

My first Al-Anon meeting surprised me

I came to Al-Anon late in life thinking I was nearing its end. Things were as they were, not as I needed them to be. I had friends who were happy but I really wasn't. I blamed this on my wife's drinking, spoiling things for me, her, and us. I was not happy.

I was a good and passionate teacher. The best moments of my life were when I was teaching, and when I wasn't, my spirit often felt strangled and scared. Throughout my life, calm moments were rare exceptions.

My first Al-Anon meeting surprised me. No one was talking about the people and circumstances ruining their lives. The Twelve Step program didn't seem to want to help me fix my wife. It offered to help me fix myself.

I was asked what I like to do for fun. I didn't know or couldn't remember. I was introduced to the Twelve Steps. I was able to acknowledge my powerlessness and my unmanageability, but not my insanity nor needing the help of a "Higher Power." I was raised in a church with a white male authoritarian God who spoke to me through white male authoritarian church leaders. I wasn't ready to accept more of this.

This was part of my insanity with life. With the help of my home group and my Sponsor, I began my recovery. Slowly, step-by-step, I changed and, in time, got better. It was hard for me to stop trying to help my wife get sober. Yet, I slowly learned to mind my own business. As I did, our relationship changed, allowing her to face her own life. She did and still does. My own recovery has been a blessing for her.

My recovery helped me remember my childhood and youth, the alcoholism within my family, and my abuse by an older neighbor. I began to see its effect on me throughout my life, with the opportunity to broaden my recovery.

The largest and most helpful step in my recovery has been my relationship with my Higher Power. In the beginning, my Sponsor suggested that I act as though I already believe in her. I reached for her with many important and difficult issues. She always helped, often in surprising and miraculous ways. She is now my daily companion.

It has been over 20 years since I started changing myself in Al-Anon. These are the best years of my life. Each day brings me happiness and serenity. This is not from what others say or do, or what happens around me. Life is not always easy, but it is always full of joy and beauty. I have learned to see this more each day.

By Jim N., Oregon
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