

## **One Al-Anon Journey: A Spouse's Experience with Addiction**

### **Journal Entries, Part 1 – The Years Before Marriage**

*(Language in italics in parentheses indicates it is a comment written after the fact.)*

March 30, 1988

I met a very nice man through our jobs, J. He is an interesting person, and we had fun talking. I hope we can stay in touch.

April 20, 1988

J. and I have talked a few times. This new and exciting friendship makes me feel like I have a connection to the world. I feel more alive. However, there are major constraints in his life so for the time being we will keep it just friends. Also, we live more than an hour apart.

August 3, 1988

J. is in the process of dealing with things. When we saw each other recently it was like being in heaven! He is a wonderful man, a friend, a buddy, and he makes me laugh. I'm so happy. I see possibilities – a future here. I pray to you, God, to guide my steps. He told me a little about his family. He is close to his dad, who lives a few hours away; his mother died a few years ago. He has a special adult daughter, Robin, who lives near him, and an adult nephew he helped raise, Luke, who has, according to J., "made poor choices in life" (not sure yet exactly what that means). He lives further away.

I had such an odd dream – I cooked a big dinner but then let it burn, every dish. Am I not paying attention? And even after I realize it's all burning, I still don't fix it. I'm asking myself in the dream, how could I be so stupid? When I woke up, I couldn't figure out what it meant or what it related to. But it was so vivid, I believe it's important and I need to pay attention to this. I wrote it down in my dream journal, to make sure I remember it. *(I believe this dream was a warning sign.)*

August 18, 1988

I felt like I hurt J.'s feelings this weekend, unintentionally. I DETEST that feeling, when I feel like I've disappointed or hurt someone I care about. It absolutely CONSUMES me. I'm sure this is a relic from my childhood, a coping mechanism from growing up with my severely depressed mother. Although counseling has given me insights, here I am again, still getting these unsettling feelings that drive me crazy.

September 20, 1988

J. is now in a position to move forward. We can get together more frequently. He has told me more about Luke. He has been in and out of detention, then prison, for various thefts since he was in his early teens. This was a shock. J. told me he did everything he could while he was helping to raise Luke to help him find something he could be excited about, but nothing ever worked. It seems Luke has some kind of psychological problem. I'm very sad for J.

October 30, 1988

I've had a horrible knot in my stomach for a while now – almost terror. I'm afraid J. drinks too much, to escape. And he doesn't take care of himself and he doesn't value himself. I feel I must issue an ultimatum about this. I'm hoping my counselor can help me figure out how to bring this up with J. He is so kind and thoughtful – but I will not be involved with someone who will not/cannot appreciate himself and take care of himself.

December 14, 1988

I talked to my counselor. She helped me prepare some words to say to J. about the drinking and his inability to take care of and respect himself, but I haven't said anything yet to him. I'm extremely nervous about bringing up my concerns. Is this feeling actually fear? Is that why I can't imagine myself saying the words? Am I afraid I'll lose him if I say something? Please, God, help me.

February 13, 1989

I have a Valentine in my life – the first time in ages. J. is great. He hasn't started dealing with his sadness yet, and boy he has a lot from his childhood. His mother suffered from mental illness, and treated him terribly. He told me one story, and I started to cry. He seemed surprised, and asked me why I was crying. I said, because the story made me so sad! I wonder how he survived so much misery from his mother's rages every day growing up, and then other challenges as an adult raising Robin and trying to help Luke. But he has so many wonderful qualities, and we really click. I love being with him. Thank you, God, for my special friend. It bothers me that he only gives me little pecks on the cheek, though, instead of a real kiss. *(Warning sign – I believe this was happening because he was afraid that I would detect alcohol on his breath.)*

February 18, 1989

Today I found out I hurt J.'s feelings unintentionally. He didn't tell me at the time. I felt terrible all day. It is so easy to hurt other people. I hate that I said something that hurt his feelings. I would like to re-wind the tape, but I can't. I wish he could have said something at the time, but if I'm honest with myself, I have a hard time with this myself. I want him to forgive me. I have called him a couple of times, but he isn't calling back. It is so difficult right now – I want him to talk to me! Knowing him has been a precious, treasured joy. Let me never take this for granted.

February 19, 1989

It's difficult for me to bring up things in this relationship. When is it OK to say something, and what do you say? I hear my mom's critical, angry, voice growing up and I don't want to sound like that. God, please bring peace to my special friend, J. – or is that my job, to bring peace to him?

February 21, 1989

J. sounds distant – it feels awkward.

February 22, 1989

J. came to visit over and we re-connected. It was wonderful. He still gives me only little pecks on the cheek, which I don't understand, but I feel the awkward moments are over. I need to ask him why he doesn't seem to like kissing me, but it feels weird to have to ask a question like that.

February 23, 1989

I went to a special program at church – it was great. The speaker was so in touch with himself, his feelings, etc. Will J. be able to achieve that?

February 25, 1989

I'm next to J. now, where I feel I belong. He makes me laugh. There's no one I would rather be marooned with on a desert island than him. Today was a great day. I felt as if I were in harmony with the world. Why today, and not other days?

February 27, 1989

Things went pretty well with J. over the weekend. I finally screwed up my courage to ask him why it seems like he doesn't want to really kiss me. His answer surprised me – he said it's because he can't breathe, but I don't think that's really it.

March 3, 1989

J. sent me a poem for the first time – and it made me laugh. He is so creative and I love it! I wish he appreciated himself, valued himself, respected himself enough to overcome his terrible childhood traumas, and the later ones, too. How can I help him? Please guide me, God.

March 6, 1989

We had a difficult episode and communication misfire involving black beans, of all things. It's so difficult for J. to talk about his feelings most of the time, and I don't know when to push so I understand what he's upset about, and when to leave it alone. I'm glad I said something tonight, and he made me laugh about it, but the underlying issue remains – his dreadful trauma from childhood continues to haunt him, and he's not free from it. Also, he has shared more of the experiences he had raising Robin and Luke. It makes me very sad. J. has been through so much in his life.

March 8, 1989

I'm having a difficult time talking to J. He has to have minor surgery in a few days, so maybe that's it. I like/love him. I want us to keep growing together.

