

Stages of Alcoholism

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Thursday, 21 August 2008
Last Updated Thursday, 21 August 2008

Alcoholism is one of the scourges of society. Many people battle the ill-effects of this illness. There are countless reasons for the illness. It could be psychological or social. It could be personal problems brought on by family troubles or financial problems. Whatever it is, alcoholism has grown more and more over the years. Add to that, the ready availability of alcohol in the market makes the problem more complicated since teens can have access to it. It is not only the alcoholic that is affected by alcoholism but more importantly, his immediate family, friends, colleagues at work and society in general.

Alcoholism is defined by the Columbia Press Encyclopedia as "a primary, chronic disease with genetic, psychosocial and environmental factors influencing its development and manifestations" and is a disease that is "often progressive and fatal.. characterized by impaired control over drinking, preoccupation with the drug alcohol, use of alcohol despite adverse consequences and distortions in thinking, most notably denial".

This definition is very comprehensive and describes alcoholism as a disease that has physical and mental manifestations. They can be shown through three stages and how they affect people in general:

The First Stage

In the first stage of the disease, the purpose of alcohol as a social lubricant is replaced by the person's need to use it as an escape from personal problems concerning family, finances or stress. A stronger tolerance towards alcohol is one symptom of alcoholism as well as the larger intake. A person in this stage also resorts to alcohol more and more if he or she is suffering from stress or having personal problems. Denial that there is an impending problem of alcoholism is also common in this stage.

The Second Stage

Alcohol in this stage has a higher hold on the person. He or she increases intake more and more with tolerance getting higher. There are times that episodes such as blackouts occur but are not yet happening on a regular basis. Hangovers, stomach problems and hand tremors may appear as symptoms. The person may try to stop drinking abruptly to prove to himself that there is no problem but he or she cannot stop. Denial is even stronger in this stage. Families and friends also notice the change in the person suffering from alcoholism.

The Third Stage

This is full-blown alcoholism with the person having the highest intake of alcohol in his or her life. Work and family life is disrupted and even basic needs such as food and grooming are disregarded. The alcoholic now turns all his attention to alcohol and spends little or no time with friends and family. He becomes aggressive and often violent and he loses all interest in his normal life. Some people also have run-ins with the law and engage in destructive behavior.