

Al-Anon Today

YOUR E-LINK TO AL-ANON UK & ÉIRE

*this
too* *shall
pass*



www.al-anonuk.org.uk

Summer 2020

Letter From Your Editor

Thank you very much to the contributors to this issue of *Al-Anon Today*.

It's been a great comfort and pleasure for the Editorial Committee to read your thoughts, and it's helped me to feel more connected at this time of isolation.

I have come to understand, through studying the Traditions with a fellow member that the whole Fellowship is going through this together and that our personal progress depends upon unity. I love being reminded that we are all equal - equally loved, accepted and treasured by our Higher Power and each other.

I am so glad I am a member of Al-Anon, the programme continues to enrich my life.

For our next issue we invite further shares on our response to the crisis. You will find some interesting questions to trigger some written shares on page 18.

Keep connected, keep safe, and keep writing!

OPINIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN
ARE NOT TO BE ATTRIBUTED
TO AL-ANON AS A WHOLE.
MEMBERS SHARE THEIR
PERSONAL EXPERIENCES
AND STORIES, AND INVITE
OTHER MEMBERS TO 'TAKE
WHAT YOU LIKED AND LEAVE
THE REST' — THAT IS, TO
DETERMINE FOR THEMSELVES
WHAT LESSON THEY COULD
APPLY TO THEIR OWN LIVES.

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When I first joined Al-Anon, I was at a very low point. I did not know that I had a problem not only with someone else's drinking, but also with focusing on other people. The drinker was just one of those people. I began to understand that I needed to detach from him and his drinking, (believe me, that took quite some time), and it took me a lot longer to understand that I needed to keep out of other people's business in general.

I see now that I confused interfering with caring. I believed that I was being helpful. Slowly, in Al-Anon, I came to understand that I needed to keep the focus on myself and out of other people's business, including that of the drinker.

I recognise now that everyone needs to find their own path and that I can only help when help is requested. I don't always get this right, but I do my best and don't give myself a hard time if I fall back to old behaviours.

Thank you to all those in Al-Anon who have shared their experience, strength and hope. I have learnt what I needed to change about myself.

Anon



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Although I didn't grow up in an alcoholic household, my dad was very strict, controlling and a perfectionist. I was always striving to please him and to do things perfectly. He was diagnosed with MS when I was 12 and I became overly responsible, and developed a need to control everything in my life. I became self critical with low self esteem. I remember never feeling I was very good at anything, so I wouldn't carry on with a hobby or pursue a job because I felt I couldn't do it as well as others could. I was also putting other people's needs before my own.

I took all these behaviours into my marriage and put a lot of pressure on myself and my husband. When my youngest son was diagnosed with autism, my co-dependent behaviour caused my marriage to break down and we –got divorced.

progress not perfection

Learning to let go of trying to be perfect is making me a better and nicer person to be around.

When I began a relationship with my childhood sweetheart, I was determined not to make the same mistakes I'd made in my marriage. But when his drinking escalated, I was ready for our relationship to end. Life had become unbearable – he was verbally abusive, selfish and unreasonable. I didn't like who I'd become either. I was on my knees when I came to Al-Anon, and spent most of the time crying. Shortly afterwards my partner did acknowledge that his drinking was out of control and got help.

What a roller coaster it's been since then. I've been learning not to enable my partner by letting him face the consequences of his behaviour. When he relapsed I found it extremely hard to deal with. I was still very focused on him, and obsessed with his behaviour, still holding onto that control. The Slogans saved me, as well as the 3 Cs - I didn't cause alcoholism, and can't control or cure it.

I was so pleased to learn that Al-Anon was a gentle

programme and that I could forgive myself. I had done the best I could at the time.

I started to get the focus back where it belonged, on me. I'm finding out who Emma is again.

A lot of my behaviours were driven by fear. Will he relapse? What will I do? When I get stressed like this I can hand it over to my Higher Power and tell myself that I'm where I'm meant to be right now. Going to meetings regularly, calling on Al-Anon friends between meetings, reading the literature and listening to podcasts helps me every day.

I know now that I am enough, that I make mistakes and that's OK. I promptly admit when I'm wrong and I like myself more now for being able to do this, for being able to be vulnerable.

