



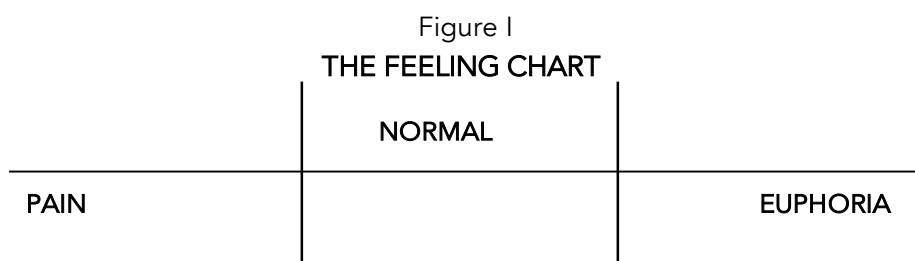
## Why People Drink!

Alcoholism is a fatal disease. . . 10 fatal. Nobody survives alcoholism that remains unchecked. Authorities estimate that 10% of the drinkers in America will become alcoholics, and that these people will not be able to stop drinking by themselves. It is a myth that alcoholics have some spontaneous insight and then seek treatment. In our experience, they come to recognize their problem only through a buildup of crises that crash through their almost impenetrable defense systems. They are forced by the tremendous problems created by their drinking to seek help; and when they don't, they perish miserably.

Alcoholism is far more than compulsive drinking; it involves the whole man physically, mentally, and spiritually, and it radically affects his relationship with God, his family, and his employer. It deteriorates his self-respect; and reduces him to a level far below what he enjoyed before his addiction.

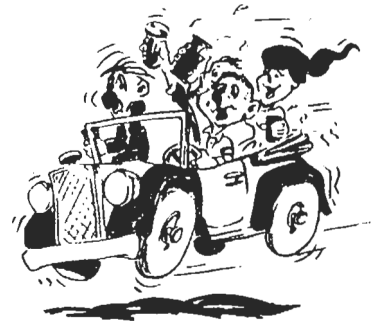
When men come in for their initial interview at D. M.C., we ask them two very meaningful questions. First, "Are you an alcoholic?" The fact that he has come to ask for admission to our alcohol rehabilitation program is self-evident, but nevertheless, we learn a great deal from the way he explains his condition. Over the years, we have learned that the average alcoholic has had 1 chronic drinking problem for at least ten years before he admits to himself that he is an alcoholic. When we have fully ascertained that he has accepted the fact of his alcoholism, we ask the second loaded question, "Why do you drink?" Nine times out of ten, the man will sadly shake his head and answer "I don't know". Surprisingly, they are truthful in their answer. They really don't know why. They do not have the necessary insight to explain why they cannot control their consumption of alcohol.

Although every case is unique with its own set of circumstances, there are some common characteristics that all alcoholics share. The personality changes that go with the problem of addiction are predictable and inevitable, with, of course, some individual adaptation. The members of an alcoholic's family will easily recognize the symptoms of the alcoholic profile on the following chart.



