

# My struggle with powerlessness

By Lindsey L., Minnesota

I am early in my recovery, and already I see when and where the disease of alcoholism grabbed a hold of me. My parents were alcoholics and addicts, and my extended family was full of the same. I suffered through the twists of manipulation and lies my entire life.

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It was not surprising then, as I entered my teens, twenties, and even thirties, that I chose alcoholics and addicts as intimate partners. I self-sabotaged my relationships with boyfriends and husbands who were good for me. I needed the disease in my life.

As I entered my first Al-Anon meeting, I was lonely, embarrassed, ashamed, and broken—completely broken. At my first meeting, I found people who understood; I found friends. I found that I was not alone, and I found help. Al-Anon helped me change my path. Instead of using all of my resources to engage and

struggle with this disease, it showed me a way to recover, to grow, and to start becoming the person I am truly supposed to be.

Taking the First Step meant that I had to admit something. Any sort of an admission for me was hard. As alcoholism is a progressive disease or a disease of relationships, I learned that I too had its symptoms. I would lie out of habit, even when telling the truth would have served me better. While I justified these lies as “helping,” they were actually part of the problem. Little lies that really meant nothing were slowly, little lie by little lie, poisoning me.

Admitting I was powerless meant I had to admit that I had become someone I wasn’t—a dishonest person. Taking this First Step meant that I had to admit that I wasn’t just powerless over alcohol, but that I was powerless over everything, except myself. When I admitted the only thing I have power over is me, I had to take responsibility for myself and my actions. Ugh! I didn’t like who I had become. It was easy then to see that my life had become unmanageable.

I tackled Step One six months after my first Al-Anon meeting and one month after getting a Sponsor.

What does the First Step mean to me?

I have learned to keep my side of the street clean, and only my side. When I let go of this fantasy of power over someone or something else, I move toward hope and serenity. As someone who wants to be a constant doer or fixer, I have to “Let Go and Let God” or “Live and Let Live.” As I learned to become an observer of my surroundings, instead of a reactor to my surroundings, harmony came out of the confusion. I learned that in order to find peace and serenity, I was the one who had to change. That was all. I didn’t have to change everything else, only myself.

How do I change *me*? I am who I am, right? No! I had to surrender completely to the Higher Power of my understanding, God.

I repeated, “I didn’t cause it, I can’t cure it, and I cannot control it.” I began to pray every morning and every night, sometimes on my knees. I first invited my Higher Power to continue to walk with me. Then, I thanked Him for all of the great things He had put in my life: Al-Anon, my new friends, and the ability to hand all of my fears and worries over to Him. I was grateful for the abundance of love I had in my life the second I chose to see

it; for my children, whom I still had an opportunity to show that there is light at the end of the tunnel; and that He was there when I reached out. Lastly, I would lay anything I was worried about at His feet.

*“Stumbling down Step One meant I had to skin my knees a few times.”*

As I began to pray, my gratitude quickly outweighed my fears. Al-Anon, prayer, and God were at work inside me and I could see the effects they were having on me. I was no longer as reactive or explosive. I no longer desired to be the constant critic, and I could feel myself growing. A quiet calm had settled over me and it was noticeable to others as well. I had found sanity. Accepting Step One meant saying to my Higher Power, “I need you, today, tomorrow, and always.”

Stumbling down Step One meant I had to skin my knees a few times. I had to pick myself up and dust myself off. But with God’s help, admitting I was powerless and that my life had become unmanageable was not only reachable, it was also relieving and uplifting. Knowing that I can return to Step One, whenever and wherever I need to, is comforting and promising.

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