March 13, 1989

The surgery turned out to be more extensive than anticipated, and he is in pain and can't do much yet. I needed to cry, seeing him in pain. He got upset when I cried. I told him it just happens sometimes

– I cry easily, and it just happens, but he didn't understand. I wonder if my tears bother J.– I should ask him. My darling – how can I communicate with you?

March 15, 1989

He's recovering slowly – his personality is beginning to re-emerge. I wish he would take care of himself. He's always drinking a lot. I still haven't talked to him about this. Now doesn't seem like the time.

March 19, 1989

I had a great time with J.– I felt like we re-connected this time – all the joy came back for me, and the worry was gone. I enjoy being with him, doing things, and going places. He makes me laugh. I love his sense of humor. What will the future bring for us? Can we be together?

March 23, 1989

I saw J. tonight. It was wonderful. He is still not fully recovered from the surgery. But we connected, and I was re-reminded of why I like/love him. In a way I already feel married, as if we're just biding our time. But I think this is just my perception.

March 29, 1989

J. is so wonderful but can't believe it of himself. Why, God?

April 3, 1989

Are we going to make it? We took a trip to visit my parents. They have heard me talk a lot about this wonderful man in my life. We had some fun times together, but I am seeing more things that make me worry. J. doesn't take care of himself, he eats and drinks too much, and won't exercise. But even beyond that, his past is still painfully close to the surface, and I feel sometimes that he can only "take" in our relationship and rarely can "give." Well, what about me? I have legitimate needs, too! I just don't know if we can make it. It kills me that he doesn't like himself and be proud, happy, and self-confident, in other words, be undergirded with well-deserved self-esteem. However, we still click a lot. We observed an incident between my parents where they were not communicating what they were really thinking and feeling. J. and I agreed on the way home that we DID NOT want that to happen to us, and we will strive diligently to be honest, even when we're not sure how the other person will react. We agreed that we need to bring things up at the time, and not let resentments build up. It feels good to have talked about that and come to an understanding.

April 12, 1989

We had a horrible conversation/argument/misunderstanding, our worst ever. He can't understand that I can have non-romantic, male friends. He says he's going to go out with other people for six months. It feels like retaliation. It's horrible. What happened to our agreement less than two weeks ago about how important it is to be open and honest with each other, and not let misunderstandings come

between us? I feel like I should bring this up, but I'm afraid of what his reaction will be. I don't want to lose him. What is happening to us?

April 26, 1989

It has been a dreadful two weeks. We worked on that misunderstanding, then we had another one about the same issue. I haven't been the same since. I am so afraid I'm going to hurt him again, that now I've started censoring what I say. Is this fear of abandonment related to my past? How do I talk to J. about why I need to cry? Why does it bother him so much? It's not an act to manipulate him – it just happens! I'm so worried. Are we capable of being in a relationship? Please be with me, God.

May 11, 1989

For ages I have felt like I was a big disappointment to my mom, which left a lot of scars, and I thought I had already worked through it with counseling. However, I see now I'm transferring that feeling to J. This is going to take a lot of work; it has been a miserable time. I talked to several lots of people at work about how I felt and now I feel that the cloud is lifting. Please be with us, God, as we struggle to figure out our difficulties.

May 15, 1989

I want to make a record of some recent realizations. I think being in a serious relationship is bringing up deeper things in my heart and mind to the surface. My particular life experience in childhood with my mom left me with the deeply ingrained belief that it was my job to make other people happy – if only I could do certain things, or be helpful or whatever, then my mom would be happy – and if I couldn't make her happy, then it must be my fault. So the feeling that I'm disappointing someone else is a terrible hot button for me. I literally want to die when I feel it has happened again with someone close to me. I lose all perspective. I still go down into that pit, even after all these years, and lots of counseling. I continue to feel awful, and I'm terrified of doing what I need to do to live for myself if I think people won't approve.

May 17, 1989

I hate this divided life, that J. and I can't be together. The job I hoped for that would lessen the commuting distance between us didn't happen.

We can bring out the best in each other, but sometimes it's the worst, too. He has a deep sadness in his life – I sense it – and I want to make him feel better but I can't and then I get sad because I can't "make" him happy. I assume it's my fault he's disappointed and beat myself up for not "measuring up." I know on some level that his happiness is his responsibility, but deep down I still feel that it's mine. I feel perhaps he has an unrealistic picture of me – that the perfect woman will solve his problems – but I'm not perfect! I make mistakes! I just don't know if we can make it. When I call him and he doesn't call me back, it drives me nuts! Please be with us, God.

June 9, 1989

I'm not sure I can write this, it's so painful. A relative reminded me that when we were growing up, our mother would say to us, "I wish I were dead," when she was feeling particularly depressed, and then that triggered my own memory of hearing it myself. This brought back many memories, and explains some things. I remember feeling responsible – if I had been a better person, then she wouldn't have felt like that. And I think that this got translated in my mind to believing that she would have been happier without me. I think I must have been like a dog as a child, desperate to please, desperate to be noticed, petted, appreciated, and loved. When I was in counseling, I realized that my coping mechanism earlier in my life was to always be on the alert, watching for visual cues on how to behave. I wanted to make everyone happy, but I wasn't able to. Oh, I hate this. How long can I feel bad, God?

June 10, 1989

I have been thinking a lot about my growing up, and I believe these are false beliefs that are ingrained in me:

- It's my responsibility to make everyone happy – I want to please everyone. I will hold back with my desires until I know everyone else's, and then I'll fit in with theirs by conforming. I'm passive – I react, not act.
- If I feel like I've disappointed someone, I'm desperate for reassurance that I'm still OK.
- If someone is unhappy, then I must do something to "fix" things so they become happy again.
- When I'm in a relationship, I'm worried that when I do something wrong or make a mistake, that the other person will be disappointed in me. I also feel I'm responsible for the other person.

June 12, 1989

I met with my counselor, and I'm rehearsing what I could say to J. next time I fear he is distancing himself from me: "I hope I'm not being paranoid but I thought I detected a change your tone of voice. I wondered if your feelings were hurt by something I said. I hope you'll tell me if I did say something – or if it's just me." (*I wasn't able to bring up concerns like this for several years.*)

June 28, 1989

I shared an insight from my past with J., and I could tell he was really listening to me. It felt so good to be heard.

