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NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

FOR THOSE

WE LOVE

&

OTHERS

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Approved Literature

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FOR THOSE WE LOVE AND OTHERS

Very often the non-addict friend or relative finds he has much more trouble with his emotions and thinking than the addict who has either turned to a program for help or is still using drugs. This pattern has been found in other Twelve Step programs such as A.A. (which led to Alanon). The identification which enables the addict to find a new way of life is missing for those of us who lived with the addict but didn't use. Most of us have found that when we hit our emotional bottom, we also need some kind of recovery program for ourselves. A place where we can find the personal identification that leads us to emotional sobriety. NarAnon and Families Anonymous are two such programs; Alanon can help those whose friend or relative has a dual problem; there are even groups for emotional health only. The important thing, it seems, is to find some method, some program of living, of recovery that will work for us. The following personal story may provide some identification for those of you living with a drug abuser or addict.



I am the wife of an addict. As terrible as it sounds, I'm grateful today that I am his wife. My husband turned to Narcotics Anonymous some years ago for an answer to his drug problem. He has been clean and sober since that time with but one slip at the beginning. I don't know if my husband will stay sober and clean forever; but I know, for myself, that I could survive and have a good life even if the worst happened. There are many reasons why I could be happy in such a situation and even happier with the life we have today. Some of them derive from my husband's growth in his program. But the bulk of the reasons are the fruit of working a program of recovery for *me*.

I must go back further than my marriage in order to identify the emotions that brought me here. I was brought up in an alcoholic home. This has colored some of my feelings and reactions to situations. I learned to fantasize as a kid — "daydream," in other words. In fact, I really can't remember many of the things that happened in childhood. Don't get me wrong; my parents were not mean or cruel, they didn't fight too much and I do believe that they tried their best. But I had ideas of my own as to how my parents should be, and the real ones never measured up to this ideal. Throughout my life, I've made pictured ideals inside my head and the real thing never measured up.

I was afraid, too. I didn't have many friends because I didn't make any, I was afraid of people. They were either better or worse than I was. I didn't fit in anywhere. If I was given a task to do that I had never done before, I would almost always say "I can't" or refuse to do it. I was afraid of failing, and, like the old saying, I couldn't succeed either. Curiously enough, I was not afraid of dying or death. Later on, I came to realize that I actually had a death wish which I was afraid of. Sometimes I would hide my fear and act impulsively rather than courageously. I left my family home and moved to California to attend college; perhaps this is one of the most impulsive moves I ever made, but I think my Higher Power was guiding me, in spite of myself, even then. Here I found that I had to depend upon myself for my life and living. I didn't like this and I thought several times that what I needed was a husband. However, I didn't go looking for one — I was too afraid and confused within myself (besides this was part of my pattern of not doing things myself).

I was always a "dingy" person. I could not remember a thing, it seemed, and my concentration was extremely limited. In fact, I doubt if I really *heard* anyone before the program. In learning about the "dinginess" and nonlistening part of me, I have found that both are in part caused by an overactive imagination (which helped to cause some fears also). Using my program, I have been able to channel this imagination into my work and hobbies. I only mention this to show that what was a hindrance before, what was a source of low self-esteem, is now a source of strength through working a recovery program for me.

When I was in college, I met my husband. We "hit it off" right away. Before we knew what happened, I was on my way to his house every other night. I didn't know he used any drugs, all I knew was that he seemed to be everything I was looking for. He knew where to go, what to do, he fitted in or so it seemed to me. I knew that somebody was finally fitting my imaginary ideals. I was dependent upon him; he seemed to be dependent upon me. I eventually became pregnant. I refused to believe it was true and actually happening to me. When I did become convinced that it was real, it was too late for a safe abortion; besides, I thought I wanted to have it. I gained some good sense, from God I know (certainly not from within) and decided to give the baby up for adoption. This did happen. The experience left some marks upon my

mental and spiritual self as well as my husband's. Today, I come to find I have gained strength from this experience. We will have another child, but I know now that to ask for unconditional love from anyone, child or lover, is unrealistic and unfair to the other person.

We eventually married and I found out about my husband's addiction. Some people try to change or to stop the addict. I merely became a doormat. If he needed it, I'd get it; if he went to his connection, I wanted to go — to "protect" him. Everything centered around his using, so I didn't have to look into myself to change anything about me.

My husband surprised me by finding Narcotics Anonymous. He began to attend meetings nightly and twice a day on weekends. This was too much for me. Here I had based all my dependence and happiness on him and he was deserting me. Instead of sobriety opening the door to happiness and the end to problems, it just made life worse for me. Because then, all I had to live with, sometimes, was *me*. Everything that I had ever thought wrong with me became truly glaring. I knew something had to be done, but for a time I expected others to do whatever it was.

One Sunday evening, after being alone most of the weekend, I felt *totally* alone; I was desperate. It seemed to me at that moment that I had been alone most of my life. I reached out for help and was taken to my first meeting. I began to attend a Twelve Step program regularly, on my own and for myself. I became aware that if I wanted to be different from the person I was — about whom I couldn't find anything to like — I would have to make the program my way of life. I worked the Twelve Steps to the best of my ability and became aware of the good and bad in me. I learned to accept me — there is no longer any good or bad — it is all just me. I am happy to say that my daily life is now much more real, exciting, and human than my daydreams. In other words, *I fit in*, I'm finally fully a part of this world and living. Believe me, I wouldn't trade what I've got today for the best fantasy I ever had.



MY GRATITUDE SPEAKS

WHEN I CARE

AND WHEN I SHARE

WITH OTHERS

THE N.A. WAY.

