Al-Anon Today

YOUR E-LINK TO AL-ANON UK & ÉIRE

Opening my eyes

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Spring 2021

Letter From Your Editor

Spring is just starting as I write this. The ground is warming and the first signs of flowers appears in my local nature reserve; primroses and snowdrops. The love and joy I receive and feel from these beautiful signs of nature mirror the love and joy I feel, being a member of Al-Anon.

You taught me to love and value myself, just as you were taught. We learn together, we grow together, we recover together. I feel like the luckiest person in the world today, just for today.

I now enjoy writing and communicating and listening and reading more and more. It's a tough time for the whole world at the moment, but so many of the shares teach me how to change my perspective.

Happy Spring dear fellow members, thank you for continuing to contribute to Al-Anon Today our e-zine, our recovery and our fellowship.

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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Self-care During a Pandemic

I attended our Area Assembly online today. It was lovely to see lots of familiar faces, and feel the warmth and love from those I call my second family. To end our Assembly, we have a spiritual share and I was asked to share on 'self-care during a pandemic'.

I began with a phrase I had heard recently, that self-care is a necessity, not an indulgence. I always found self-care so hard to do, I thought it almost selfish, and indulgent. However, I have learnt in Al-Anon that it is one of the keys to serenity for me. If I am not looking after myself and my needs; physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally, who is? I am responsible for me.

I wrote down COVID 19 and meditated on what came up for each letter, and here's what I shared:

Control - what can I and what can't I control? This reminds me immediately to use the Serenity Prayer.

Contribute - what can I contribute? How can I serve others?

Consider the source - I apply this to watching the news. I refrain from flicking between news channels to hear the latest about Covid 19. My Sponsor says, "you will hear what you need to hear, trust your Higher Power."

'One Day at a Time' - this may mean, one hour at a time or even one minute at a time and helps me from projecting into the future and imagining 'what ifs'.

Outside - going outside daily, walking in nature, connecting with my Higher Power outdoors, benefits my mental and physical health. I walk, I talk to my Higher Power, I pray, listen, and allow myself to just be in the moment.

Victim - am I in victim mode, embracing the "poor me's" feeling self-pity about what Covid 19 is doing to my life? Or can I **value** myself instead, my sense of humour, my contribution to society, my uniqueness and my Al-Anon programme?

Inventory - I take stock of how I am feeling, and what I am doing or not doing as I go through my day. This keeps me in the day, and encourages awareness. I especially use that awareness when I experience God's interruptions in my day – a phone call, a request for help, an emergency: not my plan for my day but my Higher Power's plan.

Isolation - I am aware that I can isolate very easily, especially when I have Covid 19 to blame. The online Al-Anon meetings have helped me a lot. Although I really enjoy much more the one-to-one online meetings I now organise with my Sponsor and other close Fellowship friends.

Decisions - I take time making decisions nowadays. For me time is love. I give myself time to become informed, to make choices, to be guided by my Higher Power, and also to listen to others whose decisions may affect me.
Al-Anon has taught me about choices. I've learned that there are three choices for every decision - two extremes of black and white or thirdly a choice in the middle, the grey area. As an adult child of an alcoholic, I automatically gravitate towards the two extremes, rather than making a decision based on middle ground.

One - Step One says that I am powerless over Covid 19, powerless over what people do or don't do, and powerless over places and things.

Nine - Step Nine is about forgiveness for me. Forgiving myself when I get things wrong, and forgiving others when they get things wrong. Forgiveness can heal hurts.

As we endure our second lockdown, a phrase comes to my mind - when I can't control what is happening, I can challenge myself to control the way I respond to what's happening and that is where my power lies.

Helen, Buckingham

What is helping you to cope?
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HOPE AND HEALING

For as long as I can remember I've felt uneasy with myself, with my own company, who I am in relation to other people, how people see me and the list goes on.

Growing up with an alcoholic father, who was violent when drunk and not present when sober, I felt very unloved and sad or nervous most of the time.

My mother did what she could for me functionally; I was clean, fed and sent to school, but her feelings about my father's drinking and his absence from home was felt by me and my siblings. When he wasn't there she was angry, and when he was there she was angry.

We, as children, were taught that the only way to be heard was to shout and roar, and the only way to solve an argument was to tear strips off each other, verbally or physically. Being nice was seen as a weakness. I was often called stupid by my father because I was so nervous around him. I was afraid of saying the wrong thing so I stuttered over my words or was clumsy.

