

What's It Like to Live With an Alcoholic Parent?

We were a very stereotypical early 1970s family. My dad had a good job and was working hard toward success, and my mom was an active, quite beautiful and thriving stay-at-home mom.

We were truly happy during my early childhood. Yet, lurking beneath the surface were the past horrors and pain my mother experienced in her own childhood. They would soon manifest into her becoming an alcoholic parent like her own. With grit and determination, she had pushed herself into a higher station in life and out of the rubble of her origins, but success allowed reflection, and reflection introduced her enemy: bourbon.

I was around 12 the first time I knew something was seriously wrong. My mother was an avid lover of music, but she had taken to locking herself in our study for hours with the lights out and music blaring. No matter how much I knocked, how many times I asked her what was wrong, she would not come out.

I would sit with my back to the locked door and listen to Glen Campbell, CCR, Three Dog Night and all the great artists of the era, and wonder what in the world was going on. When I questioned it, I was rebuked and, year after year, it worsened.

By the time I was in my mid-20s, it had gone from functioning alcoholism to nightmare alcoholism. She was merely a shell of the woman I loved so dearly. Divorced, lost and completely engulfed in a sea of bourbon and depression. My dad had set her up in a nice place to live and she had financial security, but the mess was left to my brother and me to tend to.

The details are too much for here, but those were the worst years of my life. We buried her at the young age of 60. She

briefly met two of the five grandchildren who would come. It's one of my greatest sorrows that she never experienced my daughters.

Being the child of an alcoholic parent is life filled with uncertainty, confusion, and great mental challenge. It's a form of child abuse that is highly overlooked in our culture saturated to the max in booze.

But always remember: Nothing is impossible with God. He can fix any situation if you trust Him.

Here is a look at the typical conditions inside an alcoholic family home:

Common Conditions in the Home

Each case is unique and some homes function better than others, but in any given place where a truly alcoholic parent is present, you'll find instability, disorganization, chaos at times, lack of discipline, emotional abuse and possible physical abuse. There will be loud arguments, destructive arguments and frightening arguments. I would go to bed many nights as a child hearing things that no child should ever hear. The home will ebb and flow completely dependent on the mood of the addict. Tension and fear will always be present.

Common Symptoms in the Child

The realest way to describe what it's like being a child in that situation? Horrifying. No matter how mature a child may be for their age, there is no way they have yet developed the mental capabilities and strength to process the madness. In my case, I use that experience for the good, such as writing from my deep experience for this site. Other children don't fare so well and are very likely to fall into addiction and trouble. Tragedy breeds tragedy. The child faces loneliness, a sense of repeated abandonment, shame, emptiness, anxiety, depression and anti-social behavior.

What Is the Outcome for the Family?

There isn't a happy ending to this story for the vast majority of cases. My family was destroyed and most end that way. The journey getting to the final blow is agonizing. Families do not want destruction, so they will naturally fight the process by attempting to cover it all up. For the child, this piles on even more trauma because it's expected of them not to reveal the true depth of the problem. My close friends were my saving grace.

They saw it in glimpses, but they knew it was there. They never judged me for it. In many ways, they became my family in my teen years and my place of happy refuge. I could spend time with their families and understand that not everyone lived that way. It gave me hope for the future.

Christians are not immune from this. Seek professional help right away, including Christian counseling, and save your children from misery.

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