

HEALTH

Is Someone's Alcoholism Suffocating You?

NewsUSA

(NU) - Do you feel like you are always holding your breath? Every time the door opens in your home, do you fear who it might be? Do you wonder whether your spouse, parent or friend will be mean, violent, subdued or withdrawn - someone totally different from who he or she is when not drinking?

If someone's alcoholism is suffocating you, you must realize that to help that person you first must help yourself. And help is out there.

For nearly 50 years, Al-Anon has been a constant resource for families and friends of alcoholics. Beginning with 87 groups, it has grown into a worldwide fellowship of 30,000 groups in 112 countries.

Families and friends of alcoholics usually require medical and mental health care for various symptoms, according to the 1999 Al-Anon/Alateen Membership Survey. The survey represents Al-Anon's sixth study of a 3 percent sample of Al-Anon groups and a 10 percent sample of Alateen groups in the United States and Canada, with a 23 percent combined response rate.

In the survey, 88 percent of Al-Anon members said the alcoholic's drinking affects their mental health and well being, 80 percent said the alcoholic's drinking

affects their ability to function daily at work or home, and 67 percent said the alcoholic's drinking affects their overall health status.

Al-Anon members also rated the benefits of their recovery program on a three-point scale:

- Improved mental health/well being - 2.9.
- Increased ability to function daily at home and work 2.9.
- Better overall health status - 2.8.

Survey results show that more than half of all Al-Anon members and 40 percent of the Alateens (young Al-Anon members, usually teenagers, whose lives have been affected by someone else's drinking) received professional help before attending Al-Anon or Alateen. After becoming involved in Al-Anon, 50 percent seek medical treatment or counseling.

Al-Anon, based on the Twelve Step program of Alcoholics Anonymous, provides non-professional mutual support to families and friends of alcoholics.

For more information, visit Al-Anon/Alateen on the Web at www.al-anon.alateen.org. For meeting, information, call 1-888-4AL-ANON (425-2666) or write to: Al-Anon Family Groups, Inc., 1600 Corporate Landing Parkway, Virginia Beach, VA 23454-5617.