

Beating The Bottle

Understanding and Overcoming Alcoholism

The National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information's definition of alcohol abuse is a pattern of problem drinking that results in health consequences, social problems, or both. A heavy drinking problem is generally defined as five or more drinks on five or more days over the past 30 days. Alcohol dependence or alcoholism refers to a disease that is characterized by abnormal alcohol-seeking behavior that leads to impaired control over drinking.

Some Of The Facts About Alcoholism

During the 1990s, the Department of Labor in conjunction with several national organizations conducted a number of studies designed to determine the effect of alcoholism on the family and the workplace. Their findings concluded that there is a significant situation developing regarding the effects of alcoholism on the American society. Alcoholism causes an estimated 500 million lost workdays each year, at a cost of approximately \$250 million dollars annually. The studies also showed that more than sixty percent of adult workers knew people

who had gone to work while under the influence of alcohol.

According to the Eighth Special Report to the U.S. Congress on Alcohol and Health (Secretary of Health & Human Services Department), "Alcohol is associated with a substantial proportion of human violence and perpetrators are often under the influence of alcohol." The research went on to say that in more than 50 percent of the reported incidents of domestic abuse, alcohol was present. Recent reports by the National Association for Children of Alcoholics stated that approximately 43 percent of the U.S. adult population has been exposed to alcoholism in their family, that is approximately 76 million people.

What Are The Effects of Alcohol?

The short-term effects of alcohol use include: distorted vision - hearing - coordination, altered perceptions and emotions, and impaired judgment. Long-term effects include loss of appetite, vitamin deficiencies, stomach ailments, skin problems, sexual impotence, liver damage, heart and central nervous system damage and memory loss. In either event, impairment begins with the first drink.

Alcohol lowers inhibitions and impairs judgment, which may lead to risky

behaviors. It hinders coordination, slows reaction time, dulls the senses and block memory functions. Functioning as a central nervous system depressant, alcohol affects virtually every organ in the body because it goes directly to the bloodstream.

How Do I Know If Someone I Love Has A Drinking Problem?

For people with a drinking problem, much like other addictions, denial may be their greatest defense against the truth. People with severe drinking problems may exhibit some of the following characteristics, which include:

- An inability to control their drinking, frequently conclude an evening drunk
- Using alcohol as an escape from daily problems
- Dramatic changes in personality
- An excessive tolerance to alcohol
- Blackouts
- Problems at work, school or in social settings directly related to their drinking

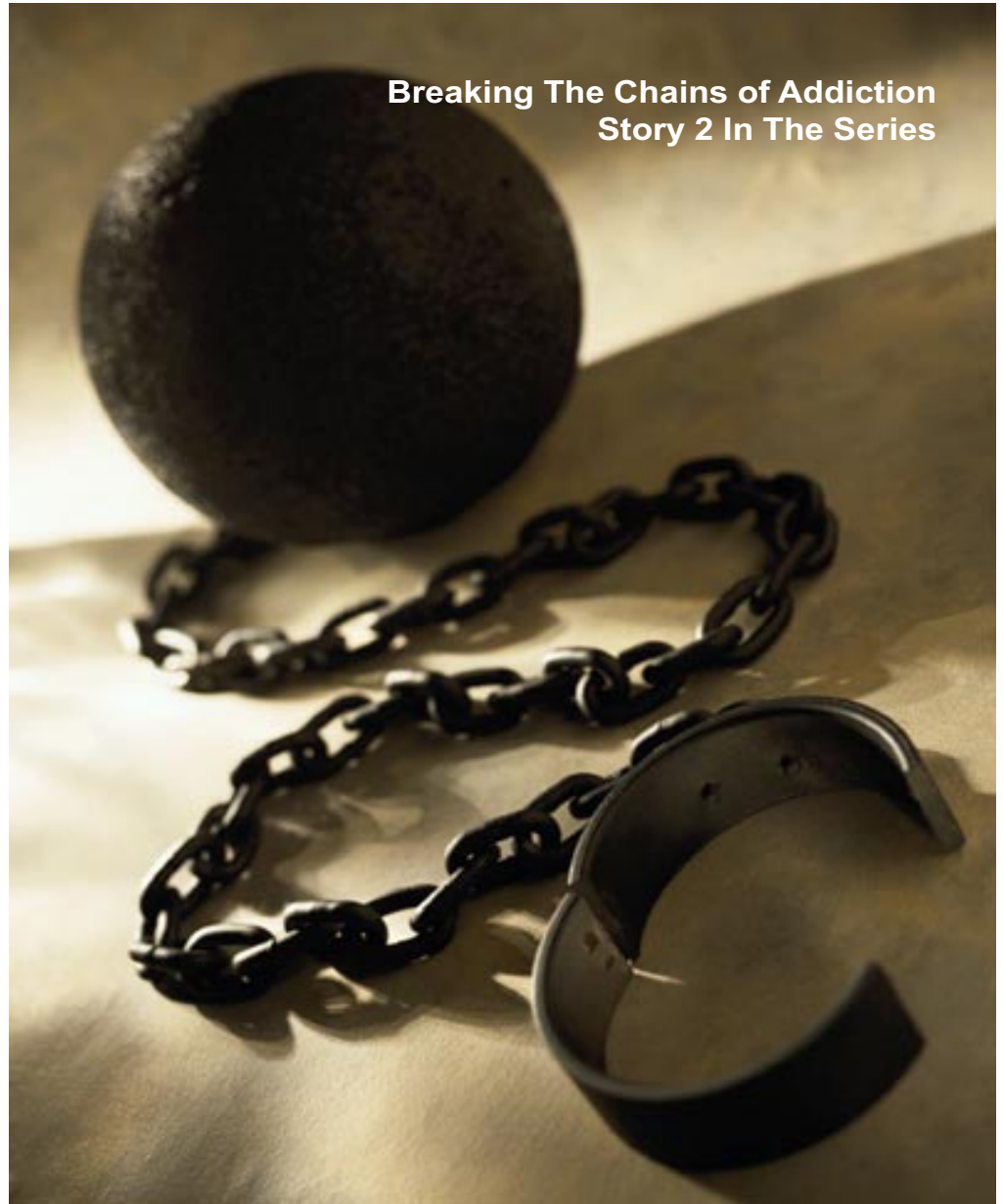
Each one of these could be a sign that an individual has a severe drinking

