

**Get Your Loved One Sober  
Alternatives to Nagging, Pleading, and Threatening**

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## Can This Book Help You?

If you live with or love someone who drinks or drugs too much, this book can help you. This book offers you a program that has been proven to help people whose lives are affected by a problem drinker, a drug user, or someone who does both. If you feel stuck in a hopeless, substance-ruled life, this book can help you. If you have ever called, or wanted to call, a crisis line, clinic, or hospital and said, “Help, my husband is drinking himself to death” or “Help, my kid stays out all night getting high, and I’m scared to death,” this book can help. You will also find help here if alcohol or drugs are destroying your marriage or scaring your children. Whether you are the wife, husband, lover, parent, son, daughter, or friend of an alcoholic or drug user, this book offers you the tools both to help you help your loved one find the path to sobriety and to improve your own life.

Throughout the book you will notice that we primarily illustrate our points with alcohol abusers. The program, however, has been proven to be effective with loved ones who abuse a wide variety of substances ranging from alcohol and marijuana to heroin and crack. Thus, you can effectively apply the program to your loved one regardless of the substance of abuse.

If you have “tried everything” and nothing has worked, but you are not ready to give up, then you are in the right place. The scientifically validated program on which this book is based has been designed specifically for people who feel they have “tried it all.” They have scolded, nagged, begged, bribed, detached, and tried a few tricks not fit to print. Just like you, they love their drinkers enough to keep trying and trying. What they have not done (and what we will teach you to do) is use that love to change the way they and their drinkers interact so that they spend less time feeling miserable and their loved ones discover the pleasure in being sober. From where we sit, that’s an awfully good deal. We are confident that you will also find it to be so.

Of course, we cannot guarantee that every single problem will be solved. What we *can* promise is that we will teach you skills to regain control of your life and to offer your drinker the best help available. In some cases, applying these skills does not result in complete abstinence and happily-ever-after—but in most cases, it does result in a better life for you and in sobriety for your drinker. The happily-ever-after is up to you and your loved one to create.

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To keep their discussion uncluttered, the authors primarily refer to drinkers for the rest of the book, rather than to drinkers and drug users. The material is equally applicable to both groups, although extra caution should be taken in cases where the user’s lifestyle is centered around violence and criminal activity.

## Chapter 1: The Program

The subtitle for this book, *Alternatives to Nagging, Pleading, and Threatening*, was chosen deliberately to emphasize that our program offers a positive alternative to the usual tactics people use to try to get their loved ones sober. If your loved one is still abusing alcohol or other drugs, in spite of your repeated efforts to get her to quit, then it is time to try something different. It is time to try the *Alternatives*.

Learning the alternatives to nagging, pleading, and threatening is fairly straightforward. It will not take years of study for you to master these tools. You simply need to work your way through this program and give some serious thought to what you want and to the choices you make. Whether you do that quickly and decisively or slowly and deliberately is entirely up to you. Although the concepts are not complex, your life is, and change will happen at variable speeds despite your consistent efforts. Just keep in mind that if you do not try at all, it is likely nothing will change (at least not for the better). On the other hand, if you use the *Alternatives*, there is the very strong likelihood that your life will improve. Hence, dig in!

The alternative to nagging, pleading, and threatening can be found in a simple system of behavior that has two goals and one central procedure. The goals are (1) to improve the quality of your life and (2) to make sobriety more attractive to your loved one than drinking. The central procedure is something we call “behavioral mapping.” It is a way of figuring out how you and your drinker affect each other and how that pattern may be modified to achieve different results. For example, Ruth found it very upsetting that Paul would open a beer as soon as he came home from work every day. In fact, she found it so upsetting that each day she would bitterly complain about it, and they would fight. After mapping out their typical after-work scenario, Ruth realized that her complaints actually made it more likely that Paul would drink. He used the arguments as an excuse to justify his “needing” a relaxing drink. Her nagging also gave him a reason to “punish” her by drinking. Using the same *Alternatives* you will learn, Ruth was able to change her reaction to Paul’s after-work beer. Further, by doing so, she eventually made it more enjoyable for him to skip the beer than to drink it. End of beer. End of complaints. End of arguments and punishment. Beginning of a better quality of life for Ruth and a shift toward sobriety for Paul.

