

THE FAMILY

Addiction is a family disease. It affects the relationships of those close to the addict: parents, spouse, siblings, children, long time friends, and employers. We who care the most suffer from the addict's erratic behavior. We try to control and are ashamed of the scenes caused. Soon, we begin to think we are to blame and assume the guilt, fears, and responsibilities of the addict. Thus, we become sick, too.

It is painful to watch our loved ones slowly kill themselves with drugs. We see them deteriorate before our eyes and are powerless to stop them. If the addicts are spouses, we may watch as our finances slip down the drain. When the addicts are our children, all the hopes and dreams we may have for them begin to fade. When the addicts are our parents, we may never have had a childhood because we assumed parental responsibilities at an early age. We may cover up for addicted siblings, friends, and employees; we may blame them or may excuse their unacceptable behavior. We worry, we take on their responsibilities, we make excuses, and we try to cover up for them. This is our anxiety, and as a result, we become enablers.

The obsession of the family becomes apparent when we try to control the addicts' using. We become detectives and search the premises and their personal belongings for drugs and drug-related items. We become obsessed with where they are, what they are doing, and how we might control their addiction. We want to believe the problem can solve itself even though our gut feeling tells us this is not so. We want to believe the addicts' promises, but common sense tells us there is something wrong. We become victims of denial.

In our despair, we have searched for an answer. We have come to Nar-Anon because we are burdened with responsibilities and feel we are alone. We come here to change the behavior of the addicts, but soon find that our own thinking and attitude must change if we are to have relief. We find people in Nar-Anon who understand what we are going through and are ready to share their experience, strength, and hope to help us. In Nar-Anon, we learn how to live one day at a time; we stop projecting. We learn how to deal with our feelings of fear, guilt, obsession, anxiety, and denial. We look at ourselves and put our energy where we have some power over the choices in our own lives.

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Nar-Anon Family Groups