TO WIVES* TO PARTNERS

With few exceptions, our book thus far has spoken of men. But what we have said applies quite as much to women. Our activities in behalf of women who drink are on the increase. There is every evidence that women regain their health as readily as men if they try our suggestions.

But for every man who drinks others are involved—the wife who trembles in fear of the next debauch; the mother and father who see their son wasting away.

Every person who drinks involves other people in their drinking. Usually there's a partner who fears the next drinking spree, or parents who hate to see their child wasting away. The choices of alcoholics affect those around them.

Among us are wives, relatives and friends whose problem has been solved, as well as some who have not yet found a happy solution. We want the wives of Alcoholics Anonymous to address the wives of men who drink too much. What they say will apply to nearly everyone bound by ties of blood or affection to an alcoholic.

Our Fellowship includes partners, spouses, relatives, and friends whose problem has been solved. It also includes people who have not yet found a happy solution. We want the partners of our members to speak with the partners of people who drink too much. What they say will apply to nearly everyone who loves an alcoholic.

As wives of Alcoholics Anonymous, we would like you to feel that we understand as perhaps few can. We want to analyze mistakes we have made. We want to leave you with the feeling that no situation is too difficult and no unhappiness too great to be overcome. We have traveled a rocky road, there is no mistake about that. We have had long rendezvous with hurt pride, frustration, self-pity, misunderstanding and fear. These are not pleasant companions. We have been

* Written in 1939, when there were few women in A.A., this chapter assumes that the alcoholic in the home is likely to be the husband. But many of the suggestions given here may be adapted to help the person who lives with a woman alcoholic—whether she is still drinking or is re-covering in A.A. A further source of help is noted on page 121.

NOTE FROM THE EDITORS: When the Big Book was published in 1939, most of the members of the A.A. Fellowship were men. In that version this chapter was titled "To Wives." For this plain language version, the title has been adapted to "To Partners," and the chapter adjusted to speak to partners and spouses regardless of gender.

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driven to maudlin sympathy, to bitter resentment. Some of us veered from extreme to extreme, ever hoping that one day our loved ones would be themselves once more.

Here are some of the things we hope they might say:

As partners of alcoholics, we understand each other in a unique way. We want to understand mistakes that we ourselves might have made. We hope to help you feel that no situation is too difficult to fix, and that you can find ways to move beyond unhappiness. All of us have traveled a rocky road. We've felt frustration, self-pity, misunderstanding, and fear. Our pride has been hurt. Our partners have made us feel everything from pity to resentment. Throughout it all, we hope that one day our loved ones will be themselves again.

Our loyalty and the desire that our husbands hold up their heads and be like other men have begotten all sorts of predicaments. We have been unselfish and self-sacrificing. We have told innumerable lies to protect our pride and our husbands' reputations. We have prayed, we have begged, we have been patient. We have struck out viciously. We have run away. We have been hysterical. We have been terror stricken. We have sought sympathy. We have had retaliatory love affairs with other men.

We are loyal, and our hope that our partners will

somehow start behaving like normal drinkers has gotten us into trouble. We have been unselfish and put our partners' needs before our own. We have told countless lies to protect our pride and our partners' reputations. We have prayed, we have begged, and we have been patient. We have also been cruel at times. We have run away. We have been so upset that nothing would calm us. We have been full of terror. We have looked to others for their sympathy. We have cheated on our partners as a kind of revenge.

Our homes have been battle-grounds many an evening. In the morning we have kissed and made up. Our friends have counseled chucking the men and we have done so with finality, only to be back in a little while hoping, always hoping. Our men have sworn great solemn oaths that they were through drinking forever. We have believed them when no one else could or would. Then, in days, weeks, or months, a fresh outburst.

Unhappy homes

Many nights our homes have become battlegrounds. In the morning, we kissed and made up. Our friends have told us to kick out our partners, and we've done it thinking the relationship was truly over. But then we would find ourselves hoping, and willing to take them back. Our partners have sworn that they would never drink again, and we believed them when no one else did. Then, in days, weeks, or months, we would find them drunk once more.

We seldom had friends at our homes, never knowing how or when the men of the house would appear. We could make few social engagements. We came to live almost alone. When we were invited out, our husbands sneaked so many drinks that they spoiled the occasion. If, on the other hand, they took nothing, their self-pity made them killjoys.

> We rarely invited friends into our homes, never knowing how or when our partners might show up. We didn't go out much either. Eventually, we lived mostly alone. When we did go out, our partners would sneak so many drinks that we could never relax and have fun. Or if they drank nothing, they would feel so sorry for themselves that they'd still ruin the occasion.

There was never financial security. Positions were always in jeopardy or gone. An armored car could

not have brought the pay envelopes home. The checking account melted like snow in June.

We've never had financial stability. Our partners were always in danger of being fired, or already unemployed. An armored car could not have brought the paychecks home safely. The checking account melted like snow in summer.

Sometimes there were other women. How heartbreaking was this discovery; how cruel to be told they understood our men as we did not!

Sometimes our partners cheated on us. This broke our hearts, especially if we were told that these exciting strangers understood our partners in ways we never could.

The bill collectors, the sheriffs, the angry taxi drivers, the policemen, the bums, the pals, and even the ladies they sometimes brought home—our husbands thought we were so inhospitable. "Joykiller, nag, wet blanket"—that's what they said. Next day they would be themselves again and we would forgive and try to forget.

