

Hope is a great defense

Before I came to Al-Anon, my life was a mess. It was a mockery of the potential I had and an insult to my hopes and dreams. I had goals I wanted to achieve, but despite encouragement from teachers and friends, I couldn't seem to overcome the disease thinking I inherited from being born into the family dynamic of alcoholism.

The painful insults and verbal abuse I suffered during childhood still echoed the corridors of my self-esteem and impaired my ability to aspire to be all that God had intended.

Then I entered the humble rooms of Al-Anon. Through listening to the members' stories, I learned I wasn't alone. Suddenly I was connected to a community of courageous individuals who showed me that my painful childhood wasn't a result of something I did wrong.

I also learned that the disease of alcoholism doesn't discriminate. Eventually, the shame and guilt that was locked into the deepest fibers of my very essence began to fade. Shame and guilt could no longer dwell in the darkness of my confusion, because of the tools I learned in the program. I'm no longer a victim to my painful past. As a child, I didn't have many choices, but I do have choices as a woman.

"One Day at a Time," I set goals—no matter how small—and move closer to my aspirations of being a successful writer and someday a wife and mother. I "Keep It Simple" and do the next right thing, careful not to overwhelm myself. I "Let Go and Let God," surrendering my need to control.

I understand that I didn't cause my mother's drinking, I couldn't control it, and I couldn't cure it. I was a child, powerless over the adults who ruled my world and powerless over a powerful disease. As an adult, I'm still powerless over alcoholism, but I'm no longer powerless over my decisions.

The Steps, slogans, and members have empowered me with the greatest defense of all—hope. Today I'm hopeful that I'll achieve the life I always believed I deserved.

By Kelly-Ann; Dorchester, Massachusetts

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