



## SOMEONE I LOVE ABUSES SUBSTANCES, WHAT CAN I DO?

Codependency plays a part in the role of the spouse, parent or child in the family that has a person with a substance use disorder. The codependent family member is almost as addicted as the chemically dependent individual; only the addiction is in learning to live life surrounded by alcohol or drug addiction. The family member may try to make everything seem normal. In some cases, family members may try to make excuses for the substance use disordered person's behavior, even pretending there's no problem in an effort to make the family feel drug-free.

### Spouse

The spouse of an individual with chemical dependency undergoes tremendous emotional burdens, especially if that spouse has children. There's the unbearable weight of trying to deal with the individual, along with the challenge and obligation of taking care of the children. The sober parent must play a better role model to the children while trying to help conquer the spouse's addiction. Guilt and anger can also affect the sober partner, who could feel she/he may be responsible in some way or should have known something in order to prevent the addiction.

### What can I do?

**Attend an Alanon meeting.** Find one here: <http://www.al-anon.org/index.html>

**Seek counseling for yourself.** Find help here: <http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>

### Create Boundaries.

#### **The first rule for boundaries:**

Do not set any boundary that all family members can't fully agree on. Do not act alone.

#### **The second rule:**

No boundary should be communicated to the affected family member until it has been discussed with the family and all are willing to implement it. Work with each other to find a boundary you can agree on. You may have to start small.

#### **The third rule for boundaries:**

The boundary must be designed to increase the well being of the family not to manipulate or punish the chemically dependent family member. It is very important, if not absolutely necessary for the family members, to get support from some group in which they can discuss their situation and talk over their options.

Sources: SAMHSA, and Seeking Safety

