

My path: from self-mutilation to self-respect

Sometimes it takes a concerned friend to make us aware that we need Al-Anon. In my case, it was my meditation instructor.

I attempted suicide twice.

After growing up with an alcohol-abusing father and a violently abusive mother, I left home as soon as I could and found myself in a relationship with an alcoholic. I worked two jobs while he collected welfare; I bought his liquor. I drank too, and I never understood why he didn't want to stop until he was involved in a dispute of some kind, usually with his violent, alcoholic brother.

When I left for a year of graduate school abroad, I was shocked that I couldn't function. I dropped out of school and returned to him, not realizing that my addiction to him was as strong and harmful as his addiction to drinking.

I began treating the alcoholic very badly and working as a stripper in addition to my day job. I had no friends and it seemed that people went out of their way to hurt me.

Before long, my belligerent, self-pitying personality led to a final break up with the alcoholic. It was then I sliced my wrists repeatedly. Years of unbearable pain followed.

I cut myself to gain admission to psych wards where I believed I might find help. I got involved with a depressed patient with drug and alcohol issues. I overdosed. The pain went on and on. Even when I went back to school and found a part-time job in my field, I felt empty. I had panic attacks and stayed in bed all day when I wasn't working.

Finally, I ended up at a meditation center, having exhausted all other possibilities. I wanted to die, but my meditation instructor told me about Al-Anon. I finally learned I didn't have to feel this way. I could "let go and let Goddess" and allow my Higher Power to address everything I had been micromanaging.

It's been a year for me in Al-Anon now and I read literature or attend a meeting pretty much every day. I am so happy to say my panic attacks are gone. I no longer contemplate suicide. I have found a new, supportive relationship. I am off disability. I no longer self-injure. I love my full-time job. I'm almost ready to work Step Four.

By M.K., Nova Scotia
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