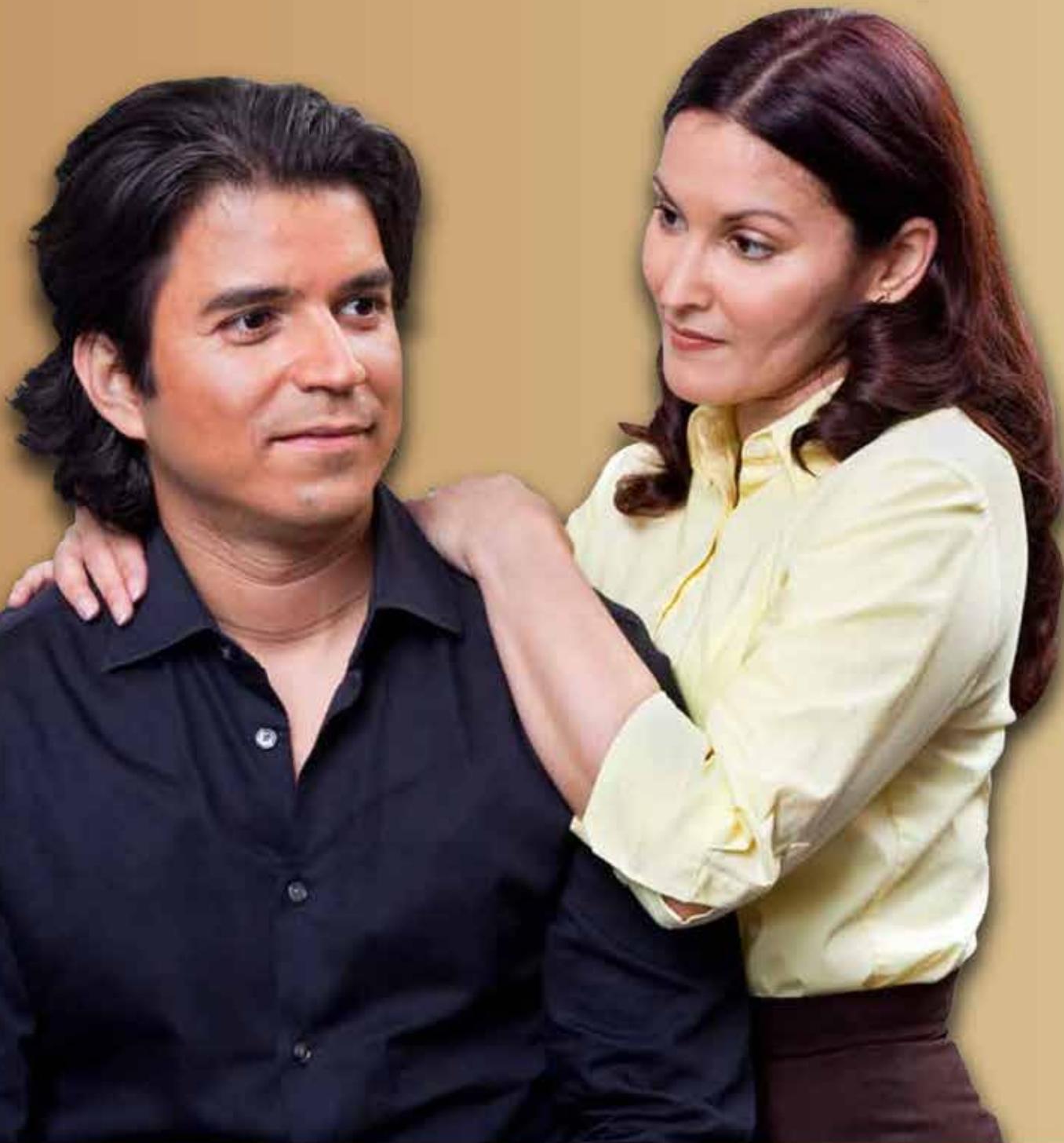


Alcohol and Depression

Steve's Path to a Better Life



Acknowledgments

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Originating Office

Quality Improvement and Workforce Development Branch, Division of Services Improvement,
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Administration, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD 20857.

