

How to Tell if You (or Someone Else) has a Drinking Problem

If you have to ask, you probably have a problem. If spouses, friends, or others have told you that you have a problem, you probably do. If you continue to drink even though you are aware of this, you have a problem.

Most who experience problems with drinking, simply quit. They have one bad experience (like a really bad hangover) and decide "no more." If you are one of these who had this bad experience, told yourself you'd quit, tried, but couldn't, you at least have an abuse problem. You might have an alcohol dependence problem, though.

What is an alcohol dependence problem. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (the psychologists' holy book) defines it as exhibiting some or all of the following:

- Narrowing of the drinking repertoire (drinking only one brand or type of alcoholic beverage).
- Drink-seeking behavior (only going to social events that will include drinking, or only hanging out with others who drink).
- Alcohol tolerance (having to drink increasing amounts to achieve previous effects).
- Withdrawal symptoms (getting physical symptoms after going a short period without drinking).
- Drinking to relieve or avoid withdrawal symptoms (such as drinking to stop the shakes or to "cure" a hangover).
- Subjective awareness of the compulsion to drink or craving for alcohol (whether they admit it to others or not).
- A return to drinking after a period of abstinence (deciding to quit drinking and not being able to follow through).

Alcohol abuse is the harmful use of alcohol. If you think you have a drinking problem, take a few minutes and take this twenty question test:

http://alcoholism.about.com/od/tests/1/blquiz_alcohol.htm

Depending on how you answer the questions, the test will suggest to you whether or not you have a drinking problem based on the findings from Johns Hopkins Hospital where this test was developed. If you feel that you have a drinking problem, seek professional help from your medical doctor, a psychologist, or psychiatrist. Group therapy, and groups like Alcohol Anonymous, is very helpful in the treatment of alcohol-related problems.

Alcoholics Anonymous is a free 12-step program. All successful members have taken these steps:

1. **We admitted we were powerless over alcohol--that our lives had become unmanageable.**
2. **Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.**
3. **Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.**
4. **Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.**
5. **Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.**
6. **Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.**
7. **Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.**
8. **Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.**
9. **Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.**
10. **Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.**

11.Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understand God-- praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

12.Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

To find an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting near you, click on the following website:

<http://local.yahoo.com/results?fr=iy-text-lcl-res&stx=alcoholics+anonymous>