

My recovery — a gift and a choice ... continued

I was driving home from work with my three young children in the back seat. Suddenly, the two-year-old began to cry. The almost-four-year-old was drawing on her head. I smiled to myself, calmly pulled to the side of the road, and took the pen away. There was no shouting, slapping, or condemnation. Just a simple, "Please don't draw on your sister. She doesn't like it."

That's when it hit me. God's plan for my children and me was much better than mine. My ex-husband turned out to be one of the ones who didn't have the capacity for the honesty needed to get better. He died a few years later of the effects of his drug and alcoholic lifestyle. But my children and I were free to get better. We were not trapped. We had choices. I coined my first slogan then, "God has something better in mind."

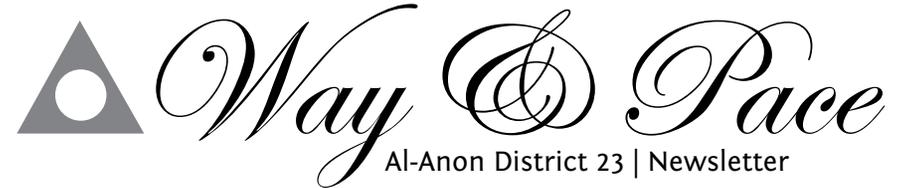
This was just one incident of many that has helped me to see that I am the one who chooses pain. I fight hard for my fantasies, in doing so I set myself up for more pain. Today, I pray to see the world through my Higher Power's eyes, and ask for guidance and clarity to make good choices based on God's will for me instead of my will for myself.

Today, I can see how those horrible experiences strengthened us; how we grew to see that we were worthy of love; and that our lives could be so much more than a string of horrific experiences. I was never a perfect parent, but with Al-Anon's help, I did a good job. With Alateen's help, my children learned that their father's behavior was not their fault.

By Viki M., Washington

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**My recovery — a gift and a choice**

I once read, "Nothing is either good or bad. It is our thinking that makes it so." Often as I look back over my life and ponder the instances and events I've lived through, I am filled with gratitude for the things I've seen, felt, experienced, or accomplished.

I wasn't always grateful. I was not grateful for the violent outbursts, the stealing, and the lack of money for necessities. I was definitely not grateful for the dissolution of my marriage, which I saw as the death of all my dreams for the future, and the realization of the harm I had caused my children by staying in that marriage for as long as I did.

Thank God for the Al-Anon program. As I attended meetings, my choices expanded. I realized that I didn't have to rely on someone who was proving to be unreliable. When the moment came when I had to choose between the wellbeing of my children and my husband's disease, I was able to do so.

Today, I am immensely grateful. The horror and pain of the disease were the only things that could kick me out of fantasyland and into reality. It took a whole year after the divorce before I began to see the other side of the coin.

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AL-ANON NEWS**Al-Anon from your Desktop:**

World Service Office: www.al-anon.alateen.org

Northern California Area: www.ncwsa.org

District 23's own webpage: www.ncwsa.org/d23

Online Meetings: www.ola-is.org

and so many more – if you google Alanon, you'll find lots of us.

Next District 23 Speaker Meeting/Potluck Dinner

Friday, April 19, 2013

5:30 Potluck Dinner, 6:30–7:45 Speaker Meeting with AA, Al-Anon, and Alateen Speakers

Quaker Meeting House, 225 Rooney St., Santa Cruz

District 23's: A Day in Al-Anon/Potluck Lunch: "We're all in this together." Join District 23 for a day of "Fun, Fellowship, Recovery and Food" on Saturday, June 22, 2013 at 8:30am – 3:15pm at Aptos Christian Fellowship, 7200 Freedom Blvd, Aptos, CA (nearest intersection: Highway 1). Bring a dish to share!

Way & Pace is produced by and for the members of the 23rd Al-Anon District, which serves Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties. It is distributed on the third Saturday of every other month to coincide with the District meeting. Your stories and Al-Anon related announcements are gratefully accepted.

Please submit via email: **Petra (Editor) at district23wayandpace@gmail.com**

Articles published at discretion of editors. Articles may be edited to fit the space.

NOTE: This is a local newsletter, not Al-Anon conference approved literature. We invite all members to submit material for publication. The opinions within do not necessarily reflect those of Al-Anon or District 23.

I can't change my son — only myself

Today is my birthday—and the only thing I want is to thank all of you for the blessings I have received from Al-Anon. All of you have shared and reached out to me in ways that have touched my heart. You helped me to believe that it is possible to endure the pain and accept that my son has a problem with drinking and using drugs.

My son is almost 20 years old. He has been walking down this destructive path for the past five years. There is nothing I can say or do to change the fact that he is driven to abuse his body. His actions threaten to destroy the very life he was given as a gift from God. He remains in denial that there is a problem at all.

