

For Immediate Release
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(Please keep contact name and number anonymous in print)

Alcoholism Affects the Entire Family ... Not Just the Alcoholic

How many people are involved in the life of any one alcoholic? Family, friends, employer, coworkers... It is important to remember that all these people are affected by alcoholism-not just the alcoholic. Many of them spend a lot of time and energy trying to "fix" the alcoholic: covering up for them, punishing them, taking responsibility for them.

For over 50 years, Al-Anon Family Groups (including Alateen for younger members) has been providing help and hope to families and friends of alcoholics. In non-professional, mutual support meetings, members share their own experience, strength, and hope to help one another to recover from the effects of alcoholism.

Living with alcoholism has been described as living on a merry-go-round, where each family member, friend, and employer plays a role with the alcoholics in their lives. These behavior patterns are like the script of a play, repeated over and over, centering on the alcoholic. A player can learn a new role by attending Al-Anon, gaining understanding of the disease of alcoholism and how it has affected them. When this happens, and the person changes their behavior, they are rewriting the script. There is no guarantee that the alcoholic will change, but the alternative is staying on the "merry-go-round." Insanity can be defined as "doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results." Changing one's behavior can be uncomfortable and very difficult to do, but members learn that they have to take responsibility for themselves and their own recovery.

Whether the alcoholic is still drinking or not, all family members and friends are welcome in Al-Anon. When anyone in a family enters recovery, the family itself will begin to change. The Al-Anon Suggested Welcome says, "The family situation is bound to improve as we apply the Al-Anon ideas. Without such spiritual help, living with an alcoholic is too much for most of us. Our thinking- becomes distorted by trying to force solutions, and we become irritable and unreasonable without knowing it."

Based upon the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon Family Groups (which includes Alateen for younger members) provides non-professional, free, and confidential support for families and friends of alcoholics. Parents, children, spouses, partners, friends, grandparents, and co-workers of problem drinkers can find hope and help in Al-Anon/Alateen. There are over 26, 000 Al-Anon and Alateen groups in 115 countries. For more information about Al-Anon/Alateen in your community, call 1-888-4-AL-ANON (weekdays, 8 am to 6 pm ET) or visit the Web site, www.al-anon.alateen.org.

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