We had an outdoor outing today – it was just wonderful. We had a lovely weekend. I feel so close to him. I hope he can find it within himself to take better care of himself and drink less. It is painful to see him having health issues. Please guide us, God.

July 15, 1989

My stomach is in knots because J. didn't call me back and I'm worried, once again, that it's because he's mad at me, even though I can't think of anything I did to hurt him. This drives me crazy. I

need to talk to him about this. I haven't yet been able to say the words I rehearsed in June. Relationships are so difficult.

July 31, 1989

We had an absolutely wonderful time together this weekend on our extended outdoor experience. It was heaven! He brought along a gag gift item and I howled with laughter when he gave it to me, which was his hoped-for reaction. He said he did it just so he could hear me laugh. I was so happy. Mom once told me a few years ago that my laughter "is very unpleasant," which really hurt my feelings. Oh God, thank you so much for bringing J. into my life.

August 18, 1989

Last night J. and I met to see a movie. He brought this wonderful potato/parsnip soup with him that he'd made at home. It was so good to see him. When the movie was over, I was overcome with love and I held him but he didn't respond and instead pulled away. I wanted to ask him to marry me right then but I didn't. Once again, he avoided kissing me. I wanted to scream and cry and ask him what was going on, but the moment passed and then it was time to say goodbye.

September 10, 1989

I have cried all evening. I called my relatives and friends and with each conversation I cried. I feel terrible. I feel something is very wrong between J. and me and I don't know what to do or say to make it better. It's terrible. He was annoyed with me Wednesday night, he wanted to be alone last night and today, and his voice sounds different over the phone. I feel like I made a mistake when we were talking earlier, and I wanted to die. Why do mistakes bother me so much? I wonder if J. and I are going to make it.

September 11, 1989

I'll be leaving to visit J. soon. I pray I can find the right words and do the right thing.

September 12, 1989

I was sure J. would say that we're through, but he didn't. I did ask if we were OK, and I asked him if he could let me know when he needs space, but he doesn't know I went through hell these past three days – over nothing. I absolutely came unglued. Why can't I speak up right away? What is wrong with me? I'm going to see my counselor, and hopefully I'll do better next time.

September 15, 1989

Why am I crying? Because my life experience in childhood created the false belief that it was my responsibility to make everyone happy, and if people aren't happy, it's my fault. Because I think if I make a mistake, I'm going to die.

September 20, 1989

I was in another car accident, again, 100 percent not my fault – the other driver wasn't paying attention and hit me. I'm in a lot of pain, again. I'm angry. I don't want to go through all the agony again. I'm sure it will take months to recover because my neck is already fragile. I can't believe this is happening to me again.

November 6, 1989

I made a resolution this weekend – that I would spend five minutes a day with God and myself, just being. I need to feel like I have some control over what is happening. This latest car wreck has been so hard for me. I cried with J., saying I felt like I was holding him back because I'm tired and in pain all the time. Work takes every bit of my energy.

I'm getting a stomach ache thinking about whether we should be together. I believe we have a lot of "areas of concern" – the biggest are J.'s low self-esteem, and traumatic experiences in childhood for both of us. I don't want to stay together now only to have things not work out even further down the road.

November 8, 1989

J. is so easy to be with: charming, pleasant, and funny. But yet he doesn't think this of himself! How can he improve his self-esteem? I don't think I can carry his weight myself. Please God, guide me.

November 9, 1989

J. and I got into an argument tonight. It makes me angry and sad at the same time. He was tired – I think he has a harder time with anger when he's tired – but still my feet are getting colder and colder. Will it always be like this for us?

November 29, 1989

J. and I had our third horrible, horrible misunderstanding about my completely non-romantic friendship with my male friend and I wanted to die. We got through it, but it was dreadful. He apologized, and we spent the weekend together. He said he didn't want to lose me. I know he means it. We will keep going. All the words I have rehearsed about my worries over the drinking, his lack of self-esteem, the anger, and me asking him for more information when his voice sounds different – all of those words – I still haven't been able to say.

January 18, 1990

J. and I saw a great movie tonight. I wanted to take him in my arms and cradle and rock and nurture him, heal the wounded parts so he wouldn't hurt anymore – and look into his eyes and rejoice with God for this lovely world.

We are thinking about buying a fixer-upper house in the city where he lives so he doesn't have to keep paying rent. I have saved enough money so I can make the down payment. He is very handy so he can make the repairs, and I can do all the painting.



January 22, 1990

We had a lovely walk today and talked about The Future – his, and mine, too – retirement, dreams, and our jobs. It was great. I feel so close to him now – nothing is between us. And I feel good about the house, too. We have decided to buy it. Thank goodness I can take care of the down payment. J. said his expenses and times of unemployment consumed all his income. (*Financial difficulties are a possible warning sign.*)

January 31, 1990

I hope J. can find it within himself to take better care of himself. I worry about him.

February 10, 1990

We closed on the house. It needs lots of work, but J. has done this before. We hope it will be ready for him to move in by April.

February 19, 1990

I feel terrible, again, about J. I didn't intend to hurt his feelings, but on the way back from a great weekend away, I told him how much it bugged me to see people not taking care of themselves. I called him three times tonight and left messages on his answering machine but he didn't call back. So now I feel sure he's mad. I hate it when he does this to me. I feel sad and scared. J. isn't here with me physically and he's not with me in spirit. God, please help me to say the right thing.

February 22, 1990

Everything was OK after all – he was at the house working late. We talked the next morning, thank goodness, before work. It will be a stretch to pay for all the renovations, but I trust we will get there. More things need fixing than we realized.

March 5, 1990

I feel I hurt J.'s feeling today while we were working at the house – somehow my frustration at slow progress got translated – in his mind – to frustration with him. This was not my intention. I need to communicate better. He was very withdrawn, in spite of my attempts to reassure him. I hate it when I can't reach him.

March 8, 1990

J. and I had a lovely time at the restaurant tonight – we clicked – which we didn't last night. When he gets tired, he gets distant. (*Warning sign – what I interpreted as him being tired and distant was most likely from drinking.*)

March 10, 1990

Once again, I'm in the arms of my beloved J. I had a sad dream this morning and felt alone, and then I realized J. is part of my life, and it was such a good feeling. I drove to our house (even though I won't be living in it for who knows how long) and painted and J. made me feel so cherished – it was wonderful. So here I am in my “other” life. Thank you, God, for bringing J. into my life – I have learned a lot in this relationship.

