

Married to OR Living with an Alcoholic

The Effects of others Drinking on Women

Alcoholism is not simply an individual problem. How do alcoholics affect families and friends? It is estimated that each alcoholic affects the lives of at least four other people... alcoholism is truly a family disease. No matter what relationship you have with a problem drinker. Those of us closest to the alcoholic suffer the most, and those who care the most can easily get caught up in the behaviour of another person. We react to the alcoholic's behaviour. We focus on them, what they do, where they are, how much they drink. We try to control their drinking for them. We take on the blame, guilt, and shame that really belong to the drinker. We can become as addicted to the alcoholic, as the alcoholic is to alcohol. We, too, can become ill.

The term *alcoholic marriage* is often used to describe a partnership in which one or both of the partners have a history of alcoholism that interferes with successful, day-to-day marital functioning. Alcoholic marriages are fairly common in the United States, with estimated prevalence rates ranging anywhere from 10% to 45%. Alcoholics are more likely to have health, social, family, financial, psychological and work related problems. Alcohol was also a major contributing factor in relationship, interaction, communication, conflict, violence, and anger & aggression towards others.

According to psychologist Neill Neill, Ph.D., if a spouse or partner shifts from enjoying a drink to compulsively needing alcohol to feel okay, the non-alcoholic spouse may also shifted from being giving and caring to being addicted to the partner's care. In other words, with alcoholism in marriage, compulsive care taking often grows alongside the deteriorating selfcare of the compulsive drinker.

Most spouses in alcoholic relationship would lie (bold faced lies, lies of omission, cover-ups, minimization), make excuses, blame others for their spouse's drinking.