

Ten Myths about Alcoholics

Breaking down the fiction to get to the facts

Most people believe things about alcoholism that are not true. These myths can keep people from recognizing alcoholism when it shows up among family members, friends and at work.

Myth #1: "He can't be an alcoholic. He's too nice."

Fact: Many alcoholics are nice, much of the time. Alcoholism is a physical, emotional, and spiritual disease. In early stages of the disease, personality may not seem to be affected all the time.

Myth #2: "She's not an alcoholic, she only drinks wine."

Fact: Alcohol is alcohol. The issue is not so much what a person drinks as when, where and why.

Myth #3: "Alcoholics are skid row bums."

Fact: Only about three percent of alcoholics are skid row types. Most people with the disease hold jobs, have families and are respected in the community.

Myth #4: "How can he be an alcoholic? He only drinks after work."

Fact: Many alcoholics schedule their drinking for after work and weekends.

Myth #5: "She's not always drunk. How can she be an alcoholic?"

Fact: Few alcoholics are "always drunk." What counts is what occurs when they do drink.

Myth #6: "He hardly ever misses work. That doesn't sound like an alcoholic to me."

Fact: Many alcoholics rarely miss work, especially in early stages of the disease. But they may feel terrible when they show up- and the quality and quantity of their work may go downhill.

Myth #7: "Women aren't alcoholics."

Fact: Alcoholism is an equal-opportunity disease. It does not discriminate on the basis of gender.

Myth #8: "She's too young to be an alcoholic."

Fact: Alcoholism does not respect age. Even children can be alcoholics.

Myth #9: "I've never seen him with a drink."

Fact: Alcoholics often manage to keep their drinking habits secret from co-workers and employees.

Myth #10: "He can't be an alcoholic. He has such a nice family."

Fact: Many alcoholics have "nice families." The family often is able to take care of- and to cover up for- the alcoholic for a long time.