

## **Gosnold**

### **2.4 Handouts for family members**

From “What is Substance Abuse Treatment? A Booklet for Families”. DHHS Publication No. (SMA) 06-4126 NCADI No. BKD 503. To order more: <http://store.health.org/> or search for National Clearinghouse Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI).

#### **Why Does Treatment Take So Long?**

Substance use disorders affect every part of a person’s life. For that reason, treatment needs to affect every part of a person’s life as well. Treatment involves more than helping someone stop drinking alcohol or using drugs. Actually, *stopping* alcohol use or drug use is just the beginning of the recovery process. Your family member will need to learn new ways to cope with daily life. He or she will need to relearn how to deal with stress, anger, or social situations and how to have fun without using drugs or drinking. Learning these new skills is a lot of work.

Many people enter treatment only because of pressure from the legal system, employers, parents, spouses, or other family members. The first step in treatment then is to help them see that they do have a problem and to become motivated to change for themselves. This process often takes time. Your family member also will need time to understand and begin to use the support of the self-help groups (Alanon)... Remember: It can take a long time for the disease to develop and it is often chronic; therefore, it can take a long time to treat it. (pp. 17-18).

#### **JUST FOR YOU**

Now that your family member is in treatment, things are starting to change. Some of the tension and turmoil that probably were part of your life may be starting to ease. But the first weeks of treatment are stressful. Each family member is adjusting to changes, starting to deal with past conflicts, and establishing new routines. Amid all these changes, it is important that you take good care of yourself—get enough sleep, eat right, rest, exercise, and talk to supportive friends and relatives. Your ... spiritual organization also may be a good source of support.

Recovery is not just an adjustment for the person in treatment—it also is an adjustment for you. For the past few years, you may have assumed roles or taken care of tasks that were your loved one’s responsibilities. Now, as time passes, you and he or she may need to learn new ways of relating to each other and learn different ways of sharing activities and chores...

Some people are very happy to be getting treatment at last; others suffer a great deal while they adjust to a new life and attempt to live it without alcohol and drugs. They may be sad, angry, or confused. It is important for you to realize that these are normal

## 2.4 Handouts for Family – page two

reactions and to get support for yourself. [Alanon, Naranon, Adult Children of Alcoholics can all be helpful.]

It is important to remember the following points as you and your family member recover....

- Your loved one's recovery, sobriety, or abstinence does not depend on you.
- Your family's recovery does not depend on the recovery of the person who used substances.
- You did not cause your family member's substance use disorder. It is not your fault.

**You didn't cause it, you can't cure it, and you can't control it.**