

ALCOHOL ADDICTED WOMEN: TREATMENT IS STILL A MAN'S WORLD

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A YOUNG MOTHER ADDICTED TO ALCOHOL

WHAT FEELINGS DOES THIS PICTURE CONJURE UP IN YOU?

ALCOHOL ADDICTED WOMEN AND SUICIDE ATTEMPTS

- ◆ ACCORDING TO ONE STUDY* OF 800 WOMEN, INCLUDING HEAVY DRINKERS AND NON-DRINKERS

80% OF THE WOMEN WHO WERE HEAVY DRINKERS HAD ATTEMPTED SUICIDE,
COMPARED TO 8.8% OF THE NON-DRINKING WOMEN.

*American Journal of Public View of Mental Health

RESEARCH ON ALCOHOL
ADDICTION
TREATMENT OUTCOMES

WHITE, HETEROSEXUAL, MIDDLE
TO UPPER CLASS MEN WITH
ALCOHOL ADDICTIONS

=

ALCOHOL ADDICTED PEOPLE



GENDER
DIFFERENCES

WHAT DO
THEY
MEAN?

PROBLEMS WITH TALKING ABOUT
GENDER DIFFERENCES

- “DIFFERENCE” IMPLIES A “STANDARD” AND AN “OTHER.”

THERE IS MORE VARIABILITY WITHIN THE
GENDERS THAN BETWEEN THEM.

THIS MEANS THAT THERE ARE LIKELY PEOPLE ON
MARS WHO ARE FROM VENUS, AND PEOPLE FROM
VENUS LIVING ON MARS!



HISTORICALLY,
WOMEN HAVE
BEEN
CONSIDERED
THE
GATEKEEPERS
OF THE
MORALITY OF
THE HOME.



MIXED SOCIETAL
MESSAGES ABOUT
WOMEN AND
ALCOHOL

AND ABOUT
ALCOHOL IN
GENERAL

IMAGES OF ALCOHOL ADDICTED WOMEN

- ◆--PROMISCUOUS
- ◆--BAD MOTHER
- ◆--DISGUSTING



PROMISCUOUS

"When alcohol is involved, people are more inclined to view sexual aggression as morally ambiguous. New research, however, suggests that men who harass women in bars and clubs aren't misinterpreting women's signals because they are drunk. Rather, they may be singling out women who appear intoxicated as easy targets."

--*Scientific American*, 2014



THE BAD MOTHER

HOW CAN PREGNANT WOMEN CONTINUE TO DRINK WHEN THEY KNOW THEY ARE HARMING THEIR BABIES?

PERHAPS FOR THE SAME REASON ANY ADDICTED PERSON CONTINUES TO DRINK DESPITE HARSH CONSEQUENCES.

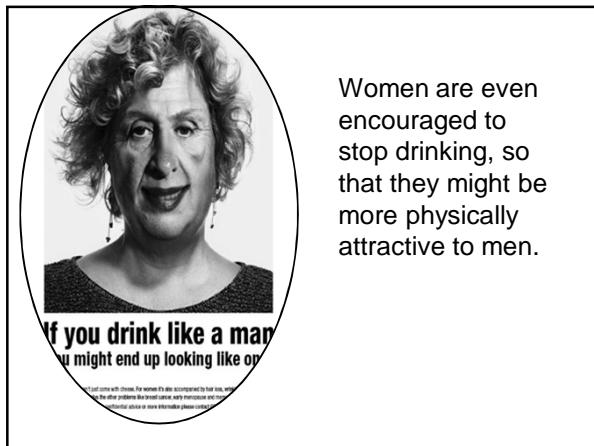


THERE IS NOTHING MORE DISGUSTING THAN A WOMAN WHO IS DRUNK.

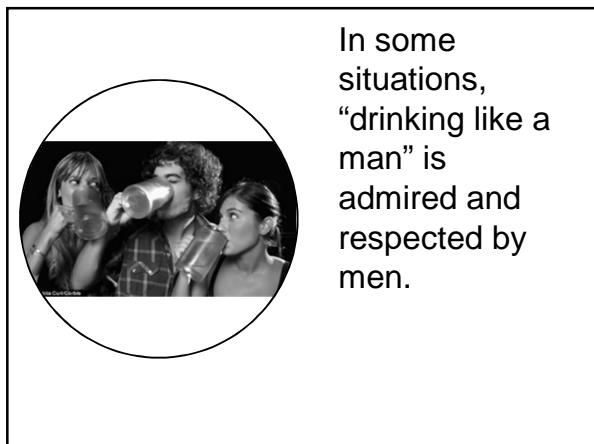
"Terry," I said, "when you are sober there isn't a more lovable creature on earth."

With a slightly sad smile she responded, "Thank you, Dad, but don't you think I might be a little bit lovable even when I'm not sober?"

--*Terry: My Daughter's Life-and-Death Struggle with Alcoholism*, George McGovern



Women are even encouraged to stop drinking, so that they might be more physically attractive to men.



In some situations, “drinking like a man” is admired and respected by men.



THIS PICTURE
REFLECTS MY
EXPERIENCE WITH
ALCOHOL IN
GRADUATE SCHOOL:

I LEARNED I COULD
DRINK LIKE A MAN,
AND THAT MEN
ADMIRER AND
RESPECTED ME FOR
IT.

THE REALITY OF “DRINKING LIKE A MAN”

- Women tend to have less of an enzyme in the liver that breaks down alcohol from its original toxic form.
- So, even a woman of the same body weight as a man may not be able to drink as much as he does before getting drunk. However, there is a lot of individual variability.