*I've learnt that my
way of doing things
is right for me and
I let other people live
their own lives*

I don't know what the future holds for me and my partner but I know Al-Anon and all my lovely new friends will be there to help me cope. Learning to let go of trying to be perfect is making me a better and nicer person to be around.

I have to take care of my thoughts when I'm alone and my words when I'm with people. I can waste a whole day obsessing about what my partner has said or done. I use the acronym THINK before I say things to people, especially my partner - is it thoughtful, honest, intelligent, necessary, kind?

I have to stop giving advice. I've learnt that my way of doing things is right for me and I let other people live their own lives.

I have started a new hobby, acrylic painting, and I'm also selling my paintings. This has really helped me in so many ways, building my self esteem, keeping that focus on me, and daring to be brave and put myself out there. If it doesn't always work out how I'd hoped, I'm still enjoying the journey.

Emma

My Journey to Recovery

When I first came to Al-Anon six years ago I did everything that was suggested. I made teas, read books, got myself a Sponsor and started working the Steps straight away. I was a perfectionist and thought I was in control of my recovery. I used to meet my Sponsor once a week to work through each step, but it was a box-ticking exercise for me.

When it came to Step Four, I said a few things that I thought were not that bad to get me through to the next step. I was unaware that by doing this I was harming my recovery. I felt that I would be judged and thought badly of unless I did the Steps quickly.

Then I left the Fellowship for a year and my life and attitude became really unmanageable.

I went to a Convention with my partner, where I saw some members from my home Group. They said it would be nice to see me back. I felt nervous but I did go back. At that meeting I heard a lady say that it is good to go to different meetings. It was as if a light bulb had switched on, and I started to go to three meetings a week. I knew I needed another Sponsor so I plucked up the courage to ask the lady who had inspired me.

I am so grateful to my Higher Power for sending her to me. She is such an inspiration and I can tell her anything because I do not feel judged. I am becoming more open minded and also doing service which has helped enormously. I feel I am growing each day in Al-Anon with the help of my Sponsor and my Higher Power, and I am so grateful. *Anon*

How has your Sponsor helped you? <https://www.al-anonuk.org.uk/share/>

from Survival to Recovery

My father was a drinker. He would forget to pick me up from school, beat me - even more when I cried. He gave me responsibility for my three sisters. This was my normality. I learned to bury my feelings, look after Dad when he had had too much to drink, take care of my sisters and excel at school. I was not allowed to have friends round, nor was I allowed to go out with them. When we went out as a family, we had to behave perfectly. I was punished by my dad for coming second instead of first in a class of 31 students.

When I was 16, I could not take the fear and pain any more. I tried to end it all and was saved by my dog. At 16 I left home and came to this country for a better life, but married someone like my father.

Today, I am grateful for those people whose behaviour brought me to Al-Anon. I have a different normality. I have learnt to feel my feelings. I am good enough, I am willing to let go of my fears and pain, and my Higher Power provides the means. I have forgiven myself for my part in allowing others to treat me with less respect than I deserved, as I did not know any better.

I now understand and love myself enough to treat myself with respect and surround myself with people who treat me as I deserve. I am letting go of the survival strategies I used as a child and living my life as an adult with the help of my Al-Anon family. I am enjoying this life-long journey and keep my past where it belongs, in the past. It does not define my present. *Anon*

WHAT WOULD YOUR HIGHER POWER SAY?

At a recent Area 5 Assembly we held a workshop on our Higher Power.

We discussed various aspects of developing a relationship with a Higher Power, and at the end the members were asked to quietly reflect on the question 'If your Higher Power was here and could speak directly to you, what would they say to you right now?'

Here are the responses.

You are doing OK, just keep going, I love you.

You are where you need to be, have courage.

Look how far you have come!

Cheer up, chill out, you are where you need to be.

You are being held by this fellowship.

Everybody has their own Higher Power to take care of them.

Don't give up, keep focused and do it!

Step out of your comfort zone.

Keep going, all will be well.

Keep coming back, you are on the right path.

I will show you the way.

Have faith and trust me..

Love yourself, be careful with yourself.

Breathe and keep going.

Hannah, grateful member of Al-Anon, Area 5

What would your Higher Power say to you?

<https://www.al-anonuk.org.uk/share/>

Anger

I was angry and confused that my civilized response was not working...

In my family of origin, anger was not expressed by shouting. Instead we were encouraged to talk to the person involved and state our feelings in a low-key way.