Our partners brought home collection agents, sheriffs, angry taxi drivers, policemen, bums, friends, and even lovers. They would call us cold and unwelcoming. "Killjoy, nag, downer"—that's what they said. The next day they would be themselves again and we would forgive and try to forget.

We have tried to hold the love of our children for their father. We have told small tots that father was sick, which was much nearer the truth than we realized. They struck the children, kicked out door panels, smashed treasured crockery, and ripped the keys out of pianos. In the midst of such pandemonium they may have rushed out threatening to live with the other woman forever. In desperation, we have even got tight ourselves—the drunk to end all drunks. The unexpected result was that our husbands seemed to like it.

> We have tried to encourage our children to continue loving their alcoholic parent. We have told our kids that their mother or father was sick, which was closer to the truth than we realized. Our partners have hit the children, kicked in doors, and smashed beloved dishes. In the middle of this chaos they may have stormed out, threatening to live with their lovers forever and leave us behind. Sometimes when we felt desperate, we've gotten drunk ourselves. We were surprised to find that our partners seemed to like it when we were drunk.

Perhaps at this point we got a divorce and took the children home to father and mother. Then we were severely criticized by our husband's parents for desertion. Usually we did not leave. We stayed on and on. We finally sought employment ourselves as destitution faced us and our families.

Trying every option

Maybe at some point we got a divorce and took the children home to our parents. Our partners' parents accused us of deserting our partner, even though we'd stayed for so long. Finally, we were forced to take second or third jobs just to support ourselves and our families.

We began to ask medical advice as the sprees got closer together. The alarming physical and mental symptoms, the deepening pall of remorse, depression and inferiority that settled down on our loved ones—

these things terrified and distracted us. As animals on a treadmill, we have patiently and wearily climbed, falling back in exhaustion after each futile effort to reach solid ground. Most of us have entered the final stage with its commitment to health resorts, sanitariums, hospitals, and jails. Sometimes there were screaming delirium and insanity. Death was often near.

> As our partners' drinking sprees got more frequent, we tried talking to doctors. The upsetting physical and mental symptoms, the way they sank into never-ending guilt, the depression and shame that followed them everywhere like a dark cloud—these things terrified and distracted us. We felt like animals on a treadmill, patiently and wearily climbing, falling into exhaustion after each unsuccessful effort to reach solid ground. Most of us have seen our partners in the final stages, through long stays at rehabs, hospitals, and jails. Sometimes we had to watch our loved ones scream in confusion. Death was often near.

Under these conditions we naturally made mistakes. Some of them rose out of ignorance of alcoholism. Sometimes we sensed dimly that we were dealing with sick men. Had we fully understood the nature of the alcoholic illness, we might have behaved differently.

> While all this went on, we made mistakes. This is only natural. We made some of these mistakes because we just didn't understand alcoholism. Sometimes we had a feeling our

partners were sick, but we didn't trust that feeling. If we had really understood that alcoholism is an illness, we might have made different choices.

How could men who loved their wives and children be so unthinking, so callous, so cruel? There could be no love in such persons, we thought. And just as we were being convinced of their heartlessness, they would surprise us with fresh resolves and new attentions. For a while they would be their old sweet selves, only to dash the new structure of affection to pieces once more. Asked why they commenced to drink again, they would reply with some silly excuse, or none. It was so baffling, so heartbreaking. Could we have been so mistaken in the men we married? When drinking, they were strangers. Sometimes they were so inaccessible that it seemed as though a great wall had been built around them.

Playing the blame game

We found ourselves wondering how people who loved their families could be so unthinking, so insensitive, so cruel. They weren't capable of feeling love, we thought. But just as we had decided for good that our partners were heartless, they would surprise us with promises to change. For a while they would be their old sweet selves, but then they would smash our love to pieces all over again. Whenever we asked why they had started to drink again, they would reply with some silly excuse, or offer us no reason at all. It was so confusing, so heartbreaking. Could we have been so wrong about the people we chose to spend our

lives with? When they were drinking, they were strangers. Sometimes they were so emotionally distant that it seemed like a giant wall had been built around them.

And even if they did not love their families, how could they be so blind about themselves? What had become of their judgment, their common sense, their will power? Why could they not see that drink meant ruin to them? Why was it, when these dangers were

pointed out that they agreed, and then got drunk again immediately?

> And even if they didn't love their families, how could they be so blind about themselves? Where had their judgment, common sense, and willpower gone? Why couldn't they see that drinking was ruining their lives? And when anyone pointed out how dangerous drinking was, why would they get drunk again immediately?

These are some of the questions which race through the mind of every woman who has an alcoholic husband. We hope this book has answered some of them. Perhaps your husband has been living in that strange world of alcoholism where everything is distorted and exaggerated. You can see that he really does love you with his better self. Of course, there is such a thing as incompatibility, but in nearly every instance the alcoholic only seems to be unloving and inconsiderate; it is usually because he is warped and sickened that he says and does these appalling things. Today most of our men are better husbands and fathers than ever before.

> These are some of the questions which race through the mind of every partner with an alcoholic loved one. Perhaps your partner has been living in that strange world of alcoholism where everything is twisted and exaggerated. You can see that your partner really does love you with their better self. Some people are just incompatible, meaning they aren't meant to be together. But in cases where one partner is alcoholic and the

alcoholic seems unloving and inconsiderate, it's usually because they are suffering and sick. It's the sickness making them act that way.

