

# Reaching for the Stars for Self—Growth Women and Alcohol

Linda Schmidt - Zeta Epsilon #2344 - Overland Park, KS - 1987

Nancy Ogle, a Community Coordinator at the Addiction Recovery Unit of Shawnee Mission Medical Center spoke on -January 13, 1987 about women and alcohol. She has worked at the medical center for nine years. Her role is to educate the public along with assessments of persons believed to have alcoholic problems. There is no fee her services.

There are misconceptions on chemical dependency, which includes both alcohol and drugs. Many times there is a combination of both. There are many different degrees of dependency, which sometimes makes it extremely difficult to detect a problem at the beginning. An alcoholic is just like anyone else, and sometimes is successful in hiding their problem from the family, friends, and co-workers. Maybe she is troubled and begins drinking one or two drinks to calm herself down, or goes out socially quite often. Then, she starts to drink every day, knowing she will “feel better” after those drinks. Eventually, this could lead to a serious drinking problem because she will begin to depend on the alcohol to escape her problems. This is just example of how alcoholism or chemical dependency can innocently.

The ratio of women alcoholics to men alcoholics is 2 to 1. As women have become more visible in the work force there are more of them seeking treatment. Nancy has -found that women seem to suffer more guilt and shame than men, and have more difficulty beginning treatment because of the same. They are more successful at their treatment however, than men are, because men have a difficult time expressing their emotions and admitting they have a problem.

Alcoholism affects anyone who is associated with the alcoholic, including family, neighbors, and co-workers. This brings us to the topic of co-dependency. A co-dependent is a person who is emotionally involved with a chemically dependent person, (i.e. spouse, brother, sister, aunt, etc.). Sometimes, the co--dependency behavior, which is a survival technique, is passed on through generations families whether alcoholism is present or not. Because there is so much emotional pain and stress caused by alcoholism in the family, certain behaviors such as perfectionism, procrastination, compulsive overeating, gambling, buying and talking, and workaholic can develop.

Families must now recognize their needs, not only just the needs of the alcoholic. You can help an alcoholic, even if she does not want help. Intervention is one way of helping.

Concerned friends, families, or co-workers intervene and either seeks help for the person, or convinces the person to seek help for themselves. Because of the co-dependency problem also associated with the alcoholic person, others are able to receive help too.

When women finally do receive help, they usually recover faster than men. This is because women are more easily able to get in with their feelings than men. Sensitivity, commitment to relationships and the importance of relationships, being able to talk about their feelings and to resolve issues also help them recover faster. It seems strange, but **true**, that the reasons stated above about why women's recovery is faster are the very same reasons why women have the dependency problems in the first place.

There are many different places that one can seek help. Hospitals, medical centers, Alcoholics Anonymous, etc. are just a few you can contact. There are also organizations for the families and friends of the alcoholic to receive help. The best places to look for help is in the telephone book and proceed from there. Please help if you suspect a person of being an alcoholic to receive help. The affected person and your life will be better for it. There is always an underlying problem which must be dealt with before the person can be helped with the alcoholism. With all the help available, there is no reason why more people are not treated.