I did not have the tools to handle a high-functioning active alcoholic. I was overwhelmed by the sheer scale of unacceptable behaviour. I didn't know what it was that I was dealing with. I was angry and confused that my civilized response was not working.

When I joined Al-Anon, things had become too much - my husband's behaviour was unacceptable and so was mine. I was irritable and unreasonable and very unhappy. I didn't like what I had become.

Initially, I applied the programme on trust. All my coping mechanisms had failed and I didn't have the mental or physical energy to do anything else. It took a while, but, by studying the Steps, I was able to create the head space to start understanding the roots of my anger.

Firstly, I was angry with my husband because I felt he was taking advantage of me and failed to listen when I raised the subject

of his unacceptable behaviour. Anger is a normal healthy response to abuse and, in one form or another, alcoholics are often abusive.

On this matter, I have been greatly helped by considering the Three A's - Awareness, Acceptance, Action. I can choose to act or not.

Secondly, I was angry at the manipulative use of anger, fear and guilt that my husband used to get his own way. For example, he would

start a row so he could have a reason to go to the pub. Why bother? Why not go straight to the pub? I

never stood in his way. In

Al-Anon I learned not to pick up the other end of his anger rope because it played me into his hands.

Thirdly, I was angry about my husband's

anger and how it had impacted our marriage and family life. Outbursts often started with an unfounded accusation or just a change of expression that indicated an attack was imminent. Something would be wrong, someone, anyone (me, the kids or the dog) had done something or not done something that made him angry.

In Al-Anon, I learned that I did not cause my husband's illness and I needed help to recover from the destructive forces at work in my marriage.



Dealing with my Anger

I am sitting at my kitchen table as I write this. I am alone in my house. I am feeling a lot of anger at the moment. Anger is an emotion that I can feel shame about. I am grateful that Al-Anon is teaching me helpful ways to deal with my anger, a way that is respectful to me and to it.

I have learned that I am powerless over my first thought. Anything I do after that, I have a choice. I heard someone share once that God is in the pause, and it is in that pause that my recovery can be.

I am learning that it is OK to be angry, and that it is necessary to process my anger with

people in recovery who I trust. I feel vulnerable when I am angry. Sometimes I have to say a lot of raging craziness to get to the root of what I am feeling. There are nearly always tears. I am grateful that I have relationships with members who are able to give me time and support me on a phone call when I feel this. Sometimes I have to punch a pillow to get the pain of my anger out. Sometimes I scream into the pillow. Sometimes I run as fast as I can, which can give me an enormous surge in energy.

I am grateful that I am learning healthy ways of dealing with my anger. *C, London Bridge 9am*

How do you deal with your anger? <https://www.al-anonuk.org.uk/share/>

Gratitude

For three weeks I've been working from home and I have spent a lot of time in my own head. This extra time at home with my husband is challenging for both of us. Was I being over sensitive and unreasonable or slipping back into old ways of behaving with stinking thinking? In truth I think I was trying to avoid a difficult conversation which I knew was needed. Eventually we had the difficult conversation and I used what I had learnt in Al-Anon. I recognised my feelings and expressed them, not as right or wrong, but as feelings. So we're moving on and taking 'One Day at a Time', even a minute at a time if necessary.

If I remember to use the tools of the programme and trust in my Higher Power I can get through this. I know I can't control what's going on around me - whatever happens is in the hands of my Higher Power.

I'm thankful for today no matter what it brings and the love of the Fellowship of Al-Anon.

Breda

FEAR is something that took over my life

for many years and the recent Covid-19 pandemic has brought some of my old fears back. Someone in my Group defined fear as false evidence appearing real.

I married a lovely, gifted woman and we had an exciting, if somewhat eccentric start to our married life. I had always known that she enjoyed a drink, but we were young, and it didn't seem that unusual.

For many years I sank deeper and deeper into denial, particularly when we were trying to start a family. They were anxious times because I knew alcohol could be toxic for an unborn child and it made me scared and angry.

In the end we gave up and I have to confess I was relieved. I had seen the effect my wife's

alcoholic mother had had on her and I wasn't sure I would be able to cope.

My frustration, fear, sense of powerlessness and inevitable anger grew.

Coming home often felt like I was playing Russian roulette and, despite being fairly petite, my wife could be aggressive and frightening sometimes. My responses were often ill-judged, aggressive and unkind.

