Al-Anon Today

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Caring for myself

Summer 2022

Letter From Your Editor

You'll find some great shares in this issue, on gratitude and service, and many other topics.

I feel as though there's an energy in the writing that reflects the fact we are all coming out of the lockdown with renewed connections, tools and hopes.

I also need to remind myself to be gentle with myself, to take things slowly and accept that I, like others, have felt a huge amount of grief as a result of the pandemic.

Thanks to everyone who put pen to paper. We love reading your shares, they're a gift to us all. The daily readers are wonderful too, but there's something about the writing that comes from members who try to express their feelings from the heart, not perfectly written but honest and authentic.

If you've never written to *Al-Anon Today*, why not have a go? We've got a list of suggested topics you may want to use.

Happy writing, happy reading.



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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We Who Live or have Lived with the Problem of Alcoholism

I came to Al-Anon when my anxiety was at its highest point. My dad's drinking was getting worse, and my response to it was becoming more and more irrational.

I was stressed out, confused and felt helpless.

Twelve years later, my dad is no longer with us, but I still attend Al-Anon meetings every week.

I still become anxious, about everything from the news, to my young children, to my job, and everything in between. But Al-Anon has given me the tools to cope with this anxiety in a healthy way.

By caring for myself through talking with friends and members, reading Al-Anon Literature, practising yoga, taking a bath, and doing mindful hobbies; I am able to live in the moment and 'Let Go and Let God'.

Service is another way to keep my anxiety in check. By reaching out to others through Public Information, chairing meetings or taking Al-Anon phone calls, I know I am doing my bit to help other people find their path to living less anxiously.

Al-Anon is a lifetime's commitment and being part of these Groups gives me the tools and strength I need in order to live a balanced, mindful and compassionate life.

Sarah, Sheffield.



THE THREE Cs

I heard a member sharing about the relief he felt from working Step One. He cited The Three Cs, I didn't cause it, I can't control it and I can't cure it. I had been tormented for a few weeks with my thinking, my anxiety was threatening to dip me back into depression.

Having been in Al-Anon for a long time, I felt ashamed, as though I should really have nailed this by now.

My desperation led me to wave my white flag of surrender and an idea came to me. I was so powerless over my thinking, it was a real problem.

I found myself thinking about The Three Cs, and instead of just thinking about my powerlessness over my alcoholic husband's behaviour and drinking, I had the awareness that I was also powerless over my obsessive thinking. I didn't cause my obsessive thinking, I couldn't cure my obsessive thinking and neither could I control my obsessive thinking.

I felt the shame slipping away as I reflected on this, and could turn to Step Two. I can't, God can, I'll let him.

I felt I was shedding a staggering burden. My attempts to control my thinking with overeating, obsessive behaviour, pushing myself too hard and getting frustrated causes me a huge amount of pain.

Recently I heard someone share that soldiers are taught surrender which means they must put down their weapon and await further instruction. I love that idea and I feel so grateful that the Al-Anon message remains vital and important despite the amount of time that I've been in the programme.

Suzanne

What does 'surrender' mean to you?

Share | Al-Anon UK

Caring for myself

THE THREE LEGGED STOOL

Many years ago I remember seeing a school pupil who was leaning back, balanced precariously on two legs of a science laboratory stool. The floor was highly polished and it wasn't long before the stool tilted and there was an almighty crash!

The same illustration can apply to my recovery in Al-Anon too. Through working the Twelve Steps with a Sponsor, my quality of life improved greatly.



I began to cope much better in my day to day life with an alcoholic. That was effectively the first leg of my recovery.

Unity is built into my home Group, District and Area by our adherence to the Twelve Traditions, thus providing my recovery with a second leg on which to stand. Those two legs seem solid and balanced, but for the long-term stability of my recovery I need a third leg.

Service provides that for me, and the good news is that there are lots of service opportunities available - initially in my home Group, then District, Area, and at a national level too. Whatever my abilities, there is a Service role which will enhance my recovery. Whether it's something as simple as opening up a meeting venue, or setting out chairs and Literature. All Service positions are valuable.

