

ISSUE 1

NEED A NATTER

**ALCOHOL
ADDICTION**

**BEING USED FOR
MONEY**

**DEBT
STRESS**

AND MORE...

Alcohol Addiction

Hi Jen

just after a bit of advice My husband is a recovering alcoholic and has been for some time. But this time of year he falls of the wagon with parties and gatherings I think he feels left out of the fun being the only sober person there and ends up having one drink saying he will just have the one but he ends up getting drunk. So all the hard work of his group recovery sessions go to waste and he starts again and then starts craving the alcohol again. Thanks D

Hi D

It's understandable that this time of year can be particularly challenging for your husband, and it's admirable that you're seeking ways to help him. Here are a few suggestions to support him during this festive period

Discuss with him what specific aspects of parties or gatherings make him feel left out or tempted to drink. Whether it's peer pressure, social discomfort, or the sense of missing out, understanding the triggers can help you both prepare strategies to manage them.

If possible, look for events or gatherings where alcohol is not the main focus or is completely absent. There are often sober holiday events or recovery-centred social groups that aim to provide community without the pressure of drinking. If he chooses to attend a gathering where alcohol will be served, create a plan together in advance. This can include:

A predetermined time to leave. A code word or signal if he feels overwhelmed. An alternative activity or place to go afterwards. Bringing his own non-alcoholic drinks or mocktails can help him feel included in the social aspect of drinking without the alcohol. Many mocktails can feel festive and special. Reassure him that you understand how difficult this time of year can be and that his sobriety is a courageous choice. Acknowledge his feelings of exclusion and remind him of the progress he's made.

Help him see that being sober can mean he fully experiences the joy of the season. Encourage him to focus on the benefits of staying sober: better memories, health, and the pride of staying on track.

Suggest that he attends extra group sessions or check-ins during this period. Many recovery programs offer additional meetings during the holidays because this is a difficult time for many people in recovery.

If group sessions aren't enough, individual counseling or therapy tailored to addiction recovery could provide more focused support. Supporting a loved one in recovery can be emotionally draining. Ensure you're also taking care of your own well-being. Consider support groups for family members of alcoholics.

Mother-in-law, holiday boundaries

Hi Jen

I need some help, every couple of months or over Christmas my husband's Mother comes to stay for 2 days and she seems to turn in to a child. She takes over my home and Kitchen and instead of me cooking Christmas lunch for my family she takes over and says I am doing it wrong that she knows how my husband likes and that I am not much of a cook and tells everyone she had to take over as I don't have a clue and if she shouts my husband goes running and does as he is told even when she is humiliating me; Our Children are not even allowed to open their presents until after dinner and sit looking at their present looking so sad its just awful. Its not just Christmas it 's any events we try to organise . Thanks S

Hi S

I'm so sorry to hear that your Christmas and events are being overshadowed in this way. It sounds like an incredibly frustrating and hurtful situation. Balancing family dynamics, especially during the holidays, can be really challenging, but there are steps you can take to set boundaries and reclaim the joy of Christmas for yourself and your family.

Here are a few things you might consider:

Have a calm and open conversation with your husband about how you feel. Share specific examples of how his

mother's behaviour affects you and the children. Make it clear that this is not about shutting his mother out but about creating a more respectful and balanced holiday for everyone. Frame it as a team effort to make Christmas special for your family.

It's your home, and you have every right to establish boundaries. Politely but firmly let your mother-in-law know in advance what you're planning for Christmas. For example: You could say you'll be handling Christmas lunch this year, And social events you have planned but she's welcome to help in specific ways, like setting the table.

Decide a time for opening presents and stick to it, explaining that this is a family tradition you want to establish for your children.

If she pushes back, stay calm but assertive: "Thank you for offering, but this is something important to me. I'd really like to do it my way this year." involving the children in the new Christmas plans will be something they will enjoy Their happiness matters, too. Let your children know that this year will be a bit different. You can make a new tradition of opening presents in the morning, then having lunch as a family.

If your mother-in-law objects, you can explain that you're prioritizing the joy of the kids. It's essential that your husband supports you. Explain that while you respect his mother, her behaviour makes you feel disrespected and undervalued. Ask him to stand by you if she starts to criticize or take over.

Encourage him to gently redirect her behaviour, and firmly but tell her that you can manage and she will ask if she needs your help.

If your mother-in-law insists on being involved, assign her tasks that don't interfere with what you want to do. For example, keeping the Children occupied, helping bring things to the table.

Try to stay positive and make good Christmas memories with your family. Be kind but firm with your mother in law and remind your husband he has to do the same.

