

Stories from the Forum magazine: April 2008

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Cleaning my hard drive: an exercise in working the Steps

I was talking to a friend one evening and she shared how she dealt with her resentments. I remember going home happy because I didn't think I had a resentment problem. I was wrong.

That night my computer wasn't working properly. I quickly realized that my hard drive was full. To free up space, I used the computer's uninstall wizard to get rid of unwanted programs. My computer ran much better.

Then it hit me: my brain was full of resentments, and it wasn't working properly. Years of resentments had clogged my brain and affected my serenity and happiness.

Computer programs have branches that reach into the deepest part of the computer. It's easy to find and delete a single computer program, but it is almost impossible to find and delete all of the interconnecting programs.

Resentments are very similar to unwanted computer programs. I had accumulated more than 45 years of resentments. My brain had billions of interconnections to my resentments, and I cannot begin to understand how to delete all of them.

My computer's uninstall wizard uses four steps that simplify finding and deleting unwanted programs and their connections. In the first steps, I search the hard drive to identify any unwanted programs. I then discuss with a systems administrator the exact nature of the unwanted program to determine if it should be removed. The wizard then asks if I am entirely ready to delete the program. By selecting the finish button, I ask my computer to remove the unwanted program and the process of seeking out and eliminating the unwanted program and all of its connections begins.

I needed an uninstall wizard for my resentments. I found one with Steps Four, Five, Six and Seven. These Steps used with other program tools, help me eliminate and prevent resentments.

With Step Four, I take a fearless and searching moral inventory. I can identify and list resentments that were not previously visible. It allows me to see my part in my resentments.

I take the Fifth Step to verify, validate, and sort out the exact nature of my resentments by sharing with myself or another person. In the Sixth Step I realize what character defects are not good for me. Once I realize that resentments make me angry, obsessive, and only hurt me, I am entirely ready to remove them.

The Seventh Step is the finish button that allows my Higher Power to do His job. I humbly ask Him to remove resentments. This request starts a process where my Higher Power finds and eliminates the remainders of my resentments. After taking the Seventh Step, I need to be patient. My computer works in near real time, but the Seventh Step works on God's time.

Computers are attacked daily by viruses and spy ware. Antivirus programs protect the computer by constantly taking inventories. When a malicious program is found, the software promptly deletes it.

I am attacked by everyday life events. I have trigger points that can instantly reinstate my resentments. The Tenth Step maintains and protects my serenity. I use it to prevent new and old resentments from developing by continuing to take my inventory and promptly admitting when I am wrong.

Firewalls protect computers from destructive viruses and unauthorized users. How can I prevent resentments? I've learned that by setting boundaries and detaching with love, most of my resentments can be avoided.

By John D., Maryland
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First appearances aren't always correct

I went to my first Al-Anon meeting expecting to learn how to get my significant other to stop drinking. At the meeting, I found several "older women" who hadn't lived with active alcoholism for 15 or 20 years. I immediately thought I was in the wrong room because I was living with active drinking and adolescents.

As they went around the group introducing themselves, several said, "I have been a grateful member of Al-Anon for more than 20 years." My first thought was, "Don't they get it yet? Why are they still here?"

I soon realized that though we had different backgrounds, we had all been affected by someone else's drinking. It was the one place I found that I could share my stories and not be judged or told what to do. Someone always said, "Oh yeah, when I did that ..."

Now that I am one of the "older women: and have been a grateful member for ten years, I can say that I did "get it" - that's why I'm still here!

By Sandy W., Texas
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