Taking the next step into Service in my District and Area has brought me into contact with others with strong personal recovery and demonstrated my 'gratitude by action'. I gained confidence and my self-esteem grew.

Through a Service Sponsor, I learned how various Service roles are conducted. Additional information about all kinds of Service positions can be found in the *UK & Eire Service Manual*.

I don't want to take the risk of balancing on just one or two legs for my recovery. It is much too precious to lose.

Isobel, Truro Monday Group

You can buy a copy of the Service Manual from the website by clicking here or read the online version.

Patience and Acceptance

My Group recently had a topic of patience. Someone mentioned in the meeting that without faith they couldn't have patience and it got me thinking how impatient I was before Al-Anon.

Everything had to be done straight away and, if there was a problem, I needed to fix it immediately. I hated feeling discomfort so I'd try to fix things that just weren't my business to fix. I realised that I needed to trust that things would work out OK and had to ask for patience.

In order to be patient, I also need to have an attitude of acceptance. This allows me not to prevent a crisis, not to create one and mind my own business. It helps me to be able to allow others to take the consequences of their actions and not try to rescue them all the time.

Al-Anon has given me patience in shed loads now, but I also need to make sure the pendulum doesn't swing too far the other way and I start procrastinating.

This programme to me is all about balance and continuing to learn. Every meeting I hear something new. Every reach out call I take I feel I may have helped in a small way. Thank you Al-Anon.

Chris

Can you share your tips on how to be more patient?
Share | Al-Anon UK



Courage to Change through Service

I have taken on a number of Service roles and, being a perfectionist, try to get it right first time, but I am learning to accept that perfection is my interpretation.

I started with small Service roles such as making tea and coffee at Group meetings and getting the chairs out. However, I know that if I take on too much it's not fair on others, and I become overwhelmed and I don't want to control. I have been accused of that by my problem drinker when I thought I was caring.

The Serenity Prayer helps reiterate I am not responsible for people, places and things, only myself.

Doing Service has helped me to realise it's 'Progress not Perfection' as I continue to grow, also 'First Things First' and 'One Day at a Time'.

For me, taking on Service roles no matter how small has really helped my growth and understanding of Al-Anon.

Barbara

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

* Giving myself a break
* The process of changing
* How do I take better care of myself?
* Moving on

I recently had my one-year anniversary of joining an Al-Anon Family Group. When I first came to the Group I felt a sense of fear about whether I would be accepted and if I was in the right place.

OK not to go it alone; it is OK to need others' support. I always did everything for others, trying to hold my family together, but now I could ask for help and receive it.

The rewards of reaching out for help

The welcome I received and the sense of relief was overwhelming. I could tell the truth and was taken seriously. I had found people who innately understood my perspective, without my having to justify or over-explain myself. I also felt accepted for who I was, without judgement.

Looking back I can see how much I focussed on my husband and his behaviour. I was willing to look at my own behaviour, but couldn't figure out what I was doing wrong. Slowly but surely, reading *Courage to Change* every day and eventually attending 'A New Beginning Scotland' meeting each morning online, I started to gain in confidence.

At the start of this year I asked someone in my Al-Anon Family Group to be my Sponsor. It was hard to reach out and ask for help, to admit that I couldn't do it alone. She said yes and it was with relief that I realised it is OK not to go it alone; it is OK to need others' support. I always did everything for others, trying to hold my family together, but now I could ask for help and receive it.

How amazing!

Recently I shared at an online meeting and displayed my phone number. Five members, whom I have never met, sent texts to me with messages of support and encouragement. I felt so uplifted by those members and all the others who listened to my share.

The support I feel from Al-Anon is so meaningful and helpful. I now feel strong enough to reach out to others, and motivated to give back to the Fellowship.

My problems at home are not resolved, and in many ways this is just the start of my journey, but I have hope and support and couldn't be more grateful to everyone in Al-Anon.

Anon

How have the online meetings helped you? Share | Al-Anon UK



'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'

Growth in Al-Anon



Thank you to my anonymous Al-Anon friend for last December's Secret Santa gift - some Spring bulbs. It started out as an empty pot that needed to be put together (much like me when I joined Al-Anon).

