

I found myself—in the midst of chaos

The most important day of my life was the day I walked into my first Alateen meeting. A week before, I was waiting for my guidance counselor in her office. I spotted a pamphlet that had an array of questions about alcoholism. At the bottom it said, “If you answered ‘yes’ to any of these questions, then Alateen is for you!” I answered “yes” to all the questions, and started on an amazing path to self-discovery and serenity.

The alcoholic in my life was my stepsister’s mom who came to live with my family because of her life troubles. I never saw her drunk. I only heard loud snoring and mumbling from the next room, and the stories my mom told me after we asked her to leave. All I saw was that she either never stopped moving or never started moving. When my stepsister lived with us, they would verbally abuse each other.

I always felt it was my job to mediate the situation because I was “mature.” It was my job to fix things. It was my job to help them get along, because if I didn’t, who would? It never worked, but I tried over and over again, hoping for a different result. I’ve learned in Alateen that my mission was in fact the definition of insanity. The end result was me feeling worthless. I always focused on them instead of myself. I didn’t even know how to focus on myself.

Before discovering Alateen, I struggled with depression and anxiety. There were times it got so bad that I was not able to get out of bed and go to school because I would be crying so much. I didn’t have any friends because I was not able to talk to people. During high school and the first few months at cosmetology school, I was that small-looking, unapproachable girl with a dark cloud over her head. This girl sat alone at lunch tables, refused group projects, and turned people away because she was afraid of rejection.

Alateen is the most amazing, eye-opening experience I’ve ever had. It is best described by one of my Sponsors who once said, “It is a safe place to find out who you are in the face of chaos.” Not only did the program help me with coping with the alcoholic, but everything I’ve learned can be applied to my daily life.

Although I do use and appreciate the Alateen slogans, the thing that resonated with me the most was what another Alateen member said—it wasn’t her job to fix other people’s problems. I jumped at that thought. I remember being truly amazed that it wasn’t my job to fix the alcoholic. I learned how to separate myself from the alcoholic’s situation. I learned to detach with love. I realized my actual job was to take care of myself.

My depression and anxiety have substantially subsided, and I have made real connections with other Alateen members. Every week, I become a better person just by showing up to my meeting. There is no way to explain how grateful I am for Alateen.

By Kayla F., CT
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