

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

November 2022

Dear Loners

This month, Anita writes about how Al-Anon has helped her to overcome the effects of growing up with alcoholism and how she has built herself a new, healthier foundation.

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Growing up in an alcoholic and dysfunctional environment I was taught not to think, not to trust and not to speak. We kept secrets and we never told anyone what was going on inside our home. We were all suffering but never let each other know how much we were suffering.

I had no voice. When I did try to speak up in my childlike innocence about the fear and injustice in my home, I was silenced or it was beaten out of me or I was disregarded and told that what I was feeling was wrong, what I was seeing did not happen and maybe I had misheard. I carried this in my heart. When you have no voice as a child and doubt your reality, you learn to accept things you shouldn't accept, you learn to bury things away deeply, you learn to only say what others want to hear and you learn to doubt every decision you make. Later, there were times in adulthood when I did say what I meant but it came out laced with bitterness, anger, resentment and frustration.

My parents never knew that their angry child would grow up to be an angry adult. They never knew how their disease impacted me and indirectly impacted them in their old age. The cycle repeats. I shudder to think about what I have passed down to my own children. The inner tumultuous home I had built myself was weak; the foundations were crumbly and eventually would lead to my downfall. It would lead to me making poor choices for myself: clinging to the bad and not seeing the good, becoming a fearful anxious adult, and worse still, accepting unacceptable behaviour from others and from myself.

At my first Al-Anon meeting, I was emotional and all over the place. Slowly and gently Al-Anon guided me towards strength, helping me to build my inner temple and strengthen its foundation. This involves living a life through maturity, through refinement and through my own truth. I know now that I can withstand whatever rocks life throws at me because I am in an amazing recovery program. The moment I turn away, I know that my foundation will start to wobble again and I will go back to my old ways of building.

Today brick by brick, I am laying a stronger foundation that no one can break down. I also show others how to build their own strong house because I share what I have learnt and how it has helped me to evolve. The Al-Anon program is slow, steady and achievable.

It does not matter how long it has taken me, what matters is that I am here now and I am willing to try new ways to build a better foundation. The Twelve Steps together with the help of my Higher Power is how I do it.

For the newcomer, know that you are never ever alone. We know what you are going through. We have all experienced it in some way, shape or form. Addiction does not discriminate. Stick around and you will learn some things; that I can guarantee.

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Thanks Anita for sharing how you were affected by growing up in a dysfunctional family situation and how you have been able to unlearn some of the survival skills that got you through your childhood but were not working for you in adulthood. It is lovely to hear that Al-Anon and its members have helped you to find your voice and that you have built yourself a new, healthy foundation. What a wonderful gift you have given yourself.

Best wishes

Clare

**Tradition Seven:** Every group ought to be self-supporting, declining outside contributions. Al-Anon is operating under financial constraints and we appeal to all Al-Anon members to contribute towards our operating expenses so that we can continue to provide help to the friends and relatives of alcoholics. Our banking details are below.

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| <p><b>Al-Anon Information Services</b>, ABSA Bank, Oakdene, Current Account No: 1118881482<br/>Branch code 632 005. Please use your <b>name</b> or <b>group</b> as the reference.</p> |
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