

An Uninvited Marriage Partner

As we all know, today's times are challenging. Unfortunately, underlying problems often become magnified during stressful times.

There are two types of stress—bad stress, such as from a job loss or grief, and happy stress, such as a school graduation or new job promotion. Both lead to new expectations, new challenges and new decisions. With both, it's about one's ability to respond to change.

How stress affects one's mood depends on the person. Some can cope fine with bad stress; others can be challenged even with good stress. Some people get through easily and stabilize themselves emotionally. Other people drown themselves in self-medication on the journey to self-destruction. For the purposes of this article, I will use "Joan and Len," a fictitious couple, who are beginning to see "alcohol" as a poor partner in their marriage.

Joan has lost her job; Len has been working harder to make up the financial difference. They have 3 children, one who is always in trouble at school. Both Joan and Len were binge drinkers in high school and college. When Len got a DUI 10 years ago, they both cut back. But Joan never told Len that she enjoyed drinking on her own. Now that she is no longer working, she's been drinking more and more. She avoids the phone calls from school. Finally, the principal calls Len at work. He mentions he has been calling for the last few days.


Later, Len asks Joan about the

calls and she insists that the phone hasn't rang in days. He looks at his wife for the first time in several weeks. He has been coming home at 9 p.m., exhausted. He now notices she looks like she hasn't washed her hair or clothing and the children's clothing isn't clean. The laundry basket is overflowing. The refrigerator is empty. When Len puts his son to bed that night, he's told that, "Mommy is always asleep when I come home from school."

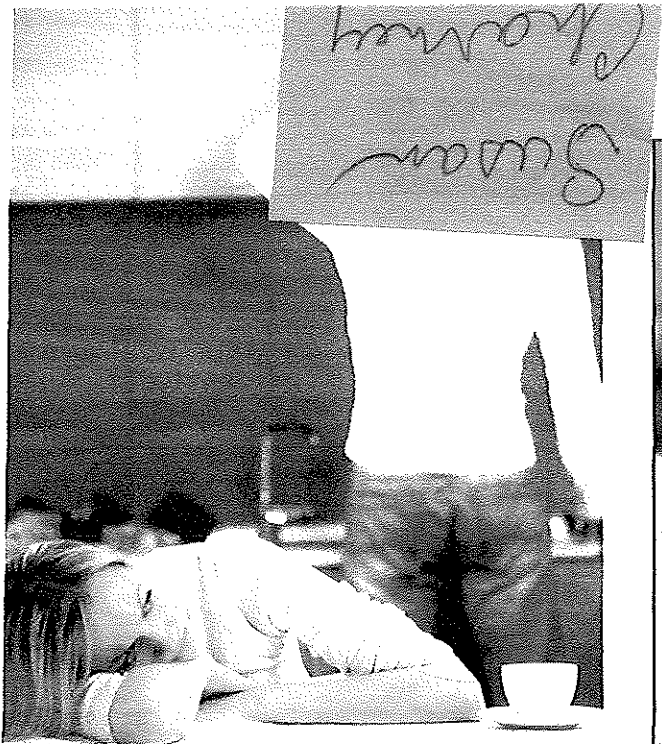
Len checks the caller ID and discovers there were actually several calls from school. He confronts Joan, who denies everything. But he knows there's a problem. He remembers their binge drinking. He feels the signs are there and is unsure what to do about it.

Len confronts his wife, who denies drinking. He worries about the safety of his children. He knows he needs help. She isn't changing but he knows he needs to do something. He goes to some Al-anon meetings and sees a therapist. He learns that confronting Joan while she is drinking won't accomplish anything, so he clears his work schedule for the next day.

He confronts her early the next morning, before she starts drinking. He tells her he believes she has a problem and shares the changes he's seen. At first she denies all of it. Then he shows her the caller ID with the calls from school. She starts to cry. She describes her loneliness and depression since she lost her job. She describes her shame over her behavior.



Some can cope fine with bad stress; others can be challenged even with good stress.



Alcohol is an uninvited guest here. It is interfering and taking over this couple's lives. Joan is not one to be able to have a "friendly" cocktail at day's end—one quickly leads to several, which leads to distorted behaviors that make everyone uncomfortable. She agrees to go for help.

