

## **Always There for Me**

My mother is an alcoholic. She has been one since the day I was born. But there was a period of peace that lasted until I was four or five years old. I remember snuggling with her on the couch under our special blanket to watch movies. My parents were happy together, and I was happy with them.

Things got worse, and there were lots of incidents, but never did I think I'd have to experience a day that would lead to losing my mother forever. That day came when I was eight and walked in from school to find my mom unconscious on the stairs and bleeding from her head.

My father explained that no one was harming my mom but herself. As a child, of course, I wondered if it was my fault. I wondered what I had done wrong to deserve this. What could I have done differently? When these questions got so intense that I would break down and cry into my father's arms and every tear was about blaming myself, he decided I needed support. We both had needed it for years.

So, we went to Al-Anon and Alateen. When I say Alateen saved me, I don't mean it hyperbolically. I do not think I would be where I am today without it. As an eight-year-old girl, I stepped into that room of teenagers and was accepted with wide-open arms. I was mature for my age, due to the constant need to rely on myself and hold conversations with police, but I was still a lot younger than the other members.

It didn't matter to them, though. I was another child of alcoholic parents, reaching out for help, and they took my hand. And when my mother was taken from the house for involuntary

commitment (emergency evaluation and treatment for persons who are a danger to themselves or others due to a mental illness), Alateen guided me through it all.

The Alateen members let me know that I wasn't the only child in the world to experience alcoholism. I had felt that loneliness for years, so having ten or more people share their experiences gave me my first exposure to empathy. Not having my mother around was hard, but I had found my people. These people understood me like no one else could—not even my father, who eventually became an alcoholic himself.

For years after, I struggled, and hard. Nothing was ever consistent for me. It was like no one ever stayed. But Alateen always did. Always.

*By Lila*

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