

by Brenda Kennedy BSN

A Black Perspective

You & Your Health



Brenda

Alcoholism

Alcoholism is a disease that affects our lives in many ways. It is a unique problem in our Black community that should be looked at closely and from a different - Black perspective.

Alcoholism is defined as long-continued, excessive consumption of alcohol. The person with this disease is one who drinks compulsively and in such a way that his (or her) drinking is damaging to himself, his way of life and those about him. It is the compulsive character of his drinking that sets the alcoholic apart from the heavy or occasionally excessive drinker. He appears to crave for alcohol but cannot control or govern this craving.

There is really no accepted explanation to account for the fact that one person becomes an alcoholic while another person does not. Generally speaking, there are certain characteristics that support one who is an alcoholic. If the environment emphasizes or supports drinking and if there are psychological factors present, the chances are greater for that person to become an alcoholic. Financial difficulties, unresolved conflicts, loneliness and marital problems may all contribute to alcoholism.

It is estimated that about 80 million people in the U.S. use alcohol and about 6 1/2 million people suffer from this disease called alcoholism. According to the National Council on Alcoholism, industries lose at least 4 billion dollars each year because of alcoholism among employees. Many companies have special programs for treatment and for rehabilitation.

In the Black community alcoholism is found more often in the younger age group. There is an increasing number of Black teenage alcoholics. 51 percent of the Black patients who are hospitalized for alcoholism are between the ages of 20-34. It should be noted that most treatment and

rehabilitation programs seem to revolve around the white middle-aged alcoholic. This becomes a problem because one cannot deal with the problems of the young Black alcoholic by using tools created to help another group. Those persons working in the areas should make special efforts to relate to this group from a Black perspective.

Complications related to alcoholism may afflict the body and the mind. Often nervous conditions are found in the alcoholic. Alcoholism may impair the function of the liver (cirrhosis), cause persistent nervous changes and gastric or stomach disturbances. Indirectly, the kidneys and heart function may be disturbed. The chronic alcoholic may suffer from severe malnutrition, vitamin deficiencies and decreased resistance to infectious diseases.

Successful treatment for alcoholism is possible only if the person wants to stop drinking and this happens only when he has been brought to recognize the seriousness of the condition. The alcoholic should be under the care of a physician, who will recommend the proper treatment whether vitamin or nutritional therapy, medications, counseling or hospitalization. If you know of someone with such a problem, remember that an attitude of understanding will do much toward helping them seek help in coping with the problem.

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October 4

Ebony Exposures Begin Season

A government-sponsored program that trains women to become carpenters, electricians, plumbers, brick masons and welders is the subject of the first program as EBONY EXPOSURES begins a new season Wednesday, October 4 at 7 p.m. on Channel 58.

Audrey Kates, producer and host for EBONY exposures, visits the Carolina Skill Advancement Center in Raleigh to see how the skilled training and improvement program works. "The women are enthusiastic and excited about being trained for non-traditional roles," says Ms. Kates. The training program is available to females exclusively.

Ms. Scottie Ferguson is director of the Advancement Center, which is housed in a building formerly occupied by the Raleigh Police Training Academy.

According to Ms. Kates, members of the first graduating class cite three reasons why women come to the Center to learn a new skill: "They are tired of job opportunities limited to secretarial work only; they realize they can earn more in a skilled position, (electricians make \$6.00-hr.) and they want to change the historical role of women in the job market—they are tired of men getting all the good, high-paying jobs."

Ms. Kates emphasizes that there is no stereotype of woman who comes to the Center for training: "Some are

married, with children, some are not. Some seem more physically suited for this type of work than others, but all are enthusiastic about it."

One of the trainees at the Center is Marie Hill, an inmate at Women's Correctional Center. Ms. Kates notes that the training program has changed Ms. Hill's life. "She is very excited about the prospect of using her new skills while on work-release from prison."

The Center is able to accommodate students only. To expand its services, the Cen-

ter has acquired an old house and plans are already underway to transform it into a dormitory. Work on the house is being done by the trainees as they apply their newly-acquired skills.

George's Con-Game

Allan Willis sees through George's scheme to con him out of his newly inherited warehouse, so George directs his flim-flammy at an alternate target, Louise, on "The Jeffersons", Wednesday, October 4 at 8 p.m. on WBTV, Channel 3.

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