Financial Problems

Hi Jen

just wondering if you can help. We have severe debt and money problems and all we seem to do is argue. Every penny seems to be needed for something and there is no enjoyment or fun in our marriage any more and all we do is ignore each other. It's so hard to see other people going out and having holidays and pictures of these perfect couples on facebook. Thanks C

Hi C

I'm really sorry to hear you're feeling this way. Financial struggles and the stress they bring can deeply affect relationships, and it's understandable that you're feeling overwhelmed.

First of all, know that you're not alone in this—many couples face similar challenges, and there are ways to start rebuilding both your financial situation and your connection as a couple. Financial stress is creating tension between you and your partner. Try setting aside a calm, uninterrupted time to talk openly about your concerns and feelings without blame. Try to work together to solve the problem.

Try to create a realistic budget that can give you both a sense of control. Prioritize essential expenses, and allocate a small amount for enjoyable activities together.

Seek help in your area for debt management : Look into free or low-cost financial counselling services in your area. They can help you develop a debt repayment plan, negotiate with creditors, or explore consolidation options.

Some organizations, that, provide confidential help: Start with manageable financial goals, like saving for a simple treat or reducing one bill. Achieving these small goals will reduce stress in your relationship rebuilding your relationship doesn't always have to cost money just spending time as a couple is just as important. Go for a walk, Have a cosy movie night in, cook a meal together.

It's easy to feel inadequate when you see perfect versions of other people's lives online. Remember that social media often only shows the highlights, not the full picture. Consider taking a break if it makes you feel worse. Even in tough times, acknowledging the small things your partner does can help shift your focus toward the positive aspects of your relationship.

Couples counselling can be incredibly helpful, especially when both financial stress and communication issues are at play. Many counsellors offer sliding-scale fees or even free sessions through community organizations. When you're overwhelmed, it's harder to connect with others. Take small steps to care for yourself, whether that's exercising, journaling, or just taking a quiet moment for yourself . Everyone needs some time to themselves to just relax in peace and quite.

Every small step toward reducing debt or improving your relationship is worth celebrating. Acknowledge the effort you're both making, even if things aren't perfect.

It's clear that you care deeply about your marriage and want to make things better. That's a huge first step. Be kind and supportive to each other and work through a problem calmly by talking and not getting angry at each other. I hope this helps you both and good luck going forward.

Fibromyalgia in men

Hi Jen

am hoping to get some help I am feeling really down and every day is more of a struggle. I am a 53 year old man and I have suffered aches and pains and stiff joints and stuff for years but just put it down to being on my feet all day working. One day at work my back went and I couldn't stand upright and my legs felt like all my muscles had stiffened up. My boss drove me home and I got an appointment with the doctor and he sent me for blood tests and it came back that I have Fibromyalgia. I thought only women got that as you never see anything about men having it.

My problem is some days now the pain is so severe I can't even get out of bed without help even though I am on medication and pain tablets. But like me most people including my wife didn't think men could get this she quite often says I am just lazy and don't want to work and so does other people. This attitude from people is making me really depressed which in turn makes the pain worse . I don't really see anyone now as I can't really go anywhere. Hope you can give me some advice to make people believe me thank you J

Hi J

I'm so sorry to hear what you're going through. It sounds like you're facing a lot of physical pain, emotional strain, and misunderstanding from those around you. Fibromyalgia is a challenging condition, and while it's more commonly

diagnosed in women, it absolutely affects men as well. The combination of physical symptoms and lack of understanding from others can feel isolating and overwhelming.

Even though fibromyalgia is more often associated with women, men can and do experience it. Research shows that while men are diagnosed less frequently, their symptoms can be just as severe. If possible, have your wife attend your next doctor's appointment.

Hearing directly from a medical professional may help her understand the legitimacy of your diagnosis. Ask your doctor to explain: the connection between pain, fatigue and depression

Maybe have a look for online support groups for men with fibromyalgia. Maybe keeping a symptoms diary as one day you can feel fine and the next you can't move and show it to your doctor also write what you do on the days to see if there is any connections if you are feeling bad the following day.

Maybe try doing some gentle stretching exercises may help you. Hope you feel better soon and people become more understanding once they know the facts. See if your doctor has any booklets about men with fibromyalgia you can show people.

Neighbours to familiar

Hi Jen

just a quick question on how I can handle a situation we have. We have just moved in to a house and the problem is the next door neighbours. We don't want to upset them but as soon as we moved in they come through the back gate knock once on the door and walk in. Apparently this was a normal situation with the people who lived there before us. They said oh we are all friends around here and just walk in to each others houses for a chat and a cuppa.

