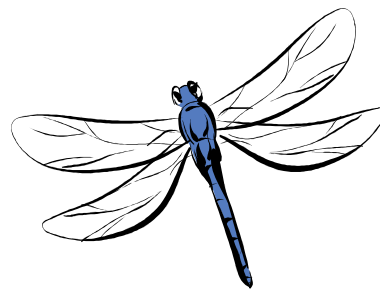


Living with Someone Else's Drink Problem

Living with a problem drinker can be really hard work. Often you will feel at the end of your tether. You will have to put up with many difficulties. Sometimes it will be their frightening or embarrassing behaviour and often you will have feelings of frustration, because whatever you try to do the drinker never seems to change.

You may feel guilty, ashamed, embarrassed and alone. You might feel shut off from the rest of the world (and the drinker) with no-one else to turn to.

The information in this handout is not intended to tell you how to stop someone drinking; the only person who can do that is the drinker themselves. But by reading through and completing the exercises, you should have a few more ideas about how to change the way the drinker's behaviour affects you, so that you feel more in control.



How it affects me

So that you can be clearer about exactly what problems you have as a result of someone else's drinking, how these affect you and how you feel about them, complete the following sentences:

One of the things I find difficult about

's drinking is:

The problem this creates is:

This makes me feel:

Try to concentrate on what the problem is for you, not just what the drinker does.

e.g.

*One of the things I find difficult about Johns drinking is: **that when he's drinking he keeps me awake.***

*The problem this creates is: **that I'm very tired at work the next day.***

*This makes me feel: **angry and resentful.***

Try this for yourself and list as many individual problems as you can think of and how they affect you.

Expressing Emotions

Once you have identified your true feelings and emotions about the drinking you need to find some ways of expressing those feelings. This will help you to release the tensions that have built up inside of you.

For example, if you are angry, thumping a cushion or pillow could help; if you are sad, give yourself permission to cry; if you are worried; is there someone you could talk to?

Some people find that just writing everything down helps release some of the frustration they may have and then destroying the written sheet by tearing it into small pieces, or crumpling it into a tight ball and jumping on it will help reduce the built up anger and resentment they feel. Don't worry about how silly it might look to someone else-whatever works for you is ok.

Think about all your feelings, list them below in the left hand column, then think of different ways you could let those feelings out and list them in the right hand column opposite the feeling. (You may be able to think of more than one for each feeling).

Feelings

What can I do to let them out?

My needs

When you live with a drinker it's easy to lose sight of your own wants and needs. Stop and think about what YOU need. Remember YOU are important too and you need to look after yourself. Try not to give up the things you would normally enjoy doing. Having outside interests often helps. This gives you time away from the drinker and means you have something to look forward to.

Treat yourself once in a while, even if it's just to a magazine. What sort of things would you like to do? What would be a treat for you? Make a list below.

Things I would enjoy/would like to do:

Treats:

Rules

How many times have you heard the drinker say “it won’t happen again”? But then all the good intentions seem to be forgotten and you are witnessing the same behaviour as before. You can’t make someone else change their behaviour but you can make a situation different by what you do.

Make some rules about what behaviour you will and won’t accept from the drinker. E.g. If she/he wakes me up at night I won’t cook tea for him/her the next day. This isn’t being petty. If the drinker is making life difficult for others, they need to be aware that others can make life difficult for them too. This, together with you having outside interests (see your list) will show the drinker that your world doesn’t revolve around them.

Explain to the drinker what you intend to do and why.

Once you have made the rule-stick to it. But remember, if you can’t enforce a rule its best not to make it in the first place. It’s important to do this otherwise the drinker wont take you seriously and will believe they can do what they like and still get away with it.

Think of a few rules you would like to make and list them below.

My list of rules:

Some things to avoid

Try not to do things the drinker should normally do. This can be difficult as often if you don't do them, they get left undone. But if you take the responsibility away from the drinker they can be left feeling useless or worthless. It gives them more reason to carry on drinking and they are also protected from the consequences of their drinking.

Think about the things the drinker should be doing.

Make your list below.

Things I do which.....should be doing.

One thing to remember is that you don't have to accept the blame for someone else's drinking. Drinkers often try to blame others for this and say things like "if it weren't for you I wouldn't be drinking" this is not true. The only person who is responsible for the drinking is the drinker themselves.