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Alcohol and Depression

Steve's Path to a Better Life



STEVE



STEVE'S WIFE, AMY



STEVE'S MOTHER



STEVE'S SON TIM



STEVE'S OTHER CHILDREN



STEVE'S FRIEND BOB



STEVE'S OTHER FRIENDS



BOB'S WIFE



STEVE'S BOSS



TIM'S TEACHER



STEVE'S COUNSELOR



STEVE'S PSYCHIATRIST



AMY'S FRIEND

10:00 P.M.

He's drinking again! Amy should be home soon, and there's going to be an argument! Nobody wants any more shouting in this house. What a bad example for the kids.

I wish that I could get some sleep. I'm tired of dealing with so many problems and feeling down.



Hi, honey. How was work?

If you cared, you wouldn't waste money on that crap you drink.

Calm down. So now you're going to start with your nagging? So what? I can't have a drink? It's the only good thing I have to take my mind off things.

I wish it was only one! You don't stop until you finish the whole case of beer!



I'm leaving then! I can't do anything with you around.

You can't do what, Steve? What? Drink until you pass out drunk right there, in front of the kids?

Here we go again. More shouting and fighting. Don't they think about the kids and their marriage?



3:00 A.M.

A few hours later... Steve is at Bob's house.

Don't you guys think you've had enough? You've woken up the kids several times with your laughing. Bob, that's enough. I need to sleep, and you need to go to work in a few hours!

Ha ha. What if I had hung out with my angry, boring wife? I wouldn't have beaten you all! How about a rematch?

Stop complaining, woman! We're playing our last hand!

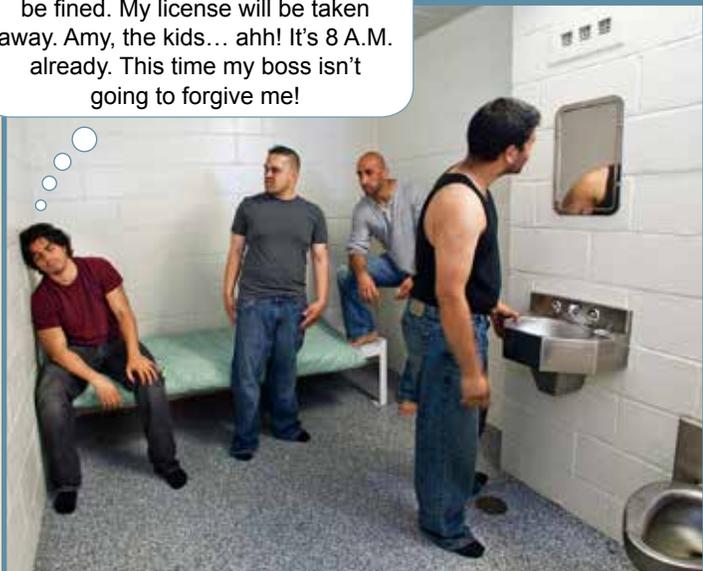




I should keep calm, it'll be fine. I only had a couple drinks.

This is a huge mess. I'm going to be fined. My license will be taken away. Amy, the kids... ahh! It's 8 A.M. already. This time my boss isn't going to forgive me!

8:00 A.M.



Not one more excuse! That's it! He's fired!

He's probably somewhere sleeping off his drunkenness! And, on top of everything, now I'm going to be late for my second job.

11:00 A.M.



This court orders the suspension of your license for six months. Because this is your second driving while intoxicated offense, I order you to enroll in a treatment program and attend a support group of your choice. You are on probation for two years and cannot drink as part of your probation. You will have to pay a fine of \$1,000 related to this offense.*

