

Today, I have a true sense of who I am

I was raised in an emotionally, physically, and sexually abusive alcoholic family. As a result of major traumas in my life, I learned to operate in a perpetual state of fear and shame at the core of my being. I based all my decisions in my adult life on these two foundations. I had no self-esteem. I didn't even think of myself as having a self. I had completely shut down feeling any emotion other than anger.

After joining Al-Anon in my 60s, I came to believe in a Higher Power. Al-Anon has given me my identity as a person. I am no longer living life as a victim but as a functioning human being. I have devoured the literature, worked the Steps with my Sponsor, and given back through service on the group and district levels. I have my own set of values now that I live by, especially in my relationships.

Recovery in Al-Anon has helped me understand my needs as a person. I now know how it feels to be valued as a person, to be spoken to with kindness and respect, to have freedom of expression and emotional support, and to have my spirit lifted with love, joy, and laughter.

In Al-Anon, I've learned that it is okay to feel my feelings and to set boundaries with people. Today, I feel safe to tell my secrets. I can get rid of the painful memories and the habits I developed to protect myself growing up within the disease of alcoholism. My mental focus is no longer on being loved by others or receiving approval from others in order to feel good about myself. I no longer need to be a people pleaser in fear of rejection or someone else's anger, or put aside my own values in order to connect to someone else in a relationship or friendship.

Today, I am no longer running on empty. I have a true sense of who I am as a person. Al-Anon has been and continues to be a wonderful adventure of discovery. I will continue to surround myself with other Al-Anon friends who will help me to grow, and I will protect myself from those who hamper my progress. With a grateful heart, I thank Al-Anon for being there all these years, and will do my part to keep it going for years to come.

By Catherine M., Florida
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