

Coping with an Alcoholic

By Dave

In the December issue of *OITM*, I wrote about the double bind of being gay/lesbian AND being raised in an alcoholic home. This month I would like to offer some suggestions on how to cope with an alcoholic in your life.

While there are many definitions of an alcoholic, I prefer this one: an alcoholic is one whose drinking interferes with his/her health, job, relations with family, or community relationships and he/she continues to drink.

Living with an alcoholic, whether the person be a parent, a friend, life partner or current lover, can be destructive. Dr. Gary Forrest has written an excellent book titled *How to Live with a Problem Drinker and Survive*. This book will be very beneficial to anyone who is associated directly or indirectly with an alcoholic. The following suggestions, with some modifications, are from Dr. Forrest's book.

Understand that it is almost impossible to change the drinking behavior or life style of those problem drinkers you are closest to. Alcoholism is a disease and you cannot make that person not be an alcoholic. You can however change yourself and as frightening as that may be, your changes may help the alcoholic more than you realize.

(1) Do not take responsibility for the actions of the problem drinker. **DON'T ENABLE.** As long as you cover up for, make excuses for, and enable the problem drinker to act irresponsibly you are taking responsibility for him/her.

(2) Do not take physical or verbal abuse from the alcoholic. No one - no one - has the right to abuse you. If physical or verbal abuse occurs, leave the room, the situation, the home. Go to a movie, take a walk, visit a friend, but do not tolerate physical or verbal abuse.

(3) Begin a life outside your relationship with your problem drinkers. Do things for yourself and if necessary, by yourself. If the alcoholic doesn't want to do something with you, do it by yourself. Because another person's drinking behavior can create

isolation for you, structure your own life differently.

(4) Find and nurture new relationships. It is difficult but healthy to meet new people. Change doesn't occur in a vacuum. There are very good people in our small community - take some risks and get to know them. Al-Anon and ACOA meetings can also be a source of new relationships.

(5) Take care of yourself physically with

realistic long-range plans and not short term, unrealistic goals.

(6) Change yourself on a daily basis. Work at each of the first five steps each day - one day at a time. If your alcoholic seeks help through AA, he/she will learn to stay sober one day at a time. You need to learn how to take care of yourself and how to cope with a problem drinker - one day at a time. Good luck.

Women's Week Celebration Planned

On March 8, 1857, women garment and textile workers on New York's Lower East Side marched in protest of their working conditions. In 1908 on the same day, women were marching again protesting the sweat shops, child labor and intolerable working conditions which had not improved for women in the garment/textile trade. Today, March 8 is celebrated around the world as **INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**, a day of celebrating womanhood and a time to concentrate on issues that affect women's lives.

The second annual **INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S WEEK CELEBRATION** is happening in Burlington March 1-8, 1987. Like last year the week will include many varied events and activities: films, workshops, a concert with CASSELBURY-DUPREE, and an International Women's Day parade.

The purposes and goals of this week are to:

1. Educate ourselves about our issues and the issues of our sisters.
2. Enhance networking.
3. Encourage women to think globally/GLOBAL ACTIVISM.
4. Establish a sense of international unity among women.

Several grants have been written, the results of which won't be known until the end of February. Seed money is needed to cover expenses of the initial planning stages:

publicity, postage, telephone, etc.

WE HOPE THAT YOU CAN MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO HELP US GET THINGS ROLLING.

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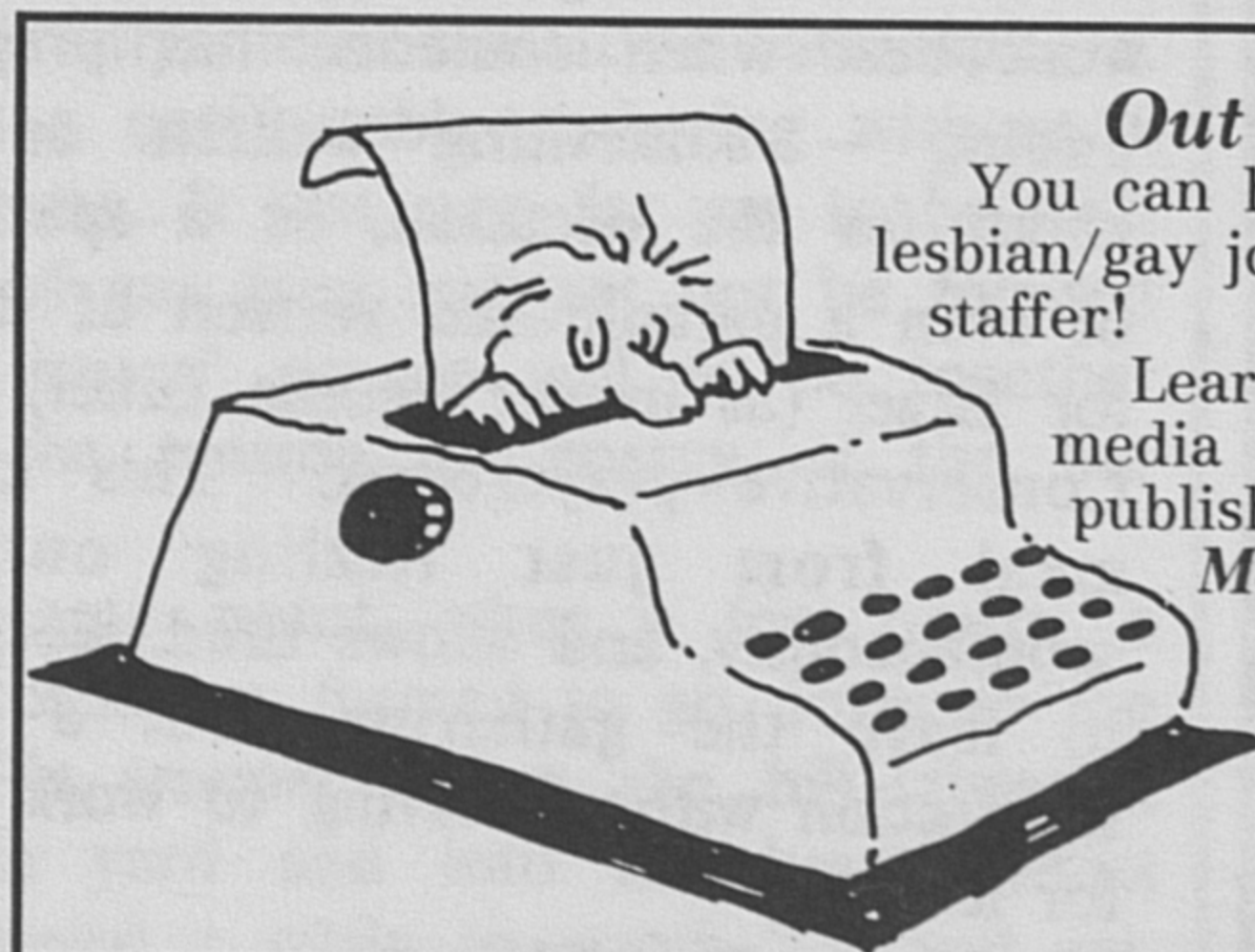
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