

While Waiting for the "Right Time"

One of the most difficult crises for us as persons is to confront a friend or family member who is becoming an alcoholic or heavy drinker. Our nature is to sit back quietly and not become involved as this "drinking is a private matter" and does not concern us. Often, though, many teenagers will not bring their friends home because Dad is stretched out drunk on the recreation room couch. They won't invite their parents to school functions or socials because they become embarrassed at the antics that follow too much drinking. They make excuses to their classmates and friends saying their parents have upset stomachs when in reality they are getting over a drunken binge. What, then, can we do while waiting for the alcoholic to seek help?

DO:

- try to remain calm, unemotional and factually honest in speaking with the problem drinker about his behavior and its day-to-day consequences.
- Let the problem drinker know that you are reading and learning about alcoholism, attending Al-Anon or Alateen, and the like.
- Discuss the situation with someone you trust--a clergyman, social worker, a friend, or some individual who has experienced alcoholism either personally or as a family member.
- Establish and maintain a healthy atmosphere in the home, and try to include the alcoholic member in family life.
- Explain the nature of alcoholism as an illness to the children in the family.
- Encourage new interests and participate in leisure-time activities that the problem drinker enjoys. Encourage him or her to see old friends.
- Be patient and live one day at a time. Alcoholism generally takes a long time to develop, and recovery does not occur overnight. Try to accept setbacks and relapses with calm and understanding.
- Refuse to ride with the alcoholic person if he insists on drinking and driving.

DO NOT:

- attempt to punish, threaten, bribe, preach, or try to be a martyr. Avoid emotional appeals which may only increase feelings of guilt and the compulsion to drink.
- Allow yourself to cover-up or make excuses for the alcoholic person or shield him from the realistic consequences of his behavior.
- Take over his responsibilities, leaving him with no sense of importance or dignity.
- Hide or dump bottles, or shelter the problem drinker from situations where alcohol is present.
- Argue with the alcoholic person when he is drunk.
- Try to drink along with the problem drinker.
- Above all, do not accept guilt for another's behavior.

Someone Close Drinks Too Much. Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare
Washington, D.C. 1979