

DAWN FARM'S RESPONSE TO THE "I WAS DRUNK" QUESTION

During our dialogues with Alternatives to Domestic Aggression, Dawn Farm decided it was important to develop a standardized response to the most frequently raised question by batterers in treatment. This question is also the most frequently raised concern by domestic violence professionals. We attempted to be clear and unambiguous, and keep the focus on holding these clients accountable for their behavior then and now.

"I only abused her one time and I was drunk and in a black out. If I'm powerless over alcohol, how can I be responsible for this? My case and sentence to ADA are completely unfair. I'm an alcoholic not a batterer."

- CD and DV are both primary problems. They may interact in a synergistic way but one does not cause the other. Therefore both need to be treated as independent primary problems.
- Recovery requires that we take responsibility for all of our actions during our use whether we were in a blackout or not. This means accepting that there are consequences to our actions and trying to learn from them.
- Many alcoholics do things in blackouts and have problems while using that they wish to dismiss when they get clean. (e.g. child abuse or neglect, promiscuity, overspending or other compulsive behaviors.) We believe it is wrong to simply write these things off with the statement "I was using then and I'm clean now." Experience has taught us that these problems often follow people into recovery and to ignore them would mean risking repeating these behaviors and relapse. In some cases professional help is needed, in cases where these behaviors directly harmed another person, getting professional help from an expert in that area is the only prudent and responsible course of action.
- Violence is rarely an isolated incident. Overwhelmingly it is preceded with other abusive behaviors. Therefore, any instance of violence is cause for serious concern and intervention. In addition, alcoholics and addicts (in general) are prone to thinking their case is different or unique, this thinking should not be trusted in most areas of life and should **never** be trusted in instances of violence.

Given all of the information above, any addict or alcoholic who is truly engaged in a program of recovery and educated about these facts should willingly seek and accept additional services to ensure that they do not abuse again. Refusal to accept responsibility and accountability for harm done to another person is a clear sign of relapse. The prognosis of any addict or alcoholic who refuses or resists intervention for abusive behavior is guarded.