Then she was caught driving drunk and my world seemed to crumble amid fear and shame. She avoided jail and stayed sober, no thanks to me, for nearly a year, but she was still in denial and unprepared to get help from AA. She was getting really ill with regular

blackouts, withdrawal, lack of regular eating and frightening fits. In the end, I just wanted her to cease to exist, and that made me feel wretched, guilty, and hopeless.

Then one day, in a rage of fear and desperation, I somehow found Al-Anon, and my life began to change. This was my rock bottom, and I kept coming back.

With recovery, my acceptance grew, and by working with my Sponsor, which was a major turning point, my life improved and I started

to get back what I had lost. Life went slowly from black and white to colour.

My fear, anger and obsession didn't evaporate overnight, but gradually I realised I felt different. I was stronger, less fearful, and my appetite for life

had begun to return. I even found myself able to laugh in the middle of very tough times. I practiced detachment, initially with courtesy, and then eventually with love.

Someone said 'Courage is fear that has said its prayers'. My growing serenity came from the programme, readings, from setting time aside to get in touch with my Higher Power (usually walking meditations), from doing service at the Group, then District and Area, attending meetings, working the Steps with my Sponsor, and yes, my daily gratitude list, when I remembered.

My wife was for many years very sick with this horrible illness and, as my love

Learning to live with Fear

re-emerged, I found this very hard to take. At last she found recovery in AA, and we had quite a few years of relative stability and joy. Our programmes helped both of us to adjust to a new normal, which wasn't always easy, but that's a different story.

Then she got two bouts of cancer, and the second terminal cancer took her after a tough period of chemo and other therapies. Inevitably some of my fears returned and, having lost her last June, they still haunt me. Soon after, I had a heart attack.

But this programme, and my Al-Anon family, has helped me more than I can express, to stay in the moment, to hand over the stuff that is too big to my Higher Power, and to find joy and gratitude amongst the fear, loneliness and deep sadness.

I had hoped this year would be a year of renewal and recovery from grief. And then Covid-19 arrived on our doorsteps in a bigger way than most of us ever anticipated, and here we are.

I don't know about you, but it has scared me. As an old Al-Anon friend said to me recently,

'this virus is no pussy'. I am on my own and not a natural isolator, work has fallen off a cliff just as I try to rebuild, and I have some unsustainable costs to manage in due course. I worry about my friends and family. So my programme is more important than ever.

Alcoholics lose sobriety and self-medicate – but I can lose my spiritual and mental sobriety if I don't stay on this amazing programme, which reminds me to focus on what I can control – social distancing, hand washing. I can't control the virus, or other people's behaviour.

I need to avoid the what ifs which can haunt me – because they will probably never happen. I am encouraged to avoid relying on self-will and to keep in touch with my Higher Power and fellow members. I also have the daily readings that hit the spot most days, and the Steps and the Slogans to guide me.

So, despite the real challenges and fears, I am so grateful for this programme because my experience, strength and hope tells me that I need to live one day at a time, because 'This Too Shall Pass'

Alastair, Guildford Tuesday Group



suggestions for meeting topics

- Compassion
- Changed attitudes
- Self Care
- Awareness Acceptance Action
- Self Esteem

I've gone through a whole gamut of emotions in the last few weeks. There's definitely been some fear in there. Fear for the people I love and, if I'm honest, some fear for myself too. I've been saying some very heartfelt prayers to my Higher Power and my whole perspective has changed.

I've re-connected with someone I thought I would never relate to again, which has been challenging at times, but we seem to be finding a way through.

I've made a new friend via email who has affirmed some of my deepest beliefs.

I've done more exercise than I would do normally because all my social events have been cancelled.

I live half way up a hill that has some beautiful woods at the top of it. I've been walking in there for my once a day exercise and found pink campion, celandines, flowering gorse, frogs croaking in the pond, lots of birdsong and the wind moving in the trees. It has been magical.

I've just got back from one of those walks and my overwhelming emotion now is gratitude. I found myself walking through the woods saying heartfelt 'thank yous' to my Higher Power.

I know I'm lucky. No-one in my life has contracted the virus as yet. I feel for all those people who have lost loved ones or who are fighting Covid-19 themselves. I hope they find comfort in their Higher Power as I have in mine.

