

**You don't have to be a falling-down drunk, puke-on-the-piano, sneak-a-drink booze hound to have a drinking problem.**



Does Sondra have a drinking problem? She doesn't think so.

A lot of her friends drink the same way she does. Besides, she doesn't drink every day. She doesn't drink hard stuff. She doesn't hide her bottles or sneak drinks or neglect her work and family like *real* alcoholics do.

"Oh, I've had a little trouble because of my drinking," says Sondra. "But I'm not that bad, yet."

"I can quit any time I want."

**How bad do you have to get?**

Think about it. Add up the costs for a DUI charge—not just the fine, but also the time wasted in (and out of) court, increased insurance rates, legal fees, and often, jail time.

Remember to add in higher health costs, missed work, and decreased efficiency. And don't forget the shattered relationships, lost friends, and broken families due to drinking and alcohol-related arguments.

How **bad** do you have to get? Is there a magic moment when you suddenly sit up and announce: "By golly, I guess I'm finally **that** bad."

Do you have to wait until you're as bad as Larry's Uncle Ross? Do you have to wait until you lose everything? Do you have to get "that bad" before you can get better?

Remember: You don't have to be a falling-down drunk, puke-on-the-piano, sneak-a-drink booze hound to have a drinking problem.

Drinking problems—including alcoholism—start small and escalate.

The process usually isn't even dramatic. It plays out slowly, one sip at a time.

**How bad do you have to get?**

You don't *have* to get "that bad." If drinking causes problems in your life, admit it. Then take the next logical step: Stop.

That may be hard to do. There may be pressures to drink from friends and coworkers.

If you find it hard to quit, try talking things over with someone who understands drinking and the problems it can cause.

That someone could be a counselor at work or school, your family doctor, or someone you know who's been there—and back again.

Just don't talk it over with drinking buddies. They're almost *guaranteed* to have an investment in keeping you from making any serious changes. Being straight with you might mean that they'd have to take a hard look at their *own* drinking.

But **do** think it over. And if drinking's a problem for you, **do** something about it.

With a little insight and a lot of courage—and the support of others who've been there and back—you may never get "that bad," at all. ■

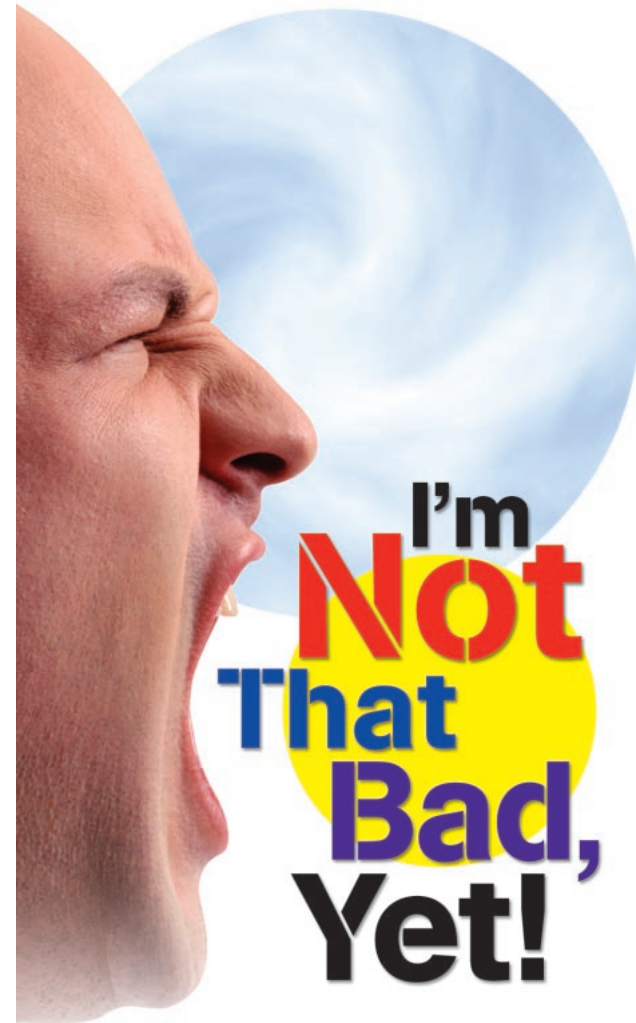


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► How, why & where to get help **before** you get that bad

## ■ Here's Larry...

Here's Larry, 17 years old, so hung over and bleary-eyed that he mumbles and stumbles through his notes at an important high school debate. His team loses. Larry shrugs it off.

