Al-Anon Family Groups](#) can help. You will learn:

- a) Not to suffer because of the actions or reactions of other people
- b) Not to allow ourselves to be used or abused by others in the interest of another's recovery
- c) Not to do for others what they can do for themselves
- d) Not to manipulate situations so others will eat, go to bed, get up, pay bills, not drink, or behave as we see fit

- e) Not to cover up for another's mistakes or misdeeds
- f) Not to create a crisis
- g) Not to prevent a crisis if it is in the natural course of events*.

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Biography of the Author

Darlene Lancer is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and expert on relationships and codependency. She's the author [Conquering Shame and Codependency: 8 Steps to Freeing the True You](#) and [Codependency for Dummies](#) and six eBooks, including: [10 Steps to Self-Esteem](#), [How To Speak Your Mind - Become Assertive and Set Limits](#), [How to be Assertive Breakup Recovery](#), ["I'm Not Perfect - I'm Only Human" - How to Beat Perfectionism](#), [Dealing with a Narcissist: 8 Steps to Raise Self-Esteem and Set Boundaries with Difficult People](#), [Spiritual Transformation in the Twelve Steps](#), and [Freedom from Guilt and Blame - Finding Self-Forgiveness](#), [Codependency's Recovery Daily Reflections](#), [How to Raise Your Self-Esteem](#) also available on [Amazon](#). Ms. Lancer has counseled individuals and couples for 30 years and coaches internationally. She's a sought after speaker in media and at professional conferences. Her articles appear in professional journals and Internet mental health websites, including on her own, www.whatiscodependency.com, where you can get a free copy of "14 Tips for Letting Go." Follow her on Twitter [@darlenelancer](#) and [Facebook](#). You can also listen and watch on [Soundcloud](#), [Clyp](#), and [Youtube](#).



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