I followed the instructions (read the literature and books, worked the Steps, attended meetings), tended to it every day (self-care and service), talked to it (share at meetings and talk to a trusted Al-Anon friend) and now I'm starting to see the positive change.

It took a long time and it's still very much a work in progress (just like me) but it will be worth the effort.

Trust in the process 'One Day at a Time' in Al Anon.

Anon

Can you share a story of nature as a metaphor for your recovery? Share | Al-Anon UK

Sharing Gratitude

An Al-Anon friend suggested to me to create a gratitude list of at least ten things I was grateful for and why and text this to her each day. What a fabulous idea this has been. It's a great way to start or end my day as it allows me to reflect on my day and even see things I could have done better.

Gradually over the years I've increased my circle of "gratitude mates" to six, so each day I receive their texts too. It's equally great to read what they are grateful for and on occasions I can read between the lines that someone may be struggling, so I send another message of love and hope back.

These friends have been there for me when I need a special virtual hug or reach out call. I'm so grateful for technology that has allowed me to communicate my feelings.

I recently found an option on my phone to set up a "broadcast list" so I only need to send once to include all with sharing personal contact details. So this programme is helping me learn new technology as well as a new way of life.

Anon

Do you have a gratitude practice? Can you share it with us? Share | Al-Anon UK



THE MYSTERIOUS GOD BOX

Caring for myself

When I first heard a dear Al-Anon friend talking about using a 'God Box', I was intrigued.

I needed to do some more exploring about this for myself. How could it be that I had been in Al-Anon for several years but had never heard of this?

I kept my ears peeled at meetings for any mentions of this elusive 'God Box' but none was forthcoming. I plucked up the courage to ask my friend about her God Box when I next went to stay with her and was very excited when she showed it to me.

I don't know what it was I was expecting to see. Was it going to be an elaborate wooden box? Or an old tin? Or an empty perfume box? Did it matter what it was?

Well to me it did, if I was going to have a God Box, then I had to do the whole thing properly. I soon found out that I was being totally ridiculous and I was over thinking the whole thing.

I can't honestly remember what her God Box looked like; only that it was big enough for a small pad and a pen. And that it contained lots of folded up pieces of paper!

She explained that if something was troubling her and preventing sleep, she would write it all down on a piece of paper, fold it up then put it in her God Box.

I was mesmerised. I thought about all the hours of endless worrying I had endured when I lived with active alcoholism. Had I known about having a God Box pre Al-Anon, then would I have used it? I don't think that I would. I was so totally obsessed with my ex-husband's drinking that there was no way I was handing his alcoholism over to a power greater than myself.

Today, I no longer live with active alcoholism. Sadly my ex-husband died without finding sobriety. It was about eight years before he died that I discovered the God Box. There were a few times when I had handed over not only him but our daughter as well.

I have put all sorts of things in it since then, be it little things, friends, family and even things happening at work. I've also had requests from friends outside of Al-Anon so I have guided them towards making their own God Boxes.

Dawn, Area 2



FARNHAM WEDNESDAY MEMBERS SHARE ON HOW THEY USE THEIR GOD BOX

❖ It was a rainy, cold winter's day. I had just been to my home Group meeting and was feeling sad, tired and confused. My favourite obsession was going around my head - shall I stay with him or shall I go?

I decided to nip into a charity shop to get out of the cold drizzle and as I walked in, I noticed a shelf full of trinkets. My hand reached out to grab something and before I knew what I was doing, I had bought a sweet musical box.

When I got home I realised there was a poem inscribed on the top, it said: "When you saw only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you".

15 years later I still have my God Box and I realise that my Higher Power did indeed carry me through that very difficult time. I now have many prayers and letters stuffed into my God Box and I will treasure it forever.

❖ I don't have a God Box (although I like the concept) but I do have an ongoing dialogue with my Higher Power. It is a way of keeping my thinking in check and handing over any worries and intrusive thoughts. I suppose it is like putting them in a box in a way. It's a way of reminding myself what I have control over and what I don't.

❖ My God Box is my post box to God. I write my fears, worries, hopes and dreams on little bits of paper and post them in the box. This helps as a physical reminder to let go and let my Higher Power deal with these things that can be overwhelming. Periodically I take them out and am always surprised to see what God has done.

