

TYPICAL SPOUSE'S RESPONSE

- STAGE I FAMILY ATTEMPTS TO DENY THE PROBLEM
- Spouse may express concern, embarrassment, but accepts explanations.
 - Believes and defends alcoholic's rationalizations.
 - May fear overreacting to the drinking will cause it to get worse.
 - Denial represents a hopeless attempt to restore the family equilibrium.
 - Refusal to admit there is a problem protects the family members from looking at whether or not they contribute to it—or that something is wrong with them.
- STAGE II FAMILY TRIES TO ELIMINATE THE PROBLEM
- Family members begin to withdraw from social situations and isolate themselves.
 - Ashamed and fearful that others will find out.
 - Cover up.
 - Attempt home remedies/control.
 - Threats
 - Extract promises
 - Hiding and pouring out liquor
 - Making deals
 - Silence
 - Spouse loses self-esteem/that affects interaction with children.
 - Drinking becomes everyone's focus/preoccupation.
 - Family relationships become strained and inconsistent.
- STAGE III THE FAMILY BECOMES DISORGANIZED
- Immobilizing fear.
 - Despair of finding a solution.
 - Arguments, threats and nagging continue.
 - Spouse and alcoholic force other family members to "take sides."
 - Avoids sexual contact (to punish). Is then accused of being "frigid."
 - Physical violence.
 - Deep psychological pain.
- STAGE IV FAMILY ATTEMPTS TO REORGANIZE
- Spouse takes over all responsibilities as wage earner, budget manager, disciplinarian, etc.
 - Still bewildered by alcoholic's erratic behavior, showered with affection one moment threatened and attacked the next.
- STAGE V ESCAPE ATTEMPTS
- Spouse agonizes over separation or divorce.
 - Worried and fearful about going it alone.
 - Too depressed to act decisively.
 - Short separations followed by reunions based on blind hope and false promises.
- STAGE VI ESCAPE
- Spouse ends relationship with much guilt and remorse ... "left a 'sick' person."