Dorothy

A CHANGE OF PERSPECTIVE



ENCOUNTERING Grief

*Today I
will try to feel
my feelings
unregulated
and without
judgement*

*What emotions has
the lockdown brought
up for you?
<https://www.al-anonuk.org.uk/share/>*

Grief - it's such a scary word for me, I have images in my head of opening the door to a runaway train that I can neither control nor stop. Yet, when I dig deep and feel the full force of my real true, unregulated emotions, I usually start to feel better, and relief at the very least, so why is it still so scary?

I am battling a lifetime of self-regulation, passed on through generations of a family deeply affected by alcoholism. This came to light after an online meeting last night, a member emailed to say that they had 'regulated' themselves in their share. I am so grateful for that email as it prompted me to be aware of my self-regulation and to actually feel the grief I have been holding inside for the past three weeks.

I assumed my old position, thinking I have no right to feel my own grief in a situation where people are dying, and struggling for basics such as food and medicines. This is the legacy of my family's thinking - always be grateful and don't expose your true feelings - they were half right! Gratitude helps me out of my own 'stinking thinking' but my reality today means I must name and feel my emotions as they arise, still something with which I really struggle.

Today I am grieving for a weekend trip away with my daughter that we had planned. I am six months into a separation from her father and although amicable, it has been extremely emotional. The theatre trip was booked at a time when I was really struggling. It gave me hope of happier times to come and a sense of freedom from my co-dependent relationship – freedom to live my life and enjoy focused time with my nine-year-old daughter.

Over the last three weeks of being inside our house (in isolation), I have diminished any feelings of grief and disappointment because 'there are much worse things happening out there.' Whilst this is true, if I abuse this insight to dismiss how I really feel, I am not being honest with myself. Today I am striving to gain a balance of being able to accept and feel my own feelings without 'sitting on the pity pot', a skill I have not yet mastered, but my awareness of this is a really good starting point.

Today, I will try to feel my feelings unregulated and without judgement, then I will couple this with the gratitude for the good things in my life today, valuing both as important parts of who I am - a lovable person.

Claire

Trust in a Higher Power Comes in Handy

At the time of writing I am 83 years old. I see oldies like me walking in my nearby town looking fearful. Maybe they are frightened of old age, illness, pain or death. Of course I do not know about them, I only know that I do not fear those things.

After quite a long time in Al-Anon, I am fortunate to have been given a measure of serenity. I think one of the advantages of this serenity is that I am not fearful.

Right now, we are in the midst of a global pandemic and the world seems to have gone mad. Nothing is the same anymore. For example, to see my Al-Anon friends I have to join them in an online meeting and watch the screen of my PC.

In old age, I prefer order and stability. This pandemic seems to have upset much that was ordered and stable.

But, I still have my Higher Power. I do not worry what or who my Higher Power might be.

My Higher Power seems to be different things on different days. The important thing is that my Higher Power is there for me, and so far has not let me down.

I do not risk my serenity by watching too much TV or reading too many newspapers. My serenity is still there as is my Higher Power and my trust that somehow, it will all end OK.

Keep coming back.

Anon (Area 4)

Closer to my Higher Power

I wake up each morning thinking it has all been a nightmare and that it is not happening, only to realise that we are all still living in this devastating turmoil. Today it is the Coronavirus I am trying to cope with.

I used to have to deal with active alcoholism and today I have to deal with living with a sober alcoholic.

I hand my day over each morning, asking for guidance and strength to get me through another day of challenges. Challenges which I have never experienced, never witnessed,

never felt before, which we all have to face. I'm taking it just 'One Day at a Time', and remembering that, as in the drinking years, I am powerless over the worldwide situation.

I try to 'Let Go and Let God', and trusting my Higher Power to assist me in my daily chores and to protect and keep me safe, is my only solace.

I feel closer to my HP more than ever. With this drip fed programme I have found my comfort in my HP who has transformed me into the person I am today. **THANK YOU**

Carmela

STEP THREE – *Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him*

I have just finished my Step Three and my Sponsor suggested that I share some of my answers. I used *Paths to Recovery* to work this step.

'How do I feel about turning my life over to a Higher Power for guidance?'

I feel willing and ready to turn my life over to my Higher Power. I have handed over some aspects of my life already and add more each day.

'How do I know what my Higher Power is?'

