

Chemical Dependency and the Family

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Special thanks to Claudia Black, PhD



Chemical Dependency and the Family

- * Chemical dependency overview
- * Definition of family
- * Effects of chemical dependency on families
- * What can you do?
- * Resources



What is CD...addiction, according to NIDA?

** Addiction is a primary, chronic disease of brain reward, motivation, memory and related circuitry. Dysfunction in these circuits leads to characteristic biological, psychological, social and spiritual manifestations. This is reflected in an individual pathologically pursuing reward and/or relief by substance use and other behaviors.*

What is CD...addiction?

** Addiction is characterized by inability to consistently abstain, impairment in behavioral control, and craving, diminished recognition of significant problems with one's behaviors and interpersonal relationships, and a dysfunctional emotional response. Like other chronic diseases, addiction often involves cycles of relapse and remission. Without treatment or engagement in recovery activities, addiction is progressive and can result in disability or premature death.*

Biological/Physical Effects

- *Chemical tolerance
- *Withdrawal symptoms
- *Chemically dependent people crave drugs and physically do not feel normal without them

Addiction is a disease.

- *It has defined **signs and symptoms**
- *It is **chronic**
- *It is **progressive**
- *It is **fatal**, if not treated

Signs and Symptoms

- *Frequent intoxication
- *Once user starts, can't stop
- *Blackouts
- *Behavior changes while using
- *Begins to miss work or other obligations, like family

Signs and Symptoms

- * Legal troubles
- * Drug taking in larger amounts than intended
- * Inability to cut down on drug use
- * A great deal of time spent in activities necessary to obtain the drug and
- * Continued use despite negative consequences

Addiction is Chronic

- * Symptoms arise and last over time
- * Interrupts the developmental cycle
- * Time not spent developing talents, skills, interests
- * Time spent in detention, jail, prison
- * May begin with an acute event (or more than one)
- * Eventually just becomes 'routine'

Addiction is Progressive

- * **Stages**
- * **Early**
 - * May be asymptomatic
- * **Middle**
 - * Tends to be when use affects relationships, life, work, etc.
- * **Late**
 - * Obvious symptoms

Addiction is Fatal

- * If left untreated, addiction to drugs will eventually kill by disease, overdose, or accident or lead to incarceration or institutionalization.
- * Drug related car and other accidents,
- * Violent activities, dangerous behaviors, gangs, fights, burglaries, homicide
- * Overdose
- * Suicide, attempted suicide
- * Diseases related to drug use

Psychological Effects

- * Drugs control mind, thinking, attitude, beliefs
- * Drugs control their moods
- * Believe life is not possible without drugs
- * Obsessive thoughts about drug
- * Love relationship with drug





What is missing here?

This disease is a FAMILY DISEASE!



The years of living with an alcoholic is almost sure to make any wife or child neurotic. The entire family is to some extent ill.

* *Alcoholics Anonymous* – p.122



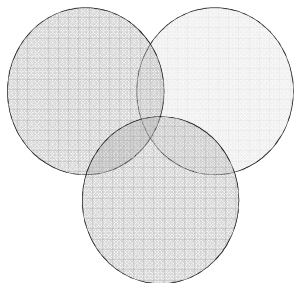
family [ˈfæmɪtɪ ˈfæmɪlɪ] *n pl -lies*1. (Sociology) **a.** a primary social group consisting of parents and their offspring, the principal function of which is provision for its members



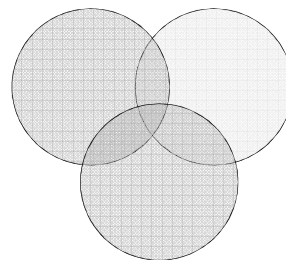
Common features of families

- * Unique roles
- * Shared roles
- * Rules—spoken or unspoken
- * Values and beliefs
- * Shared history

Families are Systems



Until something changes...



And everything reflects the change

- * Role shifts
- * Changed responsibilities
- * Rules are broken
- * Upended values and beliefs
- * Loss of history
- * Denial sets in

Chemical Dependency Changes:

- * How it feels to live in the family
- * How people communicate
- * How family members relate to each other and get along
- * How family members deal with problems and conflicts

Chemical Dependency Changes:

- * How family members meet each other's needs
- * How members assume roles and meet the demands of these roles
- * How family members relate to the outside world: We often recreate our family relationships in other relationships!

