

Letting go of my teenage daughter—my First Step

It was three short years ago that I almost lost my beautiful teenage daughter. We had discovered her journal detailing binge drinking, sex with friends, and her experimentation with drugs.

She ran away time after time, careless as to the havoc, hysteria, and pain her actions brought. I spent dozens of sleepless nights walking the floors and driving the streets looking for her.

Several weeks later, with my wild and crazy daughter safely tucked away in the juvenile detention center, I drove upstate to visit a rehabilitation facility eight hours away. That day, without knowing the Al-Anon program, I made the first steps on my own road to recovery. I decided to "Let Go and Let God."

I acknowledged my own powerlessness over her addictions. I came to believe that my Higher Power could restore me to sanity. And I made the conscious decision to turn my daughter back to the God of her understanding.

I made a deal with my Higher Power. I had been given this beautiful gift of a child for 15 years, and I was giving my daughter back to God. If she could be saved that would be a miracle, but if she was to die then I would bury her and accept that too. I was utterly powerless. And at that moment, I knew peace and acceptance from what I would later learn was my coming to the First Step in Al-Anon.

A few weeks later I repeated the drive, this time with the wild-eyed girl in the back seat. I turned away as she was taken from me. As weeks and months passed, I was instructed—and even ordered—to let her go.

At one parents' weekend, I saw a self-assured woman from another state who had a child there, and she told me about Al-Anon. I wanted what she had. I brought my daughter to the school to fix her, but it was in this place that I found my own recovery.

Three years later, it is evident that the Twelve Step programs of A.A. and Al-Anon are saving my daughter and me on our independent paths to recovery. These programs have become our mutual saving grace.

Many of us came to Al-Anon in desperation. Some of us came in faith. Many times I have had to sheepishly rediscover that action is not always the best response to an alcoholic situation. I find the peace I seek through acceptance and waiting for guidance, or simply acknowledging that I cannot control most things, events, or people.

By Jeanette M., Pennsylvania
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