

## Join a support group

Many schools have assistance programs that offer support groups for students who are living with alcohol or drug abuse in their families. These programs help with problem solving, and they give you the opportunity to meet other young people who are struggling with the same problems at home that you might face. They can help you see how others are able to have a good life in spite of what is happening at home.

## Alateen is for you

Alateen is a group for teens who are affected by someone else's alcohol or drug use. It holds meetings, like a club, where young people share tips on how to make their lives easier when a family member drinks too much or uses drugs.

The meetings are sponsored by Al-Anon. You can find the location of meetings near you by looking in the phone book under Al-Anon or Alateen, or ask a youth minister, your school counselor, your doctor or another adult you trust to help you get to a meeting near you. You can also find out about Alateen at [www.alateen.org](http://www.alateen.org) or by calling toll-free at 1-888-425-2666.



## If it is your friend's Mom or Dad who drinks too much

Don't walk away, and don't pretend you don't see it.

Things you can say that might help:

- It's not your fault that your parent drinks or uses drugs.
- You're not alone – lots of kids come from families where this is a problem.
- There are people who can help.

Things you can do:

- Tell your pastor or youth minister that you are worried about your friend.
- Be a good friend – include your friend in your activities and your family's fun.
- Encourage your friend to talk to a trusting adult.

## More information is available

SAMHSA's Helpline for Alcohol and Drug Information 1-800-662-HELP  
[www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov](http://www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov)

Alateen  
1-888-425-2666  
[www.alateen.org](http://www.alateen.org)

The National Association for Children of Alcoholics (NACoA)  
[www.nacoa.org](http://www.nacoa.org)



DHHS Publication No. (SMA) 06-4160 Printed 2005 Reprinted 2006  
NCADI Publication No. PHD1111

# It Feels So Bad



## It Doesn't Have To



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  
[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)



## Does Your Mom or Dad drink too much?

Millions of youth like yourself worry about their parents drinking too much or using drugs. It's a big problem that happens in every kind of family, whether rich or poor, single parent, traditional or blended family and families that attend places of worship.

### When your parents have been drinking, do they:

- embarrass you?
- blame you for things you didn't do?
- break promises?
- drive under the influence?
- behave in confusing and unpredictable ways?

Your parent could be misusing or be addicted to alcohol or drugs. Addiction to alcohol or drugs is a disease. People with this disease often do things that are confusing and hurtful. They need help to stop the alcohol or drug use. Sometimes that help is through an alcohol or drug abuse program; sometimes it is through Alcoholics Anonymous or other self-help groups, which often meet in churches and synagogues. These groups have helped millions of Moms and Dads recover, regain their health, and begin to heal their families. Caring adults are available to help your Mom or Dad get the treatment and recovery support they need.

## Things You Should Know

Lots of teens live in families with alcohol abuse or alcoholism – one in four. Many also live with parental drug abuse. You are not alone.

Addiction to alcohol or drugs affects all members of the family, even if only one person has this disease. This is why it is called a “family disease.”

Nothing you have done has ever caused anyone else to drink too much or use drugs. It's not your fault. You need and deserve help for yourself.

**You didn't Cause it  
You can't Cure it  
You can't Control it  
but**

**You can  
Take better Care of yourself by  
Communicating your feelings  
Making healthy Choices  
Celebrating yourself**

People with alcohol or drug addiction in their families are at greater risk of getting this disease when they choose to drink or use drugs. You can never get this disease if you don't drink or use drugs.

It is important for you to concentrate on finding help and support for yourself.

## Take Care of Yourself

If you feel bad because your Mom or Dad is drinking too much or using drugs, there are steps you can take to make things better for yourself even though you cannot stop your parent from drinking or using.

**Talk to a caring adult.** There are many adults who will listen and help you deal with problems at home, even when it seems no one has noticed. Sometimes they are not sure if you want or need support and are waiting for you to say something first. Often a teacher, a counselor at school, a youth minister, a coach, doctor, nurse, friend's parent, grandparent, aunt or uncle is knowledgeable and anxious to help.

**Families with alcohol or drug problems often try to keep it a secret.** It is important to find caring adults who can help you. Talking to them really helps, and it is not being disloyal to your family if you seek help for yourself.

If you don't get the help you need from the first person you approach, it is important to reach out to another adult you can trust.

**Get involved in youth programs.** Join in activities offered through your church or synagogue, your school's extracurricular programs, or your community recreational departments. Here you can hang out with other young people, use your special talents and strengths and learn new skills while making friends and having fun.