

# AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS CAPE AREA ECHO

RSS EDITION 5-2018

## REGIONAL SERVICE SEMINAR (RSS) EDITION



### SELF-LOVE

What is self-love?

Is it something you can buy in a beauty makeover or a new set of clothing?

Can you get it by reading something inspirational?

Can a new relationship make you love yourself more?

The answer to these questions is 'No'! Although they feel good and are gratifying, you cannot grow in self-love through these types of activities. Because self-love is not simply a state of feeling good.

Examples of popular self-love terms:

- you must love yourself more
- why don't you love yourself?
- if you only loved yourself, this wouldn't have happened to you
- you can't love another person until you love yourself first

Self-love advice we give or get can contribute towards living a more fulfilled life.

Self-love is important to living well as it can influence:

- who you pick for a partner/friend
- the image you project
- how you cope with the problems in your life

Self-love is important to your happiness so let's explore how to bring more of it into our lives.

*self love*  
THE KEY TO HAPPINESS

#### SELF-LOVE DEFINITION

- ❖ Respect for one's own well-being and happiness (respect is defined as to feel or show esteem or honour, in other words to have a good opinion)

Where do we start to self-love?

A good start is self-compassion which is a way of relating to yourself without harshly judging or punishing yourself for every mistake or flaw.

Research on self-compassion shows that it is associated with:

- less anxiety and depression
- more optimism (hope)
- better recovery from stress
- better observance of healthy behaviour changes

Research on self-compassion, describes it as follows:

Self-compassion involves treating yourself with the same kindness, concern, and support you'd show to a good friend. When faced with difficult life struggles, or confronting personal mistakes, failures, and inadequacies, self-compassion responds with kindness rather than harsh self-judgment, recognizing that imperfection is part of the shared human experience.

Let's look at some characteristics of self-compassion which has separate but related aspects:

#### MINDFULNESS

- Having an open, curious, non-judgmental attitude.
- Not overidentifying with negative stories about yourself.

#### SELF-KINDNESS

- Treat yourself kindly, rather than harshly.
- Provide the same care and support to yourself that you would to a good friend or loved one.

#### COMMON HUMANITY

- Allow yourself to be human, to make mistakes and learn from them.
- Remember, as humans we are not perfect, nor should we be expected to act flawlessly,

In practice, self-compassion can:

- transform your relationship with yourself
- promote healthier ways of living
- change behaviour by motivating yourself rather than shaming and self-criticising.

Shame and self-criticism lead to inner rebellion and giving up, while self-compassion gives you hope and helps you trust the process of change.

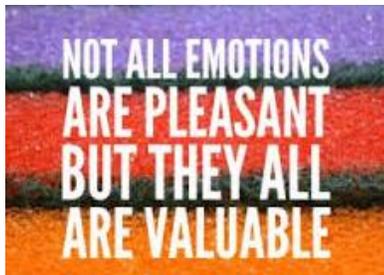
#### SELF-COMPASSION STEPS

##### 1. IDENTIFY THAT YOU ARE EXPERIENCING EMOTIONAL DISTRESS OR MENTAL SUFFERING

- Adopt a mindful attitude.
- Deliberately pay attention to your inner experience.
- Notice when you are beginning to shift into a negative state.

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- Realise that you are thinking negative thoughts about yourself.
- Realise that you are feeling anxiety in your body.
- Stop and say to yourself, “This is a difficult moment” or “I’m feeling distress in my mind and body”.



## 2. ACCEPT THAT THE FEELING IS THERE

- Acknowledge the negative feeling and try to accept it.
- It is there after all and you can’t really push it away.
- If it is a negative thought, look for the underlying emotion (anxiety, sadness or anger).
- Scan your body to see where you feel tension or discomfort:
  - in your chest
  - belly
  - shoulders
  - throat
  - face
  - jaw.