I was overwhelmed with fear and anxiety because of unresolved feelings from my past. I grew up surrounded by alcoholism. My mother was an alcoholic. My parents divorced and my father left home when I was six years old. Any childhood I had experienced was buried along with my memories. I became a pseudo-adult and took care of my mother. I was the best little girl—so responsible and aware.

I spent all my summers with my maternal grandparents, where I learned how my loving and amazing grandmother handled my gruff and abusive alcoholic grandfather.

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You don't have to drink to suffer from alcoholism.

There is help for you in Al-Anon and Alateen.

To find a meeting or information about Al-anon go to: ncwsa.org/d23

Al-anon Answering Service (831) 462-1818

I can't change my son — only myself... continued

I walked on eggshells, ready to adapt to his explosive outbursts.

Just when I thought I knew all I wanted to know about alcohol, my mother remarried, and my stepfather was an alcoholic. He yelled and hurt my younger brother and me. We would just hide from him. We never had friends over, and there were no family dinners.

I made a promise to myself that my children would never experience what I did, so I didn't drink alcohol. I was going to be the best mom. However, behind my strong and independent exterior, I carried the affects of growing up as a frightened and confused young girl.

I have battled congestive heart disease for nearly 13 years. I escaped a marriage that was toxic to me. I was not safe and I couldn't allow my boys to think that their father's behavior was appropriate. I was forced to have my ex-husband and my beloved son leave our family home by court order—the rage and vile names were more than I could bear. I broke my promise to myself to give my son the family he deserved.

At one time, I believed I was to blame for my son's drinking and drug use. Outpatient rehab had failed, and all my hopes for his recovery were shattered. A compassionate man saw me standing alone in the parking lot, unable to get in my car and drive home because I was so devastated. The tears wouldn't stop falling. He encouraged me to go to an Al-Anon meeting for parents.

I found the courage to go to the Al-Anon meeting, and I kept coming back. I read the literature and worked the Twelve Steps. Gradually, I learned to accept that I was powerless over alcohol, and that the guilt, which consumed me until I didn't want to live, was useless.

With hard work and faith, I came to believe that the only way I could help my son was to give him to God, and love him just the way he is with no conditions attached. I had to accept that I could lose him to the deadly disease of alcoholism. When I surrendered and let him go, a great burden was lifted off my shoulders, and I realized that I wasn't responsible for my son's choices.

I have learned in Al-Anon that the only person I can change is myself. I have my son to thank for that. When I was so desperate over his problems, I walked into the rooms of Al-Anon and out of denial. My obsession and the insanity were robbing me of whatever life I had left.

I can't fix my son, because he has decided to continue to drink and use drugs. He can't control it, and even with all the love I have in my heart for him, it is still impossible for me to cure him.

I am still learning to mind my own business, and to live my life without fear and regret, "One Day at a Time." I will "Keep Coming Back

By Sharon C., California

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My serenity... and my sister's relapse

The day I had not worried about came today—the day she decided to drink again. I have no idea how the pain of drinking brought her to sobriety, and how the pain of living brought her back to drinking. I just know my beautiful sister is suffering and our family is grieving the loss of the brightness that came with her sobriety. My heart is full of compassion, sadness, and love.

I recall with gratitude our joyous reunion during the time of her sobriety. I wish that it could go on forever, that I could keep the relationship that we have begun to build. We grew closer, shared our ups and downs, and encouraged one another. We had a special connection, having survived 40 years of an alcoholic home and alcoholic relationships together, and now recovery.

It's been a privilege to watch her find her own way through difficult times with the help of her loving God and the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous. Recalling with gratitude helps me to heal today, and to let go.

I don't know what the next day will bring, so I won't worry. For today, I extend compassion to myself, to my family, and to my loved ones as the scenery changes on our path. For today, I will be kind to myself and reach out for the kindness of my Al-Anon community. They are with me. For today, I will see beyond the disease of alcoholism to the light of a lovely spirit, and employ the magnanimous hope that recovery offers for another day's reprieve.

By Terry C., Louisiana

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CHOICES

No, I will not heed the voice that cracks orders,
incessant, loud, habitual orders.
I'll not trudge under its shadow.

Instead I will settle by the silver-lined river,
invite in the light filled notes
that dance across the ripples.

They are clear and harmonious.
Gone the strict marching band
with its stripes and honor.

There's only light, the river
and the bright almost transparent white horizon
which pulls me forward.

Anonymous, Santa Cruz, CA



**Share your experience, strength and hope or
any Al-anon related news to:**

Petra (Editor) at district23wayandpace@gmail.com

