

No one deserves my love as much as I do

I went to my first meeting the same day my doctor suggested it. It couldn't have come at a better time. For almost a year, I cried at every meeting—and still can. These tears cleanse my soul, and I feel better when I come out of a meeting. I need meetings now just like I need water.

I am 31, and I spent half of my life close to one addicted person or another. I had no knowledge of the disease and its effects on me. The changes were so subtle. I lost my sense of self-worth because I wasn't focused on me. I found people whom I wanted to change so I could feel worthy and important. Now, because of Al-Anon, I realize I was and still am addicted to chaos. That's what has become familiar and, unfortunately, makes me comfortable. I am aware now, and my addiction to chaos needs to change if I really want to live.

I have to work on me every day and will for a long time to come. But I need to be patient with myself and accept where I am. I don't want chaos. I want peace and serenity, but addiction is baffling, powerful, and cunning. I don't need to understand. I just need to be open and willing to change.

My habit of focusing on others for so long has made me sick. It will take time to get healthy. I have gotten better. At least, I am aware now. As long as I go to my meetings and bring my body, my mind does absorb the words. My behaviors are taking longer to change, but I am a work in progress.

I don't need to beat myself up because the alcoholics and addicts did that for me. I can sound like a textbook if that's what it takes for me to learn. I can be flawed because, after all, I am still human. As long as I strive to have a better day than yesterday and not insist for things to go my way, everything will be okay.

I heard that no one deserves my love as much as I do. Putting my needs first is okay. Only then can I be of help to others, and *only* when they ask. Most importantly, I have learned to pray for strength and not for life to be easier. Life and its problems will happen. At times, it will be painful, but how I react is up to me. I don't have to be upset forever and continue to suffer in self-pity or fear. I'm allowed to have these feelings, but at some point I have to release them in order to move on.

I used to question everything, and, honestly, this habit may never change, but I have learned it is easier to let go and accept. In Al-Anon, I can trust people, because they don't question *me*. They just listen. They help me be less judgmental. They have shown me many lessons and, most especially, what it means to truly love. I can love

myself and the addicted persons in my life most by letting them go. I pray for me, I pray for them, and then I work on me.

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