

I was 'crazy' in love - and couldn't blame the drinker

"I'm addicted to you." I said those words after months of being crazy in love. I was unable to deny them because every cell in my body was tired of the unrest my addiction had caused.

I had met him on-line. When he readily admitted to me that he went to A.A. meetings, I thought I had the "credentials" to love him because my sister and my son had the same disease.

He stared at me with suddenly wary eyes that knew something in our relationship had just shifted. "No, you're not." he replied.

"Yes, I am." The words came out with determination. I felt like I was somewhere in the room watching myself.

It was a spider-and-fly kind of moment. "I love you; I'm sick with loving you. I'm lost in loving you. I'm not thinking clearly when I'm with you. I'm not thinking clearly when I'm not with you. I'm a mess."

"No, you're not addicted. Trust me, I know. You're dependent, maybe, but you're not addicted," he answered. The fullness of my words hit me, and I felt the tears on my face. He was right; I was dependent.

I had started attending Al-Anon a few months earlier and also went to A.A. meetings with him on occasion. He was wrong, though, when he told me I wasn't addicted. I wasn't addicted to drugs, or alcohol. I wasn't a gambler. I was in new territory, and I didn't know its name.

There was no turning back. I knew it, I sensed it, and I was scared. But really, I'd had enough. I'd had enough of my crazy behavior from trying to fit my life around a man who was alternately loving me or disappearing.

With shaking hands and my heart beating, I made the call I desperately needed to make. A behavioral health service found a psychotherapist who could see me the next day.

I found myself in the office of a professional who specialized in addiction and relationships. The hours spent in A.A. and Al-Anon meetings had held me together, though I didn't grasp how critically important they had been.

I didn't blame the man with whom I was in love. / was my problem. I'd lost my best friend—who couldn't stand to watch me change in this way. I'd alienated my family in the process of trying to figure out how to love an alcoholic in recovery. Here I was, a recent widow, thinking I'd made it to the other side of the grieving process and was ready to be in a relationship.

With therapy, I delved more deeply into the Twelve Steps, but now from the perspective of my addiction. I did the painful work. I had to go way back to learn who I am.

The Twelve Steps opened my heart. They led me to take care of me. I learned that realizing and facing what's toxic isn't easy, but it can be done. I learned that I don't do this alone. It's been a few years since that spiritual awakening. I love in healthier ways now. I'm learning.

*By Pat K., Florida
The Forum, May 2009*

© Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. 2008. All Rights Reserved.