Sounds simple, doesn’t it? Well it is both simple and difficult. The techniques are not difficult to learn. What can be difficult, however, is applying them in your current life. The way you and your loved one interact is a well-rehearsed routine born of your natural style, his natural style, the impact of alcohol on your loved one’s brain and behavior, and the interaction of all of the above. If you think of the changes you want to achieve as a journey, you can draw a parallel between the simple lines on a road map and the techniques you will learn, and then draw a parallel between the actual roads you travel and the life context in which you implement them. Real roads, unlike their clean counterparts on a map, have potholes, detours, and traffic jams. Your life has hard-to-break habits, unforeseen crises, and just plain discouragement that you will need to

overcome. However, just as you wouldn't give up a desirable journey simply because some of the roads are bumpy, you won't give up on changing life with your drinker just because it is not always easy. Change is almost never easy; but change for the better is always worth the effort. After months and years of nagging, pleading, and threatening your loved one, you are ready for a change.

### **A Look Ahead**

As we have already said, there are two simple objectives to this program. One is to improve the quality of your life. That means not only getting your loved one to stop abusing alcohol, but more importantly, putting the sanity back into your own life *regardless of whether she ever gives up drinking*. That's right. It is time for your quality of life to become less dependent on whether your loved one is drunk or sober, in a good mood or bad, home or out. To this end, we will help you create a safety plan to ensure that regardless of your drinker's mood, you and those dependent on you do not become victims of violence. (We cover this in chapter 3.) On a happier note, chapter 4 offers you a glimpse of the future you will create. In other words, as you work your way through that chapter, you will figure out what you want your life to look like and begin to translate those dreams into attainable goals. Chapter 5 addresses the guilt that gets in the way of moving forward and helps you feel good about finally being in the driver's seat. Part of moving forward, of course, means rebuilding your emotional and social life. Chapter 6 shows you how.

The objective of moving your loved one toward sobriety, believe it or not, is also helped by improving the quality of your life *independent* of his behavior. As your stress level decreases, you will be able to deal with your drinker in a calmer, less reactive manner, and your relationship will improve. This in turn will help you motivate your drinker toward sobriety. Unfortunately, your improved attitude, while necessary, is not sufficient to accomplish this second goal. Thus, we also give you a tool kit of techniques that are effective alternatives to nagging, pleading, and threatening. To begin with, the behavioral map we mentioned earlier forms the foundation of almost every strategy. Thus, an entire chapter is devoted to teaching you how to use this important technique. Chapter 2 will explain the behavioral map, provide lots of examples, show you how to use it in your own situations, and help you practice until you can map your interactions and be confident that you really are getting at what triggers your difficulties. Combining this awareness with the other techniques you learn will empower you in a way that nagging, pleading, and threatening never could. Moving on to these other techniques, you will find chapters devoted to disabling your enabling behaviors (chapter 7) as well as useful problem-solving and communication techniques (chapters 8 and 9). "Behavior Basics" (chapter 10) will equip you with the core tools of behavior change so that you can more easily modify your behavior and that of your drinker. (Lest you shudder at the thought of "modifying" anyone, stay calm. The section on page 7 called "A New Angle on Control" will explain what this really means. We are not pushing anything so devilish as mind control!)

Chapter 11 is devoted exclusively to helping you select and support the best treatment approach for your loved one. Chances are you have been down the treatment road before—telling your drinker that treatment will help, begging her to consider it, even getting an agreement to try it, only to have your drinker not keep the appointment or drop out after only one or two visits. In fact, the unhappy reality is that the majority of drinkers who enter treatment seldom remain for more than one or two sessions. However, individuals whose partners, parents, children, and lovers have learned the *Alternatives* stay in treatment six or seven times as long as other drinkers do (Ellis et al. 1992). We attribute this to the fact that our clients learn how to suggest and how to support treatment. There is more to successfully engaging someone in treatment than guilt or goading this person into it (as you well know). We will teach you how. You will also learn what to do to make staying in treatment as attractive for your loved one as possible.

Finally, chapter 12 addresses the important issues of relapse prevention and what happens after you have done everything you can. As you move through this journey of change, you will experience successes and face obstacles, some minor, others not. However, one of the key advantages of the *Alternatives* approach is that it prepares you to deal with obstacles, potholes, detours—whatever falls in your path. Thus, difficulties become opportunities for you to gain control over your life. Ultimately, whether or not your drinker achieves lasting sobriety, your journey with us will give you the skills and tools to enhance your own quality of life. Hence, in a best-case scenario, the two of you will achieve peace together and worst-case scenario is that you will have done everything possible and be able to move on and take care of your own life. In either case, your future looks brighter.