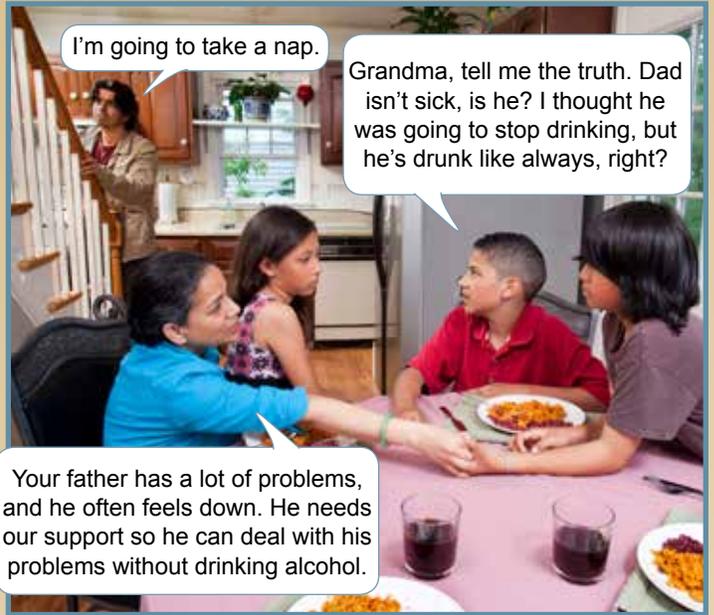
*Penalties, jail time, and fines vary by jurisdiction.



Steve, what happened to you?!

Nothing. Where is Amy?

She had to take a second job, which started today.



I'm going to take a nap.

Grandma, tell me the truth. Dad isn't sick, is he? I thought he was going to stop drinking, but he's drunk like always, right?

Your father has a lot of problems, and he often feels down. He needs our support so he can deal with his problems without drinking alcohol.

1:30 P.M.
A few weeks later...



Son, do you want lunch? It's ready!

The only thing I really want is to die! I'm good for nothing! I don't have a job. I don't have the money for these fines. I can't drive. Amy hates me. My kids don't respect me! I don't even remember driving the car the night I got the DUI. I want a drink.

Steve, please don't let the kids find you in bed when they come home from school. Aren't you embarrassed? What kind of example are you setting for them? Look for a job! I can't pay all our bills. Have you started going to treatment like the judge ordered you to do? How much is that going to cost?

3:30 P.M.



Stop nagging! I called one of the places on the list the judge gave me, and they charge only what you can pay so it won't be so hard on us financially.



It's good to see you happy, Dad. What happened?

Nothing special, sweetie. Do you want something to eat?

Of course, he's happy because he's already started drinking. I can smell it on him.

Days later, at a group session...

I lost my wife, my kids, my job, my money, and almost my life because of my alcohol problem. I was in prison because I hit and injured someone—almost killed him—while driving drunk. But now I haven't had a drink in five weeks. My life is so much better.

Hmm. That sounds awful. What am I doing to my family? I lost another job. I lost my license. My kids are disgusted with me. And sometimes I don't remember that I had been driving—I could kill somebody, too.



Meanwhile, at Tim's school...

I want to let you know Tim is failing two important classes. These next months might be his only opportunity to get better grades. Is everything okay at home?

A few days later...

Hey Steve, we're going to buy some beer, then we're going to Joe's place. How about a game of cards?



I don't know. I'm feeling kind of out of it.

No, not tonight. I have too much on my mind.

Don't tell me that this group of yours has converted you! Stop your whining!

Two weeks later... Steve keeps attending treatment sessions.



I don't understand why I have felt so unmotivated and tired for so long. Why can't I feel good? I've missed out on so much—my kids' soccer games, family outings...

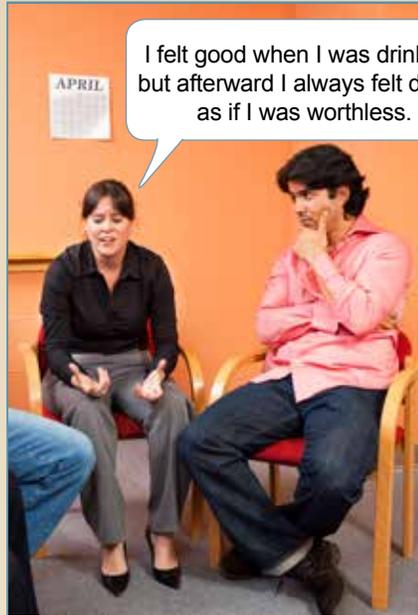


After several weeks, Steve finally speaks to the group for the first time. He has accepted that he has a chronic illness—alcohol use disorder.

I... I don't know where to begin... umm, well... I think I have alcohol use disorder.



I finally realized that I turned to alcohol to escape my feelings—all kinds of bad feelings.



I felt good when I was drinking, but afterward I always felt down, as if I was worthless.



I realize I am dependent on alcohol, and I want to be sober! I don't drink for a while, but then I start again. I look for alcohol every time I feel sad.