The alcoholic is like a tornado roaring his way through the lives of others. Hearts are broken. Sweet relationships are dead. Affections have been uprooted. Selfish and inconsiderate habits have kept the home in turmoil.

Alcoholics Anonymous – p.82



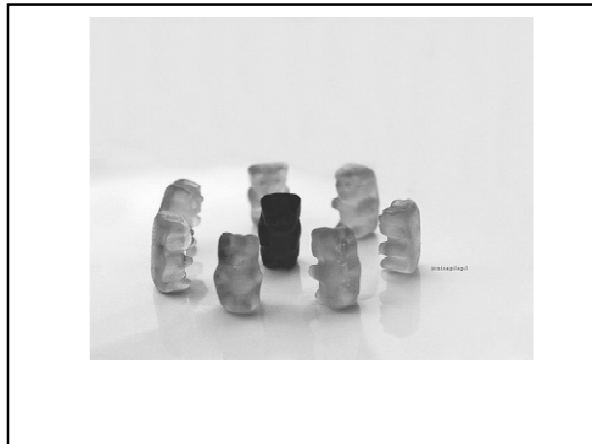
Resulting Disappointment

- o The chemically dependent person is unable to live up to his or her commitments and promises.
- o Broken promises and unfulfilled expectations are common.
- o Members of the family are constantly having their high hopes turn into great disappointments.

Characteristics of the Alcoholic or Chemically Dependent Family

- The Centricity of the Alcoholic
- Denial and Shame
- Inconsistency, Insecurity and Fear
- Anger and Hatred
- Guilt and Blame
- Resentments develop





It brings misunderstanding, fierce resentments, financial insecurity, disgusted friends and employers, warped lives of blameless children, sad wives and parents. Anyone can increase the list.

Alcoholics Anonymous – p. 18

Denial and Shame

The image contains two separate black and white photographs. The left one shows a banana with the words 'APPLE APPLE' written in marker on its side. The right one is a close-up of a gorilla's face, looking directly at the camera.

Inconsistency, Insecurity, Fear

A black and white portrait of a man wearing a top hat. The image is split vertically down the middle, with the left side showing a different lighting or expression than the right side, symbolizing inconsistency.

Anger and Hatred

A collage of three black and white photographs. The top left shows a young girl crying with her mouth open. The top right shows a man with a stern, angry expression and a clenched fist. The bottom center shows a woman with a serious, angry expression, pointing her finger forward.

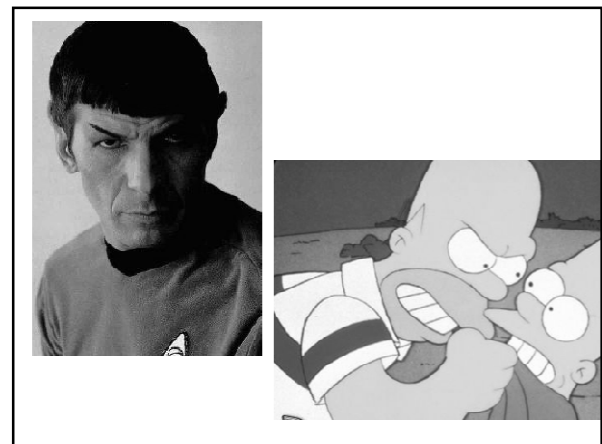
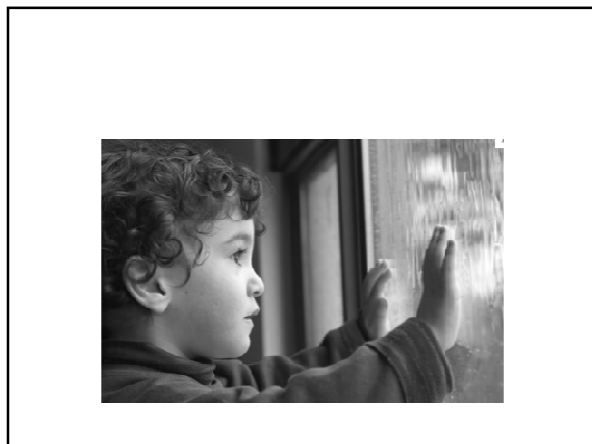
Guilt and Blame

A collage of three black and white photographs. The top left shows a man in profile eating. The top right shows a woman with her hands raised in a gesture of surrender or blame. The bottom center shows a man's face being pointed at by several hands from different directions, symbolizing blame.