❖ I have a God Book. I find I am most easily connected to my Higher Power when I am out in nature and was really drawn to it because it has a beautiful tree of life picture on the front and shiny gold edging which somehow makes it feel very special. I don't use it as much as I could but writing this has been such a good reminder.

When I am at my lowest, and sometimes gently reminded by my Sponsor, I write a prayer in my God Book. It is remarkable how much it helps to let me let go of my fear and worry.

The simple act of writing to my Higher Power reminds me that tomorrow is a new day and my difficulties will pass as I work my programme. When I look back weeks or months later, it is remarkable to find that my prayers have been answered. Even if not in the way I might have imagined!

Did you know that details of upcoming Al-Anon Conventions and other events both locally and Worldwide can be found on the Al-Anon website?
It's a convenient way to publicise any Workshops or Conventions you are helping to organise.
Please go to *Events | Al-Anon UK* to explore.

Building Self Esteem

South Central District Meeting

Before our District Meeting started, we had a short spiritual meeting. A member shared on the topic of 'building self esteem' and used the reading from ***How Al-Anon Works*** *as a guide. I took notes of what everyone shared and asked members if I could use their words and turn them into a written share.*

Here's what the Group Reps shared.

❖ My father was an alcoholic and there was often violence in the home. This had a big impact on my self esteem. Thanks to Al-Anon I have found ways to deal with this. I find a routine is important, as it shows me I value myself because I am doing what I told myself I would do. This is a form of detachment which helps me to no longer be a doormat. I take care of myself rather than trying to fit around everyone else. Meditation is a great help too. It makes me begin to feel worthy of love and unwilling to be treated with anything other than respect.

❖ Doing Service for me is an estimable act for me. I've just handed my notice in at work, because I realised how toxic the environment was. I don't want to be in that environment anymore. And although I'm scared of the new beginning, I know I will be alright because of how I've changed in the programme.

❖ For me, self esteem is a choice, a state of mind. I don't have to feel anxious or depressed, rather I can feel grateful for what I have, and see the glass as half full, or even full to the brim.

❖ I am interested in the phrase 'self integrity' - I think it's important for me to turn up for myself. Recently I made a commitment to myself to do cold water swimming. I've found I often want to talk myself out of it, but even if I don't feel like doing it, I turn up and always feel better afterwards. In the same way, I can easily talk myself out of attending an Al-Anon meeting, even though I know I will feel better afterwards.

❖ I need time and space to detach and remember that other people and situations are not my responsibility. I can be there for me instead. I can be stable and steady for me. Sometimes I may need to distract myself from my over-responsibility by performing a simple chore, but that can give me the time I need to reset my thinking.

❖ Recently I became worried that I'd upset a friend. She hadn't returned my calls and I began to wonder what I'd done wrong. I have a tendency to this paranoia and it can make me very upset and anxious. I prayed to my Higher Power 'please help me let this go'. I felt my anxiety lessen somewhat - I realised, if she likes me she likes me, and if she doesn't she doesn't. Later another friend told me that our mutual friend was going through a very difficult time.

Can you co-ordinate a joint share at your next District meeting for Al-Anon Today? [Share | Al-Anon UK]



When I contacted my MP

At a recent online support meeting for Area PI Co-ordinators a member shared with us how he'd managed to wangle a meeting with his local MP.

He shared with the other PI Co-ordinators that he'd tried sharing the 'Hidden Effects' campaign with his local Parish Council, then with his local town councillors, with limited success. He told us that his buzz word for 2022 is 'persistence', so he emailed his local MP, telling her about Al-Anon Family Groups and how he wanted the public to be more aware of our fellowship. He didn't get a reply and was quite shocked, sending another email - reasoning to himself that our local MPs are there to represent us.

He received an apology for the late reply and a meeting was set up. Here is what happened at the meeting.

'Some of the points discussed concerned the lack of joined up thinking between government, local government and third party agencies such as Al-Anon Family Groups. Greater communication could help signpost the support that's available.