My awareness of what my Higher Power is grew on me gradually. At first I was afraid to say it out loud. Then a fellow Al-Anon member asked me what my Higher Power was. I saw a robin sitting in a tree and I was at peace watching it. At that point it clicked, birds were my Higher Power.

'Do I trust my Higher Power to care for me?'

Yes, my Higher Power has shown that I can trust him to look after me. He has been sending people into my life that have helped me. I bought a car from a salesperson, who went on to be my life coach and pointed me in the direction of Al-Anon when I asked for help with coping with an alcoholic.

I have faith that my Higher Power will care for me again with my current situation. I have no job, I cannot look for one or move back to my flat due to the lockdown. This is giving me time to look at myself and take better care of myself.

'How can I turn a situation over and let go of the result?'

I can talk the situation through with my Higher Power, Sponsor or another member, then wait patiently for the result. I did this when I wanted

to move in with my partner. I thought we could move into my dad's house to live with him, but thought my partner would not want to. Then my partner's landlady gave him notice and he came up with the idea himself. We have happily lived with my dad for a year now.

'How can I stop myself from taking my will back?'

By pausing, stopping, praying and using the Slogan 'THINK'. I can also phone my Sponsor or another Al-Anon friend to talk it through.

'What can I do when my loved ones make a decision I don't like?'

Talk it through with my loved one to get an understanding, but remember it is not my business; 'Let Go and Let God'

'How can I let my loved ones find their own life path as I am finding mine?'

By keeping the focus on myself and letting go of my loved one's choices. Detaching with love allows them to figure out what is best for them.

'How can I express God's will in my actions and words towards others, including the alcoholic?'

By being kind, understanding, loving and non-judgemental. By not taking things personally and by letting people live their own lives.

I now feel ready to move on to Step Four, knowing I am not alone on my journey. I have my Higher Power, my Sponsor, other Al-Anon members and our Conference Approved Literature.

Grateful Member of Al-Anon

Can you share your step work?

<https://www.al-anonuk.org.uk/share/>

a wealth of help

For me isolation is not about being alone, I actually enjoy times of solitude, doing my own thing.

I can, though, feel loneliness and hopelessness, as if I am adrift in a vast ocean with no one else to reach out to. Al-Anon squashes that flat. Whatever situation I am in, there is a wealth of help and support that I can reach out to anytime.

I realise there is a connectedness which restores my peace of mind. A fellowship, a support, a 'working it out together,' that I get every time I stretch out of my independent self and grab all the programme has to offer.

Every meeting, physical or digital, phone call, text, email, letter, Public Information endeavour, reading, writing, Slogan-using, cup of tea making - each step leads to a path of fellowship where I am met at every turn with experience, strength and hope.

Augustine was reported to have said, 'It is solved by walking', so I put one foot in front of the other and step out of isolation - the Al-Anon way - my sign post for living.

Liz, Poole

I came to Al-Anon many years ago as I wanted to find a way to stop my husband drinking. He continued to drink, but I found a way of life that has allowed me to live. My husband did find sobriety, in his own time, not mine.

The Al-Anon programme, members and meetings have helped me to navigate a lot of challenging situations in my life.

I have not handled everything perfectly, but it would have been so much worse without the programme. I have developed a relationship

A New Way of Life

with a power greater than myself, and I work on this on a daily basis. I need daily reminders of who is in charge.

Life throws many challenges, but Al-Anon is my way through. 'One Day at a Time', one step at a time.

Anon

IT WORKS IF YOU WORK IT

I am so grateful for Al-Anon. Such a small word, grateful - it cannot possibly describe all the changes in my life that have been made possible by attending Al-Anon meetings, talking with other members, doing service, and reading Conference Approved Literature. More than anything else, Al-Anon gave me a change of perspective, which enabled me to embark on an amazing spiritual journey.

Listening with an open mind was one of the Al-Anon principles that helped me to become non-judgmental. I had always thought I was a liberal open-minded person, but with help from the Fourth and Fifth Steps, I was able to

see how much of my thinking had been distorted by the effects of alcoholism. I learned how my obsession with control and over-responsibility had burdened me throughout my life, leading me to carry responsibilities that were not mine. Today I have so much freedom, joy, and peace in my life. Don't get me wrong, life is still hard with its ups and downs, sorrows and disappointments, but thankfully I have found a Higher Power who I can talk to and rely upon.