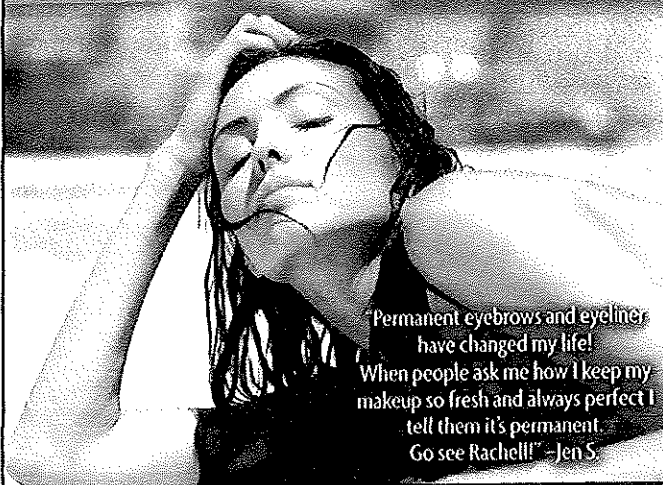
Joan may or may not get better. But what happens to the rest of the family? Everyone becomes addicted to the addiction. "Today is a good day! No one drank and there were no rages in the house!" Everything gets measured by the behavior of the addict. The family lives in a state of chaos, waiting for the peace to begin. Trying to find stability in the midst of chaos is a very lonely journey. The shame associated with the behavior takes over. It is evident with children who refuse to bring friends home and spouses trying to explain away the behavior of the alcoholic addict to family members.

It will be a journey for this couple and many like them. There is no clear end to addiction, yet recovery can be attained. Recovery takes work, possible relapse and relapse prevention. The commitment to AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) is a good start. There are times when hospitalization or IOPs (Intensive Outpatient Programs) should be recommended. The only way one can begin the journey of recovery is when a person wants to change, NOT when they are trying to change for someone else.

There is help available for spouses and family members. There are support groups such as Al-Anon and even for teenagers of parent alcoholics. It is important to find others to relate to. Becoming a member of the self-help community, you can learn new ways of coping.

Darren Charney, MSW, LCSW, psychotherapist, has a private practice in Scottsdale. He provides counseling services for individuals, families and couples. Charney also works with people with chronic illness and their families to help them find balance in their lives. 480.467.0223. Darren Charney also contributed to this article. He is currently pursuing a career in community outreach.

SUMMERTIME SOLUTION TO SWEATPROOF BEAUTY



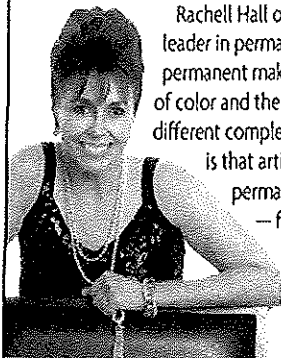
"Permanent eyebrows and eyeliner have changed my life! When people ask me how I keep my makeup so fresh and always perfect I tell them it's permanent. Go see Rachell!" —Jen S

RACHELL HALL PERMANENT MAKEUP™

Today's active lifestyle requires get-up-and-go convenience. There's nothing like permanent makeup for those early morning workouts that often require a stop on the store on the way home where, with permanent makeup, you won't be embarrassed to run into neighbors and old friends nor fear making new friends, because you'll always look terrific.

TOP 3 REASONS TO GET PERMANENT MAKEUP

1. Your workout works because with permanent makeup, your game face is already on!
2. Your work works, because permanent eyebrows and eyeliner save tons of time getting your work face on!
3. Your life works, because you look naturally beautiful 24/7!



Rachell Hall of Rachell Hall Permanent Makeup™ is the national leader in permanent makeup. The application of beautiful permanent makeup requires an artist with a refined sense of color and the unique ability to custom-blend colors for different complexions, personalities and lifestyles. Rachell Hall is that artist and she has been providing natural looking permanent makeup — classic beauty, nothing trendy — for an international clientele for over 20 years. Forget about applying makeup time and time again, with permanent makeup your whole life can be wash 'n wear beauty. Now that's beautiful!

RACHELL HALL PERMANENT MAKEUP™

480-368-9239

www.ClassicBeautyMagazine.com

ES
'09
EN
S!
CE
ER
UT

K
T
E

ace
A
A
ced
world