Embarrassment



Resentment is like taking poison and waiting for the other person to die.





Ways Family Members Reduce Stress

- * Ignoring the problem behaviors, conflict, and pain
- * Using defense mechanisms (both the chemically dependent person and other family members – denial, minimization, approval seeking, victimization)
- * Taking on new roles to stabilize the family – children caring for children, protecting the family secret

Family Roles

- The Hero
- The Scapegoat
- The Lost Child
- The Mascot
- The Chief Enabler

The Hero

The Hero

- * Behaviors:
 - * High achiever, excels, leads, very busy, almost never says no, responds to adult, controlling
- * Feelings:
 - * Anxiety, inadequacy, unworthiness, resentment, self-blame, loneliness
- * As an adult:
 - * Unrealistic sense of control, needs to control, needs approval, feels overly responsible or may act irresponsibly when overwhelmed

Offers the family a sense of being okay

The Scapegoat

The Scapegoat

- * Behaviors:
 - * Tests limits, breaks rules, gets in trouble, acts aggressively, uses substances as an outlet/relief, inappropriate language, behavior, dress, usually has most realistic picture of the family.
- * Feelings:
 - * Anger, confusion, resentment, inadequacy, self-blame for family problems, "out of control"
- * As an adult:
 - * Typically has progressive substance abuse problems; problems throughout life; progressive involvement with the criminal justice system

Offers the family a sense of purpose by providing someone to blame

The Lost Child

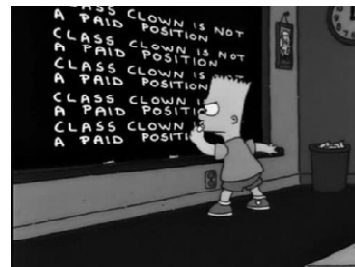


The Lost Child

- * Behaviors:
 - * Quiet, daydreamer, isolates, fantasizes, avoids conflict, passive
- * Feelings:
 - * Loneliness, fear, unworthiness, inadequacy, lack of fulfillment
- * As an adult:
 - * May have problems with depression, difficulty with interpersonal relationships, alcohol or drug problems usually due to inability to cope

Offers the family a sense of relief and success, and is not a trouble to the family

The Mascot



The Mascot

- * Behaviors:
 - * Class clown, seeks attention through humor and acting out, uses humor to keep people at a distance, seldom serious
- * Feelings:
 - * Anxiety – measures self-worth by how others see him or her; anger; hurt; loneliness
- * As an adult:
 - * Problems in school and at work, seldom forms intimate relationships, "clowns around" or "life of the party," may develop SA problems

Offers the family a sense of comic relief from the pain

The Chief Enabler



The Chief Enabler

- * Behaviors:
 - * Shields and shields the using family members, makes excuses for and may lie to protect the user, minimizes negative consequences, blames others for the problems, sometimes sabotages progress towards recovery
- * Feelings:
 - * Anger, hurt, guilt, resentment, anxiety, fear, desperate to control everything, helpless, exhausted

Offers the family a sense of stability and protection

One in four children live in a home where alcoholism or alcohol abuse is present *daily*.