As I got older I couldn't wait to leave home, so I shared a flat in town with my twin sister and we were out socialising any chance we got. My twin and I fought a lot but that was in part due to us not knowing how to discuss things without fighting and in part due to other people's views of us. We were compared a lot and that fuelled our insecurities and jealousy of each other.

I didn't know how to cope with confrontation so I would go out and get drunk to escape my feelings but of course they would always resurface - with me in tears at the end of the night or fighting with someone and saying all the things I should have said when sober. I was so unhappy in myself. I attempted suicide in my late 20's out of desperation to be seen and understood.

I attended counselling for many years which helped but it's only since coming to Al-Anon that I've truly felt understood and heard by people who have been through the same upbringing as myself, with an alcoholic parent, brother, son or daughter.

We know the pain of living with alcoholism. I hope that by sharing my story I can be of some help to someone.

There is always a feeling of hope and healing from doing the readings, attending meetings or talking to someone. Al-Anon has truly changed my life for the better.

Anon

Damaged – not insane

Coming into Al-Anon and finding that I could share without any judgement,
gave me hope to carry on and to find peace knowing that
I was damaged and not insane.

Anon

FORGIVENESS AND ACCEPTANCE

I thought for a long time that I was in control. I manipulated my view of events to maintain that illusion but I did not understand that I could not fool my Higher Power.

Working the Steps, and particularly Steps One, Two and Three, I have come to see the connection between my expectations and the trauma of resentment, which I have used as fuel for the greater part of my life. This fuel is acidic and burns a hole deep inside my soul, releasing vapours so toxic that only a few brave souls dare come near.

When I completed my first Step Four inventory my Sponsor gave me a list of defects of character to help me in the Steps to follow. I can see now that when those characteristics came into my life they brought associates and had a party! This affected my thinking and feelings.

Today I am using the Slogans and the Serenity Prayer to learn to love again. I am learning that my thinking can be impaired to the point of insanity when I try to repair or save myself or others.

I have finally found some hope because I can remember that it was surrendering my will that helped me come through the difficult times. I have come to realise that forgiveness and acceptance can help me to find peace of mind.

Al-Anon has helped me to express my needs. The Steps, Traditions and Concepts, and the other tools of the programme, are rich in gems for those willing to mine them.

A Happy Digger.

learning to like myself

I found Al-Anon around 17 years ago.

My wife is an alcoholic and she has a drink once in a while now. For a number of years, she attended AA but not anymore.

I have kept attending my Al-Anon meetings and applying the Al-Anon ideas because I was the problem in our house.

I had become very bad tempered and stopped liking myself, I hated being so angry with my wife so I took my programme seriously.

Now I'm not that nasty man I had become. I'm usually a placid guy and I now like myself.

Thank you Al-Anon, I love our meetings.

Ivor

HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL

I love the season of spring. Beyond the literal growth it brings, I find a symbolic sense of rebirth. The days start to get warmer, and green shoots of new plants timidly show their growth.

Like my growth in Al-Anon, I've had to go through different seasons of change - enduring long winters when my progress seemed slow or non-existent. Then I would experience a glimpse of hope in a new behaviour or attitude which felt like a new spring dawning.

I've learned to keep my recovery focused on the small shoots of hope that I can work with and to maintain, a bit like a gardener, a daily practice of weeding out the attitudes that don't serve me anymore. It's an organic process and if I try to hurry it, I'm bound to become unstuck.

Real change takes time and asks me to dig deep to root out my life-long learned habits, and to examine them in the cold light of day to see if they serve my new way of living.

In the dark days of winter, it can feel hard for me to find hope. However, in the small daily actions of tending my own garden, keeping an eye on my own thoughts, words and deeds, I can ensure that I'm becoming the kind of person I would like to have around.

Anon

EXPERIENCE **STRENGTH** & HOPE

I came into Al-Anon to find help and solutions to stop my alcoholic son from drinking, and help him lead a life that would offer him better opportunities. I felt I was failing as a mum, that I was flawed. I believed it was my job as his mother to save him, give him the life I thought he deserved, a life without addiction.

If I had come to Al-Anon earlier I could have had the benefit of friendship, the tools, Slogans, Steps and a Sponsor to support me. I would have recognised that I was sick, and that my son's disease called alcoholism was really affecting me.

My rock bottom happened one family Christmas and my Higher Power helped me, even if I didn't know that at the time. I often prayed that I'd get the help I needed to save my beautiful son from the dreaded alcohol that was, in my mind, ruining his life. This Christmas was similar to lots of family occasions in the past. Our son had left home and was living rough. He stayed in contact with us, very erratically – we often heard how he was through a third party – the hospital, police, kind strangers and at times himself, if he was able to call. We would collect him, bring him home and let him stay until the next time he disappeared, which could be the next day.