Thanks to Al-Anon, I now make better choices and I keep the focus on myself.

Anon

Area Delegates share what service has given them

'I have found confidence; assertiveness as opposed to aggression; humility and honesty. It has given me better communication skills. I remember to ask myself 'Is it thoughtful, honest, intelligent, necessary and is it kind?'

'I have found courage and kindness. I have had to make space for a Higher Power's will rather than my own.'

'It has helped me be a leader who encourages rather than bosses. Service provides me with a sense of commitment and consistency.'

'It has given me lots of friends and the confidence to speak in public. I now feel comfortable going to new places and events on my

own and speaking to people I do not know.'

'I can now chair meetings and events and try new things. I am no longer afraid of not doing things perfectly. I have enjoyed travelling to new places, to Conventions and workshops.'

'It's given me back much more than I've put into it - a 'can do' attitude, a feeling of usefulness, and the ability to not take myself too seriously, as well as learning I don't have to know all the answers.'

'Service has given me tolerance; trust; confidence; learning not to dominate; to be responsible; taught me about the Service Manual. I've learned there is a God and I'm not it!'

What has service in Al-Anon given you? <https://www.al-anonuk.org.uk/share/>

The Only **ONE** I Could Change

Before Al-Anon I was so sure I could fix both my marriage and my husband. I tried self-help books, couples counselling, and women's shelters. I thought about Al-Anon, but I denied that alcoholism was the whole problem. I was ashamed of our marriage, but we put on an act for family and made it look like all was happy.

I blamed my husband for all our problems. I thought I knew so much because I hadn't come from an alcoholic family, whereas he had. Eventually, I couldn't take his abuse any more.

When I was facing major surgery, I thought he should stop drinking, but he continued. In desperation, I went to my first Al-Anon meeting. I saw it online and thought of going for years.

When I finally arrived, smiling faces welcomed me. Tears rolled down my cheeks once I sat down. I thought to myself –I finally did it– and couldn't wait to ask people how to fix this mess. Instead they listened to me cry and vent. They hugged me and told me that they understood. They were so comforting and told me to come back. I did come back.

Since then, my life and marriage has gotten so much better. I have new friends that get me, so I no longer complain to people who don't understand this disease. My self-worth has improved because I now understand alcoholism.

Furthermore, my relationships have improved because I know that I can't change anyone but myself. I have hope and serenity now. Our family is happy again.



*By Julie P
Illinois*

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We'd love some more of your responses to the current crisis. Here are just some ideas to get you started.

What Slogan are you using, and how is it helping you?

How has your relationship with your Higher Power benefited or changed due to the lockdown?

Have you been able to do more work on the Steps or Traditions? What have you discovered?

Can you share about how your programme is helping you?

Please visit www.al-anonuk.org.uk/share/

to submit your contribution or post to:

The Editor, at the General Service Office address (page 2).

Please help us make this e-zine a vital, rich and diverse expression of the Al-Anon programme of recovery.

please share your thoughts with us

You don't have to be a professional writer. The Editorial Committee will take care of the spelling, grammar and punctuation – these are not as important as heartfelt experiences.

The length can be anything from a single sentence to 450-500 words. Anything longer we may have to edit. Whatever you decide, sharing in *Al-Anon Today* can be another step along the road to recovery for both the reader and the writer, helping you and other members to grow.

You may choose how you sign your article: with your own name, anonymously, or with a pseudonym, but please note that for legal purposes your full name and address are required with your submission.

Your anonymity will be fully respected.

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THE SERENITY PRAYER

*God grant me the Serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
and wisdom to know the difference.*

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Al-Anon's Suggested Preamble to the Twelve Steps

The Al-Anon Family Groups are a fellowship of relatives and friends of alcoholics who share their experience, strength and hope in order to solve their common problems.

We believe alcoholism is a family illness, and that changed attitudes can aid recovery.

Al-Anon is not allied with any sect, denomination, political entity, organisation, or institution; does not engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any cause. There are no dues for membership.

Al-Anon is self-supporting through its own voluntary contributions.

Al-Anon has but one purpose: to help families of alcoholics.

We do this by practising the Twelve Steps, by welcoming and giving comfort to families of alcoholics, and by giving understanding and encouragement to the alcoholic.

UK & Éire Service Manual 2016, page 10

THE TWELVE STEPS

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

