

Why I Stayed

There are many reasons, but I think the initial one was the connection I made with people who opened their hearts by sharing their trials and struggles, past and present. When I first came to Al-Anon, I didn't know what to expect, but I quickly found something I hadn't experienced before. Second, I was finally listened to without being shut down. And third, I felt safe.

The hurt and pain I felt were not unique to me. There were others who suffered from living with the effects of this disease, yet they seemed to be able to smile in spite of it. I envied what they had, and I wanted to have that too.

I tried to find happiness despite my ex's drinking, but what I really wanted was for him to stop. In Al-Anon, I learned that my peace did not have to depend on someone else's choices. As I kept coming back, I began to find more peace. My recovery became a remarkable journey of self-acceptance and forgiveness.

I was a child of a mixed marriage, and I had lived with shame about that for much of my life. I loved my father deeply, but I hid my identity and background as much as I could. Through the program, I began to face the part of myself I had avoided for years. This led me to travel to his hometown of Iloilo in the Philippines, and I met my father's family for the first time. They welcomed me with open arms. I made amends to my father before he passed, for which I am deeply grateful. That was many years ago.

Today, I am blessed to sponsor others, which is a gift in itself. My sponsees have become my friends, and many of them now sponsor others. Being a Sponsor is not easy; it requires

patience, understanding, and honesty. I once heard an A.A. speaker who identified as “recovered” joke, “If you don't hate your Sponsor, you don't have a good sponsor.”

We laughed, but I understood the meaning. There have been times I didn't agree with my Sponsor or like what she had to say, but over time, her words proved true. I just wasn't ready to accept them yet. The experience taught me that growth in Al-Anon doesn't always feel comfortable, but it's certainly worth it.

Meetings grant me serenity. Through sponsorship, I have found the power to give and receive love. Sticking with Al-Anon brought me healing, connection, and a community. This sense of belonging and purpose is why I continue to stay and grow.

By Linda C., Wisconsin

The Forum, September 2026

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