Al-Anon Today

YOUR E-LINK TO AL-ANON UK & ÉIRE



www.al-anonuk.org.uk
Winter 2023/24

Letter From Your Editor

The Al-Anon programme of recovery offers so many gifts and my willingness to embrace those gifts is all that's needed. At the beginning of the year when I was appointed Editorial Chairperson, I was very privileged to have been given the opportunity to continue the legacy of *Al-Anon Today*. As each year end approaches, I like to set aside a little time to glance back and take a little peek forward to reflect and set my intentions; it helps me see more clearly and to put things into perspective.

I love reading our Al-Anon literature and the all the many personal sharing's we have in our books and currently I'm enjoying fulfilling one of my intentions as I turn each page of our newest piece of literature A Little Time for Myself - A Collection of Al-Anon Personal Experiences (A29)

The Editorial Committee would like to express gratitude to all members who have contributed to the e-zine by submitting their heartfelt shares of experience, strength and hope to *Al-Anon Today.* With your continued support we hope to prepare and produce a special edition for the Spring 24 issue to celebrate *Al-Anon Today's* 10th anniversary. Members are warmly invited to send in shares to www.al-anonuk.org.uk/share/ and to join us in celebrating *Al-Anon Today's* first decade.

You could write about your Al-Anon journey, how you celebrate your Al-Anon birthdays, your challenges and successes in the programme, what you have learned, what are you still learning, how far you have come or your milestones.

Whether you decide to share a few sentences or fill the whole page, your stories will inspire, enlighten and brighten the day of many readers.

"In Al-Anon, one of our greatest gifts is the privilege of helping others find their way out of darkness into the light"... From Al-Anon's Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. Sharing your joys, your challenges and your gifts of recovery in Al-Anon Today, all have power to reach into our hearts and minds.

Al-Anon's shining diamond. Al-Anon Today (e-zine) is free to share with all your fellow members.

I do hope you enjoy this Winter edition of *Al-Anon Today*, its pages are filled with expressions of courage and recovery in the Al-Anon.

Wishing you all receive the priceless gifts of serenity at Christmas and a year filled with contentment and happiness.

Annie S

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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.

YOUR AL-ANON TODAY

FESTIVE CALENDAR

Toolkit Tips for Surviving the Holidays

1 Be kind and gentle with yourself.



2 Go to meetings, call or message your Sponsor or a friend in the programme.

3 Say the Serenity Prayer, connect with your Higher Power.

4 Take time for yourself, a cup of tea, a nice bath or shower. Relax for a few minutes.

Use Suggested Responses…
'Let it begin with me'
Keep It Simple!

5



6 Remember…
"How Important Is It?"
"Let Go and Let God"

7 Start each day in prayer and remember your gratitude at the end of the day.

8 Stop! Think!
Easy Does It!
First Things First!
Take care of YOU!

9 HALT
Are you Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired?

10 Give yourself permission to Change the things you Can

11 Accept, don't expect.

Find a quiet space to read some literature, Just for Today, Just for Tonight. 12

Go late. Leave early. Limit interaction. 13
It doesn't matter how anyone else acts.

Meetings, Meetings, Meetings. 14
Listen to a podcast.

15 Prayer and Meditation. Keep the focus on you.

16 Serenity Prayer, PAUSE, BREATHE! Use the Slogans.

17 Do I want to be right or keep my Serenity?

Have fun, smile, enjoy each moment. 18

Hand it over. Write a gratitude list each day. 19

Detach with love it's OK to walk away. 20

21 Go for a walk, sit quietly in another room, meditate, pray.

One hand on my shoulder, and one hand over my mouth. 22

Drive separately. Leave when you need to. 23

24 Be Grateful for your growth and the recovery you've gained.

Wishing You a Very Happy Holiday Season

Anon

I learned in Al-Anon that I can use neutral responses when I find myself in sticky situations. I can pause and use the slogan ***THINK*** when my first thought is not polite, kind, honest or useful, and I can consider using these phrases when silence isn't possible.

