

I Thought I Was Helping.

By - Frank V., New York.

I came to Al-Anon because I had an alcoholic child. I felt miserable because my child was in trouble and frustrated because I couldn't seem to do anything about it. I also felt angry that he lied and took advantage of me. As a father, I saw myself as the fixer. I provided wisdom, guidance, and advice-lots and lots of advice. I minimized problems with humor, provided money, and showed disapproval. The effect of my actions put roadblocks in his path to recovery because they gave him no room to breathe, no opportunity to help himself and rebuild his self-esteem. Every time he turned around, I was there to help, or so I thought, by offering what I felt was a better way. We always had long phone chats, which used to consist of him telling me his problems and me giving him advice because I knew that, if he would just listen, all would be well. In truth, my advice, money, and disapproval did nothing but injure him. In effect, I was telling him that he did not have the skills necessary to make his own decisions. I was demeaning him, not helping him.

However, by using the tools I learned at Al-Anon meetings, I changed the nature of our conversations. Instead of giving advice, I gave empathy. Instead of telling him what

to do, I told him I was sorry to hear about his latest problem and let him solve it for himself. Then a remarkable thing happened. After several weeks of these conversations, he said to me "You know, I really enjoy these talks we've been having lately; they mean a lot to me." At around the same time, he began his own program of recovery.

My new approach did not cause him to recover or even help him to recover, but it did remove some obstacles that I had been putting in his way. In essence, my script had changed, and therefore, our relationship changed. Through this program, I learned that, if I take care of myself and treat myself with respect, then I will be in a better position to help my son in a way that acknowledges that there is a real person, a loving person, inside my alcoholic son. I finally realized that he is an adult and, therefore, has the right to solve his own problems and to live his own life. As a result, in addition to being my son, he once again became a very close and dear friend.

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The Loners letters from all areas can be found on our website

<https://www.alanon.org.za/members-newsletters/>

From Rejection to Acceptance.

By - Daisy P., California.

Ever since I was a child, I had a ringside seat to my alcoholic/addict's chaotic behavior. I heard a lot of loud, angry words and cursing. It was not unusual for me to see a fist or open hand coming at me out of nowhere, only to be blamed for making the abuser hurt me. I was belittled to tears, and I felt unacceptable and unwanted. No one ever came to my defense. My crazy family life just did not make sense.

As a result, I felt that I was a burden and a disappointment to those around me. I also felt unworthy of any gift, compliment, or anything good. I was blamed for all that was wrong in our home. I knew well the physical and emotional pain and the mental, verbal, and sexual abuse-all of which left me feeling isolated. If anyone complimented me, I was quickly reminded how ugly I was. I had long ago shut down my feelings in order to mask the pain of rejection. I had also become my worst critic, and soon any happy-go-lucky feelings within me died. The caregivers in my life were full of anger and frustration, which often made me wonder, when is my real family coming for me?

Literature

Please contact Annalise at the office Mon - Fri between 9am and 1pm, and she will be happy to recommend Al-Anon books and pamphlets that meet your needs...

Just for today . . .

- I'll make all my decisions based on who I really am, not what others expect of me . . .
- I'll be grateful for all of the people in my life . . .
- I'll be grateful for all of the people in my life . . .

I thought getting married would fill the emptiness and loneliness. However, nothing changed in my new life except that I soon had three children. Thankfully, though, I was introduced to Al-Anon by a trusted friend. The people at that first meeting welcomed me with open arms while I cried a veil of tears. I heard others share how they were working on themselves to get over the damage the alcoholic had left behind. In Al-Anon, I finally understood why my family of origin was so chaotic and full of anger and frustration.

The warm, caring hugs started to heal the fractured self I had tried to hide most of my life. I began working on rebuilding my self-worth and choosing healthier friendships. I gave myself permission to physically let go of those who continued to abuse and blame me for their own bad choices. I learned that I can't change them, but I can change me. I'm so blessed to have found where I do belong by sharing my encouragement, strength, and hope in Al-Anon.

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Compiled by:

CAPE AREA OFFICE

Postal Address

PO Box 727

Goodwood, 7459

Residential Address

Unit B5, N1 City Mews

Frans Conradie Drive

Goodwood, 7460

Tel: 021 595 4517

Fax: 086 523 3030

E-Mail: alanonct@iafrica.com

Our expenses are met by voluntary contributions. If you would like to send a donation our bank details are:

ABSA Bank (Current account)

Account No: 407 321 5579

Branch Code: 632 005

Our 24 Hour Helpline - 0861 25 26 66