

Forgiveness Is for Me.

By - Joy F., Saskatchewan .

I have a family that I love, but it has not always been happy. I craved and sought my mother's love and validation my entire life, with very little success. I went back again and again only to be embarrassed, shunned, chastised, or made to feel guilty. Every time, I left feeling hurt and sometimes mad, which really just covered up the hurt. I would ask myself, "Why does she do this? What have I done to deserve this? When will she tell me I am a lovely,

worthwhile daughter and that she is proud of me?"

I was stuck in this place for many years - a perpetual victim. I went to therapy, discussed it with my partner, journaled about it, and tried all kinds of strategies to gain favor with my mom. While these things helped a bit, what really helped me find freedom was forgiveness.

In Al-Anon, I have learned to have compassion for the alcoholic - to separate the person from the behavior and to forgive them. I discovered that forgiveness isn't some

magnanimous act that lets others off the hook. It is about me and for me! First, I have no business judging another - the alcoholic, my mom, or anyone. Second, when I have compassion and find the willingness to love others despite their behaviors, I make room to consider forgiveness. Finally, when I forgive, I let go.

Forgiveness gives me my life back! It gives me peace, calm, and serenity. It gives me time and energy to spend on the sweetness of life instead of a merry-go-round of complaining and keeping resentments alive. It gives me a doorway through which to love my mother despite all of the hurts that I have experienced.

As my mother grows old, I am finding my way to loving her unconditionally. If I am being honest, I sometimes revert back to my old way of thinking, but today, I strive to spend less time there and move more quickly toward forgiveness.

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

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

Moving Beyond Survival Mode.

By - Sara B., Arkansas .

I walked into Al-Anon full of very strong and volatile emotions and beliefs that I had adopted growing up with alcoholism and then carried with me after marrying an alcoholic. Although I cried a lot in the first and many later meetings, I held onto the belief that I had my life together. I had a tight grip on my intentions and felt I took care of myself by holding my feelings close. I had been in survival mode for so long that I was not even able to live a happy life. I thought I had it together, but when I came into the rooms of Al-Anon, I saw y'all.

You all smiled and hugged, and I thought you were nice enough people. But then I heard you speak of those terrible secrets, the same ones I kept hidden, about the insanity of living with alcoholism. I was shocked. They were the same secrets. You had them too! When I heard you share, I realized that we have all experienced the same things in one way or another. You understood me.

But you were happy, and I was not.

How was that possible? You said, "Work the Steps"; "Get a Sponsor"; and "Read the CAL (Conference Approved Literature)!" I learned that I had to really look at my survival mechanisms. After getting a Sponsor to guide me, I put some of my rusty old coping skills in one pile, other skills in another. I soon found that many of my old coping mechanisms made me look like I functioned well, but in truth, they were not working at all. In fact, it appeared I was not really living.

My Sponsor lovingly looked at my years of pain, grief, and failure with me. She suggested that I read, practice, and pray. And when I did, I made new, healthier mechanisms. Sometimes I still have fears and feelings that are inappropriate. Today, though, I use the slogan "First Things First." I think before I speak. I walk away if I need to. Today when I walk into an Al-Anon meeting, I bring a lovely new creation: me.

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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 learn all that I can . . .
- I'll try to reach my potential for this day only . . .
- I'll turn off the television . . .

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