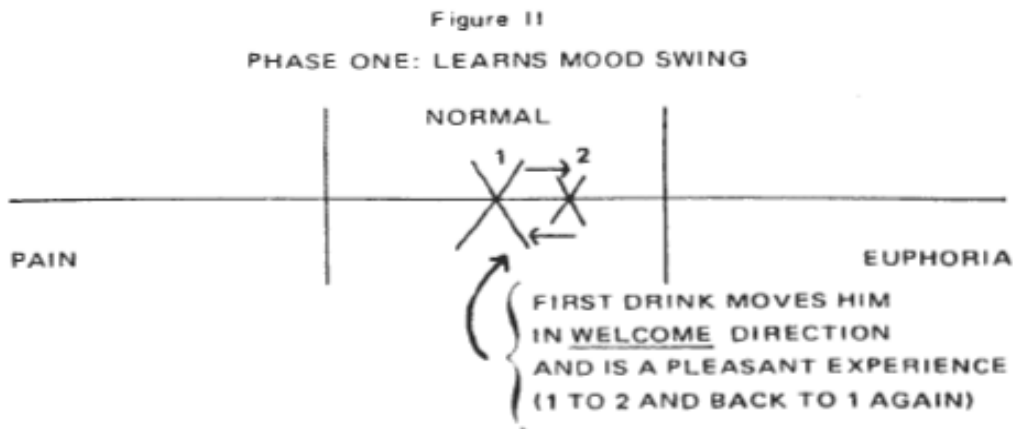


## Phase I Social Drinking



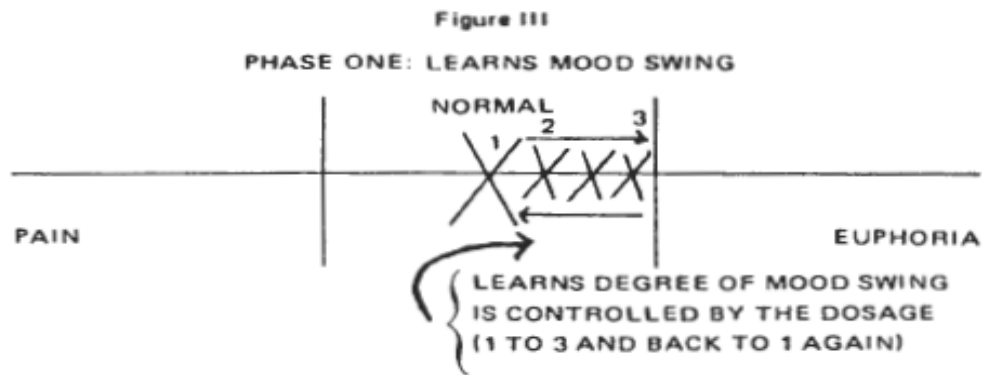
Most young people are introduced to some beverage containing ethyl alcohol very early in life. It may or may not taste good, but it is a significant discovery as a new feeling, and in no time, most young drinkers get accustomed to the taste. The first drinking experience is a mood swinger in a positive direction. It gives the drinker a good warm feeling and may even make him giddy, depending upon the amount consumed. When the effects of the alcohol wear off, the drinker returns to normal and there is no damage and no emotional cost. The new drinker discovers that he can turn it on and off, and control the degree of the mood swing by the amount he drinks. He also discovers that it works every time.

At this point, his relationship with alcohol is positive, rather than negative. Experience builds upon experience and consolidates it, and the result is a deeply imbedded relationship which he will carry through the rest of his life!



At this stage, there is no real permanent damage from the effects of drinking, so the social drinker happily moves into the second phase of his relationship with alcohol. He has learned that it never fails to produce a positive mood change, so he swings into a more or less regular drinking habit. In effect, he enters into the drinking culture. The Cocktail Hour has become an American institution, and alcohol has become an integral part of business and social entertainment.

How long the social drinker can remain in Phase I, is unpredictable. He may pass in one side and out the other in a relatively short time, or it may take years. Not every social drinker will become an alcoholic, but about one in every ten will move into the alcohol addiction.



