

HOW TO SPOT DEVELOPING ALCOHOLISM IN YOURSELF AND OTHERS

EARLY STAGE

What to look for in yourself:

- Alcohol is magic to you: makes you confident, witty, popular.
- You sometimes drink more than usual when upset, blue, or pressured.
- Your capacity to drink without overt drunkenness is growing.
- You don't enjoy dry social events and prefer drinks as friends.
- You've had one or more black outs: "mornings after" when you couldn't recall events of drunkenness.
- Your hangovers are mild.
- You sometimes make time for drinking; e.g., postpone dinner after a late day to squeeze in cocktails.

What to look for in others:

- She often seems high at parties, more than is usual in your circle.
- Apparent need to drink after tough day. Gives reasons like unwinding.
- Seems to refill her glass often. May offer to pour for others at parties.
- Suggests drinks to get through dry period, e.g., PTA meeting.
- Sometimes seems puzzled when you mention funny things she said or did at a party.

MIDDLE STAGE

- You feel a sense of disappointment when a drinking group breaks up.
- When sober, you sometimes regret things you said when drinking.
- You feel a little guilty over your drinking. You don't always tell others how much you've had.
- Sometimes, when drinking, you find you have little interest in food.
- Your blackouts grow more frequent.

- Often urges others to go on drinking with him: "Let's have one more!".
- Notable personality change when drinking: he's assertive, bellicose.
- Sneaks extras at parties instead of asking for them openly. Seems increasingly furtive about drinking.
- At a barbecue, he's still drinking while others turn to food and coffee.
- He begins to get a local reputation for weekend drunkenness.

What to look for in yourself:

--You occasionally drink alone at home, or go to bars and restaurants where you aren't known.

--Your hands and legs feel shaky, but a drink calms you.

--Hangovers aren't mild anymore. You sometimes spend much of a day in bed and put off doing work.

--You have a secret morning drink or find yourself impatiently watching the clock till noon.

--After drunkenness, you give yourself an excuse: you were tired, etc.

--You've made yourself promise to control your drinking but haven't changed.

--You've tried gimmicks: drinking milk first, changing schedules, going on vacation. Nothing worked.

What to look for in others:

--Cover-up odors appear: heavy perfume, chewing gum, cough drops. He may also tell unsolicited cover stories.

--Tremor in fingers. Seems clumsy getting out of cars, going down stairs.

--Increasingly fails to turn up where people expect him; pleads sickness. If employed, is often late, absent.

--At a party, cocktail hour, etc., he finishes his first drink very fast. May actually gulp it.

LATE STAGE

--Your drink capacity, once big, is now dropping.

--You sometimes maintain a "buzz" or are unequivocally drunk for several days at a time.

--Blackouts grow longer: You may "lose" entire days.

--Hangovers grow intolerable, with physical sickness plus terror and/or depression. Only drinks help.

--You hide bottles and go to great lengths to ensure a steady supply.

--You feel others don't like you and the world is against you. Life is a bad joke. You sometimes think about suicide.

--Appears to get drunk quite suddenly, often after only one or two drinks.

--Job performance and/or family life visibly deteriorate. Frequent drunkenness is now obvious.

--May vanish for days and be found in a strange bar or motel with no memory of how he/she got there.