

Learning to heal my own pain

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I needed to stop thinking about what I wanted for everyone else's life and look instead at my own. I learned that living with alcoholism gave me my own disease— trying to rescue, control others, and seek happiness outside of myself. Healing my pain couldn't come from healing my son's disease, even if I were able to; it had to come from healing mine.

I know now that in trying to control others, I was really trying to control my fear and grief, as I watched their disease unfold. By working my program, I've learned to face, release, and heal those natural feelings, and not avoid them by trying to fix others.

The wonderful paradox is that, as I began empowering myself, I also began to empower the alcoholic. By taking the focus off him, I stopped enabling him and removing the consequences of his actions. I have heard that most people make their biggest changes from a place of crisis. By preventing the crisis, I was removing his motivation to change. As *Hope for Today* (B-27) says, "It is an illusion that depleting myself will help someone else."

Al-Anon has empowered me to enjoy my life. It has liberated me from feeling like a victim of other people's choices. Today, I know that whether the alcoholic seeks recovery or not, I will still be fine because I have healed my own pain and found my own life. My happiness no longer depends upon their choices, and that is true freedom.

By L. O'D
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