### **About Change**

As you read this book, keep in mind one important truth. Change is not an event. It is a process—a slow process. No matter what behavior you want to change—a nail-biting habit, overeating, or how you relate to someone—it does not happen in one big jump. Making change is no different than taking a long car trip. You may decide on Monday morning to drive from New York to Los Angeles, but it will take longer than the moment of decision to get you there. You need to pack your bags, figure out what roads to follow, and so on. What's more, once you start driving, you will find that some of the roads you had planned to travel are closed or in poor repair. You will need to find detours, tolerate potholes, and otherwise adjust your plans as you go. You will also find that if you drive for shorter rather than longer periods each day, the trip will be more enjoyable, and you will feel more rested and in control. The same goes for your change journey.

The improvements you are after will take time and are best achieved in small steps with careful planning. Given how long you have already lived with your drinker under the present circumstances, you can tolerate it a little longer as you make small, controllable changes. Rather than whipping through this book and making a mile-long list of things to “fix,” work through the *Alternatives* with the plan of making one small change at a time. As these changes begin to feel natural, go back and add more. What you learn

here is yours forever, so you need not hurry up and get through them quickly! Take your time, go slow, and enjoy the knowledge that you are on a life-enhancing journey.

Keep the journey in mind as you move forward. When things don't go smoothly, remind yourself that every road trip has its snags. A highway detour between Albuquerque and Phoenix would not send you scurrying back to New York, so don't give up on your hopes for your drinker just because one or two or more attempts at change hit a wall. Each time you try a new technique and it does not work, sit down and think through what happened. Review your original plan, review what you did, get a clear picture of how your drinker responded, and think about how you might improve your approach. Use the same motivated problem-solving skills you would use if your highway of choice had a detour and you needed an alternate road to Los Angeles. These detours might be a nuisance, but they are a natural part of the journey. Expect them and you will master them.

### **A New Angle on Control**

Only you really know how much blood, sweat, and tears you have invested in this relationship. However, we feel safe betting that you have tried repeatedly to get your loved one to change. Experience shows that when people love someone, they give him the benefit of the doubt, again and again. They keep trying in hopes the individual will finally "see the light" and change. This would be a great strategy except for one problem. Most people try the *same* tactics over and over. The sad thing is they do this not because what they are doing works but because it is the only way they know how. If you think about it, you can see it makes no sense. In fact, it has the same effect as parking yourself in front of that detour on the Albuquerque/Phoenix highway and revving your engine in front of the road-closed sign hoping the noise will force the sign to let you pass. How much more productive it would be if you could pull out a road map and find an alternate route to your destination.

Open yourself up to new ways of interacting with your loved one and have the courage to take control of your situation. Rather than continually knocking your head against the same old walls, come along with us and learn how to control your reactions to your loved one and, through your reactions, shape a change in her behavior.

We are not talking about control in the ugly sense of tricking or forcing someone to do your bidding—that would hardly make for a satisfying relationship. Rather, the control we teach is one you already have but are not using effectively. When you and your loved one get into an argument, you cross-trigger each other's behaviors. For example, let's say your drinker is late to dinner (again!) because he stopped on his way home to have a few drinks at the pub. He is more than a little tipsy but nonetheless in a good mood. You, on the other hand, are furious and let him know what an inconsiderate SOB he is the moment he comes through the door. His mood immediately sours, and he heads for the liquor cabinet and proceeds to get plastered. You throw dinner on the table and spend the rest of the evening alternating between ignoring and scolding him. There might be hope of this "working" except for the fact that the two of you have repeated this scene dozens of times. Clearly, nothing has changed.

Now consider how the evening might have gone if you had greeted him with, "Honey, I feel awful when you come home late and tipsy. Although I love being with you most of the time, I really don't enjoy you when you're drinking. I've already eaten dinner and made plans to go to a movie with my sister. See you later." As you imagine both scenes (the original and our revision), think about the implications of each. In the original, everybody has a lousy evening, and more importantly, your loved one clearly gets the message that even though he is late and drunk, he still gets dinner and he still gets to have you around all evening. While the two of you might be fighting, you are still together. In the revision, you do not give him an excuse to storm over to the liquor cabinet, you avoid all the pain of a lengthy argument, he has to fend for himself for dinner, and he finds himself alone for the evening. *In changing the way you react to him, everything changes.* Of course, this one interaction probably won't trigger him to give up the bottle and begin a new life. But repeated changes like this will nudge him along as he finds it less and less rewarding to be drunk and more and more rewarding to be sober. By changing your behavior, you change your drinker's behavior.

