

Al-Anon Today

YOUR E-LINK TO AL-ANON UK & ÉIRE

*Sharing
Growth in
Recovery*



Summer 2024

Letter From Your Editor

At a recent meeting I attended, the topic was the Al-Anon Declaration, the focus was Let It Begin With Me. We shared what that means to each of us and the various ways we grow by carrying out this action.

Sharing Growth in Recovery via writing can bring about healing for both the reader and the writer. Each time a contribution is received for *Al-Anon Today* (e-zine) I am filled with gratitude as I witness the Al-Anon Declaration unfold.

I appreciate the process of voicing one's share in written form and the courage it can take to send it in. The action of pressing the "Submit" button via the [Share / Al-Anon UK](#) involves allowing that gentle healing process to take place. A Higher Power is clearly at work in this process. Letting go and letting God determine the outcome.

The spiritual process of reading heartfelt, inspirational shares of recovery sent in by members, helps me continue to grow, to trust, and to allow my Higher Power to lead the way. Thank you for Sharing Growth in Recovery.

If you've never written for *Al-Anon Today*, why not give it a go? You don't have to be a professional writer. The Editorial Committee will take care of the spelling, grammar and punctuation. Sharing our unique stories and how we grow using the tools of the Al-Anon programme of recovery, enrich us all.

I do hope you will continue to send your shares in for *Al-Anon Today* and join us in this powerful process of healing.

Annie S

AL-ANON DECLARATION

Let It Begin With Me

*When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help,
let the hand of Al-Anon and Alateen
always be there, and - Let It Begin With Me*

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.

listen and learn

The person I'm affected by is my twin. I am so grateful to have found Al-Anon.

Working this spiritual programme of recovery, one day at a time offers me a new way of living and it feels amazing. I have gained courage, strength and hope and I've blossomed so much.

I keep coming back and one day at a time it keeps me on track in my recovery, and from a lifetime of chaos. Al-Anon offers me a programme where I can listen and learn and an opportunity to take on Service roles and continue to grow.

Lesley

What helps you continue to grow
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YOUR AL-ANON TODAY

SELF-CARE CALENDAR

(Every day is another chance to be the best version of You)



1

Look for good in others, particularly when you feel frustrated with them.

2

Focus on being kind rather than being right.

3

Observe the changes in nature around you.

4

Respond kindly to everyone you talk to today, including yourself.

5

Call an Al-Anon friend to catch up and really listen to them.

6

Be gentle with someone who you feel inclined to criticise, especially yourself.

7

Connect with others and do something fun.

8

Tell a loved one about the strengths that you see in them.

9

Recognise your strengths and be proud.

10

Thank three people you feel grateful to and tell them why.

11

Acknowledge someone's problem or pain rather than trying to fix it.

12

Make time today to do something kind for yourself.

13

Really listen to what people say, without judging them.

14

Reflect on your own personal growth.

15

Write a list of things you feel grateful for and why.

16

See how many people you can smile at today.

17

Allow gentle healing to gently unfold.

18

Learn something new and share it with others.

19

Focus on what's good, even if today feels tough.

20

Be gentle with yourself when you make mistakes.

21

Take five minutes to sit still and just breathe.

22

Choose one of your strengths and find a way to use it today.

23

Go outdoors and notice five things that are beautiful.

24

Give yourself permission to Change the things you Can

25

Prayer and Meditation. Keep the focus on you.

26

Find a quiet space to read some literature

27

Have a cup of tea, a nice bath or shower. Relax for a few minutes.

28

Serenity Prayer, PAUSE, BREATHE! Use the Slogans.

29

Have some fun, smile, enjoy each moment.

30

Remember... "How Important Is It?" "Let Go and Let God"

detachment

I was in the programme for some time; diligently working the Steps with my Sponsor. I felt much better and was no longer shedding copious amounts of tears in meetings as I had for a long time. I still suffered from what my Sponsor called “terminal uniqueness” and I kept telling her that I would not be able to detach from my husband’s verbal abuse.

My Sponsor patiently repeated “keep going to meetings, working the Steps and praying to your Higher Power and let’s see”. And, she was right! One day, I drove my husband to the airport, he went on a rant about my latest transgression in his ‘Rule Book’. But this time it was different! I did not panic, my heart was not racing, I felt as if I was watching a movie, I was totally unaffected by his words. He went into the terminal and I drove home to call my Sponsor.