Try not to condemn your alcoholic husband no matter what he says or does. He is just another very sick, unreasonable person. Treat him, when you can, as though he had pneumonia. When he angers you, remember that he is very ill.

Try not to judge or punish your partner no matter what they say or do. They are a very sick, unreasonable person. Treat them, when you can, as though they have pneumonia. When they make you angry, remember that they are very ill.

There is an important exception to the foregoing. We realize some men are thoroughly bad-intentioned, that no amount of patience will make any difference. An alcoholic of this temperament may be quick to use this chapter as a club over your head. Don't let him get away with it. If you are positive he is one of this type you may feel you had better leave. Is it right to let him ruin your life and the lives of your children? Especially when he has before him a way to stop his drinking and abuse if he really wants to pay the price.

However, there's an important exception to this rule. Some people really do have bad intentions, and being patient with them won't make any difference. An alcoholic who is like this may try to use what we've said in this chapter against you. Don't let them get away with it. If you are sure your partner is bad-intentioned, you may decide to end the relationship. Is it right to let this person ruin your life and the lives of your children? Especially

when they have a way to stop drinking and treating you badly if only they were willing to put in the work?

The problem with which you struggle usually falls within one of four categories:

Four types of problems

The problem you face usually falls into one of four categories:

One: Your husband may be only a heavy drinker.

His drinking may be constant or it may be heavy only on certain occasions. Perhaps he spends too much money for liquor. It may be slowing him up mentally and physically, but he does not see it. Sometimes he is a source of embarrassment to you and his friends. He is positive he can handle his liquor, that it does him no harm, that drinking is necessary in his business. He would probably be insulted if he were called an alcoholic. This world is full of people like him. Some will moderate or stop altogether, and some will not. Of those who keep on, a good number will become true alcoholics after a while.

> **One: Your partner may be a heavy drinker instead of an alcoholic.** Their drinking may be constant, or it may be heavy only at certain times. Your partner might spend too much money on liquor. Drinking may slow them down mentally and physically, but they don't realize it. Sometimes they embarrass you and your friends. Your partner says they're positive they can handle their liquor, that it doesn't hurt them, that drinking is necessary to their business or work. They would probably be insulted if they were called an alcoholic. The world is full of people like your partner. Some will drink moderately or stop altogether, and some will not. If they keep drinking, they may become true alcoholics after a while.

Two: Your husband is showing lack of control, for he is unable to stay on the water wagon even when he wants to. He often gets entirely out of hand when

drinking. He admits this is true, but is positive that he will do better. He has begun to try, with or without your cooperation, various means of moderating or staying dry. Maybe he is beginning to lose his friends. His business may suffer somewhat. He is worried at times, and is becoming aware that he cannot drink like other people. He sometimes drinks in the morning and through the day also, to hold his nervousness in check. He is remorseful after serious drinking bouts and tells you he wants to stop. But when he gets over the spree, he begins to think once more how he can drink moderately next time. We think this person is in danger. These are the earmarks of a real alcoholic. Perhaps he can still tend to business fairly well. He has by no means ruined everything. As we say among ourselves, *"He wants to want to stop."*

Two: Your partner is showing lack of control because they can't stop drinking even when they want to. It's hard to predict what they'll do when they're drinking. They admit this is true, but say they are sure they can do better. Your partner has tried, with or without your help, some ways of moderating their drinking or staying dry. They may be starting to lose friends, and their work may be suffering. They are worried and starting to realize they can't drink like other people. Your partner sometimes drinks in the morning and through the day, to keep their nervousness under control. They feel guilty after drinking sprees, and tell you they want to stop. But when they get over the spree, they begin to think about how they'll just drink moderately next time. We think this person is in danger. These are the earmarks of a real alcoholic, but they haven't ruined everything—yet.

As we say in our Fellowship, “They want to want to stop.”

Three: This husband has gone much further than husband number two. Though once like number two

he became worse. His friends have slipped away, his home is a near-wreck and he cannot hold a position. Maybe the doctor has been called in, and the weary round of sanitariums and hospitals has begun. He admits he cannot drink like other people, but does not see why. He clings to the notion that he will yet find a way to do so. He may have come to the point where he desperately wants to stop but cannot. His case presents additional questions which we shall try to answer for you. You can be quite hopeful of a situation like this.

Three: Your partner has gone much further than partner number two. Though once like the drinker described in number two, they got worse. Their friends have slipped away, their home is a mess, and they cannot keep a job. Maybe you've gotten the help of a doctor, and begun to take your partner from hospital to hospital. They can admit that they're unable to drink like other people, but don't understand why. They cling to the idea that they'll find a way to stop on their own. They may have reached a point where they desperately want to stop, but cannot. Their situation brings up questions that we will try to answer for you. You can be quite hopeful in a situation like this.

Four: You may have a husband of whom you completely despair. He has been placed in one institution after another. He is violent, or appears definitely insane when drunk. Sometimes he drinks on the way home from the hospital. Perhaps he has had delirium tremens. Doctors may shake their heads and advise

you to have him committed. Maybe you have already been obliged to put him away. This picture may not be as dark as it looks. Many of our husbands were just as far gone. Yet they got well.