This particular Christmas we didn't know where he was, or if he was alive as the weather was cold and bleak. I was frantic with worry, had no energy, could not concentrate on anything, yet I wanted the perfect Christmas for our family at any cost. To show the neighbours our wonderful family celebrations. I was terrified, my life was chaotic. I had morphed into this person I did not recognise.

At this time, I would spend two days a week at my daughter's, helping her and I loved it – however my sickness was always just bubbling underneath. I could snap, be totally unreasonable in my demands, have no patience, and have no understanding of normal behaviour.

I was determined that we would have a perfect Christmas, (which included our son - so I needed to find him). I got the decorations, managed my husband on how to decorate our home so it looked like a normal family home at Christmas. I spent a lot of time getting perfect presents for everyone. I planned the menu and we bought all the food. Beds were made up fresh and all cleaning done. Our daughter, husband and new baby came to stay.

I could not accept that I was not in control. Everyone's needs came first. I believed that if we had the perfect Christmas as planned, I would be happy.

On 23 December a woman phoned, saying she had found our son and was with him. She needed to call an ambulance. I remember her saying all families should be together at this special time of year and I ought to be more charitable. I thanked her for being so kind but I was feeling judged, angry, frightened and very sad. She had burst my bubble of the perfect Christmas. How was I going to fix this? She had mentioned the hospital he was being taken to so we could meet the ambulance. I knew I could not do that so I was in a total panic.

Realising my life was spiralling out of control I saw everything I knew disappear from me. Fear was feeding my anxiety.

On 24 December an addiction counsellor called informing us we could collect our son as he was being discharged from hospital. I could not talk to him and asked him to call back in an hour. I could not think straight and argued with

my husband. Everyone was so upset and my fear of losing control was driving me insane. Looking around my home and family, I realised this was where I was meant to be, so when the counsellor called back I told him we were not collecting him - our son could not come home. His reply stunned me: "That's ok, that's fine, I'll find him accommodation, leave it with me. And happy Christmas"

Our small family had a nice Christmas. We seemed happy, although tinged with sadness and apprehension. My controlling behaviour had affected everyone. I knew I needed help or I would go insane or worse.

In the new year I agreed to visit an Al-Anon meeting – they could help me stop my alcoholic drinking. Although I didn't get a cure for my son, I did find peace and serenity for myself. I found help, help for me to understand I too was sick. The help and support I have received from my Al-Anon friends has been immense. I found a Sponsor and am working the Steps. The Serenity Prayer and tools of the Al-Anon programme have let me see that at Christmas my Higher Power helped me, which in turn has helped my family. I know now about the three Cs: I did not cause it, I cannot control it, I cannot cure it.

Once I accepted Steps One, Two and Three I realised how my behaviour, born out of love, was controlling, and enabling my alcoholic son. I understand my unrealistic demands and behaviour were not helping him.

Slowly my experience, strength and hope have reduced my fear and anxiety. I can now make decisions for me about what I need, and am slowly healing.

Anonymous mum

Finding Gratitude

I was feeling a bit down when the news came that we were going into another lockdown due to rising COVID numbers. Our Group had moved from weekly online meetings to face to face meetings. Although the numbers were limited through social distancing, it was good to be physically with fellow members again.

With the new restrictions, online meetings had to resume. Although I felt disappointed at first, I had to find gratitude that there was a medium with which to carry on meeting.

'One Day at a Time' I hope it will not be too long before being able to attend face to face meetings again.

Jennifer Area 12

suggestions for meeting topics

- Asking for help
- Grief
- Giving and receiving
- My relationship with my Higher Power
- Self care

Changing me, changing my relationships

'You are leaving me to clear up the mess' was my son's parting shot after we had spent a few hours together. In the past I would have thought how like his father he is and sometimes thoughts like that still creep in.

I spent most of my married life in fear of putting a foot wrong. I was shouted at and abused for everything and anything, like the way I washed up or parked the car. For my part, I was an irritable and unreasonable martyr. I took everything personally. In truth, my son is like me too.

It has been a long haul up from the bottom and I know that I would not have made it without my local Group and my Sponsor. The chaos of family life is being replaced by the regular rhythm of working the Al-Anon programme.

Step Ten is now a particularly precious tool, performed just before sleep and more often if needed. I put down how the day has gone on paper, thanking God for his direction in my day and reasoning out what I need to do tomorrow. This enables me to think straight and keep my mouth shut.