I told her “something very strange happened to me, I think I had an out-of-body experience!” She asked me to explain. “Ah, she said,” that’s detachment!” And from then on, I was able to start setting boundaries with my husband by either leaving the room or ending the conversation.

How did it happen? I don’t know... All I did was follow the programme’s suggestions and like so many before me, I experienced detachment from abusive behaviour. I continue to work a diligent programme, to grow, and learn how to avoid regressing into enmeshment with alcoholic loved ones.

Thank you Higher Power,
and thank you Al-Anon!

Ana I, FL

Can you share on detachment?

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KEEPING THE FOCUS ON ME

Al-Anon found me just over two years ago and saved me. My close relationships were causing me much difficulties. I was unaware to what extent, until I had a cancer diagnosis and was made homeless, all at the same time. The kindness I received from perfect strangers within the fellowship was a sharp contrast to that of my familial and romantic relationships.

As the programme seeped into my psyche, I realised I was addicted to fixing others and became everything they needed me to be.

I looked at my cancer as a blessing, as it highlighted why my life played out like a soap opera and how; no matter how much I put into my relationships, I got nothing in return.

As soon as I detached and placed the focus on me, (instead of my insatiable need to focus on everyone else) my life started to become much more peaceful and manageable.

At first, as I adjusted, life was too peaceful, but I figured if I was so good at taking care and worrying for others, I might start taking care of myself. Perhaps I could be as kind to myself as I was to others.

As I connected with myself, I started to have a better relationship with my Higher Power. My Higher Power has proved time and time again, that it has my back and is far better than me at leading a way forward to a better life.

I am by no means recovered but the journey is amazing and a fascinating one.

I have spent over thirty years on self-help books and courses. Some of which are hypnosis, cognitive behavioural therapy and anxiety management. I tried antidepressants, counselling, psychotherapy etc. In fact, I spent my savings on recovery, but nothing has come remotely close to working this Twelve Step programme. It unveils my denials and helps me to see and hear for the first time in a healthier way.

Hopefully, going forward I will choose healthier relationships and make healthier decisions. For the first time in my life I don't feel something horrible is going to happen. I can trust in life and move forward feeling safe.

I am indebted to the fellowship, for the gifts it has given me and for the wonderful souls in the meetings, who remind me that I am not alone with my thoughts and experiences.

When I first came to Al-Anon and heard that people had been coming for thirty years, I thought it might not be a very successful programme, because these people aren't fixed. I now know, people keep coming back out of choice because of how it enriches their soul and gives them a better life experience.

Blessings to all new and old Al-Anon members and thank you so much.

Anon

JUST FOR TODAY



I hated everyone before coming to Al-Anon, I especially hated myself. I was always tired and I needed to sleep. I would still be awake by 3am and when I woke up, I'd be full of fear, worrying about the past and dreading the future. My life was falling apart and I didn't want to exist anymore.

A family member gave me the Al-Anon daily reader One Day at a Time. Reading it helped me to sleep and it made me feel better: I didn't know why.

They suggested I go to Al-Anon meetings and explained that being affected by alcoholism growing up, life can become unmanageable. I couldn't understand this because I was now an adult, but I went along anyway.

I have learnt to grow up in Al-Anon and to live each day in the here and now, One Day at a Time.

Phyllis

What helps you live One Day at a Time?

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In particularly difficult situations, or when I have gone too far into my own thoughts and mind that I can't get back out, reciting the Serenity Prayer doesn't work for me. In these situations, I take out a sheet of paper and write the Serenity Prayer at the top. I draw a line down the middle of the page and list the things I can change on one side and the things I cannot change on the other.

The act of writing freezes the perpetual thoughts I have and gives me the wisdom to know the difference.

From there, I gain back my serenity and the situation becomes more manageable.

Derv Ireland

How do you gain serenity?

[Share | Al-Anon UK New beginning](#)



When I first stepped into an Al-Anon Meeting I was clearly looking for a way to fix my alcoholic family and my partner. Being a person living with active drinking, I was on edge with my anxiety and overthinking. I thought if anyone needs help, it's the people who are drinking: definitely not me. It took courage to seek help and to admit that I am powerless over alcohol. I thought I could carry the world around without having any struggles.

