

One in Four Children Deal With the Disastrous Effects of a Parent's Alcoholism

During Children of Alcoholics Awareness Week, from February 14-20, Al-Anon highlights the life-altering effects on children who grow up with a parent who drinks too much alcohol. Results from Al-Anon's 2015 Membership Survey reveal higher percentages of depression, anxiety, and PTSD among those who have been affected by a parent's alcoholism.

February Children of Alcoholics Awareness Week sheds light on the one in four children in the United States who live with the disease of alcoholism in the family. While Al-Anon Family Groups provide support to anyone who is affected by someone else's alcoholism, their 2015 Membership Survey reveals that more than half of members' lives have been affected by a parent's drinking. Al-Anon Information Analyst Pamela Walters said, "Among Al-Anon members who have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder, depression (80%), Anxiety Disorder (42%), and PTSD (21%) were reported most frequently." "However, these percentages are even higher among those with a parent who drinks," said Walters.

"Growing up in an alcoholic home, I was held back, scapegoated, and beaten down," said Leslie, an anonymous commenter on a "First Steps to Al-Anon Recovery" podcast. She continued, "Listening to my father now as he abuses, scolds, and insults everyone around him, I imagine myself as a fragile, delicate child standing in front of him sobbing, begging him to be nice to me. I wanted so much to be loved. It was like begging a vicious dog to snuggle. It was never going to happen, and it wasn't my fault that it didn't work out. It wasn't my fault it left me barely able to function—damaged and broken."

"I know I can turn to Al-Anon for help and strength," said Leslie. "I will survive this. I'm not a child anymore. I'm a strong, grown, capable woman. I'm amazing. I've survived being held down and stood up before. Looking back, I used to think I was a failure, unable to function. Now I see I was a survivor, and I did the best that I could in an insane situation."

Al-Anon Family Groups are for families and friends who have been affected by a loved one's drinking. Nearly 16,000 local groups meet throughout the U.S., Canada, Bermuda, and Puerto Rico every week. Al-Anon Family Groups meet in more than 130 countries, and Al-Anon literature is available in more than 40 languages. Al-Anon Family Groups have been offering strength and support to families and friends of problem drinkers since 1951. Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. acts as the clearinghouse worldwide for inquiries from those who need help or want information about Al-Anon Family Groups and Alateen, its program for teenage members.

For more information about Al-Anon Family Groups, visit al-anon.org and read a copy of Al-Anon's annual public outreach magazine "Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism 2016." Find a local meeting by calling toll-free: 1-888-4AL-ANON.