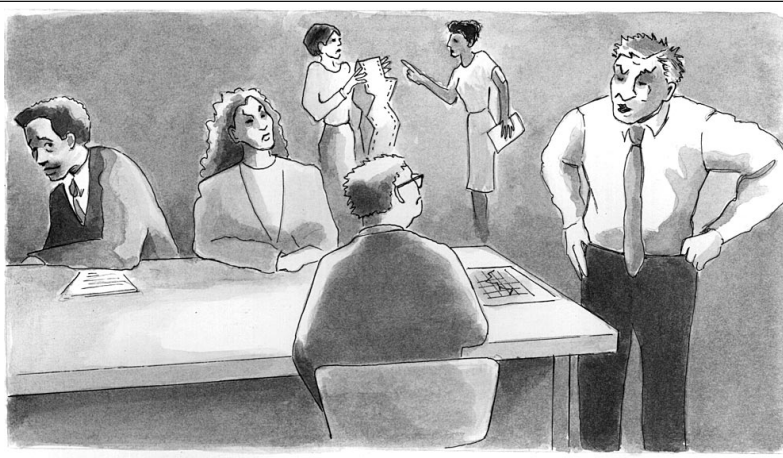




# THE DRY DRUNK

## *A Hazard to the Nonusing Alcoholic*



*Warning signs of a dry drunk can include acting self-important, making harsh judgments of others, impatience, dishonesty, impulsive behavior and mood swings.*

**W**hen an alcoholic stops drinking, it's cause for rejoicing. Unfortunately, sobriety is not guaranteed to last. It takes hard work and commitment and a keen eye for dangers.

One danger to the non-drinking alcoholic is the dry drunk, a set of habits and attitudes that take the joy out of life for the alcoholic and those around him or her. Those habits often precede a relapse into drinking, even if the alcoholic has been sober for years.

A dry drunk can be successfully treated. Here are some signs that will help you recognize the condition, and some suggestions on how to cope with it.

### **Warning Signs**

During their drinking years, alcoholics develop many abnor-

mal attitudes and behaviors, which come with them into sobriety, and are characteristic of the dry drunk. Often, family members don't recognize the symptoms of a dry drunk as anything unusual, since they have become so used to the abnormal behavior of the alcoholic. Some typical signs of a dry drunk are:

- acting self-important, either by "having all the answers," or playing "poor me."
- making harsh judgments of oneself and others.
- being impatient or pursuing whims.
- blaming others for shortcomings one suspects in oneself.
- being dishonest, usually beginning with little things.
- impulsive behavior which ignores what's best for oneself and others.

- inability to make decisions.
- mood swings, trouble with expressing emotions, feeling unsatisfied.
- detachment, self-absorption, boredom, distraction or disorganization.
- nostalgia for the drinking life.
- fantasizing, daydreaming and wishful thinking or euphoria.
- less participation in a 12-step program or dropping out altogether.

### **Treatment**

With help, the alcoholic experiencing a dry drunk can learn to see the world and oneself more realistically, and develop habits that lead to a happier life. The basic aims of treatment are to develop responsible behavior, patience, honesty and self-acceptance. If you're experiencing the effects of a dry drunk, either in yourself or someone close to you, we suggest the following steps:

- Ask for guidance or referrals from your employee assistance program.
- Consult a health professional trained in health dependency issues.
- Get in touch with Alcoholics Anonymous or Al-Anon (for families of alcoholics) and attend meetings regularly. Knowing that others understand and have triumphed over these problems can be the best help of all.