March 14, 1990

Why can't I let relax and let go of the people I care about?

March 16, 1990

I wonder if J. is jealous again – it's hard to be apart for so long. I hear his voice and he sounds distant and I worry, but I don't say anything because I feel it is an unapproachable subject.

March 18, 1990

We worked all day on the house. It looks good but we have a long way to go. And, speaking of a long way to go, will J. ever believe in his heart that he is a likeable, loveable, wonderful, desirable person?

March 20, 1990

Yesterday I worked on the house alongside J., but we seemed apart to me. Today I still feel like we're apart – that subtle sensation – and conversation doesn't seem to be helping. He gets more distant when he's tired later in the day, and maybe that's all this is. But I feel uneasy. (*Warning sign – a personality change as the day wears on could be from drinking.*)

March 21, 1990

I tried to surprise J. at the house on a week night, the first time I've done this, but he wasn't there. I called and left him a message saying I was at the house, and he came later, extremely angry – he'd been napping because he wanted to take a break from working on the house. It was bad for a while. I feel terrible, but I think it's going to be OK. Why is it so difficult for us to communicate? He didn't have to come over! He could have told me, sorry, he's not coming, he's tired! We don't connect with each other at the beginning of a misunderstanding, and then it gets worse. AND It is impossible for me to speak up at the time! I hope we can do better. (*Warning sign – I believe he was so angry because I was interrupting the drinking.*)

March 22, 1990

J. and I met half-way for our mid-week church service and a visit, but it wasn't especially joyous. He's so tired, discouraged about work, and it was hard for me to know what to say or do. J. says he wants to be less driven about working on the house, but I don't feel like I've been pushing him. Is he blaming

me, or does he not want to accept responsibility for his own feelings? Am I being too petty and selfish? YUCK! Relationships are so difficult!

March 24, 1990

Yesterday it seemed like we were back on track and it felt good. Today, now that we are together, I think J. is still sad, but he seemed to perk up as the evening wore on. How much of his attitude is my responsibility? I feel like it's a lot, but that may not be so.

March 28, 1990

Will it always be difficult for me to talk to J. about sensitive issues? I was in a panic this morning, trying to figure out a way to approach discussing my concerns about an issue with the house. It's not supposed to be like this with someone you love!

March 30, 1990

Why is it that I'm afraid J. is angry with me so often? Can we make it? (*Warning sign – anger can be related to drinking.*)

April 2, 1990

I want to enjoy the process as much as the product. I want to cherish these moments with J., working together to build something. So why is so difficult to do? And why do I go on thinking that he is going to abandon me every other day, or that every frown on his face is my doing? When can I relax and enjoy this relationship? God, help us to be kind to ourselves and to each other.

April 3, 1990

J. called and he sounded chipper tonight, which reassures me no end, and all the other problems seem smaller. He will be moving into the house in a few days.

April 9, 1990

J.'s move into the house went OK, but now I'm very anxious so my stomach hurts. We don't seem to be communicating – why? Can we only talk when we're together, and not over the phone? I left our house to drive back and I wonder if he thinks I'm deserting him – but we can't talk about it. Last night we had such a great time at dinner – it was so cozy in the kitchen, and we had such a pleasant talk about everything and nothing. So why can't those feelings continue?

April 11, 1990

I saw J. tonight for a mid-week visit – I just asked him if he was annoyed with me and he said no – so if that's true, why did I think so and how can I make sure this happens less often? Is this a leftover issue from his traumatic childhood? Will I be healthier and happier if I can work through this? I worry J. and I won't make it because we can't communicate. And why is it so difficult for us to talk about money? I am afraid to bring up difficult subjects because I don't want to lose him. God, please help me.

April 15, 1990

I am with J. now. He is making a trip without me to visit his dad tomorrow. Please God, keep him safe. J. and I had another misunderstanding in communication – he wanted a night to himself last night, and since I didn't understand what he was saying, later he thought I was trying to manipulate him into doing something he didn't want to do. When are we going to do better? Can we do better? I love him and want the best for him. If that means being without me, then that's OK. God, help us to truly communicate and know the right way forward for us.

April 16, 1990

J. has been a pit in my stomach, a lump of worry – will he be OK? Can we survive together? Will I be afraid of his anger? Before he left, he threw his glasses across the room, yelling that he felt like he was under a microscope – where did that come from? He hasn't called me – does that mean he's still driving, or is still mad and doing this on purpose to get back at me – for what? For not understanding him? It wasn't on purpose. It feels like this is old anger, the irrational kind. How can we move past this?

April 17, 1990

God, give me wisdom to say the right words so I will be there to support J. and myself at the same time. How can we get past this anger so I'm not afraid of him?

April 25, 1990

I am afraid of J. now. I am also second-guessing everything I do – I don't feel free to be spontaneous anymore. J. didn't call me until late tonight and even though I knew it was because he was working on the house, I started to worry and my stomach was in knots. This is not what I want! I think I need to see my counselor and get some help to figure out how to get trust back.

April 27, 1990

We had a mid-week visit at the house last night, had a lovely dinner together, and we didn't work on the house. It was so nice. And tonight, when we talked on the phone, for the first time in a while I didn't feel afraid of him – the trust is back. I feel reconnected. God, help me to know your will and to do it. Help us to listen better to you and to each other, instead of hearing only ourselves.

April 28, 1990

I can scarcely bear to write these words. There was no message from J. tonight, and when I called there was no answer and his machine didn't come on. As a friend said, I have come unglued. I am going over last night's phone conversation and I am thinking of every wrong phrase, word, term, and nuance that I might have said unknowingly, and I am terrified, absolutely terrified that he is angry at me and my stomach is in knots. I dread tomorrow's attempt to reach him and what am I going to do about this. Oh dear God, please guide me. Help me to know your will. I need your help.

May 14, 1990

I had a great weekend by myself, the one I should have had two weeks ago but didn't because I panicked. J. and I had a lovely visit, too – it seemed short but it was very nice. My stomach was at ease.

I've had some additional insights into my life experiences. I'm realizing that separation is a huge issue for me, far more than I understood. When I'm gripped with that feeling, it's as if the world is ending – separation feels like death. I have to know where J. is and I feel increasingly uneasy if I don't. I feel responsible for him when we are in a group with other people – I don't like that. It's like I have to make sure he's doing OK. And why do we fight over things that are not huge issues instead of talking about them like adults?

