

# My son's alcoholism challenged my whole identity

**I was in my Al-Anon home group meeting yesterday when I looked over at a newcomer and saw my previous pain on another woman's face. I remembered the overwhelming heartache, like nothing I had ever felt before, as I realized—my beautiful baby boy is an alcoholic.**

Before Al-Anon, nothing else was as much a priority as keeping my son alive. In my mind, he could die at any time from this disease, and a good mom would do anything to help her child. I was embarrassed that people would think I had done something wrong in raising my son. I begged, cried, and obsessed about finding help for him and his drinking.

This included behaviors I had long ago abandoned, because as a child I was not allowed to express opinions and have feelings. I had also grown up in a home tainted by this disease. As an adult, I knew that was the wrong way to raise a family. I thought I knew the exact answers on how to have a successful, loving family. Much of my thinking was based on a television show that I had watched as a child to escape my reality.

My son's addiction challenged my whole identity. I remember begging my Higher Power for a book that would tell me exactly what to do. I would do it exactly that way, no matter how grueling and tiresome.

I was willing to lose my home to send him to rehabilitation. I neglected my husband and my other three children. My best friend at the time abruptly stopped talking to me. My husband wanted our son out of the home. Even my son wanted out of the home and went so far as to try to get social services to remove him.

The worst reality was that my son resented me. His resentment and dislike sent me back to the rooms of Al-Anon. I had been there years before because of the effects of my husband's alcoholism. It just never occurred to me to go because of my child.

I now have my own life, with no time to immerse myself in others' lives. I learned through working the Steps to recognize my feelings, without stifling them to the point they begin to own me. I remember doing everything as fast as possible to get as much done as possible and feel as little as possible. I thought I had to work in servitude to others. In Al-Anon, I learned that if I was resentful in this made-up slavery, it wasn't a gift or service to others.

The hardest part was learning to be still with myself. At first, I would have to do needlework during meetings, just to sit that long. The greatest thing I learned was that I

could not control all my defects of character, but my Higher Power could and would, if I asked. In my mind, I would visualize that my Higher Power loved my son as much if not more than I did. Daily, I would imagine my Higher Power surrounded by children. I would swaddle my son with a blanket and hand him over to his Higher Power.

Today, the biggest reward is my relationships with others. If not for Al-Anon, I would have alienated everyone I knew. My oldest daughter and I are true friends. She has forgiven me for the neglect she had to endure and the responsibility she had to assume. My youngest two children are finding their own identities. My husband is allowed to have his own opinion and actions separate from mine. My son and I don't have long, heartfelt conversations, but he will spontaneously hug me, and I know I have overcome his resentment.

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