Maybe this was my chance to learn something about my relationship with an alcoholic fiancé. I was concerned at first, that when I shared, people in the room might not understand my broken English. But I soon discovered that Al-Anon is a language that doesn't depend on words.

Everyone shared at the meeting, even me, in between crying! Sometimes, there's no way I can hold back the river of tears. I haven't a clue if they could understand anything from my story, but getting things off my chest really worked and I'm looking forward to getting more things off my chest.

The language of Al-Anon

I imagined I was the only one and it was reassuring to see so many other people there like me. I found I could relate to their stories, I didn't feel alone anymore and It was such a relief when I heard someone share the 3Cs - I didn't cause it, I can't control it and I can't cure it. I am now starting to understand how controlling I can be, I'm a work in progress, and I think I always will be, but that's okay.

Thanks to alcoholism, I found a family in Al-Anon and a way to cope with real life. Today, I am focusing more on myself and less on others. It's so much harder, but Al-Anon is teaching me that I can choose between thinking of myself as the poor victim of alcoholism or the strong person who becomes ready to face challenging situations in life. Today, I will do my part by focusing on myself.

Cassie

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a new beginning

My new beginning happened in January 2020 when I walked through the doors of Al-Anon, I was broken. My alcoholic son had lost everything. His job, his home and access to his children. This all happened while he was in his second rehab centre.

Having completed this rehab, he had nowhere to live so I said, 'come and live with me, son'. I didn't know about rock bottoms then. This was in August 2019. He was dry and looking better than he had for a long time. We went kayaking, cycling and walking, happy father and son making the most of the summer.

This lasted about two weeks then he started to drink again. I was devastated. I thought his second lot of rehabilitation was sure to fix him. In my mind people who couldn't stop drinking were weak willed and had to shape up. I had a lot of pain to go through and a lot of learning to do before I knew better.

I became hyper vigilant; I could hear the surreptitious opening of a vodka bottle behind a closed door at 20 metres. I could smell the change in his body chemistry. I would confront him and he would pretend not to be drunk and become belligerent and sometimes physical and I would

get right into the ring with him and slug it out. This became more frequent and more violent as time went on.

After five months I walked out of my own home, got in my car and drove to a car park for some peace and calm. While I was sitting there, I remembered one of my son's counsellors suggesting that I try Al-Anon.

He explained that Al-Anon was for me not the alcoholic in my life. I googled Al-Anon and got the helpline number. They told me where my nearest meeting was and when it was. I didn't go. I needed more pain. Two weeks later I was broken. I couldn't think straight, I felt like I had been crushed, I was in a fog of despair. I didn't know it then but this was my gift, my new beginning.

I went to my first meeting. I was early and there was only one other person there. She introduced herself and offered me a cup of tea. We sat down and about four more people came in and sat down. No one talked much, it was very quiet. Regardless, I knew I was in the right place. I was simply accepted and allowed to be myself and begin my journey of self-discovery.

John

What is your experience of your first Al-Anon meeting?

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Keep it simple

Time for myself was always in short supply before I started to keep the focus on me. I was affected by the behaviour of others and grew up with a lot of disinformation. I had to deal with choosing what was important to me from a young age and tended to make things bigger and heavier. I'm not good at small talk so when I heard the slogan Keep It Simple for the first time, I formulated the opposite in my mind which made it more complicated for me to understand.

I restructured it the only way I knew how, with drama, threats, begging and pleading, allowing it to grow into a catastrophe.

I was constantly exhausted anticipating everything that could possibly go wrong. It was also difficult for me to accept that I lived in chaos as it all felt so familiar.

After a while in Al-Anon, I gained an insight that my procrastination, paralysis and perfectionism were a block for me to surrender and affected my sanity and my serenity.

Working the Al-Anon programme and being open to a power greater than myself helps me decide to put the worthy things in my life first. My own self-care, my children, passionately growing in my talents and my competence. Doing

meaningful work and living creatively.

