

# Al-Anon: Friends of alcoholics avg. three more problem drinkers in their lives

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Family and friends who report knowing an alcoholic, usually have three or four more among their acquaintances

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Survey results reported January 31 by the support group **Al-Anon** show a new dynamic in the relationship between **alcohol abusers**, those with the **disease of alcoholism** and the people around them. Only 20 percent of those surveyed for the 2012 Al-Anon Family Groups Survey who said they have had a problem drinker in their lives reported just a lone relationship with an alcoholic. The report shows 60 percent had two-to-four alcoholics in their lives, including one or both parents, a spouse or romantic partner, children, grandparents, siblings or friends. Twenty percent have had five-to-11 alcoholic relationships.

The survey has been conducted every three years since 1984. It provides data on the demographic characteristics of Al-Anon's membership – the families and friends of alcoholics -- and the health benefits members may come to realize in learning to cope with the negative effects of someone else's problem drinking.

Pamela Walters, Al-Anon Family Groups Information Analyst, says, "These numbers validate that alcoholism is a family illness, as many Al-Anon members have come to understand. Alcoholism is more than just the drinker's addiction to **alcohol**. It has complex emotional and social effects on family members and anyone else who has a close relationship with an alcoholic.

"In Al-Anon, the friends and families of alcoholics find their way to recovery from the effects of alcoholism as a family illness, just as alcoholics work toward their own recovery from the addictive effects of alcohol, in Alcoholics Anonymous (**AA**)," Ms. Walters said. "Even people who do not think

their lives have been affected by a problem drinker are surprised at what they learn in Al-Anon meetings."

From September to October of 2012, the Al-Anon Family Groups World Service Office conducted the Membership Survey of its members located in the U.S., Bermuda, Puerto Rico and Canada. More than 3,200 Al-Anon members participated.

Al-Anon Family Groups are for families and friends who have been affected by a loved one's drinking. Nearly 16,000 local groups meet throughout the U.S., Canada, Bermuda, and Puerto Rico every week.

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