I realise now that my son's fear and trauma come from living with multi-generational alcoholism on his father's side and equal dysfunction on mine. My new understanding helps us to rebuild our relationship one day at a time. I am very thankful that we can.

Anon

How has Al-Anon changed your relationships with your family and friends?

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CULTIVATING ACCEPTANCE

I was reflecting on acceptance and had a thought - I think a huge part of my recovery in the last year has been acceptance of the lockdown and all the restrictions.

I've used it as a time to study the programme and the Steps and practice working them. It's been magic.

I don't think I've moaned very much - just accepted it's a time of change that I have no control over. I've accepted that I'm content with what I'm doing and very content with what I'm not doing.

I'm very grateful that online meetings were introduced and I accepted that change to meetings with open arms and I can see the benefits.

I now have a deeper understanding of our programme. I've also met lovely people in the programme from all over the world that I would never have had the chance to meet in normal circumstances.

I'm very grateful today that I'm able to accept 'what is'.

Anon

Free to do today

My story is about coping with an active drinker, my wife, who has controlled my life. I've been trying endlessly to please her.

Thank God that Al-Anon empowered me to reboot my psychology, transforming my whole perspective on life.

After many years practising detachment with love, I have today unlocked the emotional connection that limited my self-belief, and caused shame and guilt. I have overcome the fear of failure, and am free to do today, to stop thinking and become a human doer.

I thank Al-Anon for the gifts and tools that have inspired me to be surrounded by hope.

Everyone needs inspiration; may the hand of Al-Anon always be there.

Hearing other people's experiences is a lifelong journey of self-discovery, to becoming the person I always wanted to be, but I lacked the courage to be.

The Al-Anon programme works for me and as I learn that love and happiness is an inside job, I no longer seek external gratification. The God of my understanding was within me all the time.

Al-Anon has grown my faith and today I can fly. First, I have to love myself and to grow. To live happily with good grace, despite a lifelong battle with dyslexia.

Living in denial is not my life's purpose. Living surrounded by hope is my life's purpose and to carry the message, to die happy not rich and to be without any resentments.

From my heart to yours I wish you a happy life. I work my programme in my daily life, putting in the footwork, and loving myself enough.

Keith - a grateful survivor

UNEXPECTED GRATITUDE

I am so grateful for online meetings, which have been a boon in connecting me not only with my home Group but with Al-Anon meetings in places like Florida and Melbourne. Seeing familiar and new faces fills my heart with joy. I appreciate the technology that allows me to stay in the programme.

Anon

HOPE

When I found Al-Anon I had hoped that my husband would stop drinking. That's what I wanted and I knew that if he stopped we would have peace and a happy relationship. He just needed to be fixed!

I listened at meetings, read 'The Merry Go Round Named Denial' and started to make some changes.
I spoke kindly to my husband about Al-Anon and AA.

I encouraged him and he nodded in agreement. He liked my new non-nagging, non-pleading self. He liked me going to my meetings and made several starts at giving up the drink but my hope for his recovery was frustrated. He wasn't ready.

I re-focused on hope for myself and worked at getting to know myself, warts and all. I engaged better with my children and colleagues and wondered at the freedom that I felt so I kept going back to the meetings and reaching out to people who actually wanted the programme.

I balanced hope for my husband's recovery with acceptance of the reality of the disease – that not everyone will recover.

Monika

Hope plus Peace equals HP

HOPE - The fact that situations change gives me hope. If I am in a bad place I remind myself that no situation stays the same.

When I worry about a situation I can over-think it and force solutions only to then find something will shift and change in my situation.

So, there is always hope to look forward to, hope that the situation will change. If the situation worsens, I use the Al-Anon Slogans, take one moment at a time, and remind myself to accept the things I cannot change.

PEACE - Whenever I thought of the situation and relationship with my dad, I always dreaded the guilt I would feel when he passed. Thanks to Al-Anon I spent quality time with my dad when the alcohol allowed, and understood his drinking as an illness. Now my dad has passed I feel peace not guilt, and have what I have learnt in Al-Anon to thank for that.

Anon

What does HP mean to you?
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I DESERVED TO GROW

I began dating an alcoholic in 1984. He was a drinker, crazy and exciting. Even as a naïve young woman I knew that there could be no secure future with his way of living but for now it was fun.

Two years later he joined Alcoholics Anonymous and I often went with him to meetings. After a further two years we committed to the more serious future of being together permanently.

I hadn't believed that Al-Anon could offer me anything now that he was sober, however, a week after we began living together I found myself in an Al-Anon meeting. I loved the feeling in the room, the welcome and the acceptance, so I committed to Al-Anon straight away.