But we find this quite invasive and at first I was quite startled to find these people stood in my kitchen they are even that comfortable they will put the kettle on. any suggestions on how to handle this. We don't want to upset people but not what we are used to and feels a bit overwhelming. Thanks P

Hi P

It sounds like you're in a tricky situation that requires balancing assertiveness with tact to maintain good relations while establishing your boundaries. Here's how you might handle this:

we've noticed that popping in unannounced was something the previous owners were comfortable with, but we're more private and prefer a bit of notice before visits. We hope you understand it's just how we like to do things. Be firm but

kind in a calm voice.

Get in to the habit of locking the gate and doors so they have to knock on your front door . Without making a big deal out of it, start locking your back gate and doors to prevent unannounced entries. You could say something like: We've gotten into the habit of keeping the doors locked for safety nothing personal, of course

Maybe say something like We' love to catch up, but it's best if you let us know ahead of time so we can make sure it's a good moment.

If it feels appropriate, gently use humour to diffuse any awkwardness. Maybe organise a coffee morning so as to not upset them then its them visiting on your terms. Just give it time and they will adjust . Hope this helps

Workplace strain

Hi Jen

I am writing to ask about if you have any suggestions I work for a wholesale factory and its minimum pay and the guy I work for makes every second count that he is paying me for. The work is so exhausting lifting heavy boxes and moving large furniture and loading furniture on to a truck and climbing ladders to sort stored boxes in the warehouse . If he thinks you have stopped for a moment he is on your back. I can start work from anytime from 6am depending on deliveries. I am totally trapped in this job and he knows it . If I don't work my family is on the street. I am so sore with all the lifting and so exhausted. Thanks M

Hi M

I'm really sorry to hear about the tough situation you're in. It sounds like you're dealing with a lot of physical strain and pressure at your job, and feeling trapped can make it even harder.

Here are a few suggestions that might help you cope and explore potential ways to improve your circumstances:

Incorporate some stretches and light exercises before and after work to reduce soreness and prevent injuries. Focus on your back, shoulders, and legs. Look up ergonomic lifting techniques to ensure you're protecting your body.

If your workplace has equipment like dollies, lifting belts, step ladders with rails, use them to minimize strain. If not

provided, consider asking if the company can supply :
Even if your boss is strict, you have a right to short breaks. Keep water handy and try to take quick moments to stretch and re-centre during the day. Consider using heat/ice packs or over-the-counter pain relief after work to ease muscle soreness.

If possible, see a doctor or physiotherapist for advice tailored to your condition. Keep a record of your work load If your boss is unreasonable about productivity, keep a log of your tasks and hours worked. This can provide evidence if you ever need to report unsafe conditions or excessive demands.

You have rights as well Research labour laws in your area. Many places have regulations about breaks, workplace safety, and fair treatment. If your boss is violating these, you could consider anonymous reporting to labour authorities.

Keep your temper While it's difficult, try to stay calm and assertive. If your boss micromanages, you could say something like, "I'm working as quickly and safely as I can, but this task requires proper care to avoid damage or injury."

Re-train for new opportunities: If time allows, consider online courses or training in areas that interest you, like logistics, forklift operation, or a trade. These could open doors to less physically taxing jobs.

Try finding a side line part time work. Explore options for supplementary income, such as online freelancing or

evening jobs, that could eventually help you transition out of this role.. Also it will probably help remove the stress by talking to someone.

Pub disturbances

Hi Jen

just wanting to know if you can suggest something . I live in a small village and there is a pub at the bottom of the street the problem is the people who go to this pub usually nearly every night and there is a lot of them and the landlord doesn't seem to put a limit on how much these people can drink and they end up outside either singing, shouting or fighting. It is quite frightening at times. I have tried speaking to the landlord about it and he just laughs it off saying oh don't be stressing they're only having a bit of fun. It is effecting my health now as they just seem to be everywhere. Thanks H

Hi H

I'm really sorry to hear you're dealing with this, it sounds incredibly stressful. When a situation like this is affecting your health and quality of life, it's important to take steps to address it.

Here are some suggestion:

Keep a record of dates, times, and specific incidents (e.g., shouting, fighting, or other antisocial behaviour. Videos or audio recordings can also provide evidence, but ensure you're staying safe and respecting privacy laws. Note how the disturbances are impacting you, such as lack of sleep or feelings of fear.

Try contacting your local authorities

Noise Complaints: Report excessive noise to your local council or environmental health team. They have the power to investigate and take action if necessary. **Police:** If there are fights, threats, or any behaviour that feels unsafe, don't hesitate to call the police. They can help address public disorder and may talk to the pub owner about their responsibilities.

Licensing Board: Every pub operates under a license, and landlords must adhere to laws around responsible service of alcohol. Report the issue to your local licensing authority—they can investigate and impose penalties or restrictions.