I try to use these neutral responses to avoid getting myself drawn into an argument, someone else's business or something I'm not ready to respond to in depth. They help me to lovingly detach and to stay off the merry go round.

Useful Neutral Responses,

helpful around the holidays



Anon

Share | Al-Anon UK

Keep Coming Back

'Al-Anon has given me a life of wonder, acceptance and hope.

All I had to do was Keep Coming Back.'



When I came into the fellowship, I was afraid of being on my own: how would I cope financially, what if he got sober and someone else got the loving, kind, funny, caring person I so longed for? I had so many what ifs.

Over the years I've learned to focus on myself; to accept myself just as I am, and even though I may not always get things right, I'm doing the best I can with what I have. I don't need to be perfect because I am perfectly imperfect.

I learned to detach with love and not just from my alcoholic loved one, but from my adult children, parents, work colleagues, and friends, which wasn't always easy when you are driven to please and fix everyone. Low self-worth was my driving force, the need to feel wanted, to belong. Fear of abandonment, and rejection all played a part in my disease: the family disease of alcoholism.

Live and Let Live helped me to detach with love, helped me accept others exactly where they were, and to keep my hands off whatever they were saying or doing, that I just didn't agree with. I learned to mind my own business, and to stop giving my opinion, unless it was asked for. I don't need to be right but I do want to be happy and it's my responsibility to be happy, joyous and free.

When I feel myself getting angry, I know that all I've got to do is pick the phone up and reason it out with someone else, get to a meeting and share my experience, and read any piece of Conference Approved Literature. I know what's not good for me, and that's thinking that I can sort everything out and deal with everything on my own. I'd done that for years, and it never worked, it just left me isolated, miserable, and resentful.

Today I'm not alone and I belong. I give and receive love because that's what Al-Anon has taught me. I have choices and I have faith in a power greater than myself. I'm truly blessed and grateful beyond words.

And… all I had to do was Keep Coming Back.

Dianne M

Can you share your courage with Al-Anon Today?
Share | Al-Anon UK

As a child, I just thought everyone's dad drank. It was normal to be hanging around the army bars, drinking cans of coke and eating bags of crisps while all the adults were drinking pints. As a young child I was playing the role of adult. Worrying was so common. Was dad OK? Was mum going to be annoyed?

As I grew so did the level of dad's drinking. I felt it was a reflection on my behaviour. If I got the best marks in exams, if I didn't make a mess, if I was quiet, maybe dad would be happy. But none of that mattered, there was always something else I knew I was doing wrong to cause him to be so unhappy that he needed to drink. A family member recommended Al-Anon years ago but I always refused as I didn't believe I needed any help. I was fine! If I could just find the right thing to say or do and dad listened to me and stopped drinking all the drama would stop.

Years later I found myself at the doors to my first Al-Anon meeting. I was going to go in, fix the issue and leave! I wouldn't be one of these people who needed to stay for years.

Little did I know that the amazing feeling when I walked through those doors would be just the medicine I needed. All these people, in one place, who must be psychic because they were telling my story. It felt like someone must have contacted them in advance and told them what to say, but no, very quickly I knew that I was home.

Even now I hear messages in Group meetings which hit so deep in me, it takes my breath away. I will remain in the fellowship for the rest of my life. Nowhere else do I feel the unconditional love, the peace and the acceptance of me, the real me, as I do right here in the Al-Anon rooms, in person or online. Nowhere else do I have people who truly understand me and allow me to speak my raw honest truth, without judgements or criticism.

The pandemic, while being emotional and extremely difficult, actually came with such a positive for me. Now I can Zoom all over the world with ease. I have meetings available to me any time of the day at the touch of a button. And, I have made friends for life who understand the real me.

Al-Anon is evolving and so am I.

Laura G

Can you share your story with Al-Anon Today? [Share | Al-Anon UK]

Unconditional Love, Peace and Acceptance



"In Al-Anon, one of our greatest gifts is the privilege of helping others find their way out of darkness into the light."

Al-Anon's Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

ONE DAY AT A TIME



As an adult child of an alcoholic and a former spouse of an alcoholic, I obsess and worry over the struggles my grown-up daughter has with her mental health and compulsive overeating. She too is an adult child.