I still like chaos sometimes, but I now realise that if I invite chaos into my life, I need to face the consequences. Keeping it simple means that I can accept and admit I need to be calm and keep calm. 'Simple' means easily understood, basic and plain.

Now I have a Higher Power in my life; doing things my way and thinking it's the only right way, doesn't work for me anymore. I can trust, keep on my side of the street and focus on the parts of my life that belong to me.

A question I ask myself before I react to situations is "what is actually happening?" I pause before I say anything and THINK, is it thoughtful, honest, inspiring, necessary and kind? I also find using the 3As: awareness, acceptance and action help me too.

I don't need to understand how things will work out anymore. Not every unexpected event or task is a crisis and if there is a difficult situation, I can learn from it. Today I trust in a power greater than me, life has become more meaningful and I feel calmer. My biggest gift is that I am now free.

Mattij

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When I first came to Al-Anon it kept being suggested to me, by people in both Al-Anon and Alcoholics Anonymous, to let go of the alcoholic and let God.

I didn't understand what these beautiful people were trying to tell me. We loved each other, we couldn't survive without one another and these programme people didn't understand that what we had together was very different from what they had or were living with! It took me a long, long time to accept the concept of a Higher Power, but boy am I grateful that I stuck around and listened to what those amazing people in the rooms were saying.

When I finally understood that if I truly loved myself and my husband, I had to Let Go and Let God, and trust that the journey ahead of us was best for us all, (my children included). I began to get better. And yes, it was one step forward, three steps back, and one to the side some days, but that was ok.

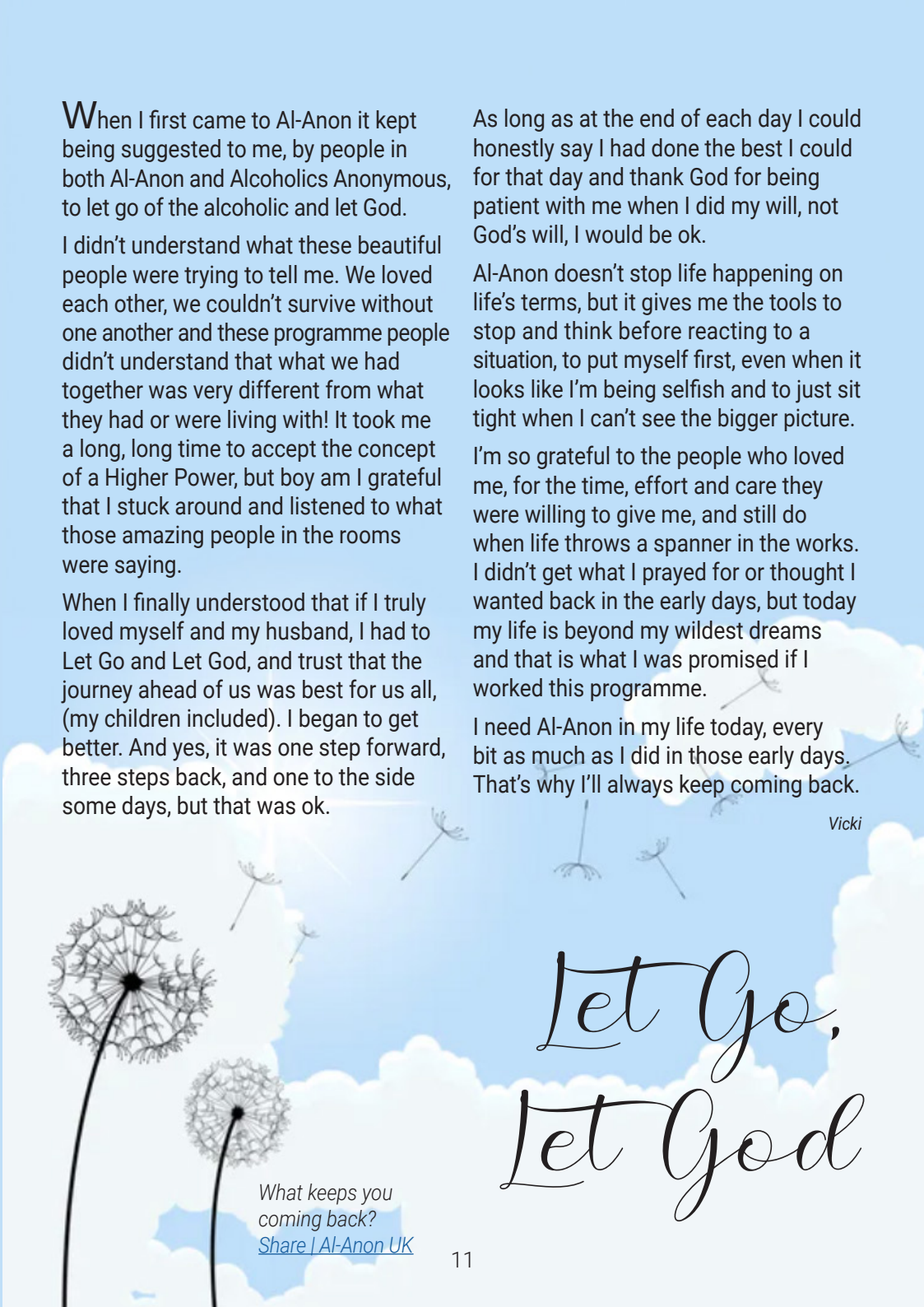
As long as at the end of each day I could honestly say I had done the best I could for that day and thank God for being patient with me when I did my will, not God's will, I would be ok.

