

Our Three Legacies

RECOVERY through the 12 Steps

UNITY through the 12 Traditions

SERVICE through the 12 Concepts

The Agram

5

May & June, 2018

The Priceless Gift of Serenity

I was sitting in my hot tub one Sunday morning, awake early with unsettling thoughts. I figured a hot tub would clear my mind as I was thinking about many things that I could not control and wondered how I was to manage it all. As I sat there soaking up the warmth of the tub, I listened to the early break of the day: sounds of chirping birds and gentle breezes blowing through the trees. I thought of my Al-Anon home group, and then my Higher Power. I breathed deeply, soaking in the warm water, and soon realized that the Serenity Prayer was at the forefront of my mind. God, grant me the serenity to accept what I cannot change or control... the courage to change me...and the wisdom to know the difference. I felt the priceless gift of serenity in my heart and knew my Higher Power was with me. I had thoughts of gratitude for this beautiful morning: the birds, the breeze, and the hot water. With a new attitude I was looking forward to my day because I knew that I could manage whatever was in front of me with the help of Al-Anon.

~Susan V.

My "Fix"

Continually taking trips through the 12 Steps is how I work my program of recovery. Each time, it is exciting to take a Fourth Step inventory because I can expect to discover self-defeating patterns I am ready to look at on a deeper level and transform into life-changing renewal. This was especially true when I worked through the Steps in a small group using *Reaching for Personal Freedom*. Our discussions and the workbook questions helped me pinpoint a defective behavior I wanted to stop; I saw that my mind jumped toward worry the way my loved ones' did toward drinking and drugging. "How can I fix them?" thoughts poured into my brain as an automatic reaction to the rising of an unpleasant emotion. This thought process was worse than useless. They wished I'd stay out of their business, and I was supposed to be doing my own inventory. Step 4

required asking myself why I leapt into a Fix? -This obsession that never really permanently fixed me or anybody else. And the answer was fear.

A 5th Step discussion with my sponsor helped me dig into the exact nature of the wrong in automatically worrying as a reaction to a feeling of fear. It distilled down to a lack of trust. Long ago I had come to believe there was a power greater than myself. I had turned my will and life over to its care and felt great relief, yet even after years in program I would sometimes find myself worried into sleeplessness and sickness over obsessively thinking about fixing other people's problems. Mentally reacting to a family crisis with the illusion of control obsessive thinking seemed to give me is a form of self-harm that doesn't help me or anyone else and wow, talk about making my life unmanageable! Step 6 would be a no-brainer, right? Of course I'd be ready to have this worrywart defect removed. Who wouldn't?

Yet during my Step 6 self-examination, the circumstances in my life brought up many seemingly great reasons for me to slip into obsessive thinking again and again. It was being revealed to me with crystal clarity that thinking myself into a state of anxiety was an addiction I was as unable to control as my loved ones were to "just stop" their addictions. The fact I was working Step 6 at the time they were suffering the effects of their disease was not a hindrance but a blessing; my opportunity to see that fear, coupled with the mistaken belief that worry could enable me to control the uncontrollable, seemed to be what caused me to go straight into the hell of mental obsession.

With Step 7, this flawed belief was replaced by the knowledge that I am powerless to fix the outer circumstances of others' lives and to humbly see myself as an imperfect human being who is entirely ready to trust the God of my understanding to remove all my defects of character: all the fears, all desire to control, all the things I am in denial about or prefer not to look at. Each walk through the Steps has been a process of taking the blinders off; in this round, I saw how far obsessive thinking could take me from my usual place of inner peace and also helplessly watched my body follow my mind as I experienced uncomfortable fight or flight physical reactions. Arriving at the acceptance of my inability to "just stop" a behavior I knew was harmful to me, I felt great compassion for all humanity. A realization came that people don't need to be fixed, they just need to be loved. Free of a compulsion to fix in favor of a well-developed taste for

what page 52 in *ODAT* calls “mental sobriety,” I have learned to trust. I have found learning to trust is somewhat like learning to ride a bicycle in that I can’t learn it by thinking about it or reading about it. The only way to learn to ride a bike is to practice it by doing it. Trust came by trusting a power greater than myself one day at a time, one moment at a time, no matter what situation life brings to me or my loved ones. And now I do! I do!

~Barbara

Mutually Respectful Pause

Feelings are what they are to each of us. The wisdom is in the recognition that if there are reactions or responses to feelings, there will be consequences. Therefore, the choices we make are worthy of forethought. ... “How important is it?” or “Is it thoughtful, honest, intelligent, necessary, kind?” or can I “Keep it simple”? When I was younger and had more energy, everything was very important and needed to be managed right away. My career required that I think fast and be willing to act quickly. Despite my age, I have learned to use my God box literally and figuratively. At first, the pauses generated by my think time seemed inordinately long and awkward. Now, I find the pause is a sign of respect. My vocabulary is less catastrophic. I mean what I say and endeavor not to say it mean. The difference in me is that I am more the woman I want to be. I have benefitted from the process of Al-Anon. I reawakened my compassion by attending meetings and reaching out to others. I take on service positions to keep my life in balance. And coupled with this recovery, I still have feelings and always will.

~Jayne

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.

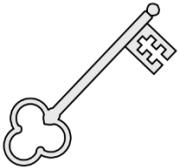
Email submissions to: newsletter@sonapalanon.com

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 either with your first name or something like “a grateful member of District 5” or “Anonymous.”



Participation is the key to harmony-

Concept 4

Announcements

Outreach Service Opportunity!