## 3. IMAGINE WHAT YOU MIGHT FEEL IF YOU SAW A LOVED ONE EXPERIENCING THIS FEELING

- Imagine your loved one being scared or sad or feeling bad about themselves.
- Think about what you might feel, like the urge to help or comfort them.
- Direct this compassionate mindset toward yourself.
- If you notice any resistance or thoughts of “I don’t deserve compassion” acknowledge

them and try to direct compassion to yourself anyway.

You may want to ask yourself why you think others deserve compassion but not you.

## 4. CHALLENGE YOUR NEGATIVE STORY ABOUT YOURSELF

- If you feel undeserving or ‘bad’, this as an old story so notice the old story of why you are bad.
- Find a way to challenge the old story.
- Do I only see in black and white (where is the grey or colour)?
- Am I self-judging?
- Is there another perspective to see this from?
- Are there other, kinder ways to view the situation?
- Are you expecting yourself to be perfect, rather than allowing yourself to be human?

## 5. THINK ABOUT HOW EVERYBODY MESSES UP SOMETIMES

- It is tempting to think that you are uniquely messed up, while everyone else is a model of virtue.
- Consider that even the most successful people make serious mistakes.
- Think about all the mistakes politicians make.

Making a mistake does not undo all your accomplishments and successes.

## 6. DECIDE WHAT IT WOULD TAKE TO FORGIVE YOURSELF

- If your behaviour hurt you or another person, ask yourself what it would take to forgive yourself?
- Think about constructive ways to apologise or make

amends to the person you hurt.

- Did you hurt yourself through:
  - addictive behavior?
  - avoidance?
  - ruining relationships?

Make a positive plan for the next time you are in a similar situation so that you can begin to act differently.



## 7. USE SELF-TALK TO ENCOURAGE YOURSELF

- For example:
  - it doesn’t help to beat yourself up
  - everybody makes mistakes sometimes
  - acknowledge yourself for trying, even if you weren’t successful
  - tell yourself to focus on the positive aspects of what you did as well as the negative ones
  - behaviour change is a process, and you need to keep trying.

## 8. BE A LIFE COACH TO YOURSELF

- Rather than punishing yourself with negative thoughts:
  - gently guide yourself in a positive direction
  - ask yourself...
    - what led to the destructive behaviour?
    - whether it’s really what you want to be doing?
    - what the consequences are?
  - tell yourself...

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- that you have other choices
- it is never too late to change.
- o Then think about...
  - a concrete step you can take right away to move in a more positive direction
  - or get up and try again.

If you choose just one or two of these self-love actions to work on, you will begin to accept and love yourself more. Just imagine how much you will appreciate **you** when you exercise these steps to self-love?

There is truth in that you can only love another person as much as you love yourself. When you exercise all the actions of self-love, you will allow and encourage others to express themselves in the same way.

Self-love is a state of appreciation for oneself that grows from actions that support our physical, psychological and spiritual growth.

Self-love is active; it grows by actions that mature us. When we act in ways that expand self-love in us, we begin to accept our weaknesses as well as our strengths; have less need to explain away our short-comings; and have compassion for ourselves as human beings struggling to find personal meaning. We are more centred in our life purpose and values.

**Intimacy is not purely physical.**

It's the act of connecting with someone so deeply, you feel like you can see into their soul.

## WORKSHOP 1

### INTO ME SEE/INTIMACY

“Sharing my intimate self in a safe Al-Anon environment is a risk I am willing to take.”

“I learn to be intimate with, and accepting of myself”.

*How Al-Anon Works, p295*  
*Hope for Today, p90*

### PHYSICAL INTIMACY

What do you see when you look at your naked body in a mirror, without judging? Show gratitude to your body – after all, this is where your soul resides.

**Q:** Which areas of my body have I neglected or worry about too much, out of shame or embarrassment? How does this affect my relationships?

### EMOTIONAL INTIMACY

Do you pay attention to how you feel throughout the day? Reflect on it at night before you go to sleep. Keeping a journal about feelings helps when an emotion triggers to know why and where it is coming from.

