

I Found My Voice

Growing up, the alcoholism in my family was kept a secret. Both my parents were alcoholics, though that's not to say they weren't great parents. I have many memories of snuggling up with them after coming in from playing in the snow and having dance parties in the basement. Since I was a baby, my father's drinking was out of control. Sometimes, he would have periods of sobriety. One lasted four years.

In second grade, I had a teacher who was a strong and caring woman. When she learned of my home situation—my dad losing his job and my mom ending their relationship—she reassured me and told me everything and everyone would be okay. She would say, “One Day at a Time.” At that age, I didn't know what that meant. I really looked up to her and hope she's watching over me to see how much I've grown.

My mother would tell me to watch what my dad drank and take note when he became angry and never tell anyone if he'd lost his job or was going to rehab. That was the shame and secrecy of living with an alcoholic. While my dad was in and out of rehab, my mom was drinking just as heavily, but the focus was always on my dad.

The summer before my first year of high school, I started Alateen. It was a place where I felt welcomed. Before Alateen, I kept all my emotions inside, believing no one could relate to my situation. I've been in this program a year now, and I'm still learning. I still struggle with

detaching with love, but with the help of the Al-Anon Member Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS) supporting my group, I am getting there.

My father has since lost his job, his home, and all his money. I have cut all ties with him out of anger and resentment. My mother has been sober for five years now. An Alateen member told me, “Just focus on ‘One Day at a Time.’” That has stuck with me. “One Day at a Time” helps me remember that I’m not alone and to focus on what I can do today. I can’t predict what the alcoholic will do; I can only control myself and what I want to do.

I still love my father. I know he’s sick. He didn’t choose to affect me with his drinking, and neither did my mom. Alcoholism is hard, but I’ll always have hope. Alateen has helped me see there is a future. I can’t control the past or future, so I live in the present. I hope the alcoholics in my life get sober and live a wonderful life. I hope other kids in my situation find Alateen.

By Lucy

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