

The Family Afterwards

They Don't Understand

By Rick R.

The families of recovering alcoholics, both male and female, have endured the symptoms and the side effects of the alcoholic's downward spiral for far too long. They often find it encouraging when the alcoholic surrenders and, in his/her search for help, finds Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) and stops the drinking. In Chapter 9, in the book, Alcoholics Anonymous (Big Book) "The Family Afterward", it mostly deals with the male member, but for this it would not be too difficult to translate it to apply to women as well.

In step twelve, (page 118 in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (12&12) and, (page 119 in the Big Book) it addresses the issue of the alcoholic who, spends too much time at meetings and the family is, upset, that A.A. is doing for him/her, what all his/her years of devotion could not do. They sometimes think that **they should be cured and do it on their own**. This misunderstanding of the disease can be put into perspective by asking the spouse the following question: If, on a scale of **1 to ten**, 1 being extreme pain and 10 being in perfect health, a person awakened each morning at a physical pain level of **2**, would it be appropriate to go to a doctor for treatment? If the answer is yes, then you could explain it like this.

On a scale of **1 to 10** the **normal** person awakens in the morning at an emotional level of **8**. The **alcoholic** awakens at a level of **2**. Neither knows the emotional level of the other. The normal one does not understand why the alcoholic is so silent/depressed/disgruntled/unhappy. Everything seems fine to him/her. What is the problem? The alcoholic, on the other hand (being at a **2**) cannot understand why the normal One is so up-beat, after all, the world is a cold and hostile place to him/her. There are wars, the economy, sickness, responsibilities, financial problems, not much to look forward to. What's the use? He feels he is looking up from the bottom of a deep pit. (**2**)

When the alcoholic is in that pit and takes a drink, he goes from a **2** to an **8 1/2** and halfway through his second drink he feels normal, and everything is right with the world. On the other hand, when a normal drinker takes a drink, he goes from an **8** to an **8 1/2**, it is nice, but he would not give up his life for it, and the next day, he is back to work. This is normal. The emotional pain level of an alcoholic will always be at a **2** unless he/she find a way to dig his/her way out of that pit.

The A.A. program is structured to restore a balance in the alcoholic's life by, one step at a time, resolving the abnormal thought patterns that drive the alcoholic to find that **peace of mind** in the bottle. For the nonalcoholic to understand this, means taking a second look at his/her perception, and finding it in their heart to help by accepting the reality of the situation. I read a popular author define the word **Love** as "**Caring for and nurturing another person.**" Remember that sobriety requires a daily maintenance of our spiritual condition. In the beginning, If the alcoholic embraces this program, he/she should, in time, return to a pattern of life that is better than anything they could have imagined. We hope that they find the answer here and that **no one should have to live their life at the bottom of that pit**. Your patience will be rewarded in time.