THE EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL ON WOMEN’S BODIES

- According to the U.S. National Institute of Alcohol Abuse & Alcoholism, women experience the negative physical effects of heavy drinking faster than men.
- DEATH RATES DUE TO EXCESSIVE ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION IS 50-100% HIGHER FOR WOMEN THAN MEN.

95% OF ALCOHOL ADDICTION TREATMENT CENTERS IN THE U.S.

ARE BASED ON A 79 YEAR-OLD MODEL FOUNDED ON THE EXPERIENCES OF 100 WHITE, HETEROSEXUAL MALES, AND HAS BEEN LARGELY UNCHANGED SINCE THEN



**"FOR EVERY COMPLEX
PROBLEM THERE IS A
SIMPLE SOLUTION, AND IT
IS WRONG."**

--Henry L. Mencken

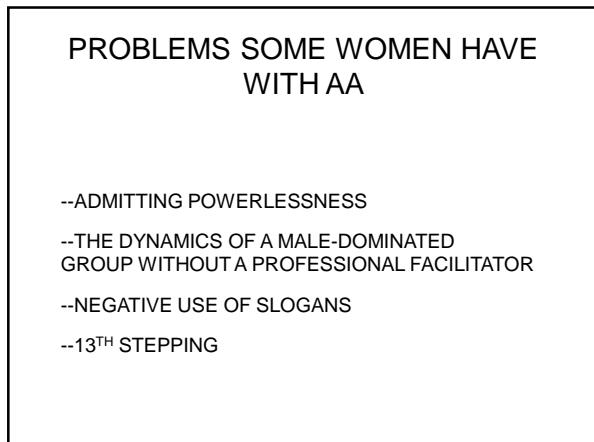


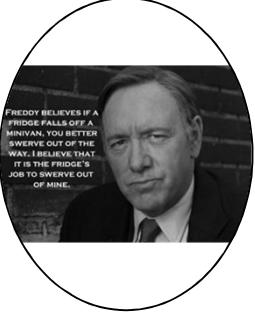
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

--emphasis on labeling oneself an "alcoholic" & admitting powerlessness over addiction
--must rely on a "Higher Power" to restore one's life to sanity
--must do a fearless moral inventory and make amends with all people hurt because of addictions
--the only way to maintain sobriety is to continue going to meetings and to maintain abstinence

PROBLEMS SOME WOMEN HAVE WITH AA

--ADMITTING POWERLESSNESS
--THE DYNAMICS OF A MALE-DOMINATED GROUP WITHOUT A PROFESSIONAL FACILITATOR
--NEGATIVE USE OF SLOGANS
--13TH STEPPING





FOR THOSE WHO LACK POWER IN OUR SOCIETY, ADMITTING POWERLESSNESS MAY NOT BE VERY USEFUL.



SOME AA SLOGANS CAN HAVE POSITIVE EFFECTS, SUCH AS, "ONE DAY AT A TIME" OR "FIRST THINGS FIRST."

OTHER TIMES AN AA MEMBER WILL THROW A SLOGAN TO STOP EMOTIONAL EXPRESSIONS, SUCH AS:

"GET OFF THE PITY POT."
"DON'T FEEL SORRY FOR YOURSELF."
"DON'T DREDGE UP THE PAST."

--Charlotte Kasl, *Many Roads, One Journey: Beyond the 12 Steps*



THE MESSAGE I RECEIVED FROM SO MANY AA MEMBERS:

"DON'T THINK"

"YOUR BEST THINKING GOT YOU HERE."



13TH STEPPING

It is also estimated that anywhere from 75-95% of alcohol addicted women have histories of childhood physical and sexual abuse, which makes them particularly vulnerable to the advances of powerful men.

TREATMENT BARRIERS FOR WOMEN

- COST
- CHILD CARE (FEAR OF LOSING THEIR CHILDREN)
- STIGMA
- BEING IN A TREATMENT ENVIRONMENT DOMINATED BY MEN

SO WHAT DO WOMEN WANT?

- ◆ - MEDICAL ATTENTION
- ◆ - INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING TO WORK ON SHAME
- ◆ - TO BE ALLOWED THE OPTION OF LEAVING A GROUP, EVEN AN OBLIGATORY AA MEETING, THAT IS MALE DOMINATE IF SHE FEELS UNCOMFORTABLE.
- ◆ - PARENTING SKILLS
- ◆ - GENERAL LIFE SKILLS -VOCATIONAL, EDUCATION, ETC.

SO WHAT CAN WE DO FOR ALCOHOL ADDICTED WOMEN?

- DEMONSTRATE AND ADVOCATE FOR EMPATHY FOR THE ALCOHOL ADDICTED WOMAN – SHE IS LIKELY RIDDLED WITH GUILT AND SHAME ALREADY – LET'S NOT ADD TO IT.
- RESEARCH THE TREATMENT PROGRAMS TO WHICH YOU REFER WOMEN.
- EDUCATE YOURSELF ABOUT OTHER SELF-HELP GROUPS FOR WOMEN (FOR EXAMPLE, WOMEN FOR SOBRIETY AND SELF-MANAGEMENT AND RECOVERY TRAINING – SMART).



“THE GREATEST
CRUELTY IS
OUR CASUAL
BLINDNESS TO
THE DESPAIR OF
OTHERS.”

-J. Michael Straczynski