problem; however, when two or more are present, it is almost an absolute probability that someone is suffering from alcoholism.

How Do I Cut Down On Drinking?

In order to deal with a problem, someone must first recognize that the problem exists. Because denial is the first and best defense, being able to recognize the need to cut back is crucial to being able to overcome alcoholism. The following is one method of reducing alcohol.

- Reduce or eliminate the total amount of alcohol at home. Remove the temptation to drink by removing the source.
- Drink slowly. Take at least one hour between drinks and always eat food while drinking.
- Take short breaks from alcohol. Occasionally, take a day or two during the week to not drink. Increase the number of days you do not drink to a week and continue to expand from there. Notice your physical and emotional changes during that time and while you drink.
- Learn to say NO. Remove yourself from social situations that may place you in a position to drink and avoid individuals who will give you a hard time for not drinking.
- Stay active. Determine what you would like to do with the money and time you save by not drinking. Go out with non-drinking family or



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friends that will support your decision to reduce your drinking.

- Get a support group. Surround yourself with people who will not ridicule or tempt you to drink. Find a strong support group of friends and/or family that will respect your decision not to drink.
- Watch out for temptations. Avoid places and people in which you

associate drinking. Do not drink while mad, sad or angry; if you want to drink less, these are habits you need to break.

- Do not give up. Remember and remind yourself that you will feel better physically and emotionally as well as be financially better off the less you drink. Eventually you will succeed so keep telling yourself that you want to be better..

Alcoholism Self-Test

The National Council on Alcoholism has developed a series of 26 questions that can help you determine whether you may need help. Please answer the following questions honestly.