My husband has remained sober in AA and looking back I don't know where I would be if not for the programme of recovery, a Sponsor's support and Al-Anon friendship.

I had felt that he was the sick one and I had no problems, so why did I need a programme? Yet, I know the frustration and despair I felt when he joined AA. I lost myself, becoming a shadow as he grew and grasped the new light of AA that had entered his world.

My pleading, shouting, crying, demanding, controlling, manipulating and eventual physical abuse of him added to my despair and guilt. I could not see that I was playing the victim until I asked for help and was shown the depth of our simple Twelve Step programme.

Today my selfishness, self-seeking, dishonesty and fear have been made clear by working the Steps and the help of a Sponsor with whom I can be totally honest.

Over thirty years of marriage to a recovering alcoholic has blessed me with a life I would never have known, opportunities and experiences that never would have been mine without our supportive members and caring fellowships.

Contempt about Al-Anon and my own self centredness were definitely among my many issues and I am truly grateful that I can continue to experience the rich blessings Al-Anon has to offer.

Anon

Have your opinions changed after you've found out about something?
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Living my Life

I have returned to Al-Anon, and in doing so, have got a better understanding of alcoholism and all that goes with it.

Being a part of this wonderful fellowship has given me strength and hope to move forward with my life, accepting my powerlessness over the disease that affects my husband.

I am learning to grow and change through self-examination by studying the Steps with an amazing Sponsor, who I have learnt so much from. Seeing my part in all that went on before I came to Al-Anon certainly made me see that I too have defects of character that I didn't realise at the time; I thought I was doing nothing wrong and it was all his fault, that we were in this toxic mess of a marriage.

My attempts at control, to have life the way I wanted it to be, could not change or help my husband. I am working on my programme 'One Day at a Time' to become the person I am meant to be, I do have bad days and slip up even though my husband is a few months into his sobriety.

Working on my inventory daily, speaking to my Sponsor, having a Higher Power in my life, attending meetings, being of service, reading literature and using the Slogans and Serenity Prayer, keeps me moving forward with progress and not perfection.

If I didn't have Al-Anon in my life, I would still be in that dark place and not seeing my faults and the cycle would continue. I am truly grateful to this fellowship and the life I am living through it.

Anon

Keeping what I have by giving it away

I have been an Al-Anon member for about 16 years. When I came to my first meeting, I was desperate; desperate to know how to stop the alcoholic in my life drinking; desperate to stop feeling as terrified and desperate to understand what was happening to me and to the drinker.

When I heard that I couldn't stop the drinking, I was horrified and wondered what the point of Al-Anon was. What kept me coming back was the kindness and understanding I received from the other members of the Group. They weren't telling me what to do, or what I should be doing for the drinker, unlike the rest of my family, and they listened to me, unlike my family.

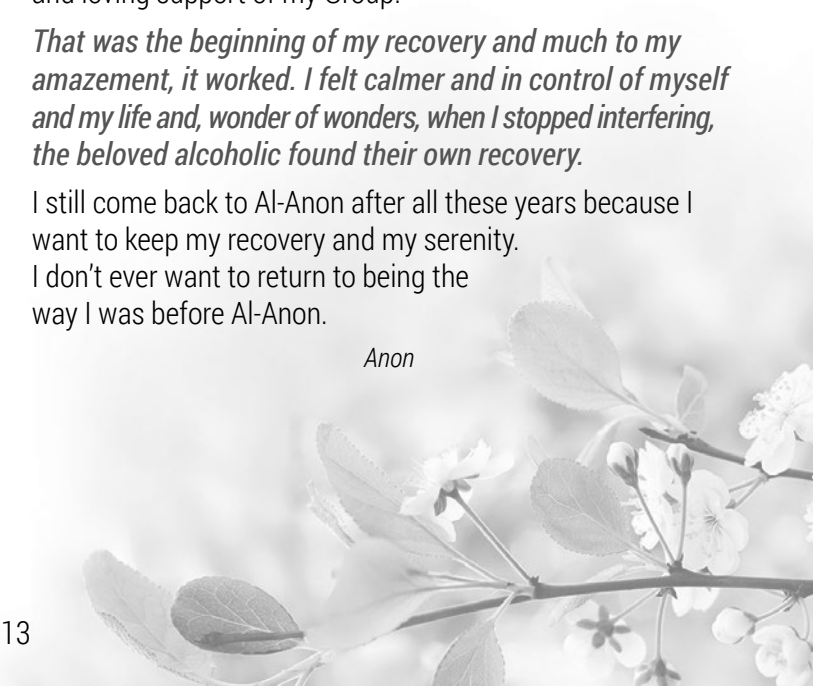
I soon came to realise that while I couldn't change the drinker, I could change my behaviour and how I reacted around the drinking. It seemed very strange to learn that hands off would be more effective than all the pleading, nagging, arguing and shouting I had been doing.

