

Through to the Other Side.

By - Scot P., Associate Director—Digital Strategy.

Prior to attending my first Al-Anon meeting, I often wondered why things happen the way they do. Why do I always seem to be digging myself out of one mess or another? I can't remember a time before Al-Anon that didn't include chaos. Life as a teenager was not easy—dealing with bullies at school. For others, their homes were their sanctuaries away from that abuse. But for me, living with an alcoholic, it was not sanctuary at all. I would come home and be bullied by my father. The same cruel things I heard at school I heard at home. If I was lucky, I would escape to my room before he went off. The pattern of fleeing, along with my low self-esteem, led me to a revolving cycle of bad decisions and digging out.

I remember my mother telling me to “count my blessings” and I often couldn't understand what blessings she was talking about. It took me decades to figure it out. They say hindsight is 20/20 and I have to say they are 100% correct. Looking back at all the mess and chaos in my life, I can reflect on some of the positive things that have led me to where I am today. One day I learned that my wife, who went to visit her mother, decided that she and the kids were not coming back. Devastated, I responded by escaping into a dark place which resulted in a demotion at work. This demotion was the catalyst for me to pack up every-thing I owned and drive 2,000 miles across the country to at least try to be a dad to my kids. I was able to find work in Michigan and begin regular visitation with my children.

I then met a woman who traveled even

farther - 8,500 miles from an island in the South Pacific - who stole my heart. Our relationship blossomed, and she introduced me to her employer, who later became my employer where I learned to love marketing. We were married, and my children were in the wedding. Shortly thereafter, my ex-wife found herself in a situation where she could no longer care for our children and we were awarded custody. So then I found myself with a new job, a new bride, a new baby, and my kids moving in with us. I thought everything would be perfect, but little did I know that chaos would almost consume our family. My children did not respect my wife, and it became a constant battle until the day both kids moved out.

Without Al-Anon, it would have been impossible to find gratitude through all that chaos. But since attending Al-Anon meetings, I must give credit where credit is due. I am most grateful that my Higher Power has been with me throughout it all, even when I didn't know any better. My Higher Power needed me to travel across the country and for my wife to travel to the other side of the world so we could meet and so that I could kick-start my life, which included a new career. He allowed my children to test our marriage, and it showed us that we were unbreakable. My Higher Power gave me new tools with each challenge, including the one that led me to the World Service Office. I am forever grateful.

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

Wherever I Go . . .

By - Sandi G., Florida.

I met the alcoholic in my life through online dating. Though I felt that I was okay with social drinking, I learned that there is no such thing as social drinking to an alcoholic. My partner was in A.A. but was a binge drinker. When he wasn't drinking, he was kind, loving, and respectful - all the traits I wanted in a partner. I thought he drank to be nasty to me and to sabotage our relationship. I lost sleep worrying if this day would be the start of a binge. I went to A.A. meetings with him for about two years trying to figure out what he was missing so that I could save him, but the other A.A. members would often suggest that I go to Al-Anon. I didn't know what that was or why I needed to go when I felt that he was the problem.

The first program idea that had particular significance for me was that alcoholism is a disease. This actually made

sense to me because I could view it like a form of mental illness. I have a dear family member who is mentally ill. I finally realized that my partner was not drinking "at me" or because of anything I did or didn't do. He was self-harming, much like my family member. He didn't know why and didn't know how to stop. What kept me coming back after my first meeting was that I saw that the people there were having fun. They celebrated each other and shared their successes and struggles. No one judged anyone or told anyone what to do. Instead, they laughed, they cried, and I could sense the love and support in that room. I wanted to learn how to do that and just get some sleep and feel happy again.

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Literature

Please contact Tania Jacquelin 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 my eyes open for the small beautiful things that I normally don't see . . .
- I'll make sure that I sincerely compliment at least three people . . .
- I'll remember to encourage a child . . .

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