Al-Anon doesn't stop life happening on life's terms, but it gives me the tools to stop and think before reacting to a situation, to put myself first, even when it looks like I'm being selfish and to just sit tight when I can't see the bigger picture.

I'm so grateful to the people who loved me, for the time, effort and care they were willing to give me, and still do when life throws a spanner in the works. I didn't get what I prayed for or thought I wanted back in the early days, but today my life is beyond my wildest dreams and that is what I was promised if I worked this programme.

I need Al-Anon in my life today, every bit as much as I did in those early days. That's why I'll always keep coming back.

Vicki



Let Go,
Let God

What keeps you
coming back?

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CONCEPT FIVE

*The Rights of Appeal and
Petition protect minorities
and insure that they be heard.*

I really like this Concept today. My first few conscience meetings were a revelation to me, just to hear things from a different angle and not be annoyed about it, but to keep an open mind and not judge the minority viewpoint. I just love to watch everyone at the end of the meeting hug each other and leave the room calmly and peacefully with no hostility or confrontation. Today, I choose to Listen and Learn. Inviting a loving God into the meeting by way of Tradition Two cements it all for me. Each Group has but one authority and despite me thinking I was God for a while, it's a loving Higher Power, and not me. I can smile about that today as I continue to learn about myself and about my defects of character which keeps me on my toes! And more importantly keeps me coming back!

In business meetings or conscience meetings everyone has a right to be heard. Concept Five is about listening to everyone's opinion respectfully and for an Al-Anon conscience meeting to work with spiritual effectiveness, every voice must be heard. Especially when there's a minority of only one or a few. This is where the Al-Anon magic happens; when everyone has been heard respectfully; those with a minority viewpoint agree, that having been heard, they accept the decision of the Group conscience and let go.

At some point, Group Members will be asked to consider whether their meeting is to be on Zoom or in-person. Each member of the Group will be entitled to have a voice and an opinion and everyone will have the right to be heard. Concept Five has taught me to use my voice, kindly, with compassion and with understanding. I don't have to nag, or convince anyone I am right but I am allowed to say how I feel, if I feel it needs to be said.

This same voice allowed me to speak with ambulance crews, doctors, nurses, family and friends whilst my mum was very unwell. I believe I did this respectfully and patiently, and I was heard. The Al-Anon magic again! Yes, I cried and Al-Anon teaches me that that's ok too. I prayed and slept with exhaustion and I knew the God of my understanding would never leave me alone and that you were there with me. My mum is recovering and is improving daily, and for that I thank God.

I choose today to hand my will and my life over to the God of my understanding. It's an ever-evolving process, one day at a time. It gives me love, peace and serenity, and days filled with golden nuggets of gratitude. All I need to say is "God, what will you have me do and say today? Thank you for being here and for being part of my recovery".

I can use this voice I have rediscovered to express my gratitude too, and to say I love you.

