

# Stories from the Forum magazine: November 2011

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## Focusing on myself helped me heal

I grew up in chaos. My father drank—but what crushed my self-esteem was my mother's rage and anger towards my brother and me when my father left after their arguing. I learned early on to take care of myself and stay out of the way.

I became the responsible one in the home and as soon as I saw the opportunity, I fled. My body left the home, but my mind did not.

I came to Al-Anon about eight months after my brother died from choking on his own vomit while passed out from alcohol. I received the phone call to identify his body. He was 24 years old. I then had to notify my mother.

The funeral was extremely stressful for me. My parents were now divorced and still angry at one another. I felt very alone even though I now had a family of my own. I sought the help of a counselor. I was depressed, suicidal, and guilt-ridden. I truly believed that somehow, some way, I could have prevented this tragedy. I was supposed to take care of him and I failed.

Someone suggested that I try an Al-Anon meeting. My first meeting was extremely painful. I felt broken, embarrassed, and angry that I had all these meetings and work to do to get better. I truly wished for a different past all together but, that being impossible, I needed to prepare for my future.

Al-Anon is where I felt okay again. I learned to be responsible for my actions—and only my actions. I did the best I could with what I knew then and, thanks to Al-Anon, I know better now. I learned how to feel my feelings again.

I needed to teach myself the values acceptable for my life and to stop blaming my parents for their failings. It was here I was told, "We all are not perfect." I didn't have to try to be perfect anymore, what a relief.

So I decided to give God his job back!

I owe it to myself and to my children to be the healthiest person I can be. I believe we are all here for a purpose. I made it a purpose in my life to be happy and to learn from others who have walked this road before me. If I wanted things to change, I had to be willing to change my behaviors. In so many ways, I had come to act like the people I most wanted to change.

From listening to people speak at Al-Anon, I learned that healing could start if I focused on myself more and other people's actions less. The people in my life were going to act the way they acted if I was around or not. I had to give up my illusion of power and admit that my way isn't the only way.

I'll continue to come to meetings and reach out to members in the program because I'm a work in progress and God is not finished with me yet.

By Lisa M., Massachusetts  
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