Jennifer M, District 5's Institution Coordinator, has service for members to form an Institutions Outreach Committee to **take Al-Anon's message of hope to families in our area institutions**. Please contact Jennifer M at institutions@sonapalanon.com

Bash Committee

Events coordinator, Paula, invites anyone who would like to serve on the BASH committee, to attend the monthly meeting. For details email her at events@sonapalanon

District 5 Support Line, 575-6760

District 5 website, sonapalanon.com

NCWSA website, northerncaliforniaal-anon.org

May 4 -6, Friday-Sunday, 36th Annual Growing Together Weekend in Occidental.
Scholarships may still be available. Text 408 481-2307 for more GTW information.

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 more about Alateen, go to the Alateen Page on our website at sonapalanon.com

GROWING TOGETHER WEEKEND is a wonderful yearly event where Alateens and Al-Anons, with AA participation, have the opportunity to grow in serenity.

How Can I Honor My Feelings?

By listening to them. Not judging them. Accepting them. Embracing them!

By realizing that they are mine, and I don't need another's approval to have them. Though this does take a lot of courage, self-esteem and HP support.

By "HOLDING" them, which means no judgement. Visualizing them being held in my "cupped hands," as one would hold a small kitten, gingerly, tenderly...lovingly.

Instead of dismissing or stuffing them, I just let them be or bubble up. They are asking for my attention or acknowledgement, so I give that!

They are part of me, part of being human. They don't have to define me or be my entirety. They are part of my whole, so I've stopped trying to excise or cut them off.

Breathing through them or allowing them a big sigh.

I am worth honoring...so I honor my all, feelings included. Everyone is to be honored.

Taking care of my needs, including my feelings, is my responsibility.

~Anonymous

My Experience, Strength, and Hope

My first **experience** was a gradual awareness that I needed to change. No one was suggesting I go to Al-Anon, but I was hearing that I was controlling, and most of the havoc in my life was my own doing. I couldn't believe that if I was acting poorly, it was my circumstance. It wasn't me! A wise person thought that some sort of support group might be helpful. I needed support in my daily living and decision making. I had gone to AA and had found success with stopping drinking, so maybe the other group, Al-Anon, would have something to offer me.

At first *I came*, and they said *keep coming back and bring the body and the mind will follow*. Then *I came to*. I learned that there were some things I had no control over, so I was just spinning my wheels. And a lot of times, I was causing the problems in my life, a hard concept for me to grasp. This was my cue to get busy and get better. This is a slow process, and I'll never be done, but it's an interesting, fulfilling journey. Lastly, *I came to believe*. I was raised with religion and knew of a higher power, but our relationship was distant. I learned that I could have a personal relationship, and also I learned how to go about getting that. Suggestions to get started: our daily readers, *Courage to Change*, the *ODAT*, and *Hope for Today*. Read them, preferably every day, but anything is good; go to meetings; share (to bring me out of my protective shell and see my problems in a new light); work Step 11, seeking through prayer and meditation to improve my conscious contact with The *GOD OF MY UNDERSTANDING*.

My **strength** is in my groups and inside myself. I've been learning how to be *the captain of my own ship* rather than bouncing from one idea to another and recognizing that I have good ideas too, (*talking and reasoning things out without gossip or criticism.*)

My **hope** is to continue on my path of knowing ALL IS WELL. I also hope I can express to the newcomer, that if they choose this way of seeing and living, they won't regret it.

There is a caveat to my share; sometimes I forget I have a program, and I lose contact with my higher power. I think I know best, or you know best instead of being open to me and you. What do I do? After I realize what has happened, I begin again. I am powerless over others, and my life has become unmanageable, AGAIN. I go to meetings. My Al-Anon friends are there and my higher power, too. Luckily, they'll always be there, and I realize how much I've missed them all, and it's only been a couple of days! I have this feeling that I'm in the right place, and ALL IS WELL in my world, AGAIN.

~LOVE, Patty M

O.D.A.T.

A recent share at an Al-Anon meeting helped me in my recovery, and I want to pass it on. The member shared the acronym O.D.A.T and how it could help you make decisions. She said that if you can answer yes to all of the following four, it can help you make decisions. Do I have the **O-Opportunity**, **D-Desire**, **A-Ability**, and **T-Time**.?

Using O.D.A.T., I was able to make a decision that supported me taking care of myself and honoring my truth. My sister had made plans to visit me to celebrate her 75th birthday and see my son before he and his wife moved out of the country. Sadly, her trip was canceled when her husband was hospitalized.

My first thought was that, if my sister can't come to me, we could all go the 320 miles south to see her. Instead of saying what I was thinking, I said, "I am going to say something right now, and no matter what I say please tell me 'No'." My son shouted across the room, "I already know what you are going to say, and that is we should all go to see your sister." Everyone joined in about how we could make it happen and how fun it would be to visit other family members as well.

As reality set in, I thought about making the trip south, and my feelings of anxiety increased. I thought about my recently impinged shoulder which had been causing me pain for a few months and the prescribed daily icing and exercises which could make this trip difficult. However, I was caught up in a codependent frenzy of mixed feelings. It was at this time that the recent O.D.A.T. share mentioned at the Al-Anon meeting came to mind. After some prayer and meditation, to get clear what God's will was for me, a call to my Al-Anon sponsor was made. We worked through the four questions. I knew I had the **opportunity** and certainly the **desire**, and the **time**, to visit, but was unsure of my **ability** to travel with an impinged shoulder. Three out of the four was good, but the rule was you had to have all four in order to go ahead. By the time we hung up, I had my answer. I was going to stay home and take care of me instead of getting caught up in people pleasing, care taking, and trying to make someone else happy at the cost of myself.

~Karren K

H.O.P.E. I am...Happy – Our – Program - Exists *Paths to Recovery p 97*

"The first gift a newcomer receives from contact with Al-Anon is hope. Seeing how others rise above their problems, listening to situations worse than their own, absorbing the atmosphere of love and goodwill, send them home with a new lease on life."

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