

Caring for the Parent Who Didn't Care for Me

I didn't realize I was raised in alcoholism. Mine felt like a typical Gen X childhood—latchkey kid, caring for younger siblings, parents who worked hard and partied harder. Only later did I understand the instability and trauma that shaped me. Looking back, I can see that alcoholism ran deep in my mom's family. Chaos was normalized. Safety wasn't.

Today, my mom is 74 and in declining health. My siblings and I are now her caretakers.

Through the grace of God and Al-Anon, I worked the Steps, found compassion, and forgave her. I let go of long-held resentment.

But caregiving has stirred feelings I didn't expect. I love my mom and want to be there for her, but old wounds resurface. Boy, is she stubborn! Facing this, I'm learning how to balance compassion with boundaries—how to care for her without abandoning myself. It's a challenge.

Recently, I had a meltdown at a meeting, my first in years. Despite this, I felt safe enough to be honest. Recovery doesn't mean this is easy. Many members understand the powerlessness of caring for a parent who may not drink anymore but still carries the "isms" or the same patterns of behavior.

Forgiveness, I'm discovering, is layered. Caregiving peels back tender places I thought had healed. Al-Anon reminds me that I can show up with dignity. I can love someone and still take care of myself, even as I grieve what I didn't have.

Today, I'm grateful that, thanks to God and my Al-Anon community, I didn't have to fall apart alone.

By Chrissy J., GA

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