I am still worried about J.'s drinking and lack of self-esteem.

May 21, 1990

I reactivated an old injury this week – it's extremely painful and difficult to get around. So I cancelled my visit to J. I'm not sure we have what it takes to make it through the bad times. It's so difficult for us to communicate.

May 25, 1990

I feel closer to J. – we've been connecting lately – and it feels so good. I have someone in my life who knows me and loves me – and I feel the same way about him. And he makes me laugh! It is truly a wonderful gift to have him in my life. And I learned some things at a seminar on communication. We can think of ourselves as a rider on top of a horse – our conscious minds need to control the horse, which is the unconscious mind – otherwise our lives will be chaotic and unhappy. It made so much sense. How can I re-train a terrified part of myself to lose the fear that started in childhood? Another crucial thing I learned is that thoughts come first, and these cause our emotions. So if I want to have more positive feelings, then I need to change my thoughts.

I received some insights from my counselor. When I fear the loss of J., it triggers a fear from my past of a loss of myself. Who am I in relation to him? I need a clearer self-definition. J. is not responsible for my feelings, nor am I responsible for his. My sense of security needs to come from a clear definition of who I am.

May 29, 1990

It was a great weekend. J. and I clicked and we got a lot done with the house. We had some good conversations and when it was time to go, I felt sad.

May 30, 1990

It is so wonderful to be with J. when he's lighthearted – I want to be with him then. It feels like we can resolve all the issues between us. But there are all the times when it seems like he's a different person –when he gets so angry at me over nothing, and we can't talk about anything. Will that ever get easier? (*Warning signs – unreasonable anger can be a sign of drinking, as well as the "Dr. Jekyll and Mr.*

*Hyde” changes in personality. This is a special concern if it seems to relate to a time of day – for example, are mornings generally better, because drinking hasn’t started in earnest.)*

When he drinks too much, I worry. When he doesn’t take care of himself, I worry because I’m afraid he’ll die and leave me and I’ll be alone again.

June 12, 1990

J. and I had another communication misfire. When I was asking questions about a serious matter, he got angry and said he felt like I was interviewing him on TV. That hurt. He was so happy Sunday morning – like a mischievous imp – he is so charming and irresistible when he’s in that space. But later, his mood changed and he shut down. His way of dealing with things that bother him is to keep it inside, and who am I to tell him how to deal with his problems? I just don’t want it to be a wedge between us. Please God, guide us and be with us. *(Warning sign – mood change from morning to afternoon.)*

June 13, 1990

I have a pit in my stomach – no call from J. I must learn how to survive this.

June 14, 1990

I survived OK. J. called me today and tonight when we met for our mid-week visit it was fine. It was so good to see him and hold him. Thank you, God, for helping me through another crisis.

August 7, 1990

Did God bring me together with J. for a reason? I’m a person who must talk about things above all, and I’m attracted to a person for whom sharing thoughts and feelings is especially difficult, or perhaps impossible. Who needs to change – both of us? I process information and events by talking about them. J. feels his privacy is being violated when I talk about our relationship with other people, but it’s the only way I can digest events and figure out what to do.

August 28, 1990

Notes from counseling for a future conversation to have with J. about taking care of his health.

I feel that we are getting closer and closer, and believe we have a future together. I want to have you in my life. I would like you to think deeply on the pain it would case me to lose you any earlier than I have to. I’m asking you to take care of yourself. I’m being selfish. I want you in my life for as long as possible. I would appreciate your willingness to look at this from the perspective of my welfare. I’m willing to cook or help you when you figure out what changes you want to make. This change needs to come from you. I’m not judging, or watching everything you eat and drink. *(I didn’t have the courage to say any of these words for years.)*

September 5, 1990

I had a lovely weekend with J. I told him about the knots in my stomach from worrying about feeling responsible for him. And we had a lot of fun just being together – the trick he played on me was so creative and funny – I laughed and laughed. I tried to reassure him that I love his sense of humor. I need to work up to the discussion on him taking care of himself. But I feel more positive now about our future together.

November 12, 1990

J. still drinks wine when he's sick, which I think is terrible. I wonder if we can make it. He said he was going to join the Y and that maybe he and his boss would go together a couple times a week. That would be wonderful. But I still worry about the drinking. I bet it's been years since he's gone for 24 hours without a drink. And I find I hardly ever have a beer after work during the week – I just don't seem to want it.

January 7, 1991

J. and I had a good talk, and I asked him if he were happy in general with our relationship and he said yes. I was afraid he wasn't. So, we need to communicate better with each other, and I need to do this as much as he does.

January 31, 1991

We had dinner together tonight, and it seemed like we didn't connect one time. I was so tired after work that I yawned right when we first saw each other, and when that happens, I think I really bothers him, even though I apologized. I wonder if we have what it takes. We had been in a good place lately, up until tonight. So, during dinner we talked about personal long-range planning – I told him my 10-year plan. I asked him what he pictures for himself – he said six months is long-range for him.

Oh dear – why is it so hard for me these days to feel joy? Why do I think of death so much, of not liking my job, of wishing for days and years to be over? I find myself counting my blessings in negatives – I don't have cancer, I'm not unemployed, I'm not in a wheelchair, etc.

February 1, 1991

When I called J. this morning, he told me how much I'd hurt him when we had dinner last night. He is extremely jealous and sensitive about friends I have who happen to be men. He is inventing something that isn't true. I've been on my own for a long time and I have developed friendships with men. I have many angry things I want to say to him, to hurt him, but I've tried to be an adult. I will pray that God's words come out of my mouth when we see each other this weekend, not cruel ones. God, please guide us to an understanding of your will for us – whether we need to be together or apart.

February 23, 1991

I had a perfect time with J. Thank you, God, for this great gift of love and friendship. Help me to cherish and nurture it.

February 26, 1991

Last night on the phone with J., I detected a slight distancing from me. I wish I had said something at the time. It is SO difficult for me to speak up for myself! My stomach is in knots, and my mind flips to: “That’s OK, my feelings don’t matter, I’ll suffer in silence, don’t mind me.”