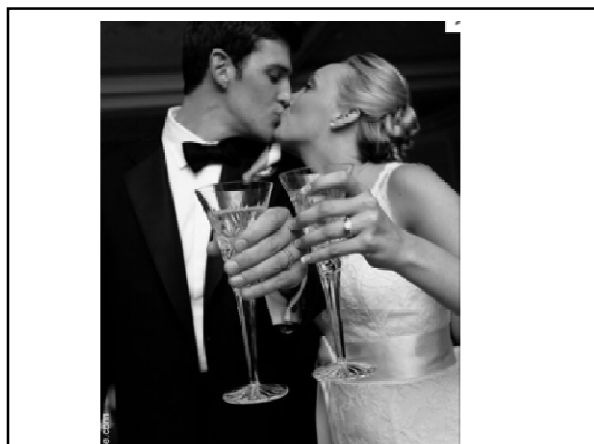
Children in CD homes are:

- 3 times more likely to be verbally, physically, or sexually abused
- 4 times more likely to be neglected
- 4 times more likely to develop chemical dependency problems of their own

Children in CD homes are at great risk for:

- Emotional problems
- Physical health problems
- Learning difficulties





Is there hope?



Recovery...

The alcoholic may find it hard to establish friendly relationships with his children....

They cannot seem to forgive and forget...

In time they will see he is a new man and in their own way they will let him know it. From this point on, progress will be rapid.

Alcoholics Anonymous – p. 134 (The Family Afterward)



Al-Anon

We who live or have lived with the problem of alcoholism understand as perhaps few others can. We, too, were lonely and frustrated, but in Al-Anon we discover that no situation is really hopeless, and that **it is possible to find contentment, even happiness, whether the alcoholic is still drinking or not.**

How Al-Anon Works – p. 8

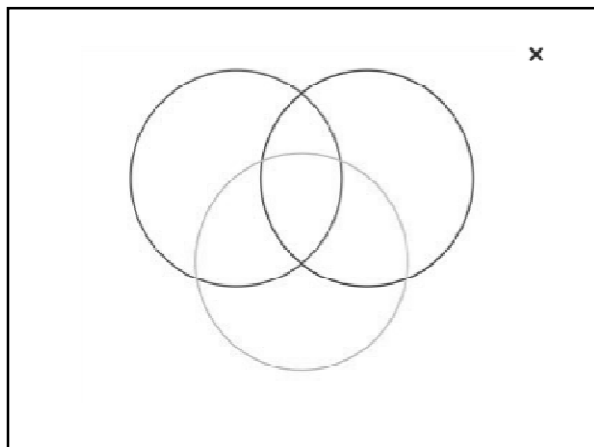
It's work!

The battle against alcoholism has become the basis for many of our relationships. Putting an end to this battle requires completely redefining what we believe about ourselves, others and our relationships.

How Alanon Works – p. 46

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.

How Alanon Works – p. 8

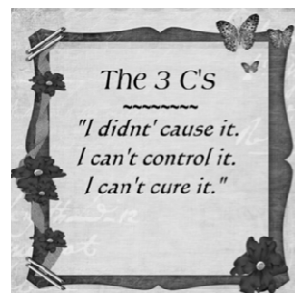


- * A systemic disease needs systemic treatment
- * Chemically dependent families have choices and can break the unhealthy norms of the family.
- * It doesn't matter why these roles were developed, they do not have to be maintained!



What's a family to do?

Develop an understanding and acceptance that addiction is a disease.



**Love the
person, hate
the disease**

What's a family to do?

- * Attend AlAnon, AA, NA, or any 12-step support group.
- * Get professional help from a therapist, medical doctor, clergy, etc.
- * Confront denial -- accept responsibility for your behavior.

A word to the helping professional....

Learn all you can about chemical dependency and co-dependency.

If you live or have lived with chemical dependency, seek recovery.

Just because the alcoholic gets drunk, acts out, fails to meet an obligation, declares the sky is orange, or makes or breaks a promise, does not mean that those who care about him or her must do what we have always done before. We are not trapped.

We have choices.

How Al-Anon Works – p. 30

Resources/references

- * It Will Never Happen to Me – Claudia Black
- * Codependent No More – Melody Beattie
- * Broken Bottles, Broken Dreams – Charles Deutsch
- * www.dawnfarm.org
- * <http://www.adultchildren.org>
- * <http://www.al-anon.alateen.org>
- * <http://www.afgdistrict5.org>

Data were obtained from the following sources:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment.
You Can Help: A Guide for Caring Adults Working with Young People Experiencing chemical dependency in the Family. (PHD878, [SMA] 01-3544) Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

University of Pennsylvania Health System:
<http://www.uphs.upenn.edu/>

