

Shifting My Focus to Myself

Before I came into Al-Anon, my focus was on anyone but me. It was mostly on my husband, who had just entered an outpatient rehab program. My sole purpose was to be supportive to him and to ensure he never drank again. He had just been released from the hospital after having spent a month in the intensive care unit. He had become critically ill from drinking and nearly didn't survive. Therefore, I focused on what I could do to ensure he stayed sober.

In one of the outpatient family sessions I attended, I expressed my fear of my husband drinking again. The counselor looked at me and said, "You need to go to Al-Anon." I thought that was great, because now I had a place to go where someone would tell me how to keep my husband from drinking.

I went to an Al-Anon meeting, and when I got there, everyone was smiling, laughing, and seemed so happy. I felt terrified, but also excited, because I was going to learn the secret to keeping my husband sober. When it was my turn to share, I told my story and asked what I needed to do to keep him from drinking. At that point, the whole room laughed. I was horrified. But they all smiled and said I was in the right place and to "Keep Coming Back."

I wasn't happy that I didn't get the answer I wanted, but I did keep going back. The more Al-Anon meetings I attended, the less I focused on my husband's recovery and the more I focused on mine. I learned the importance of self-care, and I shifted my focus to myself. I had never really done that before or imagined it was something I should be doing. I started eating

healthier and taking better care of myself. In doing so, I found I wasn't trying to control my husband's behavior so much; I was paying more attention to mine.

I've been in the program now for six years, and Al-Anon has helped me begin to figure out who I am and realize that it's alright to focus on myself. My feelings matter. I am a happier person today because of the Al-Anon program.

By Debie R., New Mexico

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