My MP said she would try to contact some of her fellow MPs to see if they can make their constituents aware of Al-Anon.

I mentioned the difficulty I was having in getting Al-Anon signposted by the District Council on their website. However, since the meeting one of her staff has been in touch with me and has sent a letter to the Chief Executive of the Council. This had the desired effect and we are now listed under 'Drugs and Alcohol' on the community page of the District Council website.'

He is encouraging members and Groups to get in touch with their MPs. He advises suggesting meeting in person with some clear objectives that the MP can help with. Once a meeting is arranged, he suggests getting support from your Area Delegate or seasoned Al-Anon members to join you, in case any curved balls are thrown in your direction.

Have you thought about contacting your MP? This website will help you locate your MP's contact details.

Contact your MP - UK Parliament

_____ *Katherine –Chair Editorial Committee*

Please share your Public Information stories with us
Share | Al-Anon UK

suggestions for meeting topics

- **The Concepts**
- **Commitment**
- **Compassion**
- **Self esteem**
- **Self awareness**

FROM OUR AL-ANON FAMILY WORLDWIDE

STEP NINE:

Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

I will make amends to myself – first

For Step Nine, I wrote myself a letter:

Dear Carolyn

I am growing in understanding you and I love you very much. From your younger days, you had a great love and compassion for others. Yet, when it came to yourself, you often felt insecure and unlovable. You made yourself responsible for the behaviour of those you loved. You thought your needs far less worthy than the needs of others. But even when you took poor care of yourself, your Higher Power was always there to help you.

Some of your greatest regrets are not about things you did wrong they are rather for the missed opportunities and the things you did not do. Now, you have the opportunity for peace, acceptance, and forgiveness of yourself. You will gain this through a strong trusting relationship with God.

You don't need to force relationships or solutions to problems. You just need to trust your own instincts and accept guidance from your Higher Power. You will not be afraid; but you will live your life with the expectation of good. You will accept gifts, compliments, and good opportunities knowing you are worthy. You will bring gratitude into each day as the salt that flavours your life.

You will live an expectant life, knowing your Higher Power will bring you the opportunity to change your behaviour. You will do things differently in areas where you have previously been insecure and not acted in your own best interest.

Everything that has happened in your life has brought you to this place. It is time to move away from regret, fear, and insecurity into a life of loving, forgiving, and caring for yourself.

Your friend

Carolyn

Caring for myself

by Carolyn B

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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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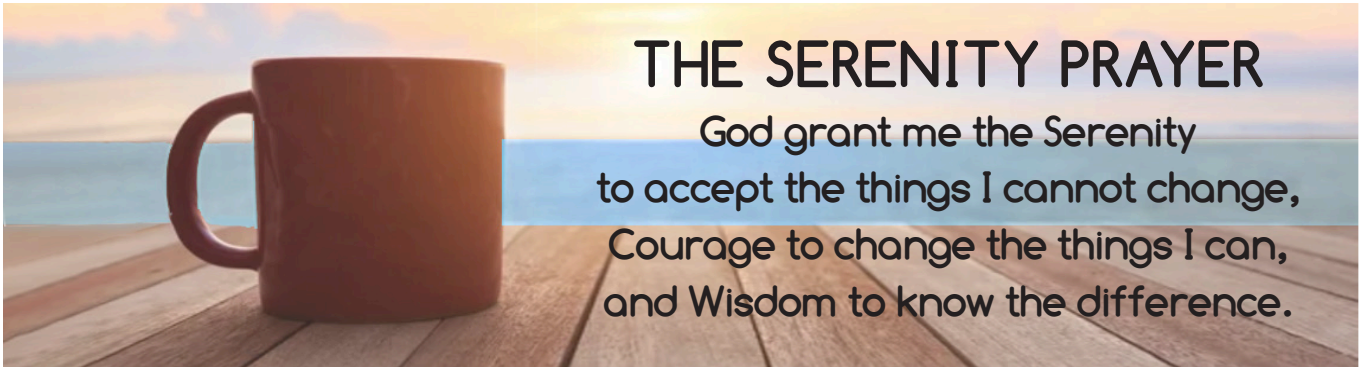
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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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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