

Our Three Legacies

RECOVERY through the 12 Steps

UNITY through the 12 Traditions

SERVICE through the 12 Concepts

The Agram

5

March-April 2018

District 5 Al-Anon/Alateen Newsletter

From Rock Bottom to Appreciating the Beauty of My Life Today

I recently moved. I got the bulk of the unpacking done within the first week, but there remains a stack of “non-essential” boxes in the garage. I have been trying to unpack one each day (Easy Does It!). Yesterday, the box that I opened was full of baggage. It was mostly old mail and miscellaneous paperwork. The most recent item in the box was 5 years old. Frankly, I was a bit shocked at its existence. I have no idea where it was lurking before the move. It was a walk through the baggage of my life before Al-Anon. I was in a very abusive relationship with an alcoholic/addict. This box was full of old medical bills from the numerous times I was injured by him, bail bond payment reminders from the times I had bailed him out of jail, late notices on bills, notices from the IRS, insurance claims from his vandalism of my vehicles and my home. It was evidence of how out of control I had allowed my life to become. It was a very tangible reminder of my rock bottom.

In going through this box something big stood out to me. I am so grateful for the life that I have today, thanks in large part to the tools of the Al-Anon program...not just the financial stability and good credit that I have today, but the physical and emotional safety as well. I am especially grateful that, thanks to working my program, I became entirely ready to open that box, go through it item by item and shred everything that I did not absolutely have to save. I was able to look at it and see progress and growth, to appreciate the beauty of my life today without passing judgment on the journey that brought me here. I am so grateful that I do not have to live mired in guilt and shame. My higher power allowed me to walk just the right path to shape me into the person that I am now becoming, and I really like this person. I have been able to make my amends to myself and to others so that I can live free. A large part of my amends was done through

service. I am so grateful that I was able to give back in such a meaningful way, not just to the program that changed my life, but to the very people who changed my life by sharing their experience, strength and hope at the meetings. In my three-year service commitment, I feel like I was able to make up for so much time and talent wasted while wallowing in the mud with the pigs. That service amends has brought such peace to me. I am so grateful for my AI-Anon family.

~Elissa W.

District 5 Alagram Is Making a Comeback and Needs Your Service!

We are keeping it simply about your shares. Writing is a valuable tool of the program, and reading your **experience, strength and hope** will encourage others in their recovery. You may contribute a longer share of about 500 words or a shorter share of about 200 words.

Email submissions to: newsletter@sonapalanon.com

Our recovery topics include:

****steps *traditions *concepts *tools *sponsorship *slogans***

****service *higher power *CAL reflections *another of your choice***

Please include your name and phone number (which will remain anonymous), in case we need to contact you. Your share can be signed with either your first name or something like "A grateful member" or "Anonymous."



CONCEPT 4- Participation Is the Key to Harmony

Would You Rather Be Right or Happy?

"I'm not always right," Dad would announce with a sly grin during a discussion or argument, "but I'm never wrong!" An adult child of an alcoholic, my dad had a tough start in life. From a poor family, he pulled himself up by his bootstraps; he became an honor student, an Eagle Scout, a pilot and flying instructor in WWII, and an engineer who supported a family of eight. He built our home, working on it late into the night, and it practically killed him. I don't think he knew how to relax. He believed that if you wanted something done, you had to do it yourself, and if it was worth doing, it was worth doing perfectly, and being right was of utmost importance. He would also call people "idiots" if they did something stupid or made mistakes. Dad mellowed with age, but alcoholism is truly a family disease; we kids grew up blaming each other for mistakes, arguing about who was right or wrong, and working either really hard or not at all (because perfection was impossible). Later as adults, most of us continued the pattern of blaming and still prided ourselves on always being right because we were afraid of being idiots.

Admitting I was wrong was almost unthinkable until I came to Al-Anon, a spiritual program which has taught me about being honest with myself and others. Recently some Al-Anon tools like the slogan, "Let It Begin with Me," the 1st Step, and detaching with love helped me resolve a situation with my husband.