February 28, 1991

I met J. for our mid-week visit for a church service and dinner. I brought up the possibility of us living in our house together once the renovations are further along and I’ve gotten a job in commuting distance, and he didn’t look happy. (*Warning sign: J. may have been concerned about how he would be able to disguise the drinking if we were together full-time.*)

March 4, 1991

When J. and I talked about why I’m upset and anxious, initially I couldn’t bring myself to be completely honest and instead said there was no reason because sometimes it was just an overall feeling. Then later I said, “There is one thing...” and he got this completely panicked look on his face – then I brought up finances, and he looked upset. I wonder what he thought I was going to say? He said I worry a lot about money – he’s right. I feel like I have to carry that that load by myself, without his participation, because he doesn’t seem very responsible. (*Warning sign: people struggling with addiction often have trouble with finances.*)

March 13, 1991

J. looked tired tonight when we got together for our mid-week visit at church. I always seem to worry if we are OK when that happens. He said we could talk more another time about “our future.” That made me happy.

March 22, 1991

I’m next to my darling J. I told him it feels like Christmas morning when I’m with him. He rings absolutely all of my bells, even the ones I didn’t know I had. It is so wonderful to be with him. Thank you, God, for bringing us together.

March 24, 1991

My stomach is in knots. J. and I had our chat about “the future” but it sounds like he’s not ready to say he wants to move in together, so I don’t feel much further ahead in understanding where we are.



March 26, 1991

I had another difficult day at work. Then I started to worry about J. and I, if we were OK, and our initial conversation didn't help – he sounded quiet and distant. So I called him back and he said something was bothering him at work but that we were fine, which was most reassuring. I'm very proud of myself for asking him and not worrying about it until the next time we talked. And my instincts were right – something was bothering him, so I'm glad I asked.

May 21, 1991

I am not happy. I can feel my stomach churning, like we're back in the early stages of our relationship. But maybe I had better get used to this feeling because I do believe it's going to be a companion through our years together. I am afraid I hurt J.'s feelings over the weekend and I said the wrong thing. Then I said another thing that hurt his feelings. So the phone isn't ringing – he hasn't initiated one since the weekend, and even though I asked him twice if we were OK, and he said yes, I will worry. I've done what I can to put it out of my head, but I still have this terrible cloud over my head that we're doomed, we're not right for each other, and we bring out the worst in each other. I don't understand how we could have had such an absolutely fabulous time together on Saturday, and here I am, miserable, a couple of days later. I want these times when we misunderstand each other to quit happening, but I don't think it's possible. How can we connect in a consistent way?

*Summary of the next several months:*

- J. gets annoyed over something, we can't talk about it, and I am plunged into despair and anguish. I meet with my counselor to figure out some words to help me convey my thoughts in a non-threatening way, but I can't bring myself to say them because I'm afraid.
- Then J. and I have a wonderful time together and I'm happy. He listens to me, is kind and supportive, and makes me laugh. I'm positive that we are meant for each other and excited about our future together.

September 29, 1991

J. told me he feels the need to deal with his past because he feels sad, even though the outside things are going well in his life. He has told me a few more things about his growing up, and I was stunned at what he suffered. He wants to read self-help books, try counseling, exercise, get back to listening to classical music, spend more time in nature, be more involved with church. I was so happy to hear him say these things. We might make it after all. My stomach is in knots and I don't know why. I'm not sleeping well most of the time.

November 3, 1991

I am so worried and nervous. I have decided to confront a family member in a couple of weeks about the abuse while I was growing up. J. is being really supportive, thank goodness. My counselor is being so helpful, and other relatives believe me and are encouraging me to move forward. I'm planning

exactly what to say, rehearsing it, and figuring out when to do it when J. and I go visit. Please, God, help me.

December 1, 1991

I had my difficult conversation to confront my family member and I'm so relieved it's over, but it didn't go the way I had hoped. During the conversation, whenever I brought up an incident, the response was that they didn't remember. But, at least I kept going until I had said everything I wanted to. I am very sad. At least it's behind me and everyone, including J., has been understanding. Please, God, help me.

December 10, 1991

I can't sleep – again – for the fourth night in a row. So I'm up and writing down what I'm worrying about. First on the list are my issues with J. – can we be together happily and easily? Can we work on our issues about communicating, the house, money, how we spend our time, and so many others? We have a high-maintenance relationship – we need to check in and discuss what's happening frequently, and he doesn't like doing this. It seems I'm always the one pushing him to talk – left to himself, he wouldn't do it. It feels like the entire burden of communicating is on me. Can he overcome his reluctance to talk and work on this? When will he start his diet and exercise program, which he has promised several times to do?

February 15, 1992

This is the first time I've written in my journal since the previous entry. Two days after I wrote on Dec. 10, I went back on an anti-depressant, because I knew something was wrong. Thank goodness I did it, because I was getting to the point where I'd walk past the knife rack and start to wonder how to cut my wrists. The aftermath of my confrontation with the family member who hurt me in the past, along with all my fears over my relationship with J., were sending me down a dangerous path.

February 17, 1992

GREAT NEWS! I got the job I applied for a while ago! I believe it will be less stressful, and when I relocate, it will be closer to J. so it will be easier to see each other.

February 27, 1992

I had an amazing, extremely detailed, and vivid dream. It felt like a message from God. When I woke up, I was the happiest I've ever been in my life. The message was three things: do your best, and as long as you do your best, you don't need to worry. Even though things may look terrible in the world, things are truly fine because the world is in God's hands. I am filled with joy. I am so happy and optimistic.

July 27, 1992

I think this is the longest period when I haven't written in my journal. I'm struggling with the anti-depressant – am I on the right one? What about the side effects?

A lot has happened since I last wrote in February –J.'s troubled nephew, Luke, is back in prison. Luke called us to say he is going into solitary confinement because he got hold of a drug to help him sleep that turns out was forbidden – it's all very confusing. It's impossible to trust what Luke says. I fear what kind of person he will be when he does get out – someone totally angry and violent with the world because he feels he's been mistreated?

January 20, 1993

I met with my counselor and she helped me to find the words for future conversations to have with J. about when I'm talking about things that upset me at work or in my life, how I can be helpful to him when he's unloading, and that I'm concerned about his health. I feel good in her office about saying the words, but when it comes time to say them, I become very afraid and don't do it. This keeps happening, I know it's not a good strategy for me, and yet I still do it, again and again.

