

**GAUTENG & DISTRICT OFFICE**  
**24-Hour helpline 0861 25 26 66**

Dear Loners

October 2018

I received this talk from Elmien. Hope you enjoy it as much as we did

***Second chances***

“A second chance doesn’t mean anything if you didn’t learn from the first.” Anurag Prakash Ray

For me, the difference between a first and a second chance is exactly that, what you have learned in between.

There is now an undeniable knowledge of what can go wrong, but also, of what is worth fighting for.

I will start with my own experiences and choices. The insanity of living with alcoholism is very real for me. It can be equated to the frog sitting in the pot and because the increase in temperature is so gradual, the frog doesn’t realise it is being boiled. I sat in that insane pot for five years before I realised how much damage was being done. I can quote our preamble, I became irritable and unreasonable. I also lost my self-esteem and even my will to get out of bed in the morning. I lived for Monday mornings, when my husband would go to work and I would have some peace in my own head. I became isolated and depressed. A chance break with my extended family and without my husband, gave me an insight on how bad things had become and I became motivated to change what I could.

It dawned on me that alcoholism is the cause of our unhappy marriage rather than a symptom. It was alcoholism causing the unhappiness, not the unhappiness causing the drinking. It is of course a vicious cycle, which just escalates, which is why I am quite happy to acknowledge it as an insanity.

And I decided to jump out of the pot. This is where it became interesting. My husband acknowledged the need for change but asked me to stay for six months and if nothing had changed, he would help me to move on.

This was something I could do. I gave him those six months, a second chance to be the person I knew he could be if he were sober. I gave our marriage a second chance. I take commitment seriously and I don’t give up because it is too much work or too difficult. The only thing that will make me give up, is knowing that the damage caused is progressive and irreversible. Almost like euthanizing an animal that has no chance of recovery.

And I gave myself a second chance. A chance at a life not only worth living, but worth celebrating.

There is a process to a second chance. It is not merely a decision.

It starts with forgiveness. Which is always a choice. It is not the moral high ground, it is a release of anger for the person doing the forgiving. It is putting down the burden of resentment. It is not forgetting. It is most definitely not condoning bad behaviour. But for a second chance to have a clean slate, it is necessary. If the hurt, resentment and anger is carried into the second chance, one partner becomes a martyr, and sets the new relationship up for failure.

It is also taking stock of loss. Friends were lost, relationships damaged due to the isolation. Some can be recovered, others can’t. Trust was broken. Forgiveness does not automatically fix trust. A lobotomy might do that, or complete memory loss. I know that I have serious trust issues and I hope that time will heal my distrust. I have no idea how long that will take though.

I must deal with injuries. An alcoholic can be terribly cruel trying to shift focus from his addiction to another’s flaws or weaknesses. To top it all, a blackout drinker will have very little recollection of his words and actions. I asked my husband, who is working through his steps with his sponsor, how someone can do an eighth and ninth step if you have no memory of what you have done. He could not respond other than telling me that I’m being mean. I’m not trying to be mean, I do need to understand though. I can make a very specific list of where I went wrong. The alcoholic is at a disadvantage here.

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I will have to find a way of dealing with my own injuries. With or without an apology or amends. I am considering professional help, as Juliet explained so well in her talk on tradition eight. I'm allowed to ask for help. I look back at my own part, I became co-dependent, I doubted myself, and I got stuck in survival mode. My second chance is learning to forgive, to live again and to love again. This is my life and I choose to live it fully. Not a victim, not a martyr. First and foremost, I get to do the things I love. I get to be creative. I get to spend time with the people I love and participate in their lives. I have always loved my family and spending time with them and I have neglected them. That will not happen again. And I am loud and funny and say ridiculous things for effect, and I will not pretend to be someone I am not. I love being physically active and I'm no longer waiting around for my partner to get off the couch.

I gave my marriage a second chance. I have a second chance at being a wife with all the perks and responsibilities that comes with that. Things are different now. I'm not emotionally dependent on his moods anymore. We need to find some common ground, we have not been able to find a lot, but we try. We had a lovely five-day holiday recently and we managed to be mostly pleasant to one another the whole time. Progress, not perfection. We like the same movies and television programs, although I don't consider watching television quality time, at least it is an activity we enjoy together. And we are both crazy cat people. It is easy to love a man who cares for the little furry kids as much as I do. So even the cats get a second chance at staying in the same house with the same people. And we adopted a shelter-cat, in the spirit of 'everyone deserves a second chance'. His name is Kaiju and he is soft and sweet and an asset in our lives. I must give my husband a lot of credit here. He embraced the second chance, he acknowledged that he is an alcoholic and is doing his best at being in control of it, rather than it being in control of him. I am pleased to say that giving him and us a second chance was the correct decision. And although I try to focus on my story, not that of my qualifier, he also made a choice for second chances. Sobriety is a second chance for him to have a fulfilling life. He is prepared to put in the work to give our marriage a second chance. And he considers giving me a second chance worthwhile. That I am worth fighting for is something I would not have believed three years ago, when I was in the darkest part of my journey into insanity. I do believe it now. This is my story and it is full of hope. Everybody has a different story, and we do not give advice. But I firmly believe we owe ourselves a second chance at finding a life worth living, with or without our qualifiers and not dependent on the choices they make.

We would love to share your experience strength and hope with other loners in the programme. New groups have opened in our area. Please visit our website, [www.alanongauteng.co.za](http://www.alanongauteng.co.za) it is updated regularly with new shares, blogs and book reviews. Remember help is a phone call away. The national website [www.alanon.org.za](http://www.alanon.org.za) has a new members sections with lots of interesting material. Well worth looking at both these sites.

Our banking details are: ABSA Bank, Oakdene, branch code 632 005). Current account no 1118881482.....in the name of **Al-Anon Information Service**. Please put your **name or group as a reference**.

With love in Al-Anon, Juliet

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**SIXTY  
FIVE  
YEARS  
OF HOPE**