

I'm a better person and parent

I joined Al-Anon for the sake of my kids. I wanted to break the cycle of alcoholism so they wouldn't grow up with it, as I had. Now, I know that I'm in Al-Anon for *me*, and recovery has improved my relationship with my children in the bargain. Here is one simple example of how it works.

Early one morning, I dropped my children off at the bus stop and drove home. It was a day off for me, and I looked forward to a whole day without any trips to town (a 20-minute drive from where we live). Before eight a.m., the phone rang. My daughter forgot her clarinet. Would I please bring it into school? My immediate response was anger. Thanks to recovery, I knew I didn't want to make a decision when I was mad. I told her I needed some time and I'd get a message to her in time for her lesson.

I lay down on my bed and threw a temper tantrum. When my angry energy was spent, I asked God to show me my part in this situation. The knowledge came to me that my daughter did not need to remember her clarinet because I was doing it for her. I memorized her music schedule and, on the days she had band, I grabbed her instrument and music book and handed it to her as she went out the door. I've found that if I take the time to stay with my feelings, I come to a place of willingness to pray.

I called an Al-Anon friend. I told her about my caretaking, and said that I thought taking the clarinet to school for my daughter would be the start of an amends. She agreed, but made a surprising suggestion, "Do something nice for yourself when you get to town—maybe have a special cup of tea or something." With a treat as part of the plan, the trip to town was no longer self-punishment and a waste of time and gas. My amends for caretaking included a little self-care!

That afternoon, I apologized to my daughter for my angry response to her call and for taking over her responsibility for her instrument. I told her of my intention to stop meddling. She smiled at me, "Mom, you're not the only one who made a mistake here. I saw my clarinet this morning and thought, 'I need to take that today.' Then I forgot it. I'm sorry, too. Thanks for bringing it in for me."

By Becky, Minnesota
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