February 26, 1993

I hope J. and I can connect this weekend. I'd like us to get past freaking out so easily. When I'm calm and collected it's one thing, but when things go wrong and he is upset, I feel helpless. God, please help us.

March 1, 1993

A few weeks ago, J. and I came to an agreement to jointly read one chapter a week in the book *Getting the Love You Want*, and then when we get together, to talk about it. We did this for two weeks, and then stopped. We were supposed to be taking turns bringing up discussing it, but that's not happening. If I don't bring it up, we don't talk about it. Help me to know your will, God, and then have the faith, strength, and courage to do it – to do my best.

March 22, 1993

Today J. and I had a good talk about something in our relationship. I told him how tough it is to make a suggestion or comment about something he is doing, because when I open my mouth, I see him stiffen, like he's afraid I'm going to attack him. I'm glad I could finally say it – it's been bothering me for a long time. We also agreed that either of us could ask the other, "Are we OK?" if we are worried that something is wrong between us. That was a huge relief! Thank you, God.

April 1, 1993

After feeling so close to J. two days ago, he seemed very distant tonight – maybe he's distracted about work. I hope we can get to the place where he can tell me up front, so I don't worry that it has anything to do with our relationship. Can we make it? He keeps going for hikes on the weekend and

doesn't include me. I know I encouraged him to live his own life when my physical ailments are active, but it would be nice if he checked in first, saying he wished I could come with him or something like that. (*Warning sign: J. could drink more if he was by himself.*)

April 10, 1993

J. and I are doing better all the time, my job is going well, and the house renovations are coming along. Thank you, God, for all the blessings in my life.

April 26, 1993

At long, long last, I finally talked to J. about the drinking when we had gone into the woods for a hike. What tipped me over the edge was going on a picnic together a couple of weeks ago and catching myself wondering if it was really water in his water bottle or alcohol. Boy was I nervous and scared! I rehearsed the words again with my counselor – “I’m worried about how much you drink. It seems like a lot to me. I am concerned about your health.” My heart was just pounding. After I said those words, he wouldn’t look at me. But after a little while, he did say I could be right, and he would cut back. I was so relieved that he didn’t get angry. Thank you, God.

May 3, 1993

It does seem like J. is drinking less now. What a relief! (*What had actually happened was that he switched to drinking vodka in a mug and I thought it was water.*)

May 14, 1993

J. told me that he had been feeling odd and went to his family doctor, who put him on medicine for high blood pressure. (*Warning sign: long-term consumption of large amounts of alcohol can eventually lead to increases in blood pressure.*) They also discussed whether J. should go on anti-depressants. J. said he would think about it.

July 19, 1993

J. continues the pattern I’ve noticed for a while, that he seems quiet and withdrawn in the evening. I’ve decided it’s the side effects of the medications he’s on now for high blood pressure and depression. I’m nervous about sharing my concerns because I don’t want to put any pressure on him. I also notice that he doesn’t seem very hungry in the evening and doesn’t eat much. (*Warning signs: it is far more likely he was quiet and withdrawn and not eating because he had been drinking heavily.*)

November 29, 1993

J. proposed to me. I’m so happy. I was ready for him to ask me to marry him starting two years after we met, but I understand he wanted to be really sure this time. We won’t be getting married for a while because we want to finish renovating our house.

February 24, 1994

J. sounded distant on the phone, again. Why is this happening? I should ask him about it. I spent time re-reading the beginning of this journal – almost four years ago – and we’ve made it. I’m so happy. There’s no one else I want to be with. I see his smile and I’m just delighted. I hope we have many years together. I had a dream last night where I wasn’t sure I loved him, and our plane couldn’t take off. I’m mildly puzzled about it. *(This dream was a warning sign.)*

February 28, 1994

J. was almost in tears when I left to drive back to my apartment tonight. I asked him a few questions but it seemed like he didn’t want to talk about it. I felt so inadequate.

March 3, 1994

I’m thinking about last night’s confrontation with J. – this is my home, too. Please don’t shout at me. *(Warning sign: unreasonable anger is a big concern.)*

March 10, 1994

J. was very wistful about his early professional work being forgotten. I wish I knew what to say when he feels like that. We’re connecting better now, but we still “miss” sometimes. God, help me to be a better friend to J. and the other people in my life.

March 24, 1994

J. seemed distant tonight, withdrawn – my stomach is in knots and I wish I knew if it’s him or me. This is still really hard, even after almost six years of being together.

March 25, 1994

We talked this morning – I’m so glad – he said he was preoccupied with things at work and working on the renovations to our house. I hope we can keep communicating better.

April 10, 1994

J.’s dad came to visit us, and the oddest thing happened. I don’t know what to think. My mind is in a whirl. The three of us were walking towards our house, and J. went off for a minute to get something. His dad immediately turned to me and said, out of J.’s hearing, that J.’s drinking had been an issue in his previous marriage, that his former wife confided that J. had a drinking problem and sometimes was drinking and driving. I was stunned and just looked at him in shock. Then J. came back and that was the end of the conversation. There was no more mention of the subject. I don’t know what to do. *(This was a very big missed warning sign. I should have called his dad privately to get more details, and then told J. what his dad said.)*

June 12, 1994

We have decided to get married next spring.

July 8, 1994

A very weird thing happened a couple of days ago. I came home from work on Friday, and J. was mowing the lawn. When I walked over to see him, he looked so odd and then he fell down. He got up but still seemed very unsteady on his feet. He said he was determined to finish mowing. I was very worried about him. I said forget about the mowing, go into the house, and drink some water. It was like he was somebody else for the rest of the evening. The next morning, he seemed fine, like his regular self. It was so weird. I didn't know what to think. (*Warning sign: he had been drinking heavily.*)

December 18, 1994

I made a long list of things I want to rehearse for a discussion I want to have with J. about things I'm worried about in our relationship, that should be at least be on our radar – or maybe I should say his radar – before we get married. They include his lack of trust of me, his unreasonable jealousy, his lack of self-confidence, the fact that I cry easily and why it bothers him so much, why it seems so difficult for us to talk about finances, and why it seems impossible for us to address issues where we disagree. I also hope we can go back to reading a chapter from "Getting the Love You Want" every weekend, and then discussing it together. (*We didn't have the discussion because I didn't bring it up.*)

