

## Stories from the Forum magazine: July 2008

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### Alateen taught me about the disease of alcoholism

Until I was seven, I thought I had a wonderful life. I lived with my mother, my aunt, and my grandfather. I had a lot of friends and I got good grades. I had no worries in the world, until my mother saw *him* again.

He was my worst nightmare - he was my stepdad. He had a drinking problem, the disease called alcoholism. It took over his life and later took it away.

My mother loved him, so I tried to make her happy by pretending that I loved him too. They got married not long after my seventh birthday, and my new sister was coming. I also had a new stepbrother. I had to move to a new house that I hated. I don't know why I hated it; I just did. My other brother was born not long after the move.

A few years later, my stepdad shot himself while drunk. He started yelling for me to bring him the phone, so I did. He called his own ambulance. The ambulance had to take him away, and he went to the hospital for awhile.

Not too long after that, his stomach was bleeding. It caused a lot of chaos for everybody. He had been in a lot of pain, and so had we. He was back in the hospital for a long time, and everyone was worried. After a while, he came home, but we knew it would happen again.

As I grew up, I felt sorry for my stepdad. When he was gone, I missed him. I grew to love him more and more, but that was confusing. I didn't know it was okay to love a stepparent.

My mom and my counselor suggested I attend Alateen. The meetings helped me a lot. I learned that I wasn't the only one who had been affected by alcoholism. I liked the feeling of being understood, so I kept going back.

Mom kicked my stepdad out a few times because he kept coming home drunk and hiding his bottles of vodka where he thought we couldn't find them. Drink after drink, she let him back in.

He left for nine months, and everybody missed him, but we knew it was for the best. We all really loved him, but we just couldn't take it any more. I still loved him, even though I didn't want to admit it. I was in a lot of denial at that point, too.

About a year later, the internal bleeding started again. He went to the hospital and then came back a few days later. He seemed fine, as far as I could tell.

When I came home from school one day, the bus pulled up to my house with about 20 police cars in front of it. I got about halfway down the hill before my grandfather stopped me. He said that my stepdad had passed away. I didn't understand. He seemed fine almost a week ago. But he had overdosed on alcohol and medication again, and this time it was enough to kill.

I know from Alateen, that my stepdad had a disease.

I feel so bad that before he died I never really showed him how much I loved him, how much I cared. I've learned to appreciate my pets because you never know what's in store. I appreciate my mom because she cares. I appreciate my Alateen friends. They can help me through anything. Most of all, I have learned to appreciate myself.

By Mary Beth L., Texas

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