

I found true peace

By Catherine L., Colorado

When I came to Al-Anon, I was angry and frustrated about so many things. Guilt motivated most of my behavior. My heart was torn over my children's and grandchildren's journey. We were all suffering.

My world was colored by a childhood in an alcoholic home. I had no idea what hardships were ahead of me because I didn't know anything about the family disease of alcoholism.

I married at a very young age, primarily to escape from home. My mother was an alcoholic and my father, brother, and I suffered from being lost in the endless cycle of trying to help her. I left home at 16, thinking I could take life by the horns and overcome all my obstacles. I met a young man from a similar background and was married and pregnant with our first child at 17. Three years later, a second daughter was born.

My marriage was very chaotic. Fighting, screaming, tantrums, and financial irresponsibility were only a few of the painful distresses we experienced, thinking it was a normal way of life. My children were caught in the web of pain and denial.

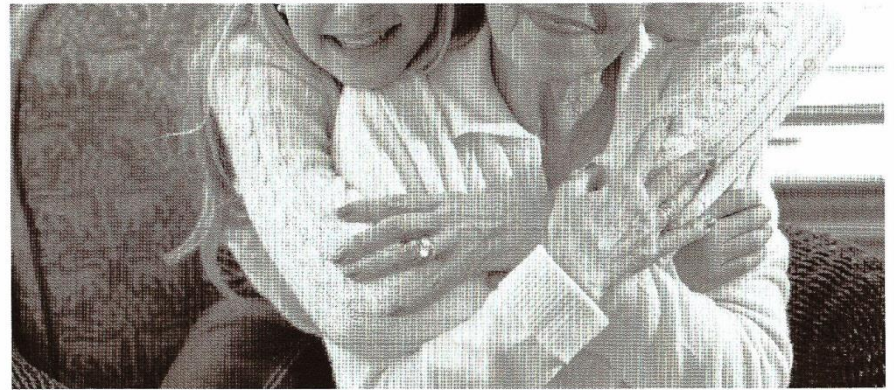
I became very depressed and found my way to an Al-Anon meeting. I don't remember much, just getting there. I entered that room

hopeless, full of guilt, and deep regret. I loved my husband who was struggling for survival with depression and emotional distress. I was just beginning to see that my life was repeating the same patterns that I had lived as a child.

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That meeting was the spark of hope that helped me lift my head from a very dark place and made me want to live again. The love and acceptance I experienced through the stories of others began to wake me up to a new world of learning. I kept coming back and found support, friends, and an incredible Sponsor. I devoured the treasures of encouragement through Conference Approved Literature. I read from several daily readers such as *Courage to Change* (B-16), *Hope for Today* (B-27), and *One Day at a Time in Al-Anon* (B-6). Each day's readings helped me to go on one more day.

As a mother, grandmother, and now a great-grandmother, I still see many of my loved ones struggling in despair with the handed-down



traits of alcoholism and drug abuse. The endless worry and guilt of my own contributions to my children's pain had haunted me until I was willing to work the Steps and relinquish my guilt to my Higher Power. It seems like I do Steps One, Two, and Three all the time to release the urge to fix and control. Gradually, I yield to the serenity and clarity, as I realize how God has guided me to this grace-filled program and a new way to live.

I have finally found a true family in Al-Anon. My husband and I are both involved in meetings and service, but are ever reminded that each day we must give our hope and expectations for our children and grandchildren to God. As I'm learning more through parents' and grandparents' support meetings, I'm finding true peace.

This season, I decided to make a list of some of our children's painful

traits that worry and hurt me. I asked my Higher Power to reveal if there are any of these defects still active in me today. As I seek love and forgiveness for my own defects of character, I'm learning to accept my children's and their difficult situations. My guilt for the things I cannot change has been eased by taking active steps to make amends toward those I have wronged. It is easy to fall back into becoming a victim of useless remorse, but wisdom is only a phone call away if I'm willing to reach out for help and comfort.

I still have a long way to go to learn what it is to truly love and forgive myself and others, but my Higher Power and the program are a constant reminder. I thank God for each brave soul who has written his or her story in our literature because it is what I need to live one more day at a time. There is hope in every situation and in all of our stories.

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