I wouldn't have been able to change without the wonderful and loving support of my Group.

That was the beginning of my recovery and much to my amazement, it worked. I felt calmer and in control of myself and my life and, wonder of wonders, when I stopped interfering, the beloved alcoholic found their own recovery.

I still come back to Al-Anon after all these years because I want to keep my recovery and my serenity. I don't ever want to return to being the way I was before Al-Anon.

Anon



Message From a Helpline Volunteer

Lockdown has made things very difficult for many families, with loss of jobs, lack of money and just being cooped up together having a huge impact. For families where there is a drinker, this can be too much to manage and can cause arguments and abuse. I know this, because I am a telephone Helpline volunteer and we have had a much higher number of calls since lockdown started.

Although it can be difficult receiving some of these calls, I keep in mind the relief I felt through finding Al-Anon. I felt I wasn't alone – that others were going through a similar experience to me and they understood. Al-Anon also helped me to understand that alcoholism is a disease, not a choice and that helped me to stop blaming and shaming, especially in my early days.

For many of the people who call the Helpline, this will be the first time they have spoken about what they are going through, so to find they are talking to someone who understands and who has been there themselves usually lessens their isolation. Even without face-to-face meetings, we can still pass on our message of hope. We can listen, we can send literature, we can give them local Al-Anon contacts and we may be able to direct them to online meetings.

I get a huge amount from being a Helpline volunteer; it's so rewarding to be able to give hope to those struggling with someone else's drinking and by giving this support, I am helping my own recovery. I am 'giving it away to keep it'. I had thought of becoming a Helpline volunteer for a while before I did do so. Now I wish I'd done it earlier.

Maybe YOU could help. You would be trained before you start, and I found the training very comprehensive. You would be well supported; there are monthly online support meetings for Helpline volunteers, and we have the support of the members who serve as administrators. You would not be on your own – as with everything else in Al-Anon, we are a fellowship and we support each other.

We are at a very difficult time at present. Al-Anon is one of the few places family members can come for help and support with coping with someone else's drinking. It's vital at present that we let those who need us know we are there for them, so please, please, help us to pass on our message of hope.

Anon

Because we are getting so many more calls, we need more Helpline volunteers as well as e-Responders to answer the emails sent in asking for support, so if you feel you would be able to help –

WE NEED YOU!

I am worthy of love and loving

In our meetings I have heard love expressed in acronym form as **L**et **O**thers **V**oluntarily **E**volve. This is expressed in a way that I really like by Thomas Merton, on page 165 of *One Day at a Time*.

My Al-Anon journey began when I was 21. I stayed in the fellowship for several years but then recently returned. Every day I am grateful that I did return, and as I reflect, I can see it is, and has always been, a journey based in love.

◆ When I first came to meetings, through my early recovery, I rebuilt loving relationships with both of my parents.

◆ My HP loved me so much that he made sure I got to Al-Anon when I was very young so that I could have seven years of improved relationship with my mum before she passed away.

◆ I learned how to love myself and by doing so learned to love others. I learned a new language in meetings that told me I was already loving and lovable. I remember my first Sponsor saying "I have to step off this cliff and be myself". I can only do this by learning to love and accept myself.

◆ I returned to meetings because of the love and kindness of a member who remembered me and contacted me to ask if I would like to go along to a new Group he was setting up.

◆ I stay because the fellowship gives me permission to feel. To feel a deep and beautiful well of love for my husband and daughter, to feel the love and pain of my qualifier's journey through alcoholism and extremely poor health, to feel compassion for him and to let go of the need to control his decisions about his health.

◆ I feel my Higher Power's love for me when I am able to attend online meetings that geographically I would be unable to reach.

◆ I feel the love of members who share their experience, strength and hope with me in meetings where I learn to 'Listen and Learn'.

◆ I feel the love of my Sponsor who is walking beside me with the example of her unconditional love.

◆ I feel the love of members who have reached out to me, offering their experience, strength and hope in messages and telephone calls, and also those who have reached out to me in order to listen to my story and ask me for help.

◆ I am grateful for the reflections on love in Part Four of *From Survival to Recovery* particularly the line "We will love others without losing ourselves, and will learn to accept love in return."