Four: You may have a partner who seems totally lost to drinking. They have already been hospitalized for drinking. They are violent or appear totally out of control when drunk. Sometimes they drink on the way home from the hospital. Your partner may have had delirium tremens. Doctors may shake their heads and say you should have them committed. Maybe you have already had to take them to the locked ward of a hospital. This picture may not be as dark as it looks. Many of our partners were just as far gone. Yet they got well.

Let's now go back to husband number one. Oddly enough, he is often difficult to deal with. He enjoys drinking. It stirs his imagination. His friends feel closer over a highball. Perhaps you enjoy drinking with him yourself when he doesn't go too far. You have passed happy evenings together chatting and drinking before your fire. Perhaps you both like parties which would be dull without liquor. We have enjoyed such evenings ourselves; we had a good time. We know all about liquor as a social lubricant. Some, but not all of us, think it has its advantages when reasonably used.

Let's now go back to partner number one. Oddly enough, they are often the most difficult to deal with. They enjoy drinking. It stirs their imagination. Their friends feel closer over a

cocktail. You may even enjoy drinking with them when they don't go too far. You have passed happy evenings together chatting and drinking in your own living room. Or maybe you both like parties that would feel boring without liquor. We have enjoyed evenings like this ourselves. We know all about liquor as a social lubricant—a way to make any situation feel more relaxed.

The first principle of success is that you should never be angry. Even though your husband becomes unbearable and you have to leave him temporarily, you should, if you can, go without rancor. Patience and good temper are most necessary.

> If you want to help your partner, the first rule of success is that you should never be angry. They may become unbearable and you may have to leave them temporarily. If possible, though, leave without showing anger. Patience and calmness are extremely important.

Our next thought is that you should never tell him what he must do about his drinking. If he gets the idea that you are a nag or a killjoy, your chance of accomplishing anything useful may be zero. He will use that as an excuse to drink more. He will tell you he is misunderstood. This may lead to lonely evenings for you. He may seek someone else to console him—not always another man.

> Next, never tell your partner what to do about their drinking. If they decide that you are a nag or a killjoy, you'll have no chance of accomplishing anything useful. Your partner will use that as an excuse to drink more. They'll tell you they feel misunderstood. This may lead to many lonely evenings for you. Your partner may seek someone else to console them—someone other than a friend.

Be determined that your husband's drinking is not

going to spoil your relations with your children or your friends. They need your companionship and your help. It is possible to have a full and useful life, though your husband continues to drink. We know women who are unafraid, even happy under these conditions. Do not set your heart on reforming your husband. You may be unable to do so, no matter how hard you try.

Make sure that your partner's drinking is not going to ruin your relationships with your children or your friends. It is possible to have a full life, even when your partner continues to drink. We know people who are unafraid, even happy in this situation. Do not set your heart on fixing your partner's drinking problem. You may not be able to do it, no matter how hard you try.

We know these suggestions are sometimes difficult to follow, but you will save many a heartbreak if you can succeed in observing them. Your husband may come to appreciate your reasonableness and patience. This may lay the groundwork for a friendly talk about his alcoholic problem. Try to have him bring up the subject himself. Be sure you are not critical during such a discussion. Attempt instead, to put yourself in his place. Let him see that you want to be helpful rather than critical.

We know these suggestions may be hard to follow, but if you stick to them they will save you from heartbreak. Your partner may come to appreciate your reasonableness and patience. This may lead to a friendly talk about their alcoholic problem. Try to let them bring up the subject. Be sure you are not critical during such a discussion. Instead, try to put yourself in their place. Let them see that you want to be helpful rather than critical.

When a discussion does arise, you might suggest he

read this book or at least the chapter on alcoholism. Tell him you have been worried, though perhaps needlessly. You think he ought to know the subject better, as everyone should have a clear understanding of the risk he takes if he drinks too much. Show him you have confidence in his power to stop or moderate. Say you do not want to be a wet blanket; that you only want him to take care of his health. Thus you may succeed in interesting him in alcoholism.

Talking about alcoholism with your partner

Before you talk about alcoholism together, you might suggest that your partner read this book. Or at least Chapter 3, “More About Alcoholism.” Tell them you have been worried about them. You think they ought to understand exactly what is happening to them. Say that you believe everyone should understand the risks of drinking too much. Show your partner that you have confidence in their power to stop or moderate. Say that you do not want to be a nag. Explain that you only want them to take care of their health. By presenting these ideas, you may succeed in interesting your partner in talking about alcoholism.

He probably has several alcoholics among his own acquaintances. You might suggest that you both take an interest in them. Drinkers like to help other drinkers. Your husband may be willing to talk to one of them.

Your partner probably has several alcoholic

friends or acquaintances. You could suggest that you both take an interest in those friends. Drinkers like to help other drinkers. Your partner may be willing to talk to one of them.

If this kind of approach does not catch your husband's interest, it may be best to drop the subject, but after a friendly talk your husband will usually revive the topic himself. This may take patient waiting, but it will be worth it. Meanwhile you might try to help the wife of another serious drinker. If you act upon these principles, your husband may stop or moderate.

If this approach does not grab your partner's interest, it may be best to drop the subject. But after that first friendly talk, your partner will usually bring up the topic again. You will need to be patient, but it will be worth the wait. Meanwhile you might try to help the partner of another serious drinker. If you act using these principles, your partner may stop or moderate.

Suppose, however, that your husband fits the description of number two. The same principles which apply to husband number one should be practiced. But after his next binge, ask him if he would really like to get over drinking for good. Do not ask that he do it for you or anyone else. Just would he *like* to?