## Phase 11 Dependent Drinking

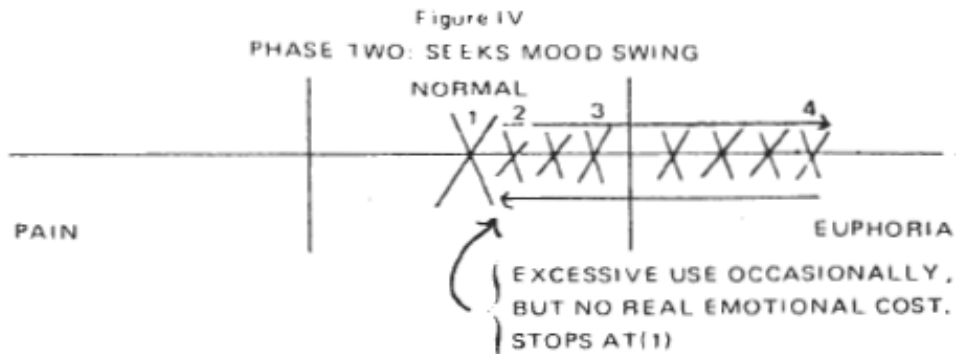


In the beginning, the drinker contracts for the mood swings and makes them safely. But if he is going to become alcoholic, the terms of his experience will begin to change. As he continues in the development of his habit, getting drunk begins to have a very different effect on him, and he is caught in the undertow which carries him out beyond social drinking into the sea of addiction. At this point he is completely unaware that he has gone beyond his depth. He thinks things are fine, but mysteriously, he has passed an invisible line that he cannot get back across by himself. WHY, we cannot say, but HOW is thoroughly describable, both behavioristically and emotionally. We can describe its symptoms and its inevitable cause. You can, at this stage, see a significant and progressive deterioration of the personality, and eventually a physical deterioration. The carefree days are gone, but he is only dimly aware of this, and he fails to comprehend the increasingly clear signs that alcohol is destroying him.

Emotionally, he is overwhelmed by the terrifying backswing of mood, and intellectual defenses begin to rise in him against the emotional punishment. This is entirely subconscious. As his drinking becomes more and more uncomfortable to him, he will instinctively rationalize his feelings of discomfort. What might appear to be a simple and harmless excuse turns out to be far more: this intellectual defense is actually the beginning of a relentless suppression of the emotions by the intellect. Eventually, he will be out of touch with his own emotions and not even know how he feels.



Unfortunately for him, the rationalization works and he feels better about himself. The tragedy is that he will continue to employ this form of defense as his problem progresses; in fact, his ability to rationalize will be practiced to a point of perfection. All people have a tendency to rationalize when they are confronted with feelings of failure, but alcoholics develop it to a fine art.

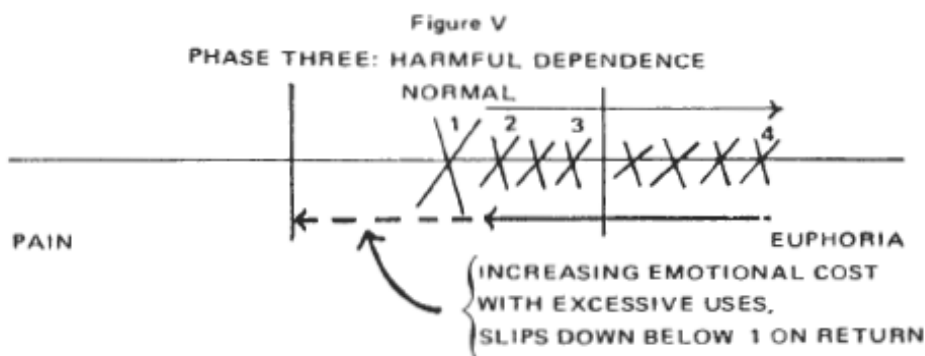


In time, he can sit in a counselor's office and declare with absolute sincerity, "I don't have a drinking problem. Everything is fine at home and at work. Like everyone else, I drink a little socially, but my problem is migraine headaches." He literally believes that what, by any objective measurement, would be viewed as false, is, in fact, true. As a result, he becomes successfully self-deceiving and progressively self-deluded.

