

# I am the only one who can help me heal

By Shelley B., British Columbia

My alcoholic spouse brought me to Al-Anon. I thought someone would tell me how to make things better. I now realize that it is up to me. I am the only one who can help me heal. Only I can do the work, and work it takes because wishful thinking doesn't make anything happen.

I still struggle with alcoholism being a disease. I still tend to think of it as a disease by choice.

I do accept that I can't control the behavior of another person, although I still sometimes find myself trying to do it. I still try to manipulate and push my own agenda

In the process of trying to change others, I lost touch with myself. I allowed others to be more important to me than myself. I sought affirmation from others by trying to shape and mold myself into whatever I thought they expected from me, and ended up losing sight of myself in the process. This greatly affected my self-esteem, and the way I saw the world. I felt lonely and empty—a hollow shell. I now see this as a very self-defeating behavior.

As my awareness grows, I find it helpful when I pray to ask only

for knowledge of God's will for me and the power to carry that out. I see that it is an important part of my growth to find out what my own needs and wants are, as they're still unclear to me. I still concern myself with what I think others expect, want, or need from me. I don't always trust my own feelings. I'm actually just beginning to understand my feelings and acknowledge them.

Before I came to Al-Anon, my life was completely unmanageable. It is much better today. I am able to recognize when the "crazies" start playing in my head, and am thankful that I now have tools that help. I understand that when I can't find any joy or happiness in anything around me, I have let my life become unmanageable, and then I grab a tool from the program. I also have come to realize that isolation is not taking care of myself; it is hiding and keeping my secrets locked deep inside where they fester and get really ugly, which causes me more pain.

I feel so much better when I really take the time to take care of myself.

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