Let's say your partner fits the description of number two. The same principles that apply to partner number one still apply. But after the next binge, ask them if they would really like to stop drinking for good. Don't ask them to do it for you, or for anyone else. Just ask whether they would *like* to.

The chances are he would. Show him your copy of this book and tell him what you have found out about alcoholism. Show him that as alcoholics, the writers of the book understand. Tell him some of the interesting stories you have read. If you think he will be shy of a spiritual remedy, ask him to look at the chapter on

alcoholism. Then perhaps he will be interested enough to continue.

Chances are they would. Show them your copy of this book and tell them what you have found out about alcoholism. Show them that, as alcoholics, the writers of this book understand. Tell them some of the interesting stories you have read. If you think they will feel uncomfortable with a spiritual approach, ask them to read Chapter 3. After that, they might be interested enough to continue.

If he is enthusiastic your cooperation will mean a great deal. If he is lukewarm or thinks he is not an alcoholic, we suggest you leave him alone. Avoid urging him to follow our program. The seed has been planted in his mind. He knows that thousands of men, much like himself, have recovered. But don't remind him of this after he has been drinking, for he may be angry. Sooner or later, you are likely to find him reading the book once more. Wait until repeated stumbling convinces him he must act, for the more you hurry him the longer his recovery may be delayed.

If your partner is enthusiastic, your cooperation will be very meaningful to them. If they're lukewarm or think they're not an alcoholic, we suggest you leave them alone. Don't pressure them to follow our program. The seed has been planted in their mind. They know that thousands of people much like them have recovered. But don't remind

them of this after they have been drinking. Doing that will just make your partner angry at you.

Sooner or later, you'll find them reading this book again. Wait until this has happened a few times and your partner decides to take action on their own. The more you hurry them, the longer their recovery will be delayed.

If you have a number three husband, you may be in luck. Being certain he wants to stop, you can go to him with this volume as joyfully as though you had struck oil. He may not share your enthusiasm, but he is practically sure to read the book and he may go for the program at once. If he does not, you will probably not have long to wait. Again, you should not crowd him. Let him decide for himself. Cheerfully see him through more sprees. Talk about his condition or this book only when he raises the issue. In some cases it may be better to let someone outside the family present the book. They can urge action without arousing hostility. If your husband is otherwise a normal individual, your chances are good at this stage.

If you have a number three partner, you may be in luck. Since they're sure they want to stop, you can bring them this book with all the joy of a lottery winner. Your partner may not share your enthusiasm. Still, they are likely to read the book and may be willing to start the program immediately. If they don't, you will probably not have to wait very long. Again, try not to pressure them. Let them decide on their own. Cheerfully stand with them through more drinking sprees. Talk about their condition or this book only when they bring it up. In some cases it may be better to let someone outside the family offer the book. They can encourage your partner to take action without

angering them.

You would suppose that men in the fourth classification would be quite hopeless, but that is not so. Many of Alcoholics Anonymous were like that. Everybody had given them up. Defeat seemed certain. Yet often such men had spectacular and powerful recoveries.

You might think that people in the fourth group are hopeless, but that's not the case. Many people in Alcoholics Anonymous were like that. Everybody had given up on them. Defeat seemed certain. But people like that have had spectacular and powerful recoveries.

There are exceptions. Some men have been so impaired by alcohol that they cannot stop. Sometimes there are cases where alcoholism is complicated by other disorders. A good doctor or psychiatrist can tell you whether these complications are serious. In any event, try to have your husband read this book. His reaction may be one of enthusiasm. If he is already committed to an institution, but can convince you and your doctor that he means business, give him a chance to try our method, unless the doctor thinks his mental condition too abnormal or dangerous. We make this recommendation with some confidence. For years we have been working with alcoholics committed to institutions. Since this book was first published, A.A. has released thousands of alcoholics from asylums and hospitals of every kind. The majority have never returned. The power of God goes deep!

There are exceptions. Some people have been so destroyed by alcohol that they cannot stop. Sometimes alcoholism is made worse by other illnesses. A good doctor or psychiatrist can tell you whether these complications are serious. But no matter what happens, try to get your partner to read this book. They may react with enthusiasm. If your partner is already in the hospital but both you and your doctor believe they want to stop drinking, let them try A.A. (unless the doctor says it's too dangerous). We have been working with alcoholics in hospitals for many years. Since this book was first published, A.A. has helped thousands of alcoholics recover in hospitals of every kind. The majority have never returned. The power of God goes deep!

You may have the reverse situation on your hands. Perhaps you have a husband who is at large, but who should be committed. Some men cannot or will not get over alcoholism. When they become too dangerous, we think the kind thing is to lock them up, but of course a good doctor should always be consulted. The wives and children of such men suffer horribly, but not more than the men themselves.

> You may have the opposite situation on your hands. Perhaps you have a partner who is at home, but who should be in the hospital. Some people cannot or will not get over alcoholism. When they become too dangerous, we think the best thing is to force them to get help. But, of course, a trusted doctor should always be consulted. The partners and children of such people suffer horribly, but not more than the drinkers themselves.

But sometimes you must start life anew. We know women who have done it. If such women adopt a spiritual way of life their road will be smoother.