## Phase III Alcohol Addiction

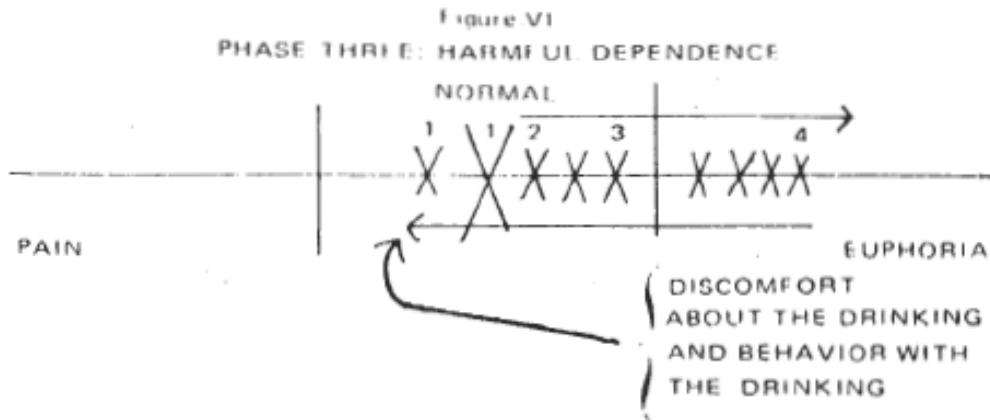


The Evening of Pay Day  
—Jacopie

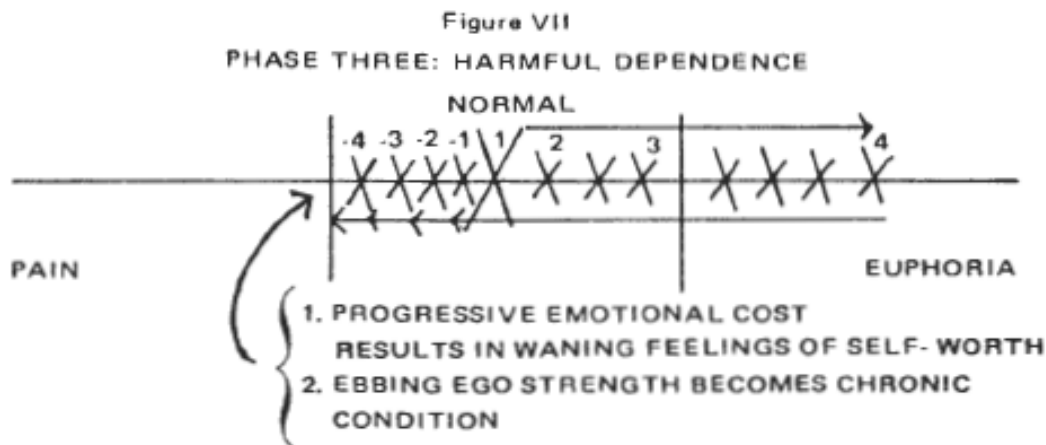




The problem is now in a recognizable form. It can be described, it has definite symptoms, and an inevitable course. It is characterized by a harmful dependence and a rising emotional cost. The alcoholic becomes overwhelmed by the terrifying backswing of mood, but his intellectual defense mechanisms always rise to combat the emotional punishment. This process is entirely subconscious, but he begins now to feel the distress, even when he is not drinking



Now the very serious stages of self-destruction are at hand. The drinker is swinging out of control, and his drinking bouts begin to provide real self-hatred. As an aftermath, he begins to evidence real mood swings or personality changes while drinking. The kind man becomes hostile; the happy man becomes morose; and the gentle man becomes violent. Alcohol causes him to drop his guard, and his chronic unconscious negative feelings are exposed. The progressive deterioration of his self-image leads to self-destructive and suicidal emotional attitudes.