Communication has always been a challenge for us because we have opposite styles. He's direct, practical and detail-oriented, while I'm spontaneous, emotional and big picture-oriented. Not long ago, a prolonged and heated interchange resulted from a miscommunication about a simple plan to meet somewhere at a certain time. A lot of waiting at the wrong places found us both insisting that the other was mistaken about the interpretation of the plan. As the argument escalated, I was about to cry with frustration when I remembered some things I'd learned in Al-Anon. I silently said the serenity prayer and apologized, admitting that I'd been unclear and inattentive when we'd made the plan. It was inconsiderate of me (Step 10). Now I wanted him to admit his part and say he was sorry, too, but that didn't happen. Instead, he persisted in being angry, saying it was entirely my fault. "That's not fair," I wanted to shout, but instead I remembered Step 1; I was powerless over other people. I could only change my own behavior and attitude. After a few deep breaths, I respectfully told him how I felt and let go of the outcome. I was able to detach with love and went to read in the bedroom. Eventually, when he was ready, he apologized, and we ironed things out. After a good talk, we made a plan to really work on our communication issues. With the help of my Al-Anon program, I know it has to begin with me most of the time. And after all, being right is not all it's cracked up to be. I'd rather be happy!

Reaching for the Al-Anon Tools

I've been away from program for a while and am back reaching for the tools to help me. I sometimes worry and obsess myself into a dark hole. In returning to Al Anon, I decided the tools would help me with a rough patch I was worrying about which was in the future. Last week I read in Hope for Today, that I can recognize this obsessive thinking as being in a familiar neighborhood. I went to the neighborhood, again, the next day, but while there decided to focus on something else for a long while. This shift in my thinking led me out of the neighborhood. Today, I was rested and events of the morning could have landed me back in that neighborhood. Instead I decided to stay relaxed and not obsess into the dark hole. The outcome was that the problem resolved itself, peacefully, without my worrying and going into the dark neighborhood. I love the tools and the daily readings!

~ Maria S.

Keep Coming Back

The first Al-Anon meeting I attended was in 1987. My son was in third grade. He is now 38 years old. I went to the meeting because his father, my husband, drank too much every day. I lived in a small town and didn't trust confidentiality at the meeting. I was shocked by the sad stories I heard. I couldn't understand why no one responded to the grief that people expressed. The stories were too painful to hear. I also didn't want my husband to know that I was attending the meetings. I didn't think I would find the help I needed to stop my husband from drinking. For these reasons, I did not "Keep coming back."

Twelve years later I went back to Al-Anon meetings. I again felt frustrated. There were women there who were my age and had 20 years in Al-Anon and still were not able to tell me how to stop my husband from drinking. I thought to myself, "One can become a medical doctor in 8 years. I don't have time for this. I guess I am going to have to figure it out myself."

Another few years passed, and I attended meetings again but never got a sponsor and never worked the steps. In 2004 I left my marriage. Both of my children were grown and out of the house. I didn't need Al-Anon. My problems were solved. In 2007 I realized

that my now adult son was an addict. I went back to Al-Anon. I could divorce my husband, but I didn't want to divorce my son.

Now I attend meetings regularly. I volunteer for service. I have a sponsor. I am working the steps. When a newcomer is present at a meeting, I always want to say, "Don't wait 20 years like I did before you embrace this program." There is something to learn from all of us. It just takes time. It won't happen overnight.

I know that even though people tell very painful stories in the meetings, they are getting help and support for their pain. The stories are not so difficult to hear because we are not alone.

Al-Anon meetings remind me where I came from and point me in a direction of healing. It's like eating healthy, exercising and meditating. It keeps me on track. I use to think I could go on a diet, lose the weight I wanted to lose and then go back to eating anything I wanted. It doesn't work that way for me. My spiritual group meetings continue to remind me that I am part of a greater whole. My Al-Anon meetings keep me from slipping into anger, resentment and fear. They give me great support and comfort. I am reminded that I have a Higher Power, and that with my Higher Power, I can live my life with serenity regardless of the circumstances. I can let go of angers and resentments, which hurt only me. I have goals towards which I am working. I have fellowship and support at all times. I am so glad that I finally "KEEP COMING BACK."

~ Carol B

My Other 3 C's

We often hear in our Al-Anon rooms about the three C's. "We didn't cause it (alcoholism), we can't control it, and we can't cure it." The 3 C's have put my life into perspective in regard to my part in the disease and how alcoholism has affected me. During meditation time recently, 3 other C's came to mind in regard to recovery.