If your husband is a drinker, you probably worry over what other people are thinking and you hate to meet your friends. You draw more and more into yourself and you think everyone is talking about conditions at your home. You avoid the subject of drink-

ing, even with your own parents. You do not know what to tell the children. When your husband is bad, you become a trembling recluse, wishing the telephone had never been invented.

Talking to others about your partner

If your partner is a drinker, you probably worry about what other people think. You may feel anxious about meeting with your friends. You withdraw more and more into yourself. You believe everyone is talking about what's going on inside your home. You avoid the subject of drinking, even with your own parents. You do not know what to tell the children. When your partner is drinking, you want to hide away from everyone you know forever.

We find that most of this embarrassment is unnecessary. While you need not discuss your husband at length, you can quietly let your friends know the nature of his illness. But you must be on guard not to embarrass or harm your husband.

We find that most of this embarrassment is unnecessary. While you don't need to discuss your partner's behavior in detail, you can quietly let your friends know about their illness. But you must be very careful not to embarrass or harm your partner.

When you have carefully explained to such people that he is a sick person, you will have created a new

atmosphere. Barriers which have sprung up between you and your friends will disappear with the growth of sympathetic understanding. You will no longer be self-conscious or feel that you must apologize as though your husband were a weak character. He may be anything but that. Your new courage, good nature and lack of self-consciousness will do wonders for you socially.

> When you have carefully explained to friends that your partner is a sick person, you will feel differently. Walls between you and your friends will disappear. You will feel their care and sympathy. You won't feel self-conscious or that you need to apologize for your partner. Your new courage, good nature, and lack of self-consciousness will greatly improve your social life.

The same principle applies in dealing with the children. Unless they actually need protection from their father, it is best not to take sides in any argument he has with them while drinking. Use your energies to promote a better understanding all around. Then that terrible tension which grips the home of every problem drinker will be lessened.

> The same idea applies in dealing with the children. Unless the children actually need protection from their alcoholic parent, don't take sides in any argument they have together. Focus on helping everyone reach a better understanding. When you do this, you can lessen the terrible tension that grips the home of every problem drinker.

Frequently, you have felt obliged to tell your husband's employer and his friends that he was sick, when

as a matter of fact he was tight. Avoid answering these inquiries as much as you can. Whenever possible, let your husband explain. Your desire to protect him should not cause you to lie to people when they have a right to know where he is and what he is doing. Dis-

cuss this with him when he is sober and in good spirits. Ask him what you should do if he places you in such a position again. But be careful not to be resentful about the last time he did so.

You have probably told your partner's boss and friends that they're sick when they were actually drunk. Now, try to avoid answering questions about this. Whenever you can, let your partner explain. Your desire to protect them shouldn't force you to lie. People in their life have a right to know where they are and what they're doing. Discuss this with your partner when they're sober and in good spirits. Ask them what you should do if they put you in this position again. But don't show anger about the last time they did so.

There is another paralyzing fear. You may be afraid your husband will lose his position; you are thinking of the disgrace and hard times which will befall you and the children. This experience may come to you. Or you may already have had it several times. Should it happen again, regard it in a different light. Maybe it will prove a blessing! It may convince your husband he wants to stop drinking forever. And now you know that he can stop if he will! Time after time, this apparent calamity has been a boon to us, for it opened up a path which led to the discovery of God.

There is another overwhelming fear you may feel—that your partner will lose their job. You are thinking of the embarrassment and hard times that you and the children will have to live through. And you may have to do just that. Or you may already

have done it several times. If it happens again, think about it in a different light. Maybe the hard times will turn out to be a blessing! This bad situation may convince your partner to stop drinking forever. Time after time, something that looked like a disaster has become a gift. Disaster often opens up a path to the discovery of a Higher Power.

We have elsewhere remarked how much better life is when lived on a spiritual plane. If God can solve the age-old riddle of alcoholism, He can solve your problems too. We wives found that, like everybody else, we were afflicted with pride, self-pity, vanity and all the things which go to make up the self-centered person; and we were not above selfishness or dishonesty. As our husbands began to apply spiritual principles in their lives, we began to see the desirability of doing so too.

Finding your own spirituality

In other parts of this book, we've talked about how much better life is when lived in a spiritual way. If God can solve the ancient puzzle of alcoholism, a God of your own understanding can solve your problems, too. We partners of alcoholics have suffered from pride, self-pity, vanity, and all the things that create a self-centered person. We were not above selfishness or dishonesty. As our partners began to apply spiritual principles in their lives, we saw how those principles might help us, too.

At first, some of us did not believe we needed this help. We thought, on the whole, we were pretty good

women, capable of being nicer if our husbands stopped drinking. But it was a silly idea that we were too good to need God. Now we try to put spiritual principles to work in every department of our lives. When we do that, we find it solves our problems too; the ensuing lack of fear, worry and hurt feelings is a wonderful

thing. We urge you to try our program, for nothing will be so helpful to your husband as the radically changed attitude toward him which God will show you how to have. Go along with your husband if you possibly can.

> At first, some of us did not believe we needed this help. We thought we were perfectly fine people, able to become nicer if our partners stopped drinking. But it was a silly idea that we were too good to need a Higher Power. Now we try to put spiritual principles to work in every area of our lives. When we do that, we find it solves our problems, too. Living with less fear, worry, and hurt feelings is a wonderful thing. We urge you to try our program. When you find your connection to a Higher Power, you will also find a new attitude toward your partner. That new attitude will help them more than anything else.