– With loving gratitude

Colleen

What does love mean to you?
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I will look for the hidden gifts
that I know can be found in each day
and give thanks for their
magical presence in my life

With Great Pleasure

I was studying Concept Four recently; 'Participation is the key to harmony'. I'm no longer so afraid of participating.

Taking part in service, Group consciences and Committee meetings has slowly built up my self-esteem, and helped me find my voice and removed the fears and lack of trust that plagued me.

However, in my professional life I often shy away from getting involved, preferring to duck and dive and be a bit of an outsider. This gives me the feeling of safety and is a tool I used when growing up with alcoholism in my family. At the root of it is, I think, fear of being too 'known'.

But then one day at work we had a team building exercise, as there were quite a few new members of staff. I was tempted to give it a miss, but because I had been studying Concept Four, I decided to trust my HP to take care of me, and to go with the flow.

I felt a bit anxious as I approached the huge group of people outside on a field, but tried to stay in the present moment and kept saying 'Let Go and Let God'. I wasn't sure what team I was in, so asking my HP for help, chose a group of people who were nearby. It turned out that was my team, out of ten possibilities.

I smiled to myself, feeling that my HP had guided me and was trying to show me I could trust him/her/it. I shyly approached one of the members of my team who had newly arrived in this country. She too seemed shy but as we got talking she told me she was a violinist, and as music is a passion of mine we had some wonderful conversations.

I was glad that I may have helped her to feel welcome, not in a co-dependent way - I'm going to fix you whether you like it or not' - but rather in a natural way that made me and hopefully her, feel good. We now talk every time we see each other and that reminds me of the power of participation; oh, and her name was Cecilia - the patron saint of music!

Joanne - Area 18

FROM OUR AL-ANON FAMILY WORLDWIDE

my perspective on Step One

'My heart swelled with happiness because I finally understood!'

When I first began attending Al-Anon, I sat confused, hurt, angry, sad and lost but I also felt strangely comforted by what I heard others share at those meetings.

So I kept coming back.

At first, the program seem to work like osmosis. I was able to pick up titbits by just sitting and listening. In particular, I gained insight when members shared their thoughts about the connection between Step One and the ideas of attitude. I understand the words "powerless over alcohol" but I did not know how to apply them in my life. I was living with a husband who was drowning in the disease and taking me down with him.

At one meeting, someone said," I am powerless over alcohol and other people, places and things but I am not powerless over my own attitude or actions." ...Wow!

For me this was looking at it from the flipside –from another direction. Instead of focusing on what I could not do, I could see where my power truly was and still is.

In that very instant, I suddenly understood the meaning of Step One I knew how it's applied to my life. In my mind, I heard cheers of excitement and my heart swelled with happiness because I finally understood!

Approaching Step One from this perspective was a defining moment for me because it showed me that I needed to turn the focus back on to myself.

By Patti H., Ontario
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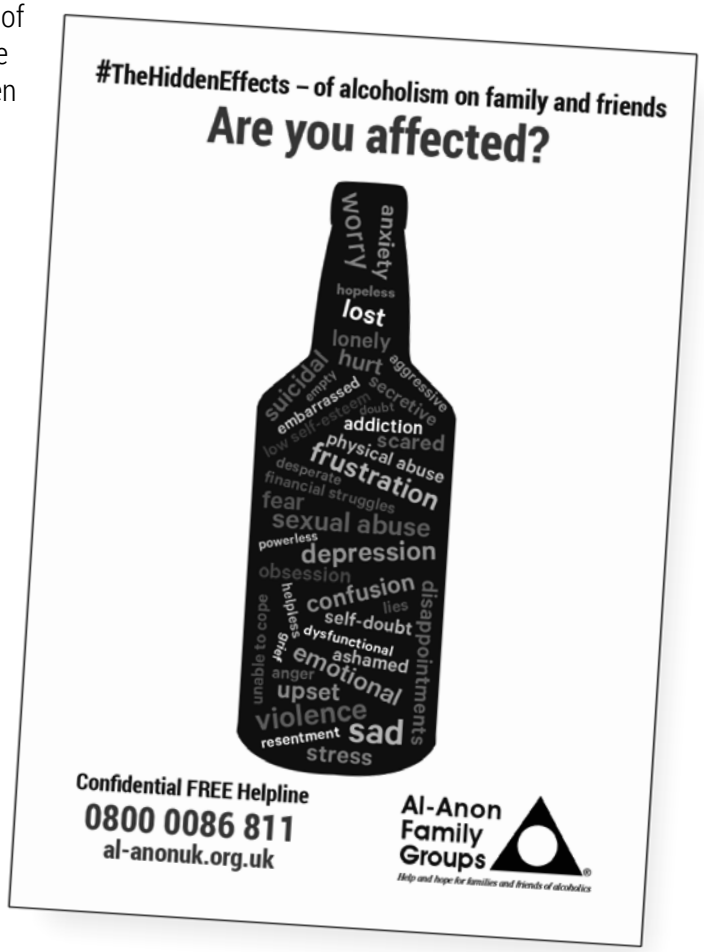
TheHiddenEffects - Public Information Campaign

