

## Feeling Crazy—the Effects of Addiction on the Family

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Addiction is defined as the state of being enslaved to a habit, practice, or to something that is psychologically or physically habit-forming, as narcotics, to such an extent that its cessation causes severe trauma.

Anything that enslaves a person rules a person. This is the effect of addiction—loss of control. The behavior becomes the central organizing feature of a person's life. It could be exercise, shopping, drinking, drugs, sex, gaming, sports, or television. Families often take on roles to adjust to or compensate for the addiction, and thus, end up playing a part in the cycle of addiction.

In the process of watching a family member lose control, mess up, and choose to do so over and over again, other family members will likely begin to feel crazy. This is because so much time and attention is spent on the whirlwind of emotions produced by the addict's ongoing habit. Feelings of betrayal, feelings of deep hurt and anguish, feelings of failure, and embarrassment, and feelings of being disrespected and dismissed are common on the part of the family members. Because the addict rarely admits his or her problem, the family is tempted to live "as if" everything were normal and fine. This is where denial of what is really happening sets in. This is also crazy making, because each person who chooses to do this, must take the reality of his or her thoughts and feelings and pretend they do not exist. Often, others in the family are taking on "roles" to participate in the addictive cycle. All of these measures prolong the addictive cycle the family is in. Life becomes a day-to-day existence of survival. Life becomes exhausting. The addict's world and the world of each member often feels like it is shrinking. Negativity and the sense of a cloud hanging over the family are common experiences.

The road to recovery is possible at any point in the cycle of addiction. It involves honesty first. Honesty with oneself about how one is truly feeling, and the part one has played, indeed the "supporting role" in the family drama. This is why getting help—through groups like Alcoholics Anonymous, Alanon, NA(narcotics anonymous) are so vital to recovery. Each recognizes the power of addiction and the need to break through only with the help of God. Groups like these are filled with people from all walks of life who have struggled to "come clean" and get real with God and others. This is where healing and freedom comes in, and most importantly HOPE. Christ said, *"...in the world you will have trial and tribulation, but be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world."*

If you are struggling with addiction, or have a loved one who is, consider reaching out to a person, or a therapist or a group to begin the journey of healing.

God's desire is to help you through every hardship you face. May you sense the love of God in your deepest despair and time of need.

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