If you and your husband find a solution for the pressing problem of drink you are, of course, going to be very happy. But all problems will not be solved at once. Seed has started to sprout in a new soil, but growth has only begun. In spite of your new-found happiness, there will be ups and downs. Many of the old problems will still be with you. This is as it should be.

> If you and your partner find a solution to their drinking problem, you will be very happy. But all of your problems will not be solved at once. A seed has started to sprout in new soil, but growth has only begun. In spite of your newfound happiness,

there will be ups and downs. Many of the old problems will follow you. This is as it should be.

The faith and sincerity of both you and your husband will be put to the test. These work-outs should be regarded as part of your education, for thus you will be learning to live. You will make mistakes, but if you are in earnest they will not drag you down. Instead, you will capitalize them. A better way of life will emerge when they are overcome.

The faith and sincerity that you both feel will be put to the test. These tests should be considered part of your education. You will be learning to live in a new way. You will make mistakes, but if you are determined they will not drag you down. A better way of life will come to you when these mistakes are behind you.

Some of the snags you will encounter are irritation, hurt feelings and resentments. Your husband will sometimes be unreasonable and you will want to criticize. Starting from a speck on the domestic horizon, great thunderclouds of dispute may gather. These family dissensions are very dangerous, especially to your husband. Often you must carry the burden of avoiding them or keeping them under control. Never forget that resentment is a deadly hazard to an alcoholic. We do not mean that you have to agree with your husband whenever there is an honest difference of opinion. Just be careful not to disagree in a resentful or critical spirit.

Some of your setbacks will be irritation, hurt feelings, and resentments. Your partner will sometimes be unreasonable and you will want to

criticize them. Starting as a tiny speck on the domestic horizon, great thunderclouds of anger may gather. These family arguments are very dangerous, especially to your partner. Often you must take responsibility for avoiding them or keeping them under control. Never forget that resentment is a deadly force for an alcoholic. We do not mean that you have to agree with your partner whenever you have an honest difference of opinion. Just be careful not to disagree in a resentful or critical way.

You and your husband will find that you can dispose of serious problems easier than you can the trivial ones. Next time you and he have a heated discussion, no matter what the subject, it should be the privilege of either to smile and say, "This is getting serious. I'm sorry I got disturbed. Let's talk about it later." If your husband is trying to live on a spiritual basis, he will also be doing everything in his power to avoid disagreement or contention.

You and your partner will find that you can deal with serious problems more easily than small ones. Next time you have a heated discussion, either of you should be able to smile and say, "This is getting serious. I'm sorry I got so upset. Let's talk about it later." If your partner is trying to live spiritually, they will also be trying to avoid disagreement or contention.

Your husband knows he owes you more than sobriety. He wants to make good. Yet you must not expect too much. His ways of thinking and doing are the habits of years. Patience, tolerance, understanding and love are the watchwords. Show him these things in yourself and they will be reflected back to you from him. Live and let live is the rule. If you both show a willingness to remedy your own defects, there will be little need to criticize each other.

Your partner knows they owe you more than stopping drinking. They want to make good. Yet you must not expect too much. Their way of thinking and doing are habits formed over many years. Patience, tolerance, understanding, and love

must become your mantras. Show your partner these things in yourself and they will be reflected back to you. Live and let live is the rule. If you both are willing to work on your defects, you won't need to criticize each other.

We women carry with us a picture of the ideal man, the sort of chap we would like our husbands to be. It is the most natural thing in the world, once his liquor problem is solved, to feel that he will now measure up to that cherished vision. The chances are he will not for, like yourself, he is just beginning his development. Be patient.

We partners of alcoholics can imagine the sort of person we would like our partners to become. It's very normal to assume that when they stop drinking, they will transform into this perfect partner. But in reality, they probably will not. Because just like you, your partner is just beginning to grow. Be patient.

Another feeling we are very likely to entertain is one of resentment that love and loyalty could not cure our husbands of alcoholism. We do not like the thought that the contents of a book or the work of another alcoholic has accomplished in a few weeks that for which we struggled for years. At such moments we forget that alcoholism is an illness over which we could not possibly have had any power. Your husband will

be the first to say it was your devotion and care which brought him to the point where he could have a spiritual experience. Without you he would have gone to pieces long ago. When resentful thoughts come, try to pause and count your blessings. After all, your family is reunited, alcohol is no longer a problem and you and your husband are working together toward an undreamed-of future.

Difficult feelings arise in the recovery process

Some of us have struggled with our resentment that love and loyalty could not cure our partners of alcoholism. We don't like to think that the contents of a book or the work of another alcoholic has accomplished in a few weeks what we have tried to do for years. At those times, we forget that alcoholism is an illness. We never had any power over it. Your partner will no doubt tell you that your patience and care are what led them to a place where a spiritual experience was possible. Without you, they would've given up long ago. When you have resentful thoughts, try to pause and count your blessings. After all, your family is reunited, alcohol is no longer a problem, and you and your partner are working together toward a shared future.

Still another difficulty is that you may become jealous of the attention he bestows on other people, especially alcoholics. You have been starving for his companionship, yet he spends long hours helping other

men and their families. You feel he should now be yours. The fact is that he should work with other people to maintain his own sobriety. Sometimes he will be so interested that he becomes really neglectful. Your house is filled with strangers. You may not like some of them. He gets stirred up about their troubles, but not at all about yours. It will do little good if you point that out and urge more attention for yourself. We find it a real mistake to dampen his enthusiasm for alcoholic work. You should join in his efforts as much as you possibly can. We suggest that you direct some of your thought to the wives of his new alcoholic friends. They need the counsel and love of a woman who has gone through what you have.

