

Alcoholism and its effects on the family

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Alcoholism is also known as a family disease. Alcoholics may have young, teenage, or grown-up children; they have wives or husbands; they have brothers or sisters; they have parents or other relatives. An alcoholic can totally disrupt family life and cause harmful effects that can last a lifetime. According to the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services and SAMHSA's (Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration) National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information, seventy six million American adults have been exposed to alcoholism in the family.

Alcoholism is responsible for more family problems than any other single cause. According to Silverstein (1990), one of every four families has problems with alcohol. Alcoholism may be defined as the disease that affects the environment, genetic, and psychosocial factors of an individual. The said disease is said to be distinguished by periodic or continuous intake of alcohol, without worrying about the adverse effects the addiction may incur on the individual (National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, February 3, 1990). For this, Alcoholism has been regarded to have several effects on families.

Like any other addiction, Alcoholism has its detrimental effects on the user. The normal signs include problems in the stomach and in the intestines, ulcer, nausea and vomiting, deliriums, and the urge to have more of the habitual vice. However, excessive intake of the alcoholic beverage would cause much damage to the body. Starting from ulcer, the problems would tend to become psychological, greatly affecting the individual. If not taken seriously, the symptoms would progress and would eventually lead to kidney

problems, insomnia, weight loss, liver failure, and even death (National Treatment Referral, n. d.).

Although Alcoholism has not been taken seriously, families have been greatly affected by the symptoms and effects it has exuded on the people involved. The addiction starts with an individual drinking an estimated two bottles of beer a day. Eventually, the individual increases his tolerance for the said drug by drinking more of the habitual vice each day. Eventually, the individual begins to show signs of irritability and impatience towards his peers and people around him. Contact with peers is limited, for conflicts normally arise when this happens (Alcoholism Symptoms, n. d.).

Unfortunately, the family and its members are the most affected people in this dilemma. This may be attributed to the fact that alcoholism can affect anyone regardless of age, sex, income and social status, and even ethnicity. This means that almost anyone can be afflicted by this. The worst part of them all is the fact that the simple drinking of beer could lead to a child's heartbreak, or worse to the child being emotionally broken (Parsons, December 4, 2003). Alcoholism present in families has been classified into four types: type one, type two, type three, and type four respectively.

The first type was regarded as active alcoholism. This was the type that included family members, such as the parents, children, grand parents, and so forth. It has been stated that this type has been present in all family lineages. The second type involved a family member that has stopped drinking alcoholic beverages. Although there was no more active alcoholic in the house, the family still supports the way that alcoholics follow. However, conflict still becomes a great part of the family. On the other hand, Type

Three shows how the alcoholic has been removed from the family, for a generation or so.

This type shows how a parent would not be considered as an alcoholic regardless of the family's history. Regardless of this, characteristics for possible alcohol addiction may still become evident. Lastly, Type Four is considered to be an alcoholic system. This may be attributed to the fact that alcoholism easily progresses, and may easily attack members of the family causing chaos (Olivera, November 19, 2005). Sometimes, Alcoholism is regarded to be genetic, and inherited from previous generations.

Individuals who have family members who are alcoholics have a high risk of acquiring the said disease. Unfortunately, it is the children who suffer the most. As mentioned earlier, having parents for alcoholics would have an effect on the children. They would tend to be emotionally disturbed, and their behavior changes as well. Some even tend to be rebellious as a sign of protest to what is being shown by the parent. Although the whole situation is being blamed on genes, sometimes the behavior of the parents and what the children see are what matters most.

When they witness such heartbreaking moments at such a young age, different queries would be formed at the back of their minds and would eventually lead to different factors (Alcoholism: A Family Component, August 2005). Alcoholism may be attributed for numerous things. Although there are certain things that people can do to cope with life, there are certain things that alcohol does in an individual's body to console them. Human needs are given and everyone becomes happy. However, there are still certain things in life that are not taken into consideration.

Furthermore, I believe that it is best to say that circumstances are really pivotal in the relationships of family members. For one, excessive heartaches cannot be cured with just a simple snap of a finger. Regardless of how an individual would try to forget a heartbreaking moment, he just can not. In turn, they shift their attention to other mediums, such as alcohol, to make them feel better. Being consumed by the alcohol inhibits them from wallowing on their heartaches, and in turn, go on with their interrupted life. Another instance that may be attributed to alcohol intake is depression.

The individual would feel that being drunk is better than suffering from the heartaches and problems brought about by the circumstances that happened around them. It is just but human nature to feel hurt when some things are done unwillingly; however, it also depends on the individuals on how they would be able to cope up with such circumstances. Furthermore, I believe that it is best to say that the family is the primary structure of society affected by such dilemma. Seeing a family member wallow on the negative effects of alcohol may become heartbreaking, and worse, detrimental to the once healthy relationship that the family had.

In addition to this, unborn babies who have no idea of the real world are also being affected by this habitual vice. Pregnant women tend to pass on some of the alcoholic content into their unborn children, while trying to enjoy this extraordinary lifestyle. Unfortunately, the intake of alcoholic beverages also causes some abnormalities and defects on the unborn babies. These tend to become irreversible and would forever remind the parents of their habitual vice. Children, on the other hand, also tend to be affected by such dilemma.

Witnessing a parent wallow on the harsh effects of alcohol would make them perceive things differently from those of children their age. They tend to form guilt feelings toward themselves, and have very low esteem. In addition to this, they form a feeling of abandonment from their parents, because they feel that their parents would opt to satisfy their needs for the habitual vice than care for them. From here on, the children would develop insecurities about themselves that greatly affect their academic standing. In school, these children would be regarded to be different from their peers, for they tend to deviate from the crowd.

In this light, they would also opt to be alone and become anti-social. Building relationships with others would become difficult from their end, for they would feel that they would also be blamed for any wrong action made by their peers (Effects of Alcoholism on Families, n. d.). Although adults may tend to become more understanding of such situations than children, they may also be affected by the addiction. Having an alcoholic for a spouse would come as a challenge that has effects on the relationship. Like the children, the spouse also has to deal with the emotional and mental torture brought about by alcoholism.

The role as father and mother would be passed on to the normal spouse's hands, because of the partner's inability to fulfill them. In this regard, the non-alcoholic spouse would have difficulty in handling everything, which would also have an effect on the children. As much as possible, the non-alcoholic spouse would accomplish tasks deemed from both, even to the extent of trying to be perfect. Unfortunately, the emotional and mental

turmoil experienced by the spouse would come in between the relationship with the children.

In this regard, the children would develop a sense of rejection from both parents. Alcoholism also affects the financial stability of the family, for much money is being spent in purchasing alcoholic beverages. In this regard, other privileges are sacrificed by the other members of the family. Quite a heartbreaking situation, but this is the way things go. For this, many couples would opt for separation and divorce (Parsons, December 14, 2003). From everything that has been said, it may be clearly stated that Alcoholism definitely has an effect on the family.

Although it was evident how much emotional and mental turmoil Alcoholism may have on each member of the family, it may also be seen that not all are negative. Giving people temporary bliss would also help in the emotional state of an individual. However, this would come as a threat when things go overboard. Alcoholism is not as bad as it may seem. People should only be careful when dealing with such, so that no other person may be broken emotionally. Furthermore, having control over one's self is essential in making the individual more capable of facing the future ahead of him.