As a grateful member of Al-Anon, one of the most important parts of my recovery is practising Step Twelve - trying to carry the message to others. I know, hand on heart, that Al-Anon saved my sanity when I most needed it; I would most certainly have had a breakdown if I hadn't discovered Al-Anon when I did. Al-Anon saved my sanity, so why would I not want other people to find this help too? For me, carrying the message means doing Public Information.

Public Information doesn't have to be difficult or complicated – it can be as simple as asking my doctor's surgery, pharmacy, coffee shop or supermarket to display a poster for us. Things are a little more complicated now, with lockdown, but that doesn't mean I have to stop.

Our new Public Information campaign, #TheHiddenEffects – of alcoholism on family and friends, launched this January and whilst I can't physically do a lot, I can still take posters and leaflets into pharmacies and to our GP surgery; I can write to, or email our local newspaper or local magazine and ask them to publish an article about how Al-Anon supports families and friends of alcoholics. If I feel brave enough, I can ask my local radio station if they would consider doing an article, or an interview about the effects of alcoholism on a family.

In the members' area of the Al-Anon UK website (www.al-anonuk.org.uk/2021-campaign-thehiddeneffects-campaign) there are lots of helpful ideas, templates and other tools to help with Public Information for the new campaign, including a digital poster, which hospitals, GP surgeries and other venues could display.



'Al-Anon has but one purpose, to help families of alcoholics' says our Tradition Five, my public information service is part of my responsibility to Al-Anon, and a reflection of the gratitude I feel.

Anon

LET IT BEGIN WITH ME

Please visit www.al-anonuk.org.uk/share/
to submit your contribution or post to:
The Editor, at the General Service Office address (below).

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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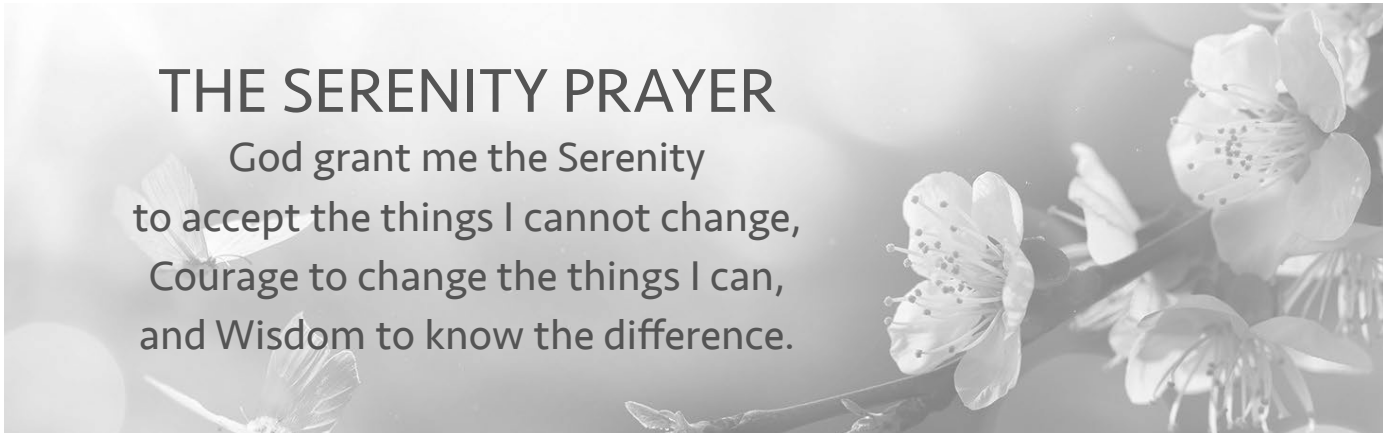
GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE:

Al-Anon Family Groups UK and Éire
57B Great Suffolk Street
London SE1 0BB

Office: 020 7593 2070

email: enquiries@al-anonuk.org.uk

website: www.al-anonuk.org.uk



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.

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