The Al-Anon programme has helped me to believe that I can find 'contentment and even happiness' whether my daughter is happy or not. I have come to understand that she does not need fixing, she has her own Higher Power.

I now know the difference between caring and caretaking. I deal with my obsessive thoughts and behaviour by letting go and letting God.

The slogan, Let it begin with me, reminds me that I, too, am deserving of focus and attention. I find this the most difficult thing to believe and to act on, but I know in my heart that this is essential for my own wellbeing. If I can do this One Day at a Time, with the help of my Higher Power, I am able to detach with love from my daughter, thus giving her the space and dignity to follow her own path, as I follow mine.

Anon

What helps you live One Day at a Time? Share | Al-Anon UK

CONTENTMENT & EVEN HAPPINESS



As Christmas time approaches, I'm beginning to recognise that familiar feeling of anxiety creeping in. I went to my first Al-Anon meeting last November and it feels different this year, because over this past year I have gathered up some of the tools I've learned at meetings and from working the Al-Anon programme.

I'm trying to keep it in the day and not to expect things to be like last year or all the years that have gone before. I am trying not to think too far ahead and to let it begin with me and I'm trying to focus on the things I can control, by changing my attitude and it's working. I am so full of gratitude that I have Al-Anon members who share their experience, strength and hope at meetings and who walk alongside me giving me examples of how they use this programme in their daily life.

I too, was lonely and frustrated, but in Al-Anon I am discovering that no situation is really hopeless and that it is possible for me to find contentment and even happiness.

Phone calls to other members are really helping me and I get so much from reading the stories in the Al-Anon Today e-zine in between meetings.

I wanted to say a big thank you to all the Al-Anon members who share their recovery with me so I thought I would send in my share of how grateful I am that I found Al-Anon.

Anon

Can you share how you deal with anxiety? Share | Al-Anon UK

True Peace and Serenity

Al-Anon Today e-zine is an Al-Anon tool that is very close to my heart.

I've come to realise many beautiful and amazing things thanks to my Al-Anon journey.

I was a young man who suffered from intense anger and debilitating anxiety issues, due in large part to frustration and terror, growing up in a home affected by alcoholism and very frequent violent episodes.

I also suffered sexual abuse that led to intense isolation and fear of intimacy. I was a boy bereft of the skills required to build anything approaching healthy relationships or even friendships. Yes, from all this to a man who now has a measure of true peace and serenity thanks to my Al-Anon family.

Getting a Sponsor, learning and working the Steps, attending meetings and being part of a really special home group, I've laid several demons to rest. I can laugh, sing, smile and enjoy my days without guilt. I can share with, cry with, identify with and maybe even help my fellow Al-Anon friends.

This is only possible though; thanks to a concept I was so incredibly distanced from and feared I'd never possess: "Trust".

Very slowly, in time I learned it was safe to share even my darkest secrets and fears. My past no longer defines my present or my future. I am no longer a victim. I'm a child of the Universe and I walk hand in hand with my Higher Power.

Alan

'My past no longer defines my present or my future. I am no longer a victim.'

Can you share your journey of healing? ***Share | Al-Anon UK***

Powerlessness - Step One

When I found my way to Al-Anon, I hated the word powerless in Step One. I didn't want to be powerless over anything, never mind over alcohol. But I gradually came to understand that I was powerless over the alcoholic in my life. If she was powerless over alcohol, and I was powerless over her, then logic suggested that I was indeed powerless over alcohol, and the family disease of alcoholism. However, it didn't stop there.

As I hung around meetings, I came to understand that I was powerless over "people, places and things". I could grasp this at an intellectual level, but I had no idea at a personal level.

While I did not grow up with alcoholism, I did grow up in a highly dysfunctional family. I was the eldest and had been born with a job description: I was to make my mother happy. This turned out to be an impossible task, but it wasn't for want of trying on my part. Throughout my childhood, I strove to be the perfect daughter. Most of my adulthood was spent in fruitless attempts to control the world around me.