Weeks later...

My cousin Louie and his wife Donna are coming to visit. They'll only be in the city for three days. It's been a long time since we've done anything as a family. Let's all go to lunch together on Sunday after church.



Steve's family comes home from a religious service.

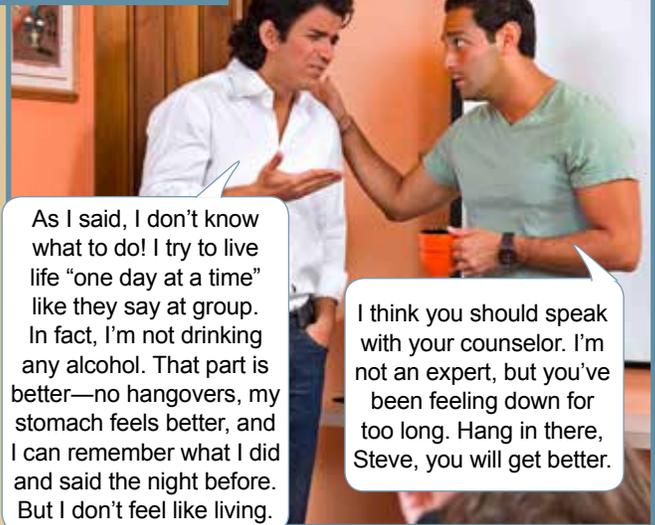


It's a shame you didn't go to service today—it was interesting. Don't tell me you haven't even gotten up! Are you planning on meeting Louie and Donna for lunch?

No. I don't feel like seeing anybody! I'm tired. I want to sleep! You should go, though.

What is happening with my son? He seems sadder every day!

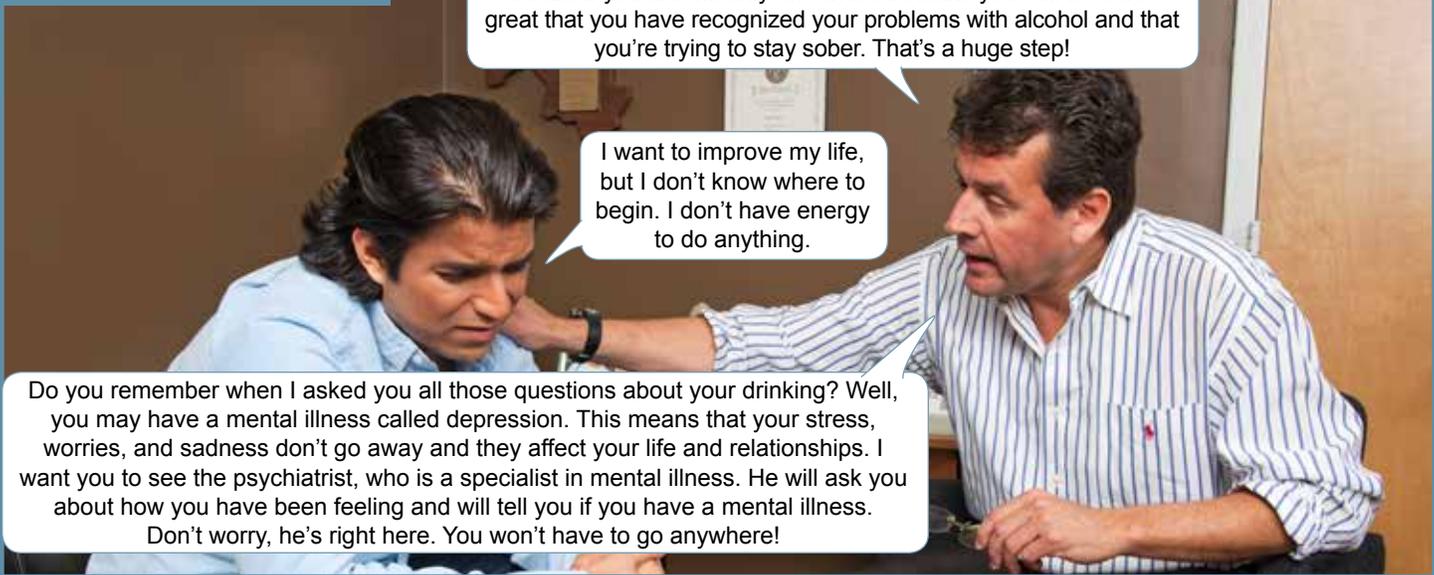
The next day, at the group...



