

# MESSAGES IN A BOTTLE

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism and Al-anon and Ala-teen are only two of many nationwide organizations looking forward to helping you with your struggles with your alcoholic parents. Overcomers Outreach, National Association for Children of Alcoholics and Adult Children of Alcoholics are all organizations that are also eager to help you deal with your parents problems. Learn which one might be the best fit for you and your situation.



## DO YOUR PARENTS DRINK TOO MUCH?

### Overcomers Outreach

Overcomers Outreach is a ministry that was born out of a deep need of a support system for individuals and families within evangelical Christian churches. Overcomers Outreach support groups use the Bible and the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous to minister to individuals who are affected by alcohol, mind altering drugs, sexual addiction, gambling, food and other compulsive behaviors or dependencies.

### National Association for Children of Alcoholics

The people hurt most by drugs and alcohol don't even use them; they are the CHILDREN of alcoholics and other drug dependent parents. The National Association for Children of Alcoholics (NACoA) believes that no children should grow up in isolation and without support. NACoA is the national non-profit membership organization working on behalf of children of alcohol and drug dependent parents.

### Adult Children of Alcoholics

Adult Children of Alcoholics is an anonymous Twelve Steps, Twelve Tradition program of women and men who grew up in an alcoholic or otherwise dysfunctional home. Members meet in a mutually respectful, safe environment and acknowledge common experiences. During meetings, participants discover how childhood affected them in the past and influences them in the present. ACA takes positive action by practicing the Twelve Steps, focusing on The Solution and accepting a loving Higher Power. It is important to find freedom from the past and a way to improve lives today.

**In the United States,  
about one in every 12  
adults abuses alcohol or is  
alcohol dependent.**



## **Q&A WITH NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON ALCOHOL ABUSE AND ALCOHOLISM**

### **Do you have to be an alcoholic to experience problems with alcohol?**

No. Alcoholism is only one type of alcohol problem. Alcohol abuse can be just as harmful. A person can abuse alcohol without actually being an alcoholic--that is, he or she may drink too much and too often but still not be dependent on alcohol. Some of the problems linked to alcohol abuse include not being able to meet work, school or family responsibilities; drunk-driving arrests and car crashes; and drinking-related medical conditions. Under some circumstances, even social or moderate drinking is dangerous--for example, when driving, during pregnancy or when taking certain medications.

### **Are specific groups of people more likely to have problems?**

Alcohol abuse and alcoholism cut across gender, race and nationality. In the United States, about one in every 12 adults abuses alcohol or is alcohol dependent. In general, more men than women are alcohol dependent or have alcohol problems. Alcohol problems are highest among young adults ages 18-29 and lowest among adults ages 65 and older. People who start drinking at an early age--at age 14 or younger--are at a much higher risk of developing alcohol problems at some point in their lives compared to someone who starts drinking at age 21 or after.

### **What can I do if my alcoholic parent refuses to get help?**

This can be a challenge. An alcoholic can't be forced to get help except under certain circumstances, such as a traffic violation or arrest that results in court-ordered treatment. But you don't have to wait for someone to "hit rock bottom" to act. Many alcoholism treatment specialists suggest the following steps to help an alcoholic get treatment:

**Stop all "cover ups."** Family members often make excuses to others or try to protect the alcoholic from the results of his or her drinking. It is important to stop covering for the alcoholic so that he or she experiences the full consequences of drinking.

**Time your intervention.** The best time to talk to the drinker is shortly after an alcohol-related problem has occurred--like a serious family argument or an accident. Choose a time when he or she is sober, both of you are fairly calm and you have a chance to talk in private.

**Be specific.** Tell the family member that you are worried about his or her drinking. Use examples of the ways in which the drinking has caused problems, including the most recent incident.

**State the results.** Explain to the drinker what you will do if he or she doesn't go for help--not to punish the drinker, but to protect yourself from his or her problems. What you say may range from refusing to go with the person to any social activity where alcohol will be served to moving out of the house. Do not make any threats you are not prepared to carry out.

**Get help.** Gather information in advance about treatment options in your community. If the person is willing to get help, call immediately for an appointment with a treatment counselor. Offer to go with the family member on the first visit to a treatment program and/or an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting.

**Call on a friend.** If the family member still refuses to get help, ask a friend to talk with him or her using the steps just described. A friend who is a recovering alcoholic may be particularly persuasive, but any person who is caring and nonjudgmental may help. The heartfelt intervention of more than one person, more than one time, is often necessary to coax an alcoholic to seek help.

**Find strength in numbers.** With the help of a health care professional, some families join with other relatives and friends to confront an alcoholic as a group. This approach should only be tried under the guidance of a health care professional who is experienced in this kind of group intervention.

**Get support.** It is important to remember that you are not alone. Support groups are offered in most communities and include regular meetings that help family members understand that they need to take steps to take care of themselves, regardless of whether the alcoholic family member chooses to get help. These groups also help family members see that they are not responsible for an alcoholic's drinking problem, and that they are not alone.

Call the National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Referral Routing Service ([Center for Substance Abuse Treatment](#)) at **1-800-662-HELP** (4357) for information about treatment programs in your local community and to speak to someone about an alcohol problem.

*Content for this download was provided by the organizations included. niNe. magazine does not endorse any one program, but strongly encourages you to contact and try any of these well respected and established organizations if you or a loved one needs help and support with alcoholism.*