When I found that my much-loved partner was turning into a verbally abusive stranger, I was distraught. I tried to control her drinking by doing all the usual: arguing, monitoring, pleading, to no avail.

Eventually, in sheer desperation, I found Al-Anon. For the first few months I kept looking for someone to tell me what to do. Then I found a Sponsor. And I found a Higher Power, who I have got to know through the first three Steps.

Today, I love being powerless because it means that I'm not in charge. I spend time with my Higher Power in the morning and that sets me up for the day. I ask for help from other members, from my Sponsor and by going regularly to meetings. I share, I read Al-Anon literature.

My partner has come to accept that I go to Al-Anon, for me, and my increased serenity has improved our relationship. Things are not easy, but they are better, and I am discovering a way of life that is sustaining me.

I keep the focus on me and on my life, my attitudes and my behaviour. I hand the rest over to the God of my understanding. It is a huge relief not to be carrying responsibilities that rightfully belong to other people. I trust that my Higher Power will continue to take care of me, and I know that I have found the beginning of freedom through the first three Steps. I feel that I am on a journey through Al-Anon. My personal powerlessness has given me access to a power greater than myself, and for that I am profoundly grateful.

Anon

Can you share on powerlessness? [Share | Al-Anon UK]

DENIAL

Through attending Al-Anon, I learned, in time, how powerful my denial was. I'd been with my partner for 44 years and challenged my denial as the result of having the courage to ask a difficult and direct question: "Do you intend to continue to drink alcohol every day?" He answered me honestly saying "Yes".

I finally realised this wasn't the life I wanted. I no longer wanted to come second to this illness. I had begun to challenge my denial. Its purpose allowed me hope. My unrealistic hope was that he would want to change. I had kept my difficulties and struggles a secret; partly because I had felt his drinking was a reflection on me, rather than the destructive disease that it is.

T***he main thing I learned in Al-Anon was to put the focus on me. I gradually learned how to detach and let go with love. I hadn't realised how much I tried to interfere with his life and how this impacted on my thinking and behaviour. I, too, had become ill. I found it too difficult to accept that I couldn't believe the words of someone I love.***

My Sponsor helped me to understand what was happening, when I was questioning my reality. That what I was expecting was real, not my imagination. She helped me learn that by facing the darkness, the actions that I didn't want to believe, I can grow. Consequently, I started to face what was happening and that helped me move forward.

The new growth and understanding of denial have given me the opportunity to connect with myself. Al-Anon helps me to trust my experiences and face them. I had been closing off my feelings for many years.

Al-Anon, time and separation has enabled me to see more clearly from a detached position and with compassion, the destructive dance of addiction in our relationship.

Shirley

Can you share what you have learned in Al-Anon?
Share | Al-Anon UK

Need a Theme to write something for Al-Anon Today? *Here are some ideas...*

- My journey of Recovery
- How far I've come
- Share your Al-Anon milestones
- How do you celebrate your Al-Anon birthdays?
- How have you changed?

"Since coming to Al-Anon I have learned to say no."

Before coming to Al-Anon I didn't really know myself. I could tell you what everyone liked and I knew how to make everyone else happy.

A Happy, Peaceful, Present Mum

I always felt there was something missing in my own life and I had a horrible empty feeling all the time. I couldn't understand why I felt like this as I had a nice house, a nice car, a good job and beautiful kids. All the outside things were there, so why did I never feel peaceful and happy? I tried to fill this emptiness with buying clothes, decorating my house, changing my hairstyle. This would work for a day or two and then the empty feeling would return.

Since coming to Al-Anon I have learned I was lacking a spiritual connection.

I was a chronic people pleaser, I did not know how to say no, if people asked me to do things. I would say yes but then build resentments in my mind that everyone always asked me to do stuff for them and I was totally overwhelmed with the responsibilities I had given myself.

My head was always buzzing with thoughts from the past and thoughts for the future. I was never fully present in my day. I lived on my nerves, I was always worrying and had terrible anxiety. I was always busy doing a hundred things at a time and while doing them I would be planning the next task.

