

Loving Guidelines

Recently I had the privilege of listening to a sponsee's Fifth Step. As they were telling me the many ways they had harmed themselves, I asked, "What rule was that due to?" They burst into tears. That rule was the belief they had internalized as a four-year-old while growing up in a family affected by the disease of alcoholism.

Since that occasion, I've asked members of my Al-Anon group and personally reflected on the question: What rule was that due to? We all provided answers that were similar yet different, based on what our mothers, our fathers, or ourselves communicated to us. We had heard things like "Don't be seen," "Don't be too loud," "Don't stand up for yourself," and "Don't tell anyone." Whatever we heard, it stuck with us.

Now that I'm in recovery, I can ask myself whether that rule is still valid or applicable and whether I would choose it again. If it's no longer serving me, I can release it. In its place, my Higher Power can give me kinder, gentler, and more loving guidelines instead of rules.

By Barbara K., Minnesota

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