

## I tried Al-Anon as a last resort

My father was drunk most of the time. He was a very abusive man, physically and mentally. My mother didn't drink a lot, but she took her frustrations out on me.

I was always in trouble for something. The rules in our home changed every day—sometimes many times a day. Consequently, I was always in trouble for something. I would get a beating from Mom and then a worse one later from Dad.

I learned very young that I was dumb, unimportant, and responsible for everyone and everything. I was supposed to do what I was told without asking questions. It was unsafe to express my emotions. To forget any of these could be fatal; Dad tried to kill me a few times.

I survived childhood and took what I knew into my adult life. I chose friends and partners who treated me the same way I was treated in my family. It was normal for me. Needless to say, none of the relationships lasted, and I blamed myself for all of it.

I had been living with a woman for almost 20 years when I ended the relationship. Life with her was good at first. Then things started to get crazy and just kept getting crazier. She had threatened to shoot me a couple of times. I finally found the courage to tell her I did not want to be with her anymore.

I was on my own and my life was still crazy. I was so guilt-ridden I didn't want to live anymore. I was about to take my own life when I remembered something I had heard about Al-Anon and how it could help. I thought I could call them and see what they had to say. If I didn't like it I could always come back out and finish what I was going to do.

I went in the house, found the number, and made the phone call. I got an answering machine—someone would call me back as soon as possible.

I waited ten days until that call came. I didn't go out to my shed because I was afraid of what I might do. After all, the rope was still there and ready to use.

Finally, someone called me. He said there was a meeting that night and that if I wanted, he would take me there. I said I would go. I just sat there at the meeting, scared as hell. I listened as each person shared *my* family secrets. I didn't know how they knew; they just did. I knew I belonged. I kept coming back.

I didn't share; I just sat there for the next six months. I still couldn't believe how they knew my secrets, but it made me feel better to know that I was not alone anymore—that other people felt the same way I did. Eventually I started to talk a little bit. I was growing in the program.

I started to take more interest in the group—setting up, making coffee, chairing meetings, and so on. I needed more, so I started going to another meeting and getting involved. The district wanted to start an Alateen group and needed Sponsors. I knew right away that I wanted to do it. I knew what it would have done for me if I could have had help as a teenager, so I became an Alateen Sponsor.

A few months later, my group asked if I would take the position of Group Representative. I didn't think I was good enough for the job, but the members assured me that I was and that they would help me. I took on the job, started attending district meetings, got involved with the Regional Service Seminar Committee, and attended my first Assembly. It was totally awesome.

At my second Assembly, the job of newsletter editor was open. Thanks to the encouragement of my Higher Power and a few wonderful Al-Anon members, I took on the job.

Life has been tough since coming to Al-Anon, but I would never trade it for the life I had before. I have a Higher Power who loves and guides me, true friends who care about me, and a wonderful program to live by. I have peace, serenity, and sanity within myself today. What more can I ask for?

By Mervin Y., Saskatchewan  
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