The judges were biased, he says. We weren't *that* bad. Still, it was a pretty rotten day for Larry. Monday. He has the whole week to look forward to the weekend.

Larry got drunk last weekend, and the weekend before. No big deal. It's a regular thing, a pattern, his *style*.

Larry's girlfriend worries because he likes to drive while drinking. Last year, while drunk at the wheel, Larry totaled out his dad's car.

Luckily, neither Larry nor his passengers were injured. And somehow in the confusion, the police never got around to giving breath tests, so Larry lucked out and didn't get a ticket. The newspaper reported that he fell asleep at the wheel.

Larry's parents have known about his drinking for some time, but were clueless about how to deal with it. *At least he's not on drugs*, his dad shrugged one day, but it didn't give Larry's mom as much comfort as it did his dad.

Finally, his mom asked their minister to talk to Larry. During the conversation, Larry admitted that he drank—but, then, so did most of the guys he hung out with.

When the minister brought up the subject of alco-

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holism, Larry thought of his Uncle Ross, who died in a veteran's nursing home. Ross couldn't hold a job, lived on a VA pension, and stayed drunk whenever he could—as long as the money lasted.

Larry remembered Ross as a bleary-eyed loser who ripped the heater out of his trailer one winter to hock it for wine. When drunk, Ross sometimes cried and called Larry "a prince." It was embarrassing.

Sure, Larry knew what an alcoholic was. Ross was an alcoholic. *He* wasn't.

"Sure, I drink," he told the minister. "I drink beer now and then. But I'm no wino. I'm not an alcoholic. I'm not that bad, yet."

## ■ Meet Sondra...

At 28, Sondra works two jobs. One is the unpaid job of every single mom—raising two kids without a man in the house.

But she does all right. Her kids have enough to eat, and Sondra keeps them in decent clothes. She can't be accused of neglecting her kids.

Her most demanding job is running a training program for welfare mothers. Sondra works long hours, and often has nighttime meetings.

There's a lot of stress, so she feels entitled to let her hair down now and then. When she does, she likes to dance and get a little loaded—and sometimes, completely wiped out.

Sondra would be outraged if you suggested that she might have a drinking problem.

"I don't drink at all during the week," she'd say. "Maybe a few beers with the girls after a committee meeting. But not that much.

"I'm not an alcoholic. I'm not that bad, yet."

Maybe not. But let's take a look at what happens when Sondra drinks.

For one thing, she and a few other drinkers on the committee persuaded the rest of the members to hold meetings at a bar, so they could "relax" during the meetings. Sometimes things get a little loose, after an hour or so, but not *too* bad.

Still, three times during the past year Sondra blacked out after a meeting. She'd gotten so drunk that the next morning she couldn't remember how she'd gotten home.

On another occasion, Sondra got arrested for drunk driving. "I only had a couple of beers," she insisted. "I wasn't that drunk."

Still, at the time of her arrest, Sondra's breathalyzer reading was .16, double the legal standard for impaired driving (.08 percent) in the United States. That meant that she'd downed more than "a couple of beers."

"I just lost track," Sondra says. "I wasn't paying that much attention. Anyway, I didn't feel *that* drunk."

The reason Sondra didn't feel *that* drunk is because she's built up a tolerance for alcohol. Now it takes more alcohol to give her that tipsy feeling.

One thing *does* bother her, though. A couple of times in the past year she woke up hung over in bed with a man she didn't know. She doesn't remember *what* happened.

But it's not that big a deal for Sondra. She claims she's never had a really satisfactory sexual experience.

"I can take it or leave it," she says.

**Equal Opportunity Destroyer.** *As women compete for higher stakes in the career game, they become susceptible to the same stress-related disorders as men, including problem drinking and alcoholism.*