As I said, I don't know what to do! I try to live life "one day at a time" like they say at group. In fact, I'm not drinking any alcohol. That part is better—no hangovers, my stomach feels better, and I can remember what I did and said the night before. But I don't feel like living.

I think you should speak with your counselor. I'm not an expert, but you've been feeling down for too long. Hang in there, Steve, you will get better.

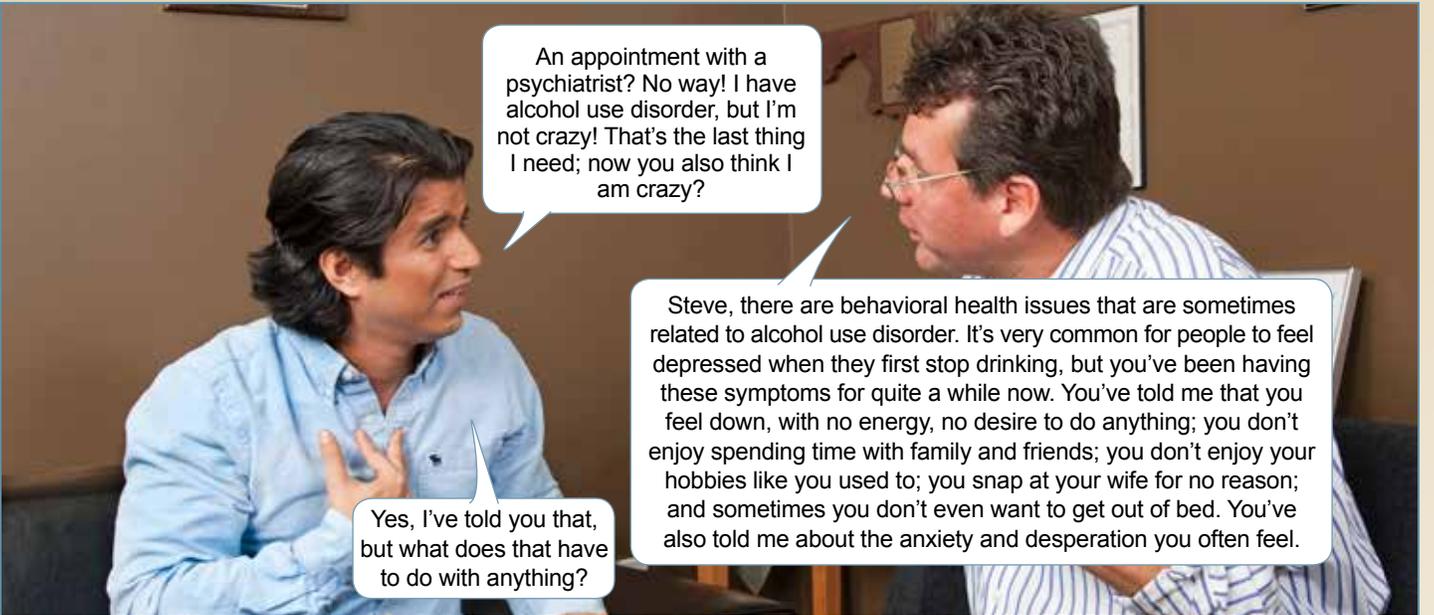
Steve decides to see his counselor from his treatment sessions.



Steve, you've made a lot of progress with your alcohol use disorder. You know you are the only one who can make yourself better. It's great that you have recognized your problems with alcohol and that you're trying to stay sober. That's a huge step!

I want to improve my life, but I don't know where to begin. I don't have energy to do anything.