January 5, 1995

J. and I had an absolutely WONDERFUL time over New Year's, exploring a place I've never been to before, full of lovely natural wonders. But I had a very upsetting experience at a restaurant, watching a drama of domestic violence, and I cannot stop thinking about it. I've got to write it down. We stopped for dinner at a buffet-only Chinese restaurant. It was very crowded, and the tables were very close together. We sat next to a woman sitting with a boy, maybe 8 or 9, and a little girl in a high chair with her back to us, maybe 18 months old. She turned around in her seat, we made eye contact and I smiled at her but she didn't smile back. There was something about the expression on her face that didn't feel right. The girl had her hair all arranged in a wave with a bow, in a dress. The mom (I presume) was trying to feed her, but she kept pushing away and turning as far around as she could to look at me again (she couldn't see J.). I heard the mom say softly, "You know your daddy doesn't like it when you do that." I was immediately on the alert after hearing this.

The husband (I presume) came back from the buffet, and when he sat down, the little girl pushed away from the high chair try and did her best to turn all the way around again. He slapped the side of her head and said, "Turn around – don't you go looking around – look over here." The little girl didn't cry or whimper, and her mother didn't say anything. I was stunned. Then she turned around again, and he slapped her again. I felt absolutely sick. I wanted to get J.'s attention, but he was eating and didn't have the same view that I did, or wasn't observing what was happening.

At this point, I became afraid to make eye contact with her. I hoped that if I didn't look at her, then she wouldn't turn around. Then I realized that she was used to getting slapped, which was why she wasn't crying. I briefly looked over to see how the son was doing. He was trying to use chopsticks, and the man grabbed them roughly out of his hands and said "Don't use them – they're stupid – give them to me." The man got up again from the table, and the little girl looked around again. I heard the mom say again, "Don't look around – you know your daddy doesn't like it when you do that" but didn't say anything else.

Then the waitress came over, gushing over the little girl – "Oh, I've been admiring your daughter – she's just precious! How old is she?"

The mom said proudly, "She's 18 months and her daddy just dotes on her! He's the one who fixes her hair and gets her dressed – he won't let me do anything!" The man came back from the buffet and sat down again. The little girl looked around again and he slapped her again on the side of the head. No one said one word all during dinner.

We finished our meal first and left. I asked J. if he had noticed anything – he said no. I told him what I had seen, and wondered if we could do anything. We talked about it for a minute, but we couldn't come up with anything. This wasn't our state, wasn't our community, it was a weekend. What could we do? But I simply can't let go of it or stop thinking about it. When I went to exercise, all I could think about was how much I hated that man and what I would do to him if I could get him alone. I am just sick to think how much damage is being done to those children, and the mother. Now I see how violence and love can be twisted together at a very early age. What an eye-opening experience.

January 20, 1995

I had an amazing dream two nights ago. I haven't been able to stop thinking about the family at the restaurant, and every time I exercise, I have been wishing I could punish the man because I am so angry at him. But something has shifted since the dream. In my dream, I saw the family (Mom, boy, little girl) in a house, in the living room, and the man wasn't there. Maybe he had gone away for a while? And then he came back, but he was a changed person. He got down on his knees in front of them, and then lowered himself all the way to the ground, put his arms out on the floor, and apologized for all he had done to them and begged to be forgiven. They said they were still afraid of him, and then they got up and moved away from him. He stayed on the floor with his arms out. And then, somehow, he turned into a tree and was growing in the living room. The family came back and knew it was him, and now they could be in the house with him and not be afraid because he couldn't ever hurt them again since he was a tree.

I woke up and felt so peaceful, like a terrible burden had been lifted from me. When I exercised yesterday and this morning, instead of being focused on my anger and hatred of this man, I am now able to have compassion and let go – I realize my anger isn't helping. Instead, I can hand this over to God, and ask for healing for everyone. I feel so much better!

February 15, 1995

Notes from a session with my counselor regarding possible things to say to J. about his anger.

“I’m grateful that during the past few weeks you didn’t get angry, and I didn’t get scared. I’d like to be free to say to you that I see the pattern is now coming back, and I’m getting scared again. When you feel comfortable, I’d like to know what you’re doing to feel better.

“I feel we didn’t finish our conversation about what happens next when you see your counselor. You said you weren’t sure you wanted to continue with him because his style wasn’t working for you. I feel the need to know that you are taking care of this. I’d be happy to brainstorm ideas and make a plan so the wedding can go on as scheduled.” *(We didn’t have this discussion because I was too nervous to bring it up.)*

March 13, 1995

We had a very difficult time when I went to his place – our house – to surprise him after one of my out-of-town night meetings for work, and I was planning to stay the night. But when he returned from his night meeting for work and found me there, he was very angry, saying it was a violation of his privacy and an interruption of his routine. He asked how I would feel if he did the same thing to me. Of course, I’d be delighted to see him, and tried to tell him that, but he was so angry I didn’t press it. I left the house and drove back to my place feeling very confused and hurt. Did I really do something so terrible by arriving unexpectedly? We’re supposed to be getting married in a few months, and we’ll be setting up our household together. *(Warning sign: most likely he was planning on drinking and didn’t want me to see how much he consumed.)*

My family is wondering if I should postpone the wedding in the spring but I have decided I really believe I’m doing the right thing by moving ahead. I can get frantic when he doesn’t call me – it’s as if he’s punishing me for hurting him, when that is never my intention.

March 22, 1995

I wonder why he says yes, that it’s really OK for me to do something, only to get angry afterwards when I have done it. I figured out what I will say the next time we get together: “Don’t say yes unless you really mean it.” Whew—that’s a relief to get that figured out. I will be moving into the house very soon. Dear God, please guide us towards your will. Help me to become wiser and stronger and trusting and loving and do better. Help us to find our way. *(I was not able to say this for months.)*

April 3, 1995

We had a wonderful weekend together at a place we both love, full of good feelings, and then when we got back to our house he freaked out about not having the bathroom finished, and made fun of my exercising, when according to him, I should have been working on the wedding invitations. I reminded him that he said would “take care of” the invitations so it was really on him that they hadn’t gone out. But then today he said he had seen his new counselor, liked him, and felt happy after the session. Thank you, God, thank you for your help. Please help J. and help me do better.