

## Stories from the Forum magazine: July 2008

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### Facing fear, learning acceptance

My mom was the wife of an Air Force officer and a closet alcoholic. She always kept up appearances and expected no less from me. The message I learned was, "Trust no one because you'll be judged by what you look like, what you do, and what you say." In other words, "Hide the truth and pretend you're perfect at all times, regardless of how you feel."

"What if" dominated my thinking every time I left the house, especially when I began to date as a young teen. It would begin the day of the first date when I would pace the house debating which outfit would show that I was interested in attracting a young man's attention. I was consumed by fear that young men might find out about my mom's alcoholism, even though she quit drinking when I was eight years old and she became pregnant with my sister.

"-Isms" were prominent in our house, even though I didn't know it back then. I knew it wasn't a "normal" family situation, so I rarely brought any of my dates home.

In Al-Anon, I am faced with moments where "what if" tries to slip me up in my day-to-day living. Now, I take a much healthier approach and have an attitude of surrender. I am able to look at some occurrences as God's will, not mine, and I face my fears and worries about intimate relationships with less anxiety. I am able to say, "If this turns out not to go the way I would like it, there's a reason." I may not know what it is or why, but I have an easier time accepting it by using the Serenity Prayer, attending Al-Anon meetings, and talking with other members.

By Mary Beth L., Texas

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