

When I know better, I do better

By Christine S., California

I was raised in the disease of alcoholism, married the disease, and bred the disease. I started Al-Anon in 1995, but when my husband died three months later, it never occurred to me to go back.

In 2010, after coming home from a job out of state, I started to have that familiar panic feeling. The one that says something is terribly wrong, but I can't quite put my finger on it. I knew exactly where to go. This is my fifth year in Al-Anon. I work the best program I can. When I know better, I do better. My addict/alcoholic son was in yet another rehab. There have been many. This time he wanted to be there. I began to regain some of the hope that I'd lost. He was sober and seemed to be willing to do whatever he had to do. He would ask about how I was, how his brother and nephew were doing, and always if I was taking good care of his cats.

"I had no problem lying."

One day, I came home and I couldn't find one of his cats. It was gone. The cat was old and sick and I knew it had gone off to die. I began to worry about how upset my son would be. I thought it would be best not to say anything the next time he called and asked about his cat.

I convinced myself it was best for him, "Don't tell him. He's doing well. You don't want him to relapse." I had no problem lying. As time went by, I realized he was bound to find out the truth, so I thought I'd prepare him by setting the stage, saying things like, "you know the cat's real old," "the cat's not looking so good," etc.

I mentioned my problem to a close Al-Anon friend. She encouraged me to call my Sponsor and tell my son the truth. I replied that I was waiting for the right time. More time went by and my son was ready for a family visit. We were all excited and made plans to drive to the rehab facility to spend the day with him.

That morning, I got everyone in the van (my son, his girlfriend, and my six-year-old grandson) and promptly prepared all of them to make sure they didn't mention the cat and upset my son. We got there, picked him up, and headed out for a great day.

Within 15 minutes, my son asked my grandson about the cat. My grandson's eyes got big. He was scared, and looked at me. It was so sad! My son immediately knew. I was caught. Everyone was upset and my son, rightfully so, was mad. We got through the visit somehow.



When I got home, I knew I had to make amends. As I prepared to make the call, I prayed, and suddenly it hit me. My amends was not only for lying about the cat. I had spent years "protecting" my son from reality. I had never allowed him to have feelings, experience anything I thought might make him sad, or grow up. My part in this disease was getting in the way of him learning to deal with life on life's terms.

My next amends was to my other son and his girlfriend. That one included owning my role in the disease. Lastly, I talked to my grandson. I told him I was sorry I tried to make him lie and that I'm working on learning to be a better grandma.

As I walked my grandson to school a couple days later he said, "Hey Gram, you're not going to lie today, are you?" I laughed and told him today I know better, so I would do better.

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