Since coming into Al-Anon I have learned to say no. This has resulted in me getting to know myself deeply and I now know what I like and dislike. I have learned how to live One Day at a Time and not in the future or the past.

My buzzing head and my anxiety has gone. Most of the time, I feel at peace and if any of these old feelings surface, I know what to do now, because I have this amazing programme and beautiful friends in Al-Anon, who understand all these feelings and thoughts and I can talk it through with them.

Al-Anon has given me a life beyond my wildest dreams. I will always need Al-Anon and the beautiful people in it. The best thing I have done in my life has been coming into the rooms of Al-Anon, and in turn, the best thing for my kid's lives too. They now have a happy, peaceful, present mum.

_____ *Pamela*

What has Al-Anon given to you? [Share | Al-Anon UK]



suggestions for meeting topics

- **My Al-Anon tool kit**
- **My favourie slogans**
- **Milestone in my recovery**
- **My Al-Anon birthday**

I Am Enough

"Sometimes I am absolutely amazed at how much this fellowship has changed me."



When I came to Al-Anon, I'd had a breakdown and was heading for another. Self-pity, resentment, fear, anger, low self-esteem, self-worth and self-respect were what my life was full of. I felt unloved and was a compulsive people pleaser.

That has all changed due to the wonderful programme we have been given and the amazing members who have shared their story and have verbally and physically helped me on this journey.

It wasn't easy, but I am not that person anymore. Resentment toward my mother (who wasn't alcoholic) and my husband who nearly killed me. Working through Steps Four and Five with a wonderful Sponsor helped me root out the damage done and freed me. It's very seldom they are in my life.

Self-esteem and self-respect are something I have now because, again, those Steps showed me I AM ENOUGH. I still sometimes struggle with self-worth. I'm not perfect and still a work in progress. Today I know I am loved, but again I have to work on that.

My relationship with my mum and husband vastly improved. I went from hating both of them, to nursing my mum and living with her the last four months of her life. Only because of what this programme taught me and being able to love my husband unconditionally while he was drinking. Then when he got sober, this programme taught me how to live with sobriety. Sadly, he was only sober for eight years before he got terminal cancer.

Again, this programme and the people in it supported, cared and loved me through the hardest time of my life.

Today I live on my own, go on holidays on my own and have a great sense of humour.

Life is good all because this programme and the people in it helped me. I will be forever grateful and will never be able to repay what I've had.

Myra, Southsea

How have your relationships improved through working the programme? Share | Al-Anon UK

Alcoholism the Family Disease

Alcoholism is a family disease. I can understand that now. I do not drink alcohol very often but if I do it would be one glass. Regardless of this, I have this family disease.

I grew up in a home where alcohol was the Higher Power. My father lived his life around his next drink. He got into fights when drinking and gained a reputation as a violent man. He got sacked from jobs, he was known to the police and spent spells of time in prison. My mum was obsessed with my father. I knew as a young child that her main concern was to track him down in the local pub and bring him home. She was desperate to gain his attention and affection. I knew she had no space to think about me or my sister. I know now that she was as affected by his drinking as he was: she was completely lost. She could not enjoy her life or show love to her children. I felt unloved and unwanted and was neglected as a child. When he left her for another woman, she sent me and my sister to his relatives and told us she did not want us anymore. The rejection was painful.

In that home, I learned that my needs were not important, that my voice would not be heard and the best way to survive was to meet the needs of others. I picked up the idea that my job was to be entertaining enough for my dad to want to stay at home instead of going out drinking. I learned to be ashamed of my dad's public drinking and fighting as I faced the neighbours' judgement of our family. They told their children not to play with us. I felt 'not good enough' to be friends with the neighbours. Living in tense, volatile situations became normal for me. Accepting unacceptable behaviour from others towards me became normal and rejection from others just made me want to work hard for their approval. I strived to show people through kindness that I was a worthwhile person. I looked for love in all the wrong places. I lived in a fantasy world to protect myself from the reality of my situation which seemed too much to bear. I thought I would make better choices when I became of age to live independently.

