



Addiction --Help for Loved Ones

by award-winning author / stress-relief expert Susie Mantell

Q: Dear Susie, Why can't I decide to evict a live-in alcoholic boyfriend?

A: There are many, many reasons people stay connected to others, even as we watch them, or ourselves, participate in behaviors we believe are unhealthy, unsafe or unwise. I would guess from the fact that you asked this question that you are uncomfortable with things as they are at present, and so you wonder why you would continue to allow or accept a day-to-day relationship that disappoints, worries or hurts you or another person.

Much as I wish I could give you a clear, simple answer, there's a far better authority on the subject.

That expert is You. Addiction is a complex physical and psychological syndrome, which affects not only the addict, but every person in his/her personal and professional life. You may have read in others of my stress tips on www.relaxintuit.com that one definition of stress is that it is an indication that something needs to change. Pain is the "reset" button. But *what* needs to change is something we must decide intuitively based upon observation and thought, our values and goals, and factual information from knowledgeable medical professionals. This may be best achieved by talking to professionals with expertise in addictive disease.

It's Not About Willpower: While alcoholism, drug abuse, eating disorders, hoarding, gambling and the full spectrum of addictive or compulsive behaviors often look like they are acts of irresponsible free will, it is essential to remember that this is generally not the case. That doesn't justify what may be unreliable, dangerous or emotionally hurtful behaviors. We are each responsible for our actions. But one cannot always make wise and safe and compassionate choices when caught in the spiral of addiction. Remember that addiction is a disease process in which rational thought cannot always prevail.

Sometimes People Stay in Such Relationships for One Or More of the Following Reasons:

1. They love the addict, long to be loved in return, and hope that somehow their love is enough to make the person change.
2. They remember how it was before, or there are still intermittent "good" days.
3. One or more of their own parents or grandparents was an addict of some type. If they have lived with irrational or reckless behavior at home before, it may seem more acceptable than it should.
4. The addict apologizes, promises to stop, and genuinely wants to stop acting out.

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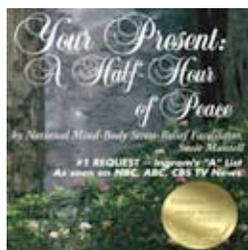
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5. They have seen people who were worse off, so this doesn't seem so bad.
6. They are financially dependent upon the addict, or vice versa.
7. There are children involved and therefore, fear of shattering a family. This is actually sometimes reason to leave a bad situation, even temporarily, until there is good support in place.
8. They're afraid to be alone, or fear feeling guilty for leaving.
9. They, themselves, have a problem with alcohol, or drugs, food, gambling, sex, rage, etc.)
10. They are afraid of what will happen to the addict if they leave.
11. They fear reprisal or retribution if they seek help.
12. They simply don't know what to do or where to go.

Note: Those who love an addict will often find they do so more than once in a lifetime.

If you would like to gain some insight into your own motives and needs at this time, I strongly encourage you to talk with a professional counselor who works specifically in the field of Addictive Disease and Co-dependency. Co-dependency is the emotional enmeshment of others in the lives of addicts. Understanding that dynamic can help them to make healthy choices and find satisfying relationships. While every person and every relationship is unique, there are some patterns and suggestions for people living with addictive disease and for those who are addicted that a skilled professional would be able to help you to identify. She/he can then help you to make wise, healthy decisions for yourself, ultimately the only person for whom you can make changes. (See: Tip on www.relaxintuit.com about where to seek help for addiction.)

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