

What a difference a year makes...

By Linda M., Ontario

I am forever changed by the spiritual gifts of our Al-Anon program—its profound literature, tools, and teachings—and most especially by the warmth, compassion, and mutuality I've discovered in our fellowship. This incredible feeling of truly belonging, perhaps for the very first time in my life, is one of the most precious gifts I've ever received. I'm so thankful for the blessing of finally "coming home" to a Higher Power of my own understanding, and to all of you, the family I've always been looking for.

*"When all I could say
was my name and then
pass, you thanked me
for being there."*

Each of you who've gone before me has been so gracious in sharing your wisdom, support, and encouragement throughout this first year of my recovery. One year ago, I came to you shattered and in tremendous pain, brought to my knees, again feeling completely defeated by life's traumas, the loss of my family of origin, and the loss of *myself*.

When I first arrived in the rooms of Al-Anon, I cried through several meetings, probably for weeks, but you asked me to "Keep Coming Back." At every meeting I went to, you greeted me with smiles, warm welcomes, and asked me if I'd like a hug. You were respectful of my tears, and simply passed me the Kleenex. You showed me the way, until the meeting format became familiar and comfortable. When all I could say was my name and then pass, you thanked me for being there. Until I could finally read aloud, you kindly read for me. When you spoke, I heard you telling my story and speaking to me. You told me just to "Keep an Open Mind" and I found a level of peace here that I never felt before. You gave me your contact information and encouraged me to keep in touch between meetings. When I reached out to you, you were delighted and listened lovingly and compassionately.

With the Al-Anon program and your help, I'm learning a new way to live. I'm learning that I didn't cause it, I can't control, and I can't cure it, and that with my Higher Power's help, all things are possible. The only thing I can control or change

is my own attitude and expectations. Life is about becoming who we really are. It is about "Progress Not Perfection." Through acceptance and forgiveness, of myself and of others, there is serenity. I can share my secrets and character defects with you (people who truly understand and care), and that in releasing them I unburden myself. By keeping the focus on me, taking care of myself, and doing what I'm asked in Al-Anon, I can indeed recover from the family disease of alcoholism. I am worthy, I am lovable, and I am enough!

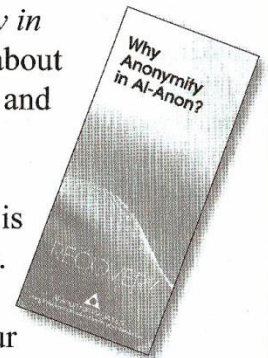
The Al-Anon program is a process. It will probably take me a lifetime to complete it. I've never been a joiner. I've never actually joined anything before in my life. But I can

tell you that I am a committed and deeply grateful member of Al-Anon. I am grateful for the priceless principles of the program, the unconditional love you have given me, the faith in the face of fear, the hope of growing into the person I was truly meant to be, and the possibility of being able to pay it forward someday.

To those of you who may be newer to the Al-Anon program, please know that each time I see you and witness your own courage (just by showing up), I feel blessed by your very presence and propelled to continue my journey of recovery. I hope that you, too, will continue to find in this fellowship the help and friendship I have been privileged to enjoy.

Not just *why* anonymity, but *what, where, and when*

The recently revised pamphlet, *Why Anonymity in Al-Anon?* (P-33), can answer many questions about anonymity and confidentiality within Al-Anon and at the public level, including on the Internet. The revised version of the pamphlet is easily identifiable, since it has a new cover design. It is eight pages and is available for 35 cents (U.S.). Remember—when you buy from your local Literature Distribution Center, you support your local services.



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