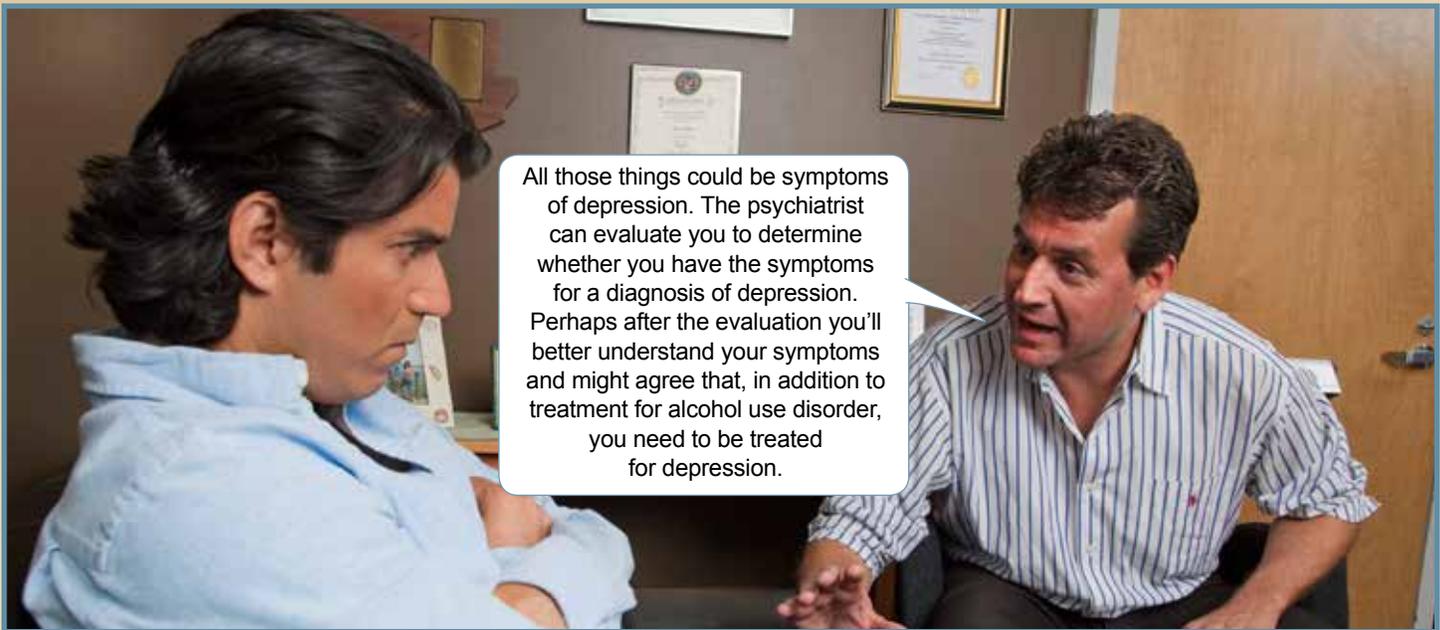
Do you remember when I asked you all those questions about your drinking? Well, you may have a mental illness called depression. This means that your stress, worries, and sadness don't go away and they affect your life and relationships. I want you to see the psychiatrist, who is a specialist in mental illness. He will ask you about how you have been feeling and will tell you if you have a mental illness. Don't worry, he's right here. You won't have to go anywhere!



An appointment with a psychiatrist? No way! I have alcohol use disorder, but I'm not crazy! That's the last thing I need; now you also think I am crazy?

Yes, I've told you that, but what does that have to do with anything?

Steve, there are behavioral health issues that are sometimes related to alcohol use disorder. It's very common for people to feel depressed when they first stop drinking, but you've been having these symptoms for quite a while now. You've told me that you feel down, with no energy, no desire to do anything; you don't enjoy spending time with family and friends; you don't enjoy your hobbies like you used to; you snap at your wife for no reason; and sometimes you don't even want to get out of bed. You've also told me about the anxiety and desperation you often feel.

