Hello, Officer? My Spouse Is Driving Drunk

I still remember sharing at my local newcomers meeting less than six months into my recovery. My spouse was in the habit of drinking and driving, which both frightened and angered me. One night, I called the local police to report her, certain I could protect her as well as others on the road.

The officer on the line asked me questions: Had I seen her drinking before getting into the car? Did I know how much she had consumed? Did I know where she was headed? I answered no to each question, but I pleaded with the officer to watch for our family car. I provided the make, model, license plate number, and a description of my wife.

After listening, the officer asked, “Ma’am, have you ever been to Al-Anon?”

“Yes,” I replied. “I just started attending a newcomers meeting.”

“That’s great,” he said kindly. “Just keep going back, okay?”

A few days later, I shared that story at my meeting. When I finished, the room filled with understanding laughter. I knew no one was laughing at me, but I could not figure out why they were so amused by my story. With a sheepish smile I said, “I don’t know why this is so funny. My wife is still drinking and driving.”

All they said was, “Keep Coming Back!” And I did.

Years into my recovery, I still reflect on the laughter my share evoked. No one told me how to get my wife to stop driving while intoxicated, and no one told me I was wrong for calling the police. Instead, they encouraged me to keep attending meetings and offered something more powerful than advice: compassion. Now, when a newcomer’s share makes me smile, I hold a special place in my heart for them and for the newcomer I once was, just beginning

to see life through the lens of Al-Anon. I try to remember that my most important response is compassion and encouragement to “Keep Coming Back.”

By Lauren J., California

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