The 3 C's that have become important to my recovery are Choices, Changes, and Chances. Having Choices and learning to be responsible for my choices have been key for me in keeping my serenity. Growing up in an alcoholic home, we didn't have any choices, but my sisters and I had lots of responsibility. Some of my responsibilities at the young age of eight were learning to cook, clean and do laundry. I liked cooking the best because it was pleasurable and the praise from others was immediate. Those early experiences were the beginning of my becoming

overly responsible and using food as a way to cope. Becoming an adult was difficult and making healthy choices was hard. I had no experience during my adolescence for making good decisions. Along with not being able to make choices, I didn't know how to set healthy boundaries since neither was mirrored to me. Now one of the best choices I make in recovery each day is to set boundaries with others. Al-Anon taught me how to say "No," and that "No" is a complete sentence. I also see that a mistake is just that, a "miss take,"I miss the "take" and know I can always learn, and I have a chance to do things differently. Also I have learned it is my choice to explain myself or not.

The second C that has been important for me is Change. It has been in accepting the things I cannot Change (the first line of the Serenity Prayer) that I was able to recognize what *in me* needed to change. My attitude when I first got into recovery was that everyone else needed to change. In reality, it was *my* attitude that needed changing. My constant thought was that my world would be just great if everyone behaved the way I expected them to behave. As we say in recovery, "Expectations are pre-meditated resentments waiting to happen." Today I know the only thing I can change is my attitude and actions, and it has to begin with me. My experience has been that when my thoughts and actions change, many of the people in my life react more positively to me. The other thing that has helped me is a line from the long version of the Serenity Prayer, "Grant me patience for the changes that take time.," one of my favorite short prayers.

The third C that has been important to me is Chances. I received a wonderful gift in recovery by coming to believe that a power greater than myself could restore me to sanity. With this gift came a beautiful ever-evolving relationship with the God of my own understanding. In this relationship there is grace in the way of chances. Every day I receive another chance to work towards more spiritual progress and be more awakened to my own spirituality. When I make spiritual choices according to God's will, my spirit grows and changes, and I notice that others offer me grace. All my relationships become better and more fulfilling. In Recovery, I have learned through working the 12 Steps with a sponsor, attending meetings, and using the tools of recovery that I can live a life of *self-care* instead of taking care of others.

I am better able to leave the care of others in the hands of their Higher Power. I am so grateful that every day my HP gives me lots of chances for spiritual progress not spiritual perfection.

~Karren

Announcements

NCWSA 2018 Convention, March 23-25, 2018

- ❖ Great Speakers
- ❖ Spanish and AA participation
- ❖ Dynamic Meetings
- ❖ Open AA, Panels, Alathons
- ❖ Food, Fun & Fellowship

Doubletree Hotel by Hilton Hotel Modesto, 1150 Ninth Street, Modesto, CA

(209) 526-6000, For registration details go to:

<http://northerncaliforniaal-anon.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/2018convention.pdf>

Night of Family Recovery in Marin, Saturday, March 24, 2018

An Al-Anon Speaker Event with AA Participation, Saturday, March 24

Potluck dinner at 5:30 pm, Meeting at 7:00 pm, \$10 suggested donation

MILL VALLEY COMMUNITY CENTER, 180 CAMINO ALTO, Mill VALLEY, CA, 5:30-9:30 PM

Al-Anon's International Convention 2018, Friday, July 6-Sunday, July 8

Alateen

Alateen is a fellowship of 12-20 year olds whose lives have been affected by someone else's drinking. They come together to share their experience, discuss what's going on in their lives, and learn coping skills. It is a place to encourage one another, learn they are not alone and learn that alcoholism is a disease.

We currently have meetings in Napa, Santa Rosa and Sonoma. Three are held at schools in Santa Rosa during school hours, while the others are held in various sites. There is a Spanish meeting in Sonoma.

To find out about much more, check out the Alateen page on our website, Sonoma & Napa County Al-Anon/Alateen.

CONTACT LIST FOR DISTRICT 5 AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS, INC., SONOMA AND NAPA COUNTY AL-ANON

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Alateen Safety	Shireen	

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