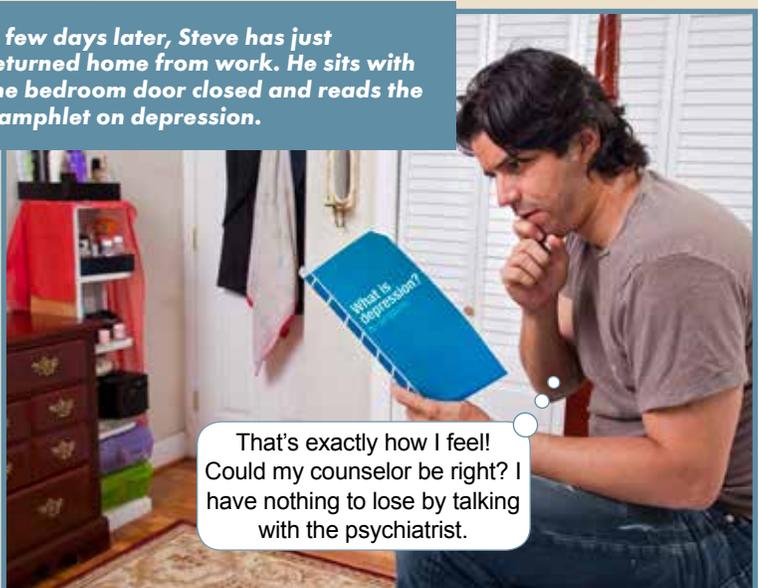


All those things could be symptoms of depression. The psychiatrist can evaluate you to determine whether you have the symptoms for a diagnosis of depression. Perhaps after the evaluation you'll better understand your symptoms and might agree that, in addition to treatment for alcohol use disorder, you need to be treated for depression.

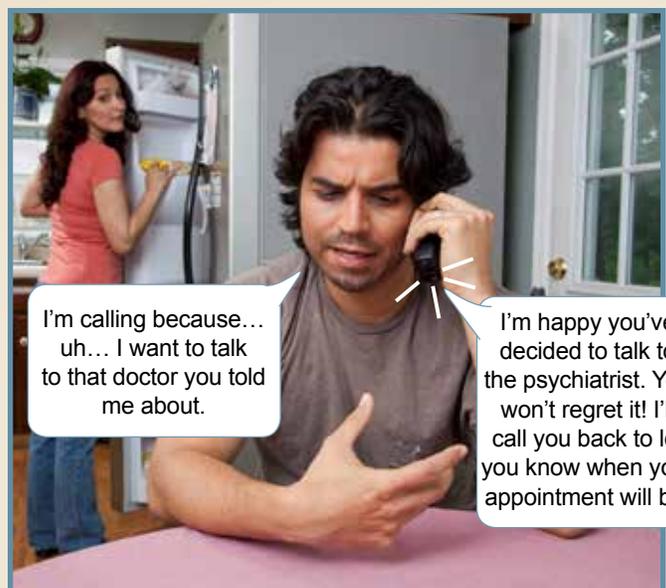


Read this pamphlet. It'll help you understand what depression is. You can ask me questions after you read it. You told me that right now you are not thinking about wanting to die or hurt yourself. However, there is a number in the brochure you can call 24 hours a day to get confidential counseling if you ever feel that way and you can't reach me or come to the clinic. If you decide to see the psychiatrist, just call me to make an appointment. It's your decision, but you should know that treatment will help you feel much better. In any case, come see me again in two days, instead of next week.

A few days later, Steve has just returned home from work. He sits with the bedroom door closed and reads the pamphlet on depression.



That's exactly how I feel! Could my counselor be right? I have nothing to lose by talking with the psychiatrist.



I'm calling because... uh... I want to talk to that doctor you told me about.

I'm happy you've decided to talk to the psychiatrist. You won't regret it! I'll call you back to let you know when your appointment will be.



Who were you talking to?

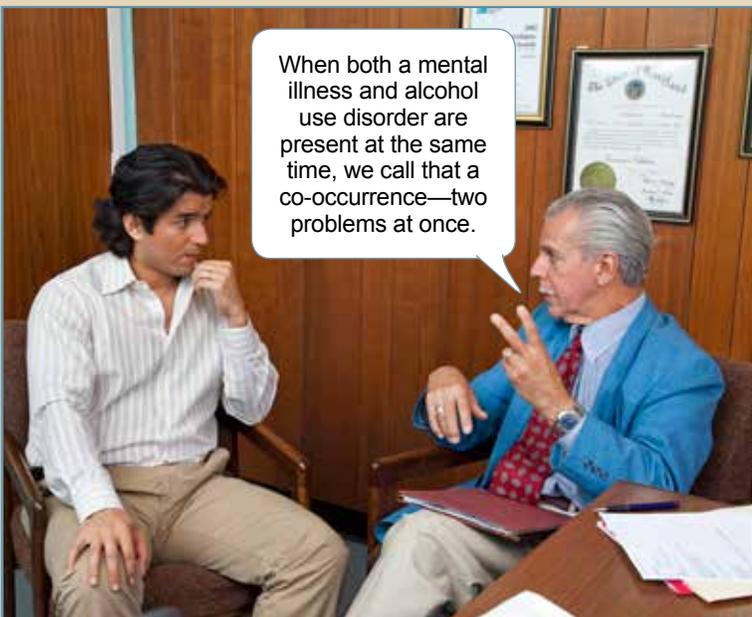
With my counselor. Guess what? I'm going to see a psychiatrist.

