

# Turning on the nightlight— learning how to let go

By Carol S., Colorado

When I first came to Al-Anon, I struggled with the concept of detachment. I was filled with fear and worry for my loved one. The thought of taking a step back from his problems seemed wrong to me. How could I let go at a time when it seemed he needed me most?

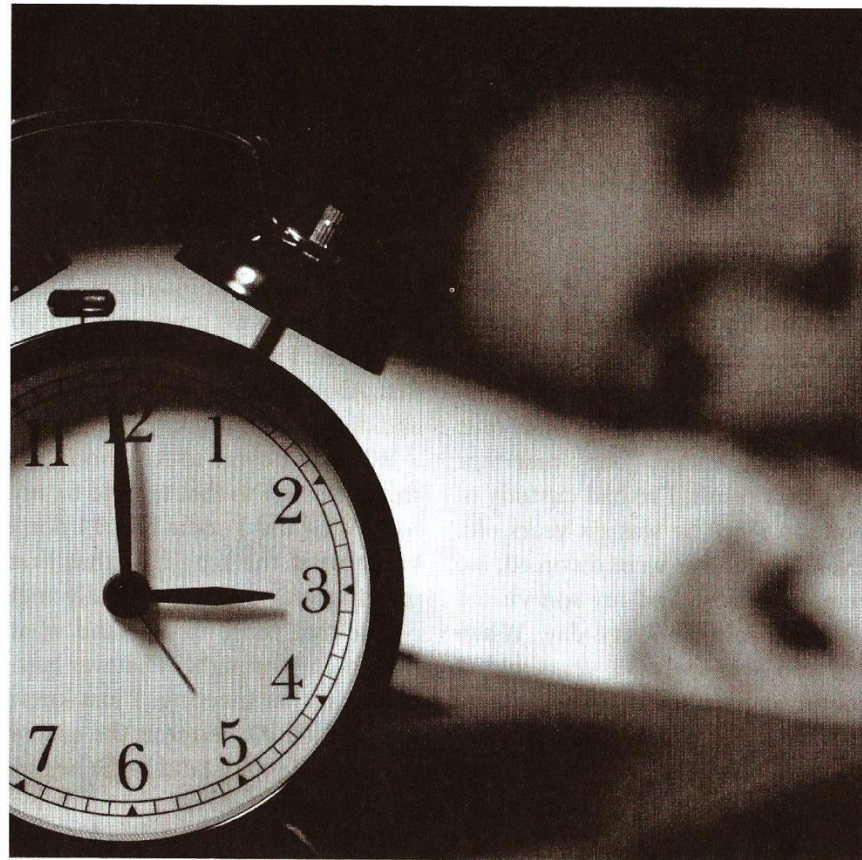
*“How could I let go at a time when it seemed he needed me most?”*

As the disease of alcoholism progressed, I had difficulty sleeping at night. I would lie awake and worry about the worsening chain of events unfolding. Our life, it seemed, was in a rapid and dizzying downward spiral. I would worry about the future. I would be vigilant, listening for every sound, waiting to respond in case my loved one fell.

The harder I tried to detach from the problems, the more difficult I found it to do. Often when I heard members talk about letting go, I thought that their definition of detachment wouldn't work for me. I came to realize that in Al-Anon there are no set rules: we are all free to determine for ourselves what is right.

I developed a bad habit of not sleeping well whenever I faced a difficulty I did not know how to resolve. As the disease worsened, I found myself up against many situations I did not know how to handle. I was exhausted, became overly emotional, and unable to cope with my own problems. I became so physically, emotionally, and spiritually depleted that I was left with little choice but to try to find a way to get the rest I needed on a regular basis.

One night before I went to bed, I got the idea to turn on a nightlight. When I pressed the switch, I told myself that it was time for me to turn myself off



and get the rest I needed. I could no longer deprive myself of the basic need for sleep in order to take on the responsibility of being awake *just in case* he needed help during the night. But I could light a light for him to find his own way, just as I was learning to find my own way in Al-Anon.

It's become my nightly ritual, turning on the nightlight and turning over my worries, letting go and letting God.

In Al-Anon, I have learned that my loved one has a Higher Power and it isn't me. I sometimes have rough nights when I am anxious and worried, but I know that I have a solution—detachment—to use to get myself back on track when I'm ready to do so. I also have a nightlight to remind myself that I can turn myself off at the end of the day and get the rest I need.

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