That is the form of control we are talking about. You can learn to manage your behaviors (interaction patterns) to change your partner's behaviors. But it takes courage, work, and patience. Courage to recognize your existing patterns, work to change your behavior, and patience to keep at it until your loved one responds or until you are satisfied you have done all that is possible.

### **A Taste of Things to Come**

Although there is much we have yet to share with you, we imagine you are anxious to begin. Here's an activity to warm you up. On a blank sheet of paper, describe the last argument over alcohol/drugs you and your loved one had. What did your loved one say/do? What did you say/do? Who said what first, second, third, and so on? Write it out as if you were writing a script for a play. Try to capture every nuance. Then look back at the scenario we described above (drinker home late for dinner, spouse angry, subsequent argument). Notice that the nondrinking spouse could change the course of the argument by changing how she responded to the situation. Specifically, the spouse dropped the attack and instead told the drinker how his behavior made her feel. The spouse also made sure the drinker knew he was loved but that his drinking behavior was not.

Now look for points in your argument scenario where you can exert control. Ask yourself whether you are feeding the flames of the argument or possibly reinforcing the behavior that has made you angry. Script a more controlled (softer) response for yourself that makes it difficult for your loved one to keep the argument going. Remember, start with your feelings, show understanding and love, and be clear about the circumstances under which you would be open to being together or discussing the problem. Rehearse this new script in your mind as often as you can. When a similar situation arises again, you will be better prepared to avoid the fireworks.

If you have trouble coming up with alternatives to your standard routine, don't worry. By the time you finish this program, you will be a pro.

## **Program Foundation**

This program helps you take charge of your part in the relationship. It does not place responsibility for the drinker on your shoulders. *Alternatives* is based on years of scientific research and has proven to be highly effective for many, many people in your situation. The overwhelming majority of our clients' substance-abusing loved ones enter treatment and stay there six or seven times as long as most other substance abusers. Moreover, people who use the *Alternatives* tell us it gives them a sense of hope, understanding, and opportunity. It can help you improve the quality of your life, your relationship, and your loved one's life.

*Alternatives* is based on the fact that family members and other people who are important to the drinker are the most influential people in the problem drinker's life. Whether in a positive direction or a negative one, the drinker reacts most strongly to those closest to her. As one of those people, you are in a position to steer those reactions in a positive direction. You can have a tremendous impact for good on your loved one. (Think of yourself as both the navigator and the driver. You have the map that shows you which roads are passable and you have control of the steering wheel.)

Living with someone for many years gives you an insight into his habits that few others have. In fact, you may know your drinker as well as, or better than, he knows himself. Given that you are motivated and willing to work for what you want, you can make powerful changes. It is the combination of your knowledge and your determination that puts you so firmly in the driver's seat. We will support your efforts by offering you *Alternatives* to whatever strategies have failed you in the past. While there are obviously no guarantees in life, we are confident that you will be able to learn a more effective style of relating with your loved one—a style that will improve your quality of life and increase the likelihood that your drinker will look at sobriety in a new light.

## **What You Can Expect**

Unlike some approaches, we do *not* teach detachment from the person you love. To the contrary, we try in every way to help you make the relationship work. We emphasize education, empowerment, and hope. You will learn to take charge of your life and to develop a better relationship with your loved one. Along with that, however, you will also learn how to ensure a better quality of life for yourself even if, in the end, your drinker chooses to remain drunk. At that point, you will have done everything possible to help her, and you will be ready to let yourself off the hook with a clear conscience.

People who adopt the *Alternatives* experience a variety of results. Some do indeed arrive at the point where they know that letting go is the only way of moving forward. More, however, find that systematically applying the *Alternatives* leads to healthier outcomes. It is not unusual for the road to lead to treatment for the drinker's drinking, and to couple's or family therapy to help work out the differences in the relationship. We have also seen many people make positive changes in their work and social lives—and here we're talking about the drinkers and the people who love them. We focus on a bigger picture than "just" those behaviors involved in drinking; you learn to increase the pleasures in your life and to take care of yourself. As a result, changes in all areas of your life are possible. It all depends on what changes you want and what you are willing to work for. Just as all along Dorothy had the means to return home from Oz (remember

the ruby slippers?), you already have the power to change. Now you will learn to harness that power and to make change happen.