Annie Area 28

*Can you share on a Concept?
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MY HIGHER POWER GETS MY ATTENTION

Having read my daily readers and handing over my day to my Higher Power, I felt serene and grateful for my life. Fifteen minutes later, I looked at my phone messages and instantly criticised the sender of one of the messages to my partner, for wittering.

Realising this as one of my defects of character; I immediately retracted the comment, acknowledging that no-one was a greater 'witterer' than me. I got on with preparing breakfast and made a hot milky coffee for myself; satisfied that I had worked my programme.

How I knocked over my coffee, spilling the contents over the table, the floor and a newly upholstered chair, I will never know. My reaction to this accident was off-the-scale anger at myself. Anger for being stupid; anger that I could never keep anything nice. Anger that this 'only ever happens to me'. 'I'm useless, worthless....' and then the tears pricked. I stopped as I recognised past behaviours of my illness resurfacing and thought, 'don't cry over spilt milk'. My Higher Power was getting my attention.

I observed and reflected on what I would do if this had been someone else in my life who had spilled the coffee. I would have been calm, gentle, reassuring and loving, never angry. 'These things happen'. 'It was an accident'. 'Don't worry it will clean up'. 'It's only a chair seat'. And, I would most likely give the person a hug.

Thanks to my Al-Anon programme and working the Twelve Steps, I was able to return to calm and gentleness for myself, thank my Higher Power for the lesson and to start my day again.

Anon

*How does your
Higher Power
get your attention?
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Guided by my Higher Power

I've been through so many difficult challenges throughout my Al-Anon journey. Unbeknown to me at that time, I have now discovered that I had always been guided by my Higher Power. Today, as I continue to grow, trusting in a power greater than myself, helps me to navigate through each day and brings me peace and serenity.

Carmela - Sheffield Friday Online Meeting

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SUGGESTIONS FOR MEETING TOPICS

Just for Today Card
Using the Concepts
Keeping it in the Day
My Al-Anon Toolkit

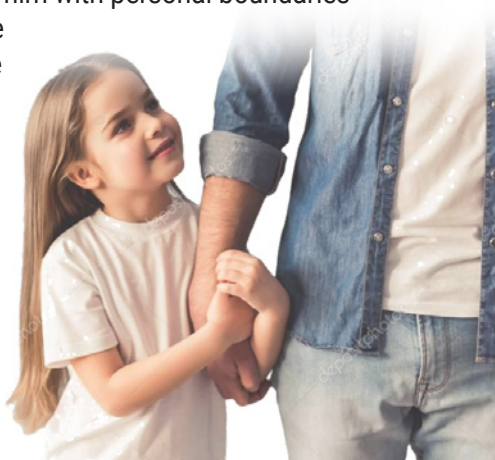
When I first came to Al-Anon, I saw life as a race in being the best, smartest, prettiest, most dedicated person in my circle. Everything was a competition and failure was my personal enemy; feeling unworthy was my biggest fear. I realised that I was still the little girl trying to get her daddy's attention, if I was just good enough, he would love me. Through Al-Anon, I learnt that personal failure is not always down to 'me not being good enough', sometimes it's because my Higher Power has something better waiting for me. I also learnt that my self-worth doesn't have to be measured by approval from others and that I can stop seeking my dad's love. I know I am very loved by many people and just because they don't show it, it doesn't mean I am unloved.

I learnt that, I can choose to detach from the little girl I regressed to whenever I met my father; I can be an adult around him with personal boundaries and love for him, and that it is acceptable to detach emotionally if my emotions are overwhelming me. I learnt to pause and consult my Higher Power in moments of emotional stress. Just for today, I will not seek others' approval and I will love myself just how my Higher Power has shown me love.

Jenny - Lexden Friday

self-worth

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KEEP IT SIMPLE **ONE DAY AT A TIME** **FIRST THINGS FIRST**
LISTEN AND LEARN *Progress Not Perfection* **THINK**
detach with love **LET GO AND LET GOD** **JUST FOR TODAY**
LIVE AND LET LIVE **KEEP COMING BACK** **EASY DOES IT**
THIS TOO SHALL PASS

LISTENING

Al-Anon has continued to marvel, strengthen and surprise me in ways that I am only just beginning to understand. I am more in touch with my Higher Power now and giving myself ten minutes of reflection time, each day leaves me grounded and more composed for the week ahead.

