

# Finding hope at my first Al-Anon meeting

When I started coming to Al-Anon over 20 years ago, I had no light, no hope in my life. I had been married almost a year when I walked through the doors of my first meeting. Everything on that day felt like darkness and despair to me.

During the meeting, I remember the lighting in the room as being dim. The atmosphere seemed to add to my mood. I remember thinking, “How could these people, sitting around a table—actually smiling—understand what I was experiencing?” I felt I desperately needed to quickly find a solution to help me handle what appeared at that time to be an insurmountable problem in my life!

As I searched the eyes of those sitting around the table, I had a strange sense that I was in the right place. Although just sitting in the chair at the table was challenging for me, I tried my best to focus and listen, to take it all in. I wanted to feel something. My mind kept whirling. I asked myself what was going to happen to us, what would the future bring, and could or would my life ever change? I had no hope.

I heard someone read a passage from a pamphlet that I found out later was titled, *Understanding Ourselves & Alcoholism* (P-48). The words that resonated with me then included:

“Perhaps the most severe damage to those of us who have shared some part of life with an alcoholic comes in the form of the nagging belief that we are somehow at fault. We may feel it was something we did or did not do—that we were not good enough, not attractive enough, or not clever enough to have solved this problem for the one we love. These are our feelings of guilt.”

Ahhh . . . feelings of guilt got my attention. My solution that night was to buy Al-Anon literature, take it home, read it, and figure out what I needed to do. Luckily, I couldn’t figure out what to do on my own. I did find hope in the pages I read and the courage to keep coming back to Al-Anon meetings. I was grateful at each meeting for the presence of the other members.

Although this was a very dark period in my life, I am aware that if it had not been for the presence of those smiling members at my first meeting, I would not be where I am today—thankful to be a part of the hope for those seeking our fellowship now and in the future!

By Marsha W., Director of Programs  
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