By the end of the journey you will see yourself differently. You will be neither the victim nor the culprit in your relationship. You will have taken control of your life, made positive changes, and be in a position to rationally decide where you want to go from there.

Clarisse, whose story follows, learned the *Alternatives* and decided that she wanted to make her marriage work. In spite of what some might see as an impossible situation, she made small, carefully thought-out changes and turned a nightmare into a relationship with a future.

### **Clarisse and Manuel**

By the time Clarisse came to the program to learn the *Alternatives*, she had been in an abusive relationship for more than thirteen years. Her husband, Manuel, made a lot of money, and she took care of the children and ran the house. To the outside world it appeared a happy home. However, Manuel got drunk almost every night and verbally abused Clarisse and the children. He expected her to satisfy his sexual desires regardless of her own feelings and, when she resisted, physically forced her to have sex with him.

It took a few months for her to work up the courage to tell her husband that she was in therapy. She finally told him after he commented that she seemed “less bitchy” lately. He didn’t like the idea of her talking to a stranger about their life, but he “let her go” and didn’t interfere. Clarisse continued to attend sessions and apply the program techniques. After a number of months, Manuel became curious about the program and was willing to meet her therapist. It was a stormy first meeting, but eventually he voluntarily entered marital counseling with her.

More than a year after Clarisse began learning the *Alternatives*, she and Manuel were still in marital counseling. He had stopped drinking and was working on his relationship with her and the children. She was taking classes at the community college and felt extremely proud of her accomplishments. Clarisse made it clear to her husband that she would never again put up with a relationship that didn’t satisfy her needs and the needs of their children. Although it took Clarisse and Manuel longer than is typical to begin making positive changes, their story illustrates how even seemingly impossible situations can be turned around with work, courage, and patience.

Hundreds of parents have also found that implementing the Alternatives to nagging and threatening has made a profound difference in their ability to steer their teenagers in positive directions. Rita and Jorge came to us terribly worried about their sixteen-year-old son, Manny, who they had good reason to believe was using marijuana and likely heading down a path that they knew would bring no good.

### **Rita, Jorge, and Manny**

Rita and Jorge were particularly concerned about Manny's increasing tendency to stay out past curfew and sleep through his alarm clock on school days. Worried, Rita searched Manny's room and did indeed find a marijuana pipe and suspicious-looking seeds in his dresser drawer. Rather than blow up at him (her first urge), she and Jorge first gave some careful thought to all of Manny's qualities and behaviors of which they were proud. They figured that if they were going to demand changes in him, they should also be able to let him know what about him was wonderful. They then identified those activities and privileges that they knew were rewarding to him. In particular, Manny loved having use of the family car to take out his girlfriend. Additionally, Manny's girlfriend was a lovely young woman with whom Rita discussed the problem and who told her that she disliked Manny's drug use and had already pleaded with him to stop. Together they agreed that the girlfriend would limit her contact with Manny to times he was straight. If he showed up at her house looking the least high, she would tell him that she really enjoys his company when he's straight and to come back later. For their part, Manny's parents clearly laid out their expectations to Manny regarding curfew and drug use and promised him that honoring curfew, tossing the drug paraphernalia, and showing a "clean" urine each Friday would result in his being allowed to use the car on Saturday nights. At first Manny was angry about the situation, but his parents and girlfriend stood by their plan and he eventually figured out that life was just that much more fun if he complied. As his behavior improved and his parents had more and more opportunities to reinforce him, their discussions became more comfortable and productive.

### **Book Structure**

One of the more difficult aspects of writing this book has been taking the dynamic, interactive process that occurs in therapy and committing it to flat, silent paper. We struggled long and hard with the best way to do this. Should we present this in a 1-2-3 sequence and guide you through everything in the typical sequence of an average client? Or should we just lay everything out in no particular sequence and tell you to pick and choose what looks appealing to you, much as you might select appetizers off a serving tray? Neither of these approaches satisfied us. We rejected the 1-2-3 strategy because we know you are not an average client who needs the typical sequence. You are unique. You bring to the task your personality along with your personal tastes and preferences, skills, and talents. Add to that the uniqueness of your loved one and "typical" is out the window. That left us with the option of offering you a smorgasbord of tips and techniques with no clear direction on when to do what. This was a little more appealing but left us with one problem: if you were already highly skilled at putting strategies together to create productive alternatives to nagging, pleading, and threatening, you would not be reading this book. Thus, we felt we owed you more than an appetizer tray.

