

## Stories from the Forum magazine: May 2010

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### A man makes peace with alcoholic mother and grandmother

When I walked into my first Al-Anon meeting I was completely stunned to see a room of more than 30 women—and no men. As a guy, I was so intimidated that I immediately turned to leave, as if I wasn't already ashamed of not being able to fix my wife—an active alcoholic.

Luckily, one of the women at the meeting caught my hand and invited me in. As I nervously listened, I was amazed to see that as each of these women shared, they told my story as the spouse and child of alcoholics.

I wish I could say that after that meeting I immersed myself in Al-Anon, but I guess I needed to suffer for a few more months before seeking recovery. Today, I'm grateful to have ten years worth of meetings under my belt.

However, being the only male or one of a handful in a meeting is a common occurrence and has its ups and downs. For instance, though there's no rule requiring a Sponsor of the same sex, I wanted a male as my first Sponsor and that took some doing. The one I found was amazing.

As I grew in recovery, he helped me to see that my uneasiness with women had a lot to do with my feelings towards my grandma who raised me and my mom who abandoned me, both of whom were untreated alcoholics.

I've come to believe that my Higher Power has a great sense of humor and an even better sense of what I need, as he put the only cure for my disease in the hands of a roomful of kind, caring women. Because of this I've been able to build a relationship with my mom, even though she hasn't found recovery, and to let go of the hurt caused by my grandmother even though she passed away long before I got recovery. My Higher Power has taught me to let go of my macho male ego in order to embrace healing. I've learned that humor heals and builds fellowship.

Through service work, I was able to overcome my sense of not belonging. I chaired meetings, sponsored Alateens, and even served as a Group Representative. Through it all, I've been able to slowly but surely move past my resentment towards women.

I've also seen things from the perspective of newcomer women who awkwardly struggled with my presence as a man in meetings where there is a great deal of vulnerability. And sometimes I found it daunting, and even awkward, as these members avoided making eye contact or went out of their way to tell me that they sit far away from me on purpose—because of my gender.

But one day one of the women in my current home group told me, "I'm so glad that you're here. It means so much to me to see that men struggle with the effects of alcoholism as I do, and I love that those little girls in Alateen get to see what a kind and loving man looks like."

I remember stepping outside for a bit as the tears came. I realized that I am truly where I belong.

By Rufus C.

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