

## 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?

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## 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

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RESEARCH ON ALCOHOL  
ADDICTION  
TREATMENT OUTCOMES

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

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ALCOHOL ADDICTED PEOPLE

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GENDER  
DIFFERENCES

WHAT DO  
THEY  
MEAN?

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## 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!

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

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MIXED SOCIETAL  
MESSAGES ABOUT  
WOMEN AND  
ALCOHOL

AND ABOUT  
ALCOHOL IN  
GENERAL

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## IMAGES OF ALCOHOL ADDICTED WOMEN

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

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## 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

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## 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.

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## 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

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**If you drink like a man  
you might end up looking like one.**

Not just come with stress. The woman's also accustomed to that too, who  
has the ability to handle the most common early morning and  
late night stress or more interesting stressors.

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

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

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THIS PICTURE REFLECTS MY EXPERIENCE WITH ALCOHOL IN GRADUATE SCHOOL:

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

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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




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

--Henry L. Mencken



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### **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

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### **PROBLEMS SOME WOMEN HAVE WITH AA**

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

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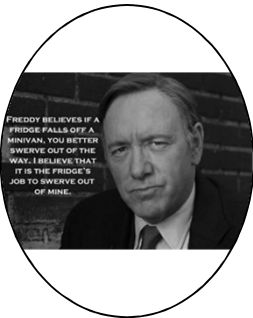
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FOR THOSE WHO  
LACK POWER IN OUR  
SOCIETY, ADMITTING  
POWERLESSNESS  
MAY NOT BE VERY  
USEFUL.

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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*

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THE MESSAGE I  
RECEIVED FROM  
SO MANY AA  
MEMBERS:

"DON'T THINK"

"YOUR BEST  
THINKING GOT  
YOU HERE."

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## 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.

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## TREATMENT BARRIERS FOR WOMEN

--COST

--CHILD CARE (FEAR OF LOSING THEIR CHILDREN)

--STIGMA

--BEING IN A TREATMENT ENVIRONMENT DOMINATED BY MEN

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## 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.

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## 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).

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

–J. Michael Straczynski

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