As the best possible means of presenting the *Alternatives*, we settled on a combination of the 1-2-3 and smorgasbord approaches. So we've laid out the first three chapters to contain essential components that everybody must understand before they can make any real progress. The remaining chapters provide all the skills and knowledge for which sequence is less critical. As you determine what your next step is, you can apply material from the chapter or chapters that are most relevant at that point in time. We do, however, strongly encourage you to read through everything before you start picking and choosing what to practice. Often a chapter title or section header can lead you to believe you already know or do not need that material when, in fact, the chapter offers a new spin on an old topic—a spin that could do a lot to smooth your road. So take the time to make sure you've packed everything you need, your road maps are up-to-date, and you have a full tank of gas in the car. Don't skip anything.

The easier decision regarding the book structure was to include examples drawn from real people with whom we have worked. To paraphrase an old saying, we believe that one word-picture is worth a thousand instructions. In other words, in each chapter we illustrate the techniques with examples of how other people made use of them. This will help you to see the many ways you can use the *Alternatives* in your life.

Also scattered throughout each of the remaining chapters are activities for you to do. To help you use each activity to hone your skills, we will show you how the characters from the various case studies complete it. If you are like most people, you will be tempted to read the completed examples and think that knowing what to do is sufficient. Be warned: knowing is not a replacement for doing! If you do not actually work through the activities yourself, the probability of being able to apply the skills is very poor. We strongly encourage you to keep a notebook in which you complete the activities. Some will take only a few moments, and others will make you really think. You will be asked to mull over material you have just read, situations and issues in your life, your dreams, your disappointments—all manner of things. *The purpose behind the activities is to help you really process the material in each chapter and to make it your own.*

As you travel your journey, you will analyze situations and make plans. You will find it most convenient to keep a notebook in which to record your thoughts and plans as well as to organize your activity worksheets. If there is one overriding "fact" in the world of behavior change, it is that people who record important information about their lives are the people most likely to succeed in making important changes in their lives. Set yourself up for success. Work the program by working the activities.

Each chapter will begin with a different case study describing the characters whose activity worksheets within that chapter illustrate our teaching points. At the end of each chapter you will find the ongoing story of Kathy and Jim. They are a fictional couple whose story is a composite of the stories of many real people who have gone through this program. Their story illustrates important points and will help you get a feel for how the *Alternatives* are applied in real-life settings. Although Jim and Kathy are fictional, their experiences are the actual experiences of people who have succeeded with this program.

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### **Kathy and Jim: In Need of an Alternative**

Kathy and Jim were childhood sweethearts who married shortly after high school graduation. After eight years of marriage, Kathy entered the program. Their story may be familiar to you.

After high school, Kathy chose to accept Jim's proposal rather than go off to college. Jim quickly got a good, steady-paying job at a local factory, and since most of Jim's high school buddies also stayed in their hometown, he continued to run with the same group. Having been beer-drinking jocks in high school, the guys pretty much continued their tradition of getting together "for a few." Unfortunately, Jim's few became more and more until it got to the point where he paid more attention to drinking than to Kathy.

When they were first married, Jim and Kathy spent a lot of time together—fishing and camping year-round and enjoying their growing family. Over time, though, they stopped doing the activities that initially drew them together. By the time Kathy entered treatment, she told us it had been five years since they had gone fishing or camping, and Jim had completely lost interest in their three children. His only real interest at that point was drinking and hanging out at the bar.

Kathy said she had tried to talk to Jim about helping with the children or around the house, but he said that since he was the breadwinner, it was her duty to take care of the house and kids. She also told us she was afraid to approach Jim about his drinking because the last time she did, he hit her. After that incident, she stayed in the house for two weeks so the neighbors wouldn't see her bruises. She told the kids she had fallen down the stairs.

Kathy was scared and felt stuck. She had passed on her chance to go to college, had never really worked, and didn't see how she could possibly support herself and the children. As for talking to Jim, she was afraid to cross him. She cooked and cleaned and did what a "good wife" was supposed to do, but she became more and more depressed. Kathy gained weight and was ashamed of the way she looked, stopped visiting her friends, and rarely invited family to visit. Holidays became a nightmare for her because she had to be around people and never knew how drunk or how bizarre Jim would act. In her own words, "My life is a total disaster. I feel like dying. If it wasn't for the kids, I'd just run away."