- _____ 1. Do you occasionally drink heavily after a disappointment, a quarrel, or when the boss gives you a hard time?
- _____ 2. When you have trouble or feel under pressure, do you always drink more heavily than usual?
- _____ 3. Have you noticed that you are able to handle more liquor than you did when you were first drinking?
- _____ 4. Did you ever wake up on the "morning after" and discover that you could not remember part of the evening before, even though your friends tell you that you did not "pass out"?
- _____ 5. When drinking with other people, do you try to have a few extra drinks when others will not know it?
- _____ 6. Are there certain occasions when you feel uncomfortable if alcohol is not available?
- _____ 7. Have you recently noticed that when you begin drinking you are in a more of a hurry to get the first drink than you used to be?
- _____ 8. Do you sometimes feel a little guilty about your drinking?
- _____ 9. Are you secretly irritated when your family or friends discuss your drinking?
- _____ 10. Have you recently noticed an increase in the frequency of your memory "blackouts"?
- _____ 11. Do you often find that you wish to continue drinking after your friends say they have had enough?
- _____ 12. Do you usually have a reason for the occasions when you drink heavily?
- _____ 13. When you are sober, do you often regret things you have done or said while drinking?
- _____ 14. Have you tried switching brands or following different plans for controlling your drinking?
- _____ 15. Have you often failed to keep the promises you have made to yourself about controlling or cutting down on your drinking?
- _____ 16. Have you ever tried to control your drinking by making a change in jobs, or moving to a new location?
- _____ 17. Do you try to avoid family or close friends while you are drinking?
- _____ 18. Are you having an increasing number of financial and work problems?
- _____ 19. Do more people seem to be treating you unfairly without good reason?
- _____ 20. Do you eat very little or irregularly when you are drinking?
- _____ 21. Do you sometimes have the "shakes" in the morning and find that it helps to have a little drink?
- _____ 22. Have you recently noticed that you cannot drink as much as you once did?
- _____ 23. Do you sometimes stay drunk for several days at a time?
- _____ 24. Do you sometimes feel very depressed and wonder whether life is worth living?
- _____ 25. Sometimes after periods of drinking, do you see or hear things that aren't there?
- _____ 26. Do you get terribly frightened after you have been drinking heavily?

Score based on the following key:

If you answered yes to any of Questions 1-8 -- You may be in the Early Stage of Alcoholism;

If you answered yes to any of Questions 9-21 -- You may be in the Middle Stage of Alcoholism

If you answered yes to any of Questions 22-26 -- You may be in the Beginning of Final Stage of Alcoholism

Studies have shown that in many of the cases, there are underlying behavioral conditions that exist with alcoholism. In order to effectively treat the condition, it is vital to be seen by a behavioral health care professional. For more information about alcoholism or some of the potential underlying causes, please contact the CARELINE at (800) 662-1002 for a free, confidential assessment and treatment options.

The Key To Personal Growth

Improving Your Self-Control



Given the high number of potential stressors in society today, maintaining a strong control over oneself can be a very difficult task. Self-control is defined by the American Heritage® Dictionary as control of one's emotions, desires, or actions by one's own will. It is a mostly learned and developed attribute of an individual's daily life. Self-control is a key element to functioning at school, work or in social situations.

Self-control is a set of barriers that prevent one group of behaviors from over taking another group of behaviors. For example, to graduate from college, an individual will take more time to study. The individual may not like or want to study but because of his/her self-control, the individual is willing to prevent one behavior to accomplish a specified task.

Developing self-control is a crucial element learned while growing. Being able to control one's emotions can help him/her to make better grades in school, have better social, and work relationships. As with any new learning

experience, there are keys to understand. For developing self-control, those keys are to remain calm and follow-up. Remaining calm is the first key to developing self-control because the ability to be calm when the situation creates chaos is vital.

The first step in developing a greater self-control is to identify current areas where lack of self-control is currently evident.

How Does One Improve One's Self-Control?

Developing a stronger self-control is an important part of overall maturity. It is more than being able to maintain your composure. Increasing your self-control is best done by determining before a potentially volatile circumstance or situation can occur what your responses will be. It is a proactive, not reactive approach to dealing with circumstances. In addition, determining if what you say is what is being interpreted by others is important. Place yourself in other people's position and determine if you are communicating in a clear and concise manner. Frustration is a primary cause of someone losing control. Avoid allowing other people to control your emotions. Take responsibility for your actions and reactions to control and refuse to allow others to manipulate your emotions. Together, these can help you better deal with situations that may cause a loss of control.

Self-Control Self-Test

Answer yes or no to the following eleven questions related to self-control.

1. During religious services, at the movies, or in the theatre, do you often talk to your neighbors?
2. If someone makes you angry, do you strike back, either physically or verbally?
3. When you are standing in a line, do you push against the person ahead of you?
4. Do you rely on others to remind you of things to be done, such as going to bed, getting up, which clothes to wear etc.?
5. Do you think that most laws are silly or unnecessary?
6. If you know that you should not consume a certain food or drink that you like, can you resist it?
7. Have you successfully broken at least one bad habit?
8. Are you usually on time for appointments?
9. Can you stop doing something you enjoy and turn to a distasteful task you need to do?
10. Do you usually finish things you start?
11. Do you feel yourself fearful of small unimportant things or happenings?

If you answered yes to more than 3 you may need to examine ways of improving your self-control.