

Why I Keep Coming Back

I've been a *grateful* member of Al-Anon since February 14, 2018. For the previous five and a half years, I was a bitter, angry, and resentful member. I couldn't bring myself to accept that alcoholism is a disease. I found it much easier to view as bad behavior.

By that Wednesday morning, the alcoholic had disappeared for five weeks, leaving me with temporary, emergency custody of my Type 1 diabetic stepdaughter and a very large chip on my shoulder. I went to my Al-Anon meeting in hope of finding some relief there, even if only temporarily.

No one had signed up ahead to chair the meeting, but someone volunteered. After the opening, she asked if anyone had a topic in mind, and a longtime member immediately said the word "consistency." In my mind, I began running through the list of bad behavior consistently displayed by the alcoholic, and I was instantly awash in my go-to emotion—anger.

But something happened that day. As other members shared, I began to examine the things *I* was doing consistently. First, I was consistently angry. Second, I consistently judged the alcoholic; and third, I consistently justified my anger and judgment. I came to realize that I no longer liked myself and whom I had become.

That day, I was finally able to stop blaming all my problems on the alcoholic, and began to examine my own faults and character defects. That day, I was able to accept that alcoholism truly is a disease.

On page 76 of *One Day at a Time in Al-Anon* (B-6), it states, "No matter how badly we think life has beaten us, we still cling to the idea that acceptance and surrender are a kind of hopeless giving-in, a weakness of character. Not so! *Acceptance* means simply admitting there are things we cannot change."

By clinging to the idea that I would be weak to accept that I couldn't change the alcoholic, I had turned into someone I didn't like. That day, I began to understand that the only person I had the right to change was me.

Today, even though the alcoholic and I are no longer together, we have become friends again. Thanks to the acceptance I found on that day, I have serenity and gratitude. Those two precious gifts are why I keep coming back.

By Eric G., Montana

The Forum, December 2020

Reprinted with permission of *The Forum*, Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc., Virginia Beach, VA.