This cunning, baffling illness had a hold on my thinking. I was attracted to troubled people as partners as it felt comfortable to me. I did not know how to be in a healthy, loving relationship. I thought that drama and the painful high and low feelings were love.

As a result, I faced loss and suffering as an adult, too. I chose troubled partners and friends that rejected me, used me or put me down to make themselves feel better. It was again, what I was used to. Thank goodness I got to Al-Anon. I now have a much healthier relationship with myself than ever before. I learned that I am okay just as I am and that people can accept me or not. My Sponsor took me through the Steps, which enabled me to learn healthier ways of living. I learned how to choose friends and partners more wisely and to form healthier relationships. I learned not to have unrealistic expectations of others and how to heal all my previous feelings of rejection and low self-esteem. By applying the Steps and Traditions to my family, I learned to nurture and support my children in ways my parents could not.

My greatest achievement in life has been to help create a safe, loving and nurturing family. Al-Anon has given me the tools to do that. Today my life is not perfect and I try to practise the Al-Anon way of living every day. I make plenty of mistakes but when I get it right the rewards are just wonderful.

Sandra

Can you share? Share | Al-Anon UK

FROM OUR AL-ANON FAMILY WORLDWIDE

Holiday Plans

‘Sometimes things can work out just fine when I stop trying to control the outcome.’

This year my husband and I planned to spend Christmas with his children. A month before our trip to meet them, I hinted that he should contact his children and put our plans on the calendar before his former wife and their friends book them up with parties or other events. ‘After all’, I said, ‘we don’t get to see them as much, and we don’t want to miss out.’

Two weeks before our trip, I again suggested that we schedule a dinner, a hike, and a Christmas meal. When I asked my husband a third time if he had done so, he got angry at me. I was so hurt – all I was trying to do, I thought, was to be a good stepmother and ensure that we spent quality time with his kids. But I decided to use one of my Al-Anon tools – “Let Go and Let God”.

We ended up having a great time with them. Our visits were organic, and they ended up spending quite a bit of time with us. We all participated in the planning and cooking of our dinner, and it was delicious.

All my efforts to organise – control actually – our visit, only resulted in a cranky husband and my hurt feelings. Sometimes things can work out just fine when I stop trying to control the outcome. I can suggest ideas, but when they are met with silence, in action or resistance, I can let them go.



by Nancy G., Ohio

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Please *Click here to share*
and 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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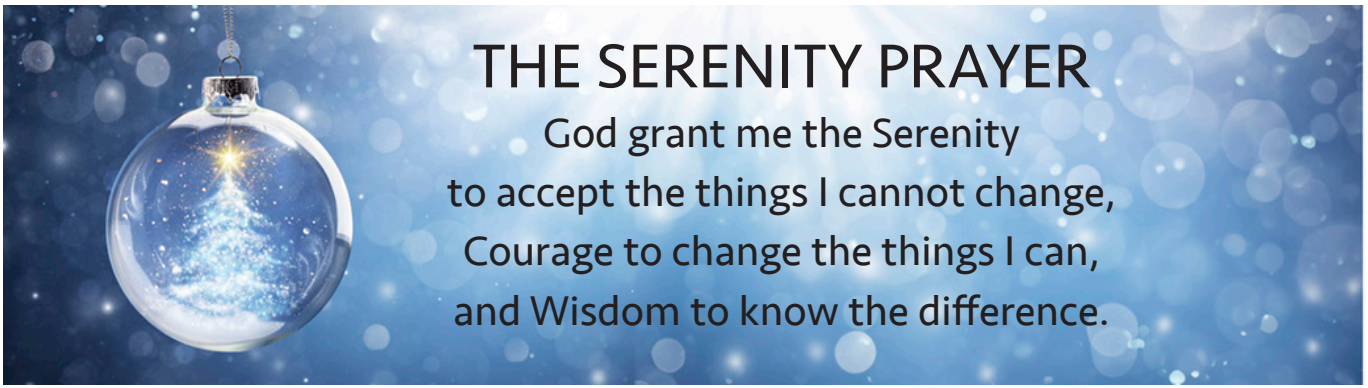
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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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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