I learned how to take care of myself

**I cannot express how much Alateen has helped me. Growing up, I was all alone. My parents were always fighting. Whether it was about what to have for dinner or getting a divorce, they were always at each other’s throat. I would try to solve the issue and make things better, but I quickly learned that it made things worse. As a seven- or eight-year-old, I didn’t know how not to be in the middle. Until Alateen, I didn’t learn how not to get upset when they were fighting and to focus on myself.**

**Alateen has not only taught me how to detach with love from my parents’ fighting, but it has also brought so many friendships and opportunities in my life.**

**When I was younger, not only did I have to deal with emotional, physical, and sexual abuse from my alcoholic father, I also had to watch my life fall apart day by day. Although my life was extremely hard and sometimes unbearable, I put on a smiling face and showed everyone that I was the happy kid in school, and that I loved life. This was hard to do, but I certainly did not want people asking questions and finding out that I really was a sad and lonely girl who had messed up parents.**

**I kept everything quiet until about sixth grade, when my parents got divorced. The divorce was so hard on me. I needed someone to talk to, so I told a few of my friends what was wrong. Being in sixth grade, drama and secrets spread fast. By the end of the day, my whole school knew that I was going through a hard time and that my perfect family had fallen apart. This was very hard to deal with, but looking back on it, I realized that this is what brought me to talk to people. I wanted to be popular and have friends so badly that I just poured most of my life out to them.**

**With everything being so bad both at school and at home, my mom suggested Alateen. I wanted to give it a try, however my sister didn’t want to go. I found the courage to go alone. My first meeting was horrible. There was only one other kid and one of the Group Sponsors. Although I had hated that meeting, I decided to give it another shot, and I am so glad I did.**

**Slowly, everything started to make sense. I realized that I can’t control my father, and that it really is not my fault he is drinking. I learned how to find a Higher Power, and most importantly, I learned how to take care of myself.**

**Alateen has brought so many people into my life, and I don’t know what I would do without them. I am so thankful that I was able to bring four other people into the rooms of Alateen. Not only does Alateen help me deal with the alcoholic in my life, I use my program every single day. Words cannot describe how much Alateen has helped me. Although having an alcoholic in my life is extremely hard, I wouldn’t change it for anything because it brought me to Alateen.**

By Julie, Connecticut
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