It's because of that pamphlet you had in your pants pocket, right? I didn't know that all those things could happen because of depression. It's an illness. When I read that list of symptoms, it sounded as if they were talking about you. You have all the symptoms!
I have a friend who told me she started taking medication for her depression, and it really helped her. She's much happier now.

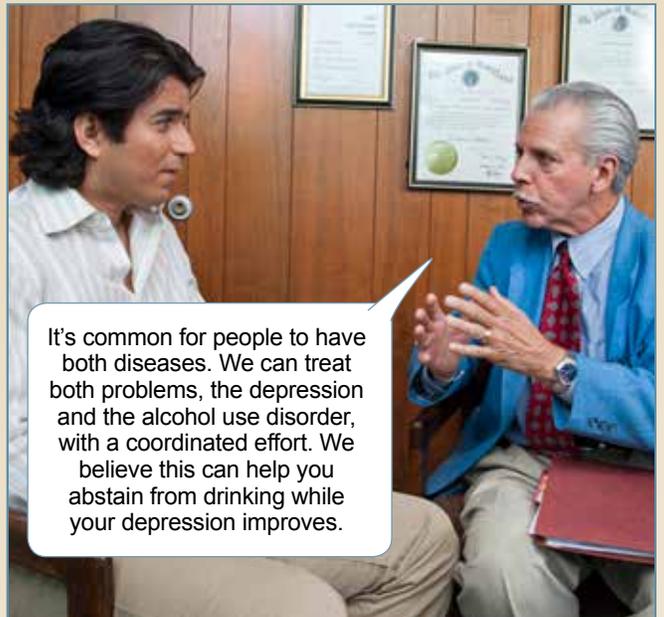
The day of the appointment with the psychiatrist.



The questions I've asked you during this past hour have helped me evaluate your mental health. Based on your assessment and on the information you've shared with me, I can tell that, besides alcohol use disorder, you also have an illness called depression.



When both a mental illness and alcohol use disorder are present at the same time, we call that a co-occurrence—two problems at once.



It's common for people to have both diseases. We can treat both problems, the depression and the alcohol use disorder, with a coordinated effort. We believe this can help you abstain from drinking while your depression improves.



Steve, are you sure the antidepressants that Dr. Herbert prescribed for you aren't habit forming?

Yes, I'm sure. He explained everything to me. I have to go back in a week so we can discuss how I'm feeling. He said I have to be patient, but I will start feeling better in two or three weeks.

After a few weeks...



Hey Steve! How about we celebrate this Friday with a few beers?

No thanks, man. I have a soccer match with my son. He beat me last week. Can you believe it? Ha ha.

I have my job back. That's great! Next week I'll have my driver's license back. You don't know what a privilege it is to have these things until you lose them!

Months later, Steve and Amy visit his counselor together.



I'm so glad to see you're feeling better, Steve. Amy's help has been crucial. It's very important that the family members of those with alcohol use disorder and depression understand both illnesses and the recovery processes.

It has been very difficult. But I understand now, and I'm happy. Because the kids and I have Steve back. He's working so I don't have to keep up two jobs. And Steve—he's better. He has his life back!



Steve has recuperated, and the family is watching sports on TV together.



The End

RESOURCES

SAMHSA Resources

Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator

<https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov>



National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org



National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (Español)

www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/gethelp/spanish.aspx

1-888-628-9454

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OTHER RESOURCES

Al-Anon Family Groups
www.al-anon.org

MentalHealth.gov
<http://mentalhealth.gov>

Alcoholics Anonymous
www.aa.org

National Alliance for Hispanic Health
www.hispanichealth.org

Mental Health America
www.mentalhealthamerica.net

National Association for Children of Alcoholics
www.nacoa.org

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