

I am learning to breathe

By Maxine I., Washington

I've always approached life with an attitude of, "If I just hang in there long enough, things will work themselves out. Everything will be okay." I think there's a grain of truth in this attitude, but it's just a tiny grain.

How Al-Anon Works (B-22), p. 47, talks about perseverance. In Al-Anon, I'm learning how to "Live and Let Live," to detach with love. These practices are similar to perseverance for me because they are not about giving up or leaving the person I love. If I "Live and Let Live," I accept the person or situation as is, and I focus on moving forward with my own life.

What I practiced before Al-Anon was not "moving forward with life." It was actually "not giving up and staying stuck in the same old place." Perseverance was my way of practicing the same behavior over and over, each time expecting a different result. My loved one would reach

for the alcohol. I would be filled with dread, but then I'd tell myself, "Maybe this will be the last time," or "maybe he won't drink so much this time." I kept expecting things to become different—magically.

"Noticing a problem then holding my breath until it goes away is not going to cut it."

What I'm learning in Al-Anon is things don't magically become different unless I do some footwork. The first step is I have to fully admit there is a problem. Noticing a problem then holding my breath until it goes away is not going to cut it. I realize now that what I used to call perseverance was really just holding my breath. I wasn't living. I was just staying very quiet, not making any waves, and doing everything I could to keep the home functioning.

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