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## **I'm In A Relationship Right Now With An Alcoholic**

By [Joe Herzanek](#)

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As a drug counselor, I receive many questions. This next one is typical:

Q: I'm in a relationship right now with an alcoholic. I love him dearly. I've never even had a drink before, so this is very foreign to me. My heart aches when he would rather spend his last dollar on beer than pay a bill or buy his children Christmas presents. I'm at a loss and don't know what to do. Please help.

A: Your question reminds me of a comment by my friend Michael Connelly. Michael compares alcohol and drug dependency to relationships we have with people in our lives (but for the addict/alcoholic the drug has become the "most important relationship in their world").

It didn't start out this way. The user never intended for it to happen. The process was so gradual, they never saw it coming and now their relationship with alcohol is like a bad marriage. The drug and the person using it are so deeply committed to each other that they can't imagine life without using, in spite of all the problems and consequences that go with the disease.

So what now? What can I do to stop this insanity? When it gets to this point it is often consequences and more pain that makes the difference. Pain is a wonderful teacher. We learn things through pain that we often cannot learn in any other way. Don't get in the way of consequences. Let them pile up.

At some point you should simply say that he must quit or you will leave the relationship. Then stick with your decision. Remember that addiction is progressive and even fatal. We've heard it said that "you can take a horse to water but you can't make him drink", which is true, but the consequences can be the salt that makes him thirsty.

Life is way too short to live very long with an active alcoholic. Keep in mind that your friend is either in denial or unaware of his problem. Whichever it may be is unimportant at this point. He is lucky to have someone like yourself to force the issue. People can and do change all the time. More often than not, it's because someone who cares did the right thing. Force the issue!

Joe Herzanek, a man who battled his own demons of addiction over twenty-five years ago, says, "I know people can change. If I can do it, anyone can!"

A recovering person himself, Joe is the president and founder of Changing Lives Foundation and author of the new book "Why Don't They Just Quit?" As an addiction counselor in Colorado he has spent thirteen years working in the criminal justice system.

His passion for helping men and women struggling with addiction, as well as their family members and friends, inspire him to offer hope and solutions.

Joe offers words of encouragement: "Addiction is not a hopeless situation," he writes. "Addicts and alcoholics aren't crazy, and they can quit."

Joe and his wife Judy have three children, Jami, Jake, and Jessica, and enjoy the beautiful Colorado outdoors with their two Cairn Terriers, Lewis and Clark.

<http://www.whydonttheyjustquit.com>

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