

It Truly Is a Family Disease.

By - Sergio Z .

It is not easy to deal with an active drinker, especially when the active drinker in my life is my brother. When I visit him, I feel badly to see how his drinking problem is affecting him. I always try to communicate with him, but when he is sober, he avoids me most of the time. The only time he talks to me—and he is very talkative—is when he has a buzz. The problem is that the next day, he barely remembers what we talked about and again avoids any conversation with me. Sometimes he goes through periods of time when he drinks constantly—for days and sometimes weeks.

However, in Al-Anon I have found hope. I have learned that my brother has a disease called alcoholism. It has been very helpful to read about the characteristics of this disease and remember that how he reacts to things is because of his disease, not because he doesn't love me. I have learned that I didn't cause his disease, that I cannot control it or cure him. I have also learned that today I have choices when it comes to reacting to his behavior—drunk or sober. I can either treat him with respect, understanding and compassion or I can try to control and scold him. The first option takes courage and lots of serenity. However, I know that if I react negatively, sooner rather than later I will feel resentful, ashamed and guilty.

In Al-Anon, I have learned phrases I can use to establish boundaries with my brother in a firm, yet loving way. Although it is difficult to remember them in a confrontation or difficult situation, they help me avoid reacting to his behavior. I have also learned not to do for him things that he needs to do for himself, like taking care of his financial responsibilities. However, when I do talk to him, I let him know that I am just a phone call away in case he needs anything that is in my power to do. This boundary is a fine line that I have to be careful not to cross, and maintaining it is difficult sometimes. But talking about my feelings with fellow members and listening to their experiences gives me courage and helps me remember that I am not alone.

When I focus on myself instead of my brother, I can see that alcoholism is a family disease because it has affected me. The good news is that I can use the tools Al-Anon has given me to improve myself and get better. Now I know that my brother will stop drinking when he is ready to ask for help. In the meantime, I can either suffer or remain positive about my recovery and my own life.

Reprinted with permission of The Forum, Al-Anon Family Group Hdqts., Inc., Virginia Beach, VA. (Extracted from the Sept 2018 issue).

Even in the Face of Anger. By - Mary M., Idaho .

When the Chairperson announced that the topic at the Saturday morning Al-Anon meeting was control, I sat back in my chair and told myself that I didn't need to share or even pay attention because control wasn't my problem. Hadn't I always acquiesced to my husband's every wish? I never tried to control him. Whatever he wanted was all right with me. I had quit wanting anything years ago. It just wasn't worth the effort in my marriage because anytime I tried to ask for what I wanted or even talked about a book I was reading or a funny story at work, my husband would either start screaming at me, or he would belittle and ridicule me for my feelings.

But for a reason I couldn't understand, early in that meeting-the meeting I didn't have to pay any attention to-I started crying uncontrollably. A friend was sitting next to me and kept putting tissues in my hand because I was crying so hard. In the last few minutes before the meeting ended, I finally shared. Through tears, I said that I didn't understand. I said that I never tried

to control my husband. He could always do whatever he wanted. I never tried to make him do anything. I was so confused!

After the meeting, another friend came over to hug me and said something that finally helped me clarify my confusion. She said that she used to try to quiet everybody in her house so that her adult alcoholic son wouldn't drink. In Al-Anon she realized how futile this was. Her son was going to drink no matter how peaceful the house was because he was an alcoholic. I finally came to understand that I had been doing the same thing in my marriage-trying to control my husband's anger by always agreeing with him and never wanting anything for myself. I continued to do this, even though his drinking and his anger had gotten worse as the years went by. I slowly began to stop living in fear of how my husband would react. I couldn't control my husband's anger any more than I could control his drinking. I learned to do what was right for me .

Reprinted with permission of The Forum, Al-Anon Family Group Hdqts., Inc., Virginia Beach, VA. (Extracted from the Oct 2018 issue).

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 keep in mind that there's a larger plan, of which I'm a valuable part . . .
- I'll look for the beauty in everyone . . .
- I'll be grateful for the people who have taught me valuable lessons in life . . .

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