

The Path Isn't Chosen by Me.

By - Natalie S., California

Recently, I was preparing to move to a new state and had to decide what to keep and what to donate to charity. I had some old beds in storage that had not been used since I was a teenager in my alcoholic home. I decided I would use these beds in my new home, and I began to fix them up for use in a new place.

As I was cleaning and shining the parts of the bed frames, a certain joy came to me. Recovering the beauty of those beds reminded me of how Al-Anon has recovered the beauty that was hidden inside of me. As a child of an alcoholic mother, I grew up in a traumatic environment full of yelling, financial difficulties, criticism, and judgement that left me full of shame. My response while growing up was to try to be perfect and to never ask for anything. With friends and neighbors, I tried to hide my shame and never show my hurt or confusion. It was a dishonest life where it was safer not to share my real self.

I have been a member of the Al-Anon program for many years and have uncovered many of my unhealthy responses to living with an alcoholic. I have

also learned that alcoholism is a disease that cannot be cured by my wishing or hoping, or by my hating the person with the disease. I found that sharing my truth in Al-Anon meetings was safe and healing. Working with a Sponsor taught me many important lessons. I learned that an alcoholic's behavior was not my fault. I also learned that a Higher Power exists for me, and forgives me for the misguided behaviors of my past that harmed myself or others. Today I feel free of shame. It has been replaced with compassion and even love for a mother who was just doing the best she could with a terrible disease. I have learned to live and create my own life.

Now those lovely beds have a second life in a home with recovery. They look beautiful. I am older now, but inside I feel beautiful too. Making the choice to attend Al-Anon was the most rewarding thing I have done in my life. I plan to be a member forever.

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

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

Deciding Where to Look.

By - Tim F., New York.

After work, I rode home to the 20th-floor apartment I shared with my alcoholic partner. It faces a main avenue of our city. When I got off at the bus stop in front of our building, I looked up at the windows to see what was awaiting me. If there were no lights on, he was either out or asleep. If I saw one light, he probably was in the kitchen preparing a nice meal. But if all the lights were on, that meant he was as brightly lit up as the flat.

Those bus rides were a source of anxiety, because I never knew whether my evening would bring solitude, a pleasant dinner, or alcoholic chaos. Over time, the discomfort began to creep into my afternoons as I started worrying long before finishing at my job. Eventually, I was anxious from the moment I walked into the office and a wreck by quitting time.

Once I began attending Al-Anon meetings, I learned not to suffer in advance of things that haven't happened yet. I began to see that worrying about the future robbed me of days and weeks, but never changed the outcome. Instead, if I focused on "Just for Today" and not tomorrow or next week, I could bring myself back to my own life in the present.

One day, I decided that when I got off the bus, I wouldn't look up at all. Instead, I would think about any purchases I needed to make or if I wanted to take a walk and think about what had happened that day. I decided not to anticipate anything at home until I put my key in the door, since whatever it was would still be waiting for me then. Several times a week, I attended Al-Anon meetings before going home, which reinforced my determination to enjoy myself.

My new outlook began to filter into my days, as I slowly freed myself from concern about what another person was doing in my absence. It also spread to my other dealings with the alcoholic, because I realized that he was in the grip of a disease that he couldn't control, despite his efforts.

That all happened a long time ago. The alcoholic and I parted ways, and I bear him no resentment. However, to this day, I sometimes remind myself not to "look up" at what someone else is doing that might, or might not, disturb or complicate my life. I'm too busy seeing what's down here on the ground, right in front of me, right now.

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Literature

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

Just for today . . .

- I'll take care of my health . . .
- I'll keep my thoughts positive . . .
- I'll make a small difference, somewhere, somehow . . .

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