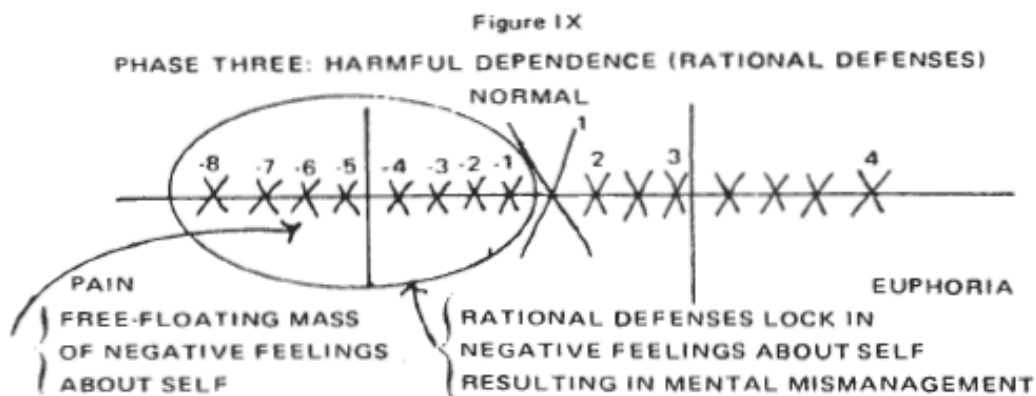
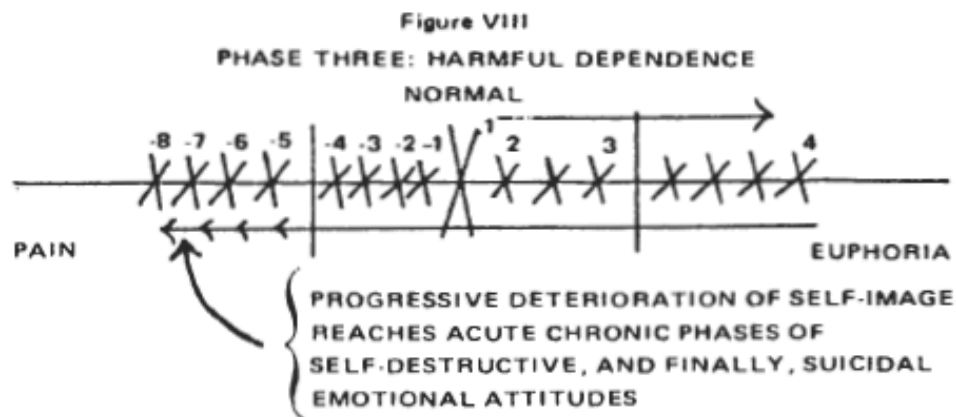




The greater the pain he suffers, the higher and more rigid his defenses become, and he actually becomes a victim of his own defense mechanisms. Free-floating anxiety, guilt, shame, and remorse, become chronically present. He is no longer emotionally able to start any given drinking episode from the "normal" point, for now he must drink to feel normal.

At this stage, drinking patterns become unpredictable or compulsive. He often quits, but he soon resumes and does not really know why he began drinking again. However, when he does start again, the resumption is always at the level of his worst deterioration. His condition worsens with each new episode.

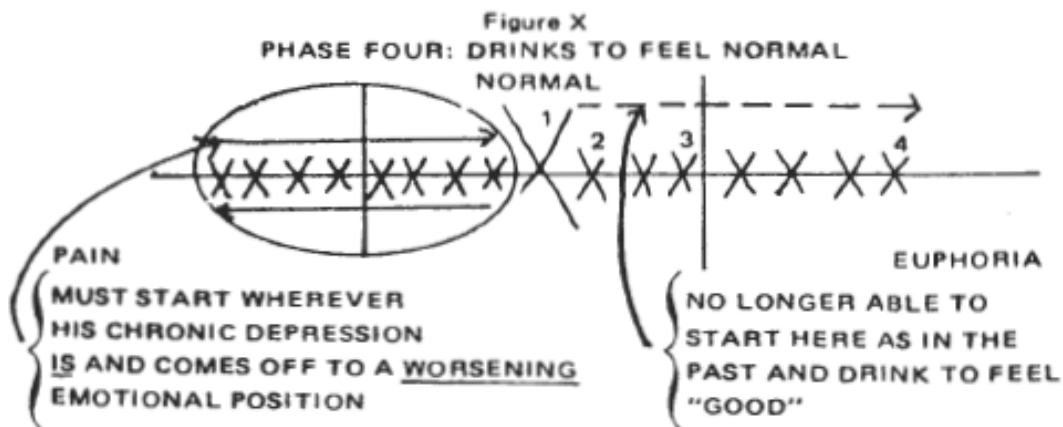
As the mass of free-floating negative feelings inside him grows, locked in now by a wall of effective rational defenses, the weight of it becomes more difficult to bear. Sooner or later, the alcoholic must resort--unconsciously again--to the one other powerful system of defense that is available to him: Projection.





