

## **Barb's Story 2** (posted November 20, 2008)

Hi, my name is Barb S. and I am a grateful member of Al-Anon.

On December 4, 2005 my 23 year old son Brent died from the consequences of a drug and alcohol addiction. Below is my story.

I joined Al-Anon when Brent was 5 years old. I used to take him to meetings with me and sit him in a corner with a coloring book and crayons. He was always so well behaved and I was always so very proud of him.

I can remember going to a meeting on a regular basis where there was a couple that came and their qualifier was their teenage son. I remember thanking God that I didn't have a child with a drug and alcohol problem. Brent was very little at the time so I prayed and ask God to spare me that pain. Still today I can remember their pain as they shared what was going on in their home.

My father is one of my qualifiers. He drank everyday as I was growing up. Today he is sober and I am so very proud of him. We attend recovery functions together and I beam when I see how many people love him. I watch him interact with his many recovery friends and I can see how wonderful his life is now that he is sober. My mother is also in recovery and I look up to her. She is the one that got me to my first meeting and I will be forever grateful to her for that. My son Brent was 3 when my dad went into treatment. I would take Brent to see him at the center at lunchtime. Brent was my parent's first grandchild and I lived at home with my parents for Brent's first year of life. He really bonded with my parents and that bond would last his entire 23 years.

At 13 years old Brent started smoking pot. The next 10 years were a struggle for him and for our family. He was clean for a year and a half when he got into trouble with the law and was forced into treatment. Life improved for all of us during that time. Brent was doing well in school and staying out of trouble. I breathed a sigh of relief but it didn't last long. Unfortunately after he got off probation he went back to using and he once told my husband that he used everyday once he was out of trouble.

Al-Anon has helped me in every aspect of my life. It has helped me get through many bad times as well as teach me how to be happy and enjoy the good times. I used to think that I didn't deserve to be happy but today I know that is not true and my goal is to be happy, joyous and free. I attend 1 to 2 meetings a week and have done so all these years. If I don't go to meetings "stinking thinking" becomes my friend and I don't like it!!

My son died on December 4<sup>th</sup>. We had a memorial service on December 8th and I was at an open A.A. meeting on December 9th. Why, you might ask would I be going to a meeting so soon? Going to meetings is a part of my life no matter what is going on. I cried at every meeting I went to for one solid year after he died. A dear program friend told me that I would cry buckets of tears and he was right. You see he had lost his son to the disease 4 years before my loss. Many times I would sit in a meeting and on the way home I would think it wasn't helping. But I decided to keep going because the meetings helped me before his death so I concluded that they must be helping now even though the pain was so great.

Many people who don't suffer from the disease do not understand the dynamics of it. One week before my son died I gave him an ultimatum. I asked (begged) him to go into treatment or he would have to leave my home. Unfortunately he chose to leave. Some people that do not understand the disease think I did the wrong thing and have been vocal about it. No one in Al-Anon has ever criticized my decision. In fact many, many people that I sit around the tables with cry when I am sharing. They can feel my pain and they understand it.

I saw a psychiatrist for grief counseling for 6 months. It cost me \$110 a session. He was able to help me somewhat but the real help I have gotten has been around the tables of Al-Anon and the most it costs me is \$3.00. I always put in a buck for my husband, one for myself and one for Brent in his memory.

Today I give open talks to young people suffering from the disease. They are all in A.A. and are in treatment. I tell them my story and I cry and some of them cry too. I might



not have been able to help Bren [FileZilla.lnk](https://www.filezilla.net/) t get clean but I will try to reach young people that are suffering until I take my last breath. I didn't want to have to share this horrific story with the world but I owe it to all the people who have helped me, my son and the rest of my family get through this terrible tragedy.

My wonderful husband is also in recovery and I can honestly say that we grow closer every day thanks to all the tools that we have learned in Al-Anon. I am so thankful to God that he blessed me with such an awesome husband.

My home is a home of recovery and it feels really good to be able to say that we are all working one day at a time to be happy, joyous and free.

Thanks for listening.

Barb