

I came to understand and accept my feelings

Standing at five feet tall, I have a different perspective than folks who measure over six feet. I hardly ever see the top of my refrigerator. Intellectually, I know it's there, but unlike my taller friends, I don't normally see those higher places in my kitchen.

In the same way, I have a stunted perspective on my feelings. I grew up in an alcoholic home. Not surprisingly, my alcoholic parent almost never expressed joy, wonder, and awe. I did not feel safe exploring those emotions. I knew I had these feelings somewhere deep inside me, but I could not identify them, let alone feel them.

Before coming to Al-Anon, when people outside my family expressed joy and wonder, I retracted emotionally. My underdeveloped emotional vocabulary was confined to sadness, anger, resentment, and self-pity—feelings that were okay to have in my family.

Just like being unable to see the top of my refrigerator, I had access only to a few emotions even though I knew there were more. I finally learned to use a stepladder when I wanted access to the top of the fridge.

The Al-Anon program is like a stepladder for me emotionally. If I want to be capable of experiencing joy, wonder, and awe, I have to work my program on a daily basis by attending meetings, reading Conference Approved Literature, and, most importantly, staying in contact with my Higher Power.

My years in Al-Anon have helped me identify emotions I knew existed but I was incapable of feeling. I'm no longer afraid to feel my feelings. I know they cannot hurt me.

I am entitled to my feelings without shame or justification. I can choose to let go of my alcoholic parent's emotional ways and grow spiritually.

A wonderful by-product of "standing on my emotional stepladder" is the support and friendship I get from my Al-Anon family. My Al-Anon family stands with me, helps me reach new heights of recovery, props me up when I falter, and shares in my victories.

I will never grow in physical height, but the sky is the limit for my emotional growth.

*By Luis, Texas
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