Speak to neighbours who might also be affected. If others share your concerns, consider approaching the authorities as a group, it adds weight to your case. If you feel comfortable, bring it up at local community meetings if your village holds them. Publicizing the issue can prompt action.

Consider Mediation

Some councils or community organizations offer mediation services. They can act as neutral parties to help you and the landlord reach an understanding. **Explore Legal Avenues** If the issue persists and nothing improves, you might have grounds for legal action if it's impacting your health. A solicitor specializing in nuisance law could advise you. If the stress is overwhelming, consider seeking support from a counsellor or health professional to process the anxiety this is causing. You don't have to tolerate this.

My dog died

Hi Jen

I don't really know why I am writing to you because my problem will seem somewhat trivial to the things other people are facing but I can't seem to get past it and put it to the back of my mind. I lost my little dog he died he was just old he was 15 . I am totally lost without him and can't seem to control my emotions. All other people say is its a dog for goodness sake get another one like he can just be replaced. I feel so sad. Can you tell me how to make these feelings stop. Thanks K

Hi K

I'm truly sorry to hear about the loss of your beloved dog. Your feelings are not trivial at all, losing a pet is a significant loss, and grief for a companion who brought love, comfort, and joy is very real and valid. Your dog wasn't just "a dog"; he was a part of your life, a source of unconditional love, and a companion through the years.

Grief doesn't follow a timetable, and it's okay to feel sad, lost, or even overwhelmed. The bond you shared with your dog took years to build, and it's natural to need time to process his absence. You're not just grieving your pet; you're grieving the routine, the companionship, and the special moments that are now missing from your daily life. It's okay to feel the way you do. Suppressing your emotions might make things harder. Acknowledge the loss, and give yourself permission to feel sadness, anger, or loneliness.

Find people who understand how significant this loss is. If friends or family don't seem to get it, there are online forums, grief support groups, and who specialize in pet loss. Talking to others who've experienced similar grief can be incredibly healing.

Consider creating a small memorial, scrapbook, or photo album to honour your dog. Reflecting on the good memories can help process your grief and celebrate the joy he brought into your life.

Grief can disrupt your sense of normalcy. Try to maintain a routine and practice self-care, even if it's hard. Simple things like going for a walk, eating balanced meals, or getting enough rest can help.

Expressing your feelings through writing can be therapeutic. You can write about your favourite memories, how much he meant to you, or the things you wish you could say to him now.

If you feel overwhelmed or unable to cope, it might help to speak with a grief counsellor or therapist. They can help you process your emotions in a compassionate and supportive way.

It's understandable that people who haven't experienced a deep bond with a pet might not fully appreciate your grief. But your experience is real, and your pain matters. Healing takes time, and it's not about "replacing" your dog it's about gradually finding peace while cherishing the memories.

Being used for money

Hi Jan

I think I need a bit of help to try and get my head straight. The problem is that I have been seeing a man sort of on and off mostly off or when he feels like it usually when he is drunk after the pubs have closed or he will message me to lend him money and I send it to him and he promises to pay it back the next day and tells me he will come around and we will have a proper date go out have a meal , have some drinks etc'. but none of this ever happens,

If I try saying No to lending him money he throws a strop saying he loves me but I can't think that much of him if I won't even lend him a few quid. He will then tell me maybe its time to cool thing off for a while and see other people and he knows I will give in as he knows I don't want him to leave. Thanks N

Hi N

I'm really glad you've reached out. It sounds like you're in a situation where you're not being treated with the care and respect you deserve, and it's completely understandable that you feel confused or trapped.

It seems like the relationship is largely dictated by his needs and on his terms. He reaches out when he needs something money or company after drinking rather than considering your feelings or needs. When you say no, he responds by

making you feel guilty or threatening to leave, which is a form of emotional manipulation. Him saying triggering things like “If you loved me, you’d lend me money” are designed to make you question yourself unfairly.

You are worthy of a relationship where your feelings, time, and boundaries are respected. A healthy relationship includes mutual support, care, and respect—not just one person making all the demands.

Lending money regularly and not being repaid creates a dynamic that’s based on dependency, not equality or trust. It’s natural to fear losing someone you care about, but if staying in the relationship causes you constant hurt and confusion, it may be worth reflecting on whether it’s truly making you happy. The fear of being alone can be powerful, but staying in a relationship that hurts your self-esteem can be even more damaging in the long run.

You have the right to say "no" without guilt. For example, you might decide to stop lending him money or only see him when you feel like it, not just when he does. Think about the kind of relationship you desire, one that’s built on respect, trust, and mutual effort.

Having outside perspectives can give you clarity and support. If the relationship continues to hurt you, it may be healthier to walk away. Ending something painful can open the door to something much better.



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