I am a compulsive note-taker but I am learning increasingly to put my pen aside and to really 'get into the listening' of my co-members.

Their testimonies, reactions and their heartfelt words and hands of friendship have made me feel so much more apt to be

alongside my family member; whatever she is thinking or doing.

I don't ever feel anyone is being judged and it brings me so much joy and freedom. There's no criticism, no confrontation, no making those faces that I'm wrong in how I'm dealing with this disease, it certainly takes some doing!

I have such a long way to go in all this, but I know, that with my Al-Anon Group with me, I am much better armed than I was back in October before I took the plunge to come to a meeting. What a journey I've had since then.

M



*Can you share your
Al-Anon journey?
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HOW I DESCRIBE *my Higher Power*

My Sponsor suggested a task for me to write a job description of my Higher Power. It was to help remind me who my Higher Power is. This is what I shared with my Sponsor. My Higher Power is ever present with a power greater than my will and myself that can restore me to sanity, guide and direct me and do for me what I cannot do for myself.

My Higher Power reminds me that I belong and that we are one. Communications are clear and in a language that I can understand. I am gently guided to change my attitudes which helps me to change and to bless others.

My Higher Power removes my shortcomings, helps me to see my choices, and shows possibilities beyond my vision, bringing me a source of comfort and strength.

My humanness is accepted with tolerance, patience and unconditional love. My Higher Power is always available, kind and reliable always giving me courage and showing me compassion.

The availability of my Higher Power is 24/7 all year round and speaks to me through various channels of communication. My Higher Power understands me and loves me unconditionally.

Ivana

Can you describe my Higher Power?
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Sharing the joys and gifts of recovery, all have power to reach into our hearts and minds. 'Al-Anon Today' is free to share with all members. Its pages are filled with expressions of courage and recovery in Al-Anon.

NEED A THEME TO WRITE SOMETHING FOR AL-ANON TODAY?

Here are some ideas...

What stops me asking for help?

How have Service opportunities helped me grow?

How does 'First Things First' help me focus?

How do I practice gratitude?

WRITING TIPS...

Share your experience from the heart, with the focus on you. Allow your creative spirit to express what you feel... like when you share in a meeting.

You could relate a personal experience based on a programme principle such as detachment or acceptance, a Step, Tradition or Concept. Remember, grammar and spelling are not as important as heartfelt experiences. The Editorial Committee will take care of the spelling, grammar and punctuation.

Al-Anon Literature

It was the Al-Anon literature that began the transformation for me. There were stories from people who had or were still going through the same things that I was. People who understood, people who cared, people who had the courage to change and to carry on living a worthwhile life.

Then, in March 2020 we were all locked down. This limitation on our freedom was a blessing that opened the world up to Al-Anon online meetings anywhere in the world. I could go to as many meetings as I needed whenever I needed them. It was through these meetings, the literature and my Sponsor that I learned that until I was broken, the light couldn't shine in and that until I was in pieces, I couldn't be remade. And that is what Al-Anon, my Sponsor and the Twelve Steps started to do, piece by fragile piece.

My son worked his AA programme and I took the focus off him to work my own programme and keep the focus on me. When the knowledge that alcoholism is truly a disease went from my head to my heart, I was able to learn to love my son again. There was a time when I would lie in bed and ask my Higher Power to let my son die quietly in his drunken sleep.

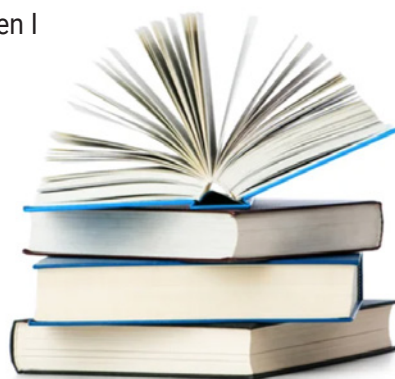
As I learnt more about the true nature of alcoholism, loathing turned to respect and compassion for the alcoholic. My son continued to drink with occasional lapses into sobriety but the atmosphere in our home became calmer and more respectful. Boundaries were put in place instead of the walls that we had been building. I learnt to detach with love. When I started to get better, so did he.

