

Experience, strength and hope from Al-Anon members for times when you can't get to an Al-Anon group

Dear Loners

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My name is Lunette and I'm a grateful member of Al-Anon. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today. I came to Al-Anon via the AA. I started attending meetings with my husband. While I was attending these meetings with my husband I realised I was sick as well.

I looked back at who I used to be and I realised that I did not like who I had become. That was when I had to admit to myself that I had no power over alcohol. That I had to accept that I had no power over my Alcoholic. I never wanted to do that before, "Accept", because I thought to accept meant that I just had to take it. I didn't want to take it; I didn't want to be weak. So I tried anything and everything to get my alcoholic to stop drinking. I got manipulative, I tried to beat him at his own game, and it didn't work. I got sneaky, I got angry, and I got crazy. It didn't work. All it did was impair my judgement, all it did was make me sick.

It got to a point where I hated alcohol. If I smelled alcohol I got distressed, it didn't even matter if it wasn't my husband who was drinking. I still over reacted. I hated the multiple bottle stores and their owners because why would someone want to make a living out of selling stuff that would destroy families that was destroying my family. Every time I would drive by our local bottle store, I would imagine throwing a Molotov cocktail inside, it kind of felt like divine justice. I was insane.

My sickness came from me letting my husband's dependency on alcohol change my personality, my beliefs and my morals.

I got a link to the XA Speakers website from one of the guys at AA when I first started attending these meetings. The first speaker I listened to was Arleen S from Tennessee. It was like a light went on in my brain. Her story sounded a lot like mine. And I realised that I was not alone. In her share she said something that resonated with me in a way nothing else has had before. That she didn't want to "accept" because she thought that meant she had to take it. But she went and looked up the word accept in the dictionary and she saw that the definition of Accept is "To Believe it's a fact".

That opened up a whole new world for me, because as much as I didn't want to accept that I had no power over my husband's drinking if it meant I had to "take it" I could accept it if it meant that I just had to believe that it is a fact. Just because it was a fact didn't mean that I had to like it, it didn't mean that I had to bear it. It just meant it was.

Right then I could do my Step 1: "I admitted that I was powerless over my alcoholic's behaviour, actions and choices - and that my life had become unmanageable.

I could finally admit that I could not cope, that I could not handle my insanity or his drinking on my own.

The nearest Al-Anon Meetings was 45 minutes away from our home, 7 o'clock at night. With two small children, the eldest of whom was in school, I could not justify to myself to attend a meeting. But I knew I needed help. So I started reading up on Al-Anon literature, listening to Al-Anon Speakers while still attending AA meetings. I started asking AA members to encourage their families to come with them to meetings with the hopes that we could start an Al-Anon group of our own locally.

Finally, the day came when it wasn't just me. Finally, we had an Al-Anon meeting of our own. We started small but we started, all of us new to the Al-Anon but we understood each other. I found a fellowship where I could start my path to recovery.

Now in the AA meetings I found out that Alcoholism was indeed a disease, that it was acknowledged by the American Health system as a Chronic Disease. I learnt that it was an allergy of the body but also an obsession of the mind. With that knowledge I was also able to help others realise that indeed it wasn't us, the spouses, and the family of the alcoholic that was to blame for their drinking. It gave credence to the slogan. "I didn't cause it, I can't control it, and I can't cure it". It gave me a new sense of freedom.

Step Two says "We Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity". I found my power in our group. Now I grew up in a Christian home, I've always believed in God but with everything that we have been thru as a family I came to the conclusion that God has abandoned me. Why else would He let me and my family go through all of this madness, heartache and insanity.

So I found my power in our group. Every meeting we had, brought a little more clarity, a little more insight, a little more knowledge. With knowledge comes power. The power to learn detachment, to enforce it and to live it. The knot in my stomach started to slowly unwind, the nervousness of leaving home started to lessen. The anxiety of the unknown started to lose its power. I could focus more on learning to act instead of to react. Instead of resorting to histrionics and tears or rage and violence towards my husband I could take a step back.

A very popular AA and Al-Anon Speaker Father Tom has a tale he like to tell. A tale of the gorilla in a cage, where alcohol is the gorilla in the cage and when the alcoholic drinks he is dancing with the gorilla, now this gorilla doesn't want to let go when he starts dancing with the alcoholic and everything in its path gets destroyed. Now me, I always wanted to climb into the cage as well, you know, to clean up the mess, vacuum a little, dust some here, make good nutritious meals and take care of my husband while he was dancing with the gorilla. Instead I just got caught up in the destruction, enraged the gorilla by trying to clean. By that I mean that my character defects ended up contributing to the mess, the destruction that the gorilla created.

Learning about detachment, I learnt that I could stand outside that cage, it didn't mean that I didn't care anymore, it just meant that I was not part of that madness. When I realised that I could still care, still love but I don't have to be in the middle of that mess it made a world of difference. It gave me hope for the future. My sanity was slowly coming back, thanks to our meetings to the support and understanding I found in the Group. Judgement had no place in our meetings because we have all been to the madness, the mess that alcohol had created in our lives. It was my safe place.

Step Three: "We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him." In my safe place, the meetings, I started to see that God had not abandoned me and my family. The more I heard the more I realised how many people suffered in silence. And it made me realise that what I went through had a purpose. He gave me a new understanding of the drama, the heartache we as a family had endured. With that came the realization that I now had the chance to help others find their safe place. A place where they could find their sanity and restore their faith in humanity. Thank you for listening to me today. Enjoy the Rally.

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