Another problem that may come up is your feelings about how much time your partner spends working on recovery. You may feel jealous of the attention they give to other people, especially alcoholics. You have been starving for their company, and now they spend long hours helping other people and their families. You feel your partner should now be yours.

The fact is that they need to work with other people to maintain their own sobriety. Sometimes they will be so caught up in helping others that you will feel abandoned. Your house may be full of strangers. You may not like some of them. Your partner may talk passionately about their problems, but not at all about yours. If you point this out and demand more attention for yourself, that will make things worse. It would be a real mistake to discourage your partner's enthusiasm for working with alcoholics. Instead, try to join in their efforts as much as you possibly can. Your partner's new alcoholic friends may have partners

of their own. We suggest directing some of your energy toward them. They need the counsel and love of a person who has gone through what you have.

It is probably true that you and your husband have been living too much alone, for drinking many times isolates the wife of an alcoholic. Therefore, you probably need fresh interests and a great cause to live for as much as your husband. If you cooperate, rather than complain, you will find that his excess enthusiasm will tone down. Both of you will awaken to a new

sense of responsibility for others. You, as well as your husband, ought to think of what you can put into life instead of how much you can take out. Inevitably your lives will be fuller for doing so. You will lose the old life to find one much better.

You and your partner may have been living alone for too long. Drinking often isolates the partner of an alcoholic. This means you probably need new interests and a great cause to live for, just as much as your partner. If you stay open to this, both of you will unlock a new sense of responsibility for others. You and your partner will begin to think of what you can put into life, instead of how much you can take out. Inevitably your lives will be fuller for doing so. You will lose the old life to find a new one that's much better.

Perhaps your husband will make a fair start on the new basis, but just as things are going beautifully he dismays you by coming home drunk. If you are satisfied he really wants to get over drinking, you need not be alarmed. Though it is infinitely better that he have no relapse at all, as has been true with many of our men, it is by no means a bad thing in some cases. Your husband will see at once that he must redouble his spiritual activities if he expects to survive. You need not remind him of his spiritual deficiency—he will know of it. Cheer him up and ask him how you can be still more helpful.

Perhaps your partner will start the A.A. program and do well for a while, then come home drunk—just when things were going beautifully. If you

believe they truly want to stop drinking, you don't need to be worried about this. Although it would be better if they didn't relapse, it's not the worst thing that can happen. Your partner will realize very quickly that they need to become even more serious about their spirituality. You don't need to remind them they have messed up. They will know. Cheer up your partner, and ask how you can help.

The slightest sign of fear or intolerance may lessen your husband's chance of recovery. In a weak moment he may take your dislike of his high-stepping friends as one of those insanely trivial excuses to drink.

We never, never try to arrange a man's life so as to shield him from temptation. The slightest disposition on your part to guide his appointments or his affairs so he will not be tempted will be noticed. Make him feel absolutely free to come and go as he likes. This is important. If he gets drunk, don't blame yourself. God has either removed your husband's liquor problem or He has not. If not, it had better be found out right away. Then you and your husband can get right down to fundamentals. If a repetition is to be prevented, place the problem, along with everything else, in God's hands.

Any sign of fear or intolerance may hurt your partner's chance of recovery. If they feel weak or worried, they may decide that your dislike of their drinking buddies is an excuse to drink. At A.A., we never, never try to arrange a person's life to shield them from temptation. Drinkers always notice this. If you try to set up your partner's appointments or plans so they won't be tempted to drink, they will know. Instead, make them feel absolutely free to come and go as they wish. This is important.

If they get drunk, don't blame yourself. Their Higher Power has either removed your partner's liquor problem … or not. If not, it's better to figure that out right away. Then you and your partner can tackle the issue together. If a relapse is to be prevented, place the problem, along with everything else, in God's hands.

We realize that we have been giving you much direction and advice. We may have seemed to lecture. If that is so we are sorry, for we ourselves don't always care for people who lecture us. But what we have related is based upon experience, some of it painful. We had to learn these things the hard way. That is why we are anxious that you understand, and that you avoid these unnecessary difficulties.*

So to you out there who may soon be with us—we say "Good luck and God bless you!"

We realize that we have given you a lot of direction and advice. We may have sounded like we were lecturing. If that's the case, we are sorry, because we ourselves don't always enjoy people who lecture us. But what we have told you is based on experience, some of it painful. We had to learn these things the hard way. That is why we are anxious that you understand, and that you avoid these unnecessary difficulties.

So to you out there who may soon be with us—we say, "Good luck and God bless you!"

** The fellowship of Al-Anon Family Groups was formed about thirteen years after this chapter was written. Though it is entirely separate from Alcoholics Anonymous, it uses the general principles of the A.A. program as a guide for husbands, wives, relatives, friends, and others close to alcoholics. The foregoing pages (though addressed only to wives) indicate the problems such people may face. Alateen, for teen-aged children of alcoholics, is a part of Al-Anon.*

If there is no Al-Anon listing in your local telephone book, you may obtain further information on Al-Anon/Alateen Family Groups by writing to its World Service Office, 1600 Corporate Landing Parkway, Virginia Beach, VA 23454-5617