Step One was the hardest. Admitting that I was powerless was the opposite of what I had tried to be all my life. When I finally admitted that I was powerless; I was able to let go and let God. When I moved over, God moved in.

John

What is your favourite piece of Al-Anon literature?

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A Seed OF HOPE

FROM OUR
AL-ANON
FAMILY
WORLDWIDE

• *I thought, I'm not the one with the problem, so why do I have to go to a meeting? 9*

Many years ago, I fell in love with and married a man I knew ran a great risk of becoming an alcoholic. But I turned the warning bells into wedding bells and went on my married way into life with him. The drinking wasn't daily or heavy during the first years of our marriage, but it grew insidiously worse as the years went on.

It became very apparent after the birth of our first child and remarkably worse after the birth of our second child. It reached its peak when our older child was diagnosed as having special needs.

During all of this, I felt so exhausted and alone, even though I was married. I was struggling with raising two young children without any help from my husband. He had completely removed himself from us. He would come home from work and go straight out to drink with the neighbours until he came in to go to bed. I would panic at the thought of another night of drinking and would check to see how much of a beer supply he had.

Because we were living on one small income, I took the responsibility of paying all the bills and keeping a family budget. So, I knew what he was blowing a month on alcohol, and yes, I held a lot of anger, frustration and resentment – rightfully so in my mind. I was also very sad.

Alcoholism was causing such havoc in our marriage that I thought daily about divorce. It seemed to me that I didn't have much more to lose since we never talk to each other anymore. We were like two acquaintances who shared a home and a bed, yet we did nothing together.

I did everything for our two children from morning to night, essentially fulfilling the role of both mum and dad. I was so exhausted from walking on eggshells so as not to make my husband mad and give him a reason to drink that I no longer knew which end was up. I didn't want to endure any more of his verbal abuse and selfish behaviour. And I didn't want my children to live in turmoil anymore.

Two years later, I finally hit rock bottom. Thankfully, though, my Higher Power had been quietly and gently speaking to me through my mum. She kept encouraging

me to give Al-Anon a try, and I finally listened. I dragged myself to a meeting, but I was angry about it. I thought, I'm not the one with the problem, so why do I have to go to a meeting? That night forever changed my life. I just listened and cried at first, but in time, I gained enough courage to share a little.

Eventually, I stopped crying, and the seeds of hope began to sprout. I bought Conference Approved Literature and studied the slogans and other tools of the programme. They opened up a whole new way of life for me.

The biggest life changer for me has been learning that I have choices and that I can and must choose daily how I am going to use this day to bring happiness, contentment and serenity into my life – yes, whether the alcoholic is drinking or not.

Who knew that simply minding my own business and taking care of myself, physically, emotionally and spiritually would make all the difference in the world!

I am completely devoted to my own recovery and well-being. I no longer freely give away my serenity; instead I've guard it with my life.

I am confident in who I am and, for the first time in my life, I am comfortable in my own skin. I am learning to accept my mistakes and to forgive myself and others. I have an amazing relationship with God, who is my Higher Power.

I know now that ultimately, I am not in control – never have been and never will be.

Giving up this power struggle has brought me serenity. I have learnt to live in the moment, knowing that I am only responsible for and in control of myself and my choices. What a tremendous relief! I no longer carry the baggage of my husbands alcoholism. Today, I know that we are separate beings and how he chooses to live his life is not a reflection of me.

Miraculously, the change in my behaviour was the catalyst for change in our family as well. As I persevered, my family slowly took notice of the changes and my new-found serenity. My kids now tell me that going to my Al-Anon meeting makes me a better mum.

I turned my husband over to the care of God and left him with in his capable hands. When I finally "Let Go and Let God", an amazing thing happened. My husband started on his own road to recovery.

Today we are family on the mend. We are learning to openly and honestly communicate with each other. We know that each of us is human and that we are bound to make mistakes. When we do, we are gentle and respectful to each other. Al-Anon is my miracle.

It has helped me find true serenity and discover my genuine self. Most importantly, it has brought my family together in a new serene home, that we call our grace space.

Anonymous, Colorado

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permission of *The Forum*,
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road to recovery for both the reader and the writer, helping you
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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.

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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.

