

**Main Office**  
8790 Manchester Road  
St. Louis, MO 63144  
(314) 962-3456



**Branch Office**  
1723 Pennsylvania Ave.  
St. Louis, MO 63104  
(314) 664-7550

## WHAT SHOULD TEENS DO WHEN AN ADULT HAS A PROBLEM?

There are things every kid should know about how to live! If you think someone in your family drinks too much, these suggestions are especially important, because drinking affects everyone in the family...even kids. If you don't have this problem, you may have a friend whose family has a problem with alcohol...talk to your friend! Let him or her know you care and share this information with them.

DO talk about your feelings with a close friend, relative, teacher, pastor, or others. Sharing your feelings is not being mean to your family...it's a normal part of being human. Talking to someone about your feelings can help you feel less alone, and that person may be able to comfort you.

DO try to get involved in doing fun things at school or near where you live...the school band, softball, Boy or Girl Scouts, or others. Doing these types of fun things can help you forget about the problems at home and can help you feel better about yourself.

DO remember that your thoughts and feelings are normal. It's OK to hate the disease of alcoholism and love your alcoholic parent...both at the same time! All people have self-doubts and mixed-up feelings. It's part of growing up.

DO remember how to have fun. Sometimes children with alcoholic families worry so much that they forget how to be "just a kid." You deserve a good case of the giggles sometimes and special treats just because you are YOU. If things are bad at home, you might not have anyone who will help you have fun, but that doesn't have to stop you. Find a friend who likes to act nutty sometimes, or help yourself to the 'crazies.' Jump in a pile of leaves, learn the latest dance steps, see how far you can spit a watermelon seed...there are a million ways to have fun!

DO go to Alateen meetings. Meeting new friends who understand will remind you that you are not alone.

DON'T ride in a car when the driver has been drinking if you can avoid it. It is not safe. Walk, or try to get a ride with an adult friend who has not been drinking.

DON'T feel guilty or ashamed about the problem at home. Alcoholism is a disease, and diseases are nobody's fault. Anybody who makes fun of alcoholics just doesn't understand the facts. (By the way, just because your parent is an alcoholic doesn't mean you will be an alcoholic when you grow up. In fact, most children of alcoholics do not become alcoholics.)

DON'T try to convince your parent to stop drinking when he or she is drunk. The drinker is not thinking clearly at such times and may forget what you said. DON'T pour out or try to water down your parent's alcohol. The plain fact is that it won't work. You have no control over the drinking. You didn't make the problem start, and you can't make it stop. It is up to your parent to get treatment, so relax. What your parent does is not your responsibility or your fault. So give yourself a break!

Source: Excerpted from "Children of Alcoholics Kit: Kit for Helpers" from the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI). The complete set includes four parts, to order these kits, call 301/468-2600.

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