Projection is the process of unloading self-hate onto those around you. The more hateful the alcoholic unconsciously sees himself to be, the more he will come to see himself as surrounded by hateful people. "They are always trying to run my life" he complains. He must dump his load of self-hatred in order to survive. The people around the alcoholic, the most meaningful and the handiest, are the objects of the greatest part of his projection. The message he sends them by whatever means is: "If you would straighten up, I'd be alright!" It is really himself that he hates, but projection works so well--just as the other defenses do--that he actually believes that those he attacks are hateful people.

There is a further complicating factor. The people around the alcoholic, being human are vulnerable. They know that something is terribly wrong, but they do not understand what is going on--that he is projecting his self-hatred--they ask themselves, "what did I do to bring this on?"



Out of feelings of guilt, the victims of projection begin to manipulate. They try to correct the situation that the alcoholic complains about, but whatever they try (they inevitably discover) does not work. The situation worsens. They become more anxious and guilty, and attempt more frantic manipulations. As their failures mount in number, their feeling of inadequacy grows, making them still more vulnerable to projections. They too, become emotionally distressed, often as severely as the alcoholic himself. This means that every sick alcoholic is surrounded by other sick non-alcoholics. In view of this, alcoholism is by far the number one "problem" in America today.



Alcoholism includes alcoholics, but while there may be only one alcoholic in the family, the whole family suffers from the alcoholism. For every alcoholic, most often there are two, three, and even more people immediately around him who are just as surely victims of the problem. They too, need real help, and should be included in any thorough going model of therapy. Of course, the spouse is particularly involved. The only difference between the alcoholic and the spouse, is the physical addiction to alcohol. Otherwise, both have all the other symptoms. The dry spouse can become as sick as the drunk, except that the bodily damage is not there. With every drunk, there is a dry who is almost a mirror image.

The people around the alcoholic have predictable experiences that are psychologically damaging. As they meet failure after failure, their feelings of fear, frustration, shame, inadequacy, guilt, resentment, self-pity, and anger mount, and so do their defenses. They too use rationalization as a defense against these feelings because they are threatened with a growing sense of self-worthlessness. They too, begin to project these masses of free floating negative feelings about themselves upon their children, back on the spouse, on other family members, on employees, and everyone else at hand. Their defenses have begun to operate in the same way as the alcoholic's, although they are unconscious of this, and they are also victimized by their defenses rather than helped. Out of touch with reality, just like the alcoholic, they say, "I don't need help. It's his problem, not mine!" In time, they too suffer from impaired judgement.

The alcoholic has such a highly-developed defense system that he becomes seriously self-deluded. The rigid defenses which have risen spontaneously around his negative feelings about himself, and therefore around the behavior that caused the feelings, would be quite enough, were they the only deluding factors, to draw him progressively and thoroughly out of touch with reality. When he reaches the stage of harmful addiction, he reaches a point where it is not a question of whether he will see what is happening to him, but rather he CAN see. In due time, he cannot. (Proverbs 23:35) "And afterwards you will say, "I didn't even know it when they beat me up...Let's go and have another drink!"

For further information on this subject, refer to the book, "I'll Quit Tomorrow" by Vernon E. Johnson, published by Harper & Row, Inc., 1973.