Naela

Naela is a 35-year-old African American woman who is entering treatment for her alcohol dependence. Naela had been a social drinker since the age of 15, but over the past year she started binge drinking at least three times a week and having at least one alcoholic drink on the days between. Naela drinks at bars with her co-workers and typically ends the night either going home with a male co-worker with whom she has been having casual sex or crying uncontrollably as she talks with her friends about how horribly she feels she has messed up her life.

Naela’s dream from childhood was to be a mother. She married at the age of 18 to the man she started dating when she was 15 years old. They divorced when Naela was 25 and she originally had custody of their two daughters. Last year, the girls - now ages 13 and 15 years - asked to move cross-country to live with their father, who lived in a more affluent community. After they left, Naela began frequenting the bars and her drinking escalated. Last month, her boss fired her from her job as an administrative assistant for calling in sick (due to hangovers) on too many occasions. This forced her to move in with her older brother, who is providing her a room on the condition that she stop drinking and engages in treatment. Naela reports feeling lost without her daughters. She wants to be someone her daughters can be proud of, but she feels justified in drinking because she feels it offers an escape from her problems. She notes that others pay more attention to her when she is drunk. However, her nights of drinking frequently end with her extreme emotional outbursts over her daughters and her feelings of hopelessness. She says she does not understand why “everyone else” rejects her.