**Q:** What emotional needs do I have that I am reluctant to acknowledge?

### MENTAL INTIMACY

Do you know your inner critic? For most people that inner critic is what controls your life. When you become aware of that inner critic, you can change your relationship with it

**Q:** How do you react when someone expresses negative emotions towards you?

### SPIRITUAL INTIMACY

Connections are formed with people, whose morals, values, interests and beliefs are similar. These are the values that we nurture in a relationship and this forms a sound, spiritual, intimate relationship.

**Q:** What are the things that can compromise the spiritual intimacy in a relationship?

### FINAL TAKEAWAY

“All in all, each type of intimacy is a process. It can change, so work on it, for more fulfilling and satisfying relationships. The above sharing of intimacy and what it means to you can be a good base to build an everlasting intimacy with others. To define and explore intimacy at so many levels is an interesting journey, one that you can benefit from.”

*Author unknown*

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## WORKSHOP 2

### ISOLATION TO BELONGING



“...The only way to release ourselves from the hold of these dark demons is to break the isolation and bring them into the light by sharing with others who understand.”

*In All Our Affairs, p32*

Isolation is one of the reasons that keep us from joining the fellowship, and even during our membership, we continue to isolate in varying degrees and ways ...

*Author unknown*

1. What are the behaviours that keep me isolated?
2. What are the reasons that I isolated myself or continue to isolate myself? For example: finances, feelings of shame... etc.

Al-Anon provides a safe haven of understanding and acceptance to those affected by Alcoholism.

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- How does Al-Anon provide me with a sense of belonging?
- How can participation in life enhance my sense of belonging?

**FINAL TAKEAWAY**

“The shell that had enclosed my life, that had prevented me from living and loving, has cracked, and the power of the Al-Anon program is filling the void that for years kept me at a distance from life.”  
*(As We Understood)*  
*Courage to Change, p222*  
 xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

**WORKSHOP 3**  
**SPIRITUAL GROWTH/  
 GUIDANCE**

**STEPS:**

- “The Steps have led me to my Higher Power”. Share your experience of this.
- How does Al-Anon support my spiritual growth?

**TRADITIONS:**

- What spiritual guidance have I found in the 12 Traditions?
- What unforeseen guidance have I received in Al-Anon?

**CONCEPTS:**

- How have I found spirituality through service and what spiritual gifts have I received?
- How has my Higher Power guided me in service work?

**SPIRITUAL GROWTH**



**TRADITION SEVEN**

**Tradition Seven – Caring and responsibility of self**

*Every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions*

We recently celebrated Al-Anon’s 67th birthday. Members from all over the Cape Area joined together in celebrating this programme that has given us an opportunity to see that there is a healthier way of living, even if the disease of alcoholism persists in our home environments. We get together for each other’s experience, strength, and hope, sharing the love generously with all who walk through the doors, be it a longtimer, newcomer or visitor.

A friend visiting from up country experienced this when she decided to join me at the event for the day as she has heard me speak so often of Al-Anon. She was overwhelmed by the love she received through hugs and greetings and the joyful noise of excited chatter among members. Even though she was a stranger, everyone made her feel a part of the event and fellowship.

This, to me, is the beauty of this wonderfully gentle, caring programme – there is always an abundance of arms reaching out to hug, huge hearts filled with love and care. Looking at the tables set for tea, the abundance of generosity from our members with tables laden with all types of mouth-watering morsels lovingly prepared and set out to share.

When I see this I realise that the fellowship does not depend on one or a handful of members, but on all members doing their part where they can. Through each

one of us contributing in some way towards the wellbeing of the Cape Area, we will experience the power of abundance.



Just for today we should believe in the power of abundance. Through the generosity of our members, there will always be enough.

~Fatima D.  
**Finance Coordinator**

**MEMBER SERVICES**

The year has entered its second half. So we are winding down towards the end of another year. And despite my misgivings about the lack of response to our efforts to get an Alateen group going, it seems that somehow our efforts were not in vain. As these events often pan out, they will develop in their own good time and in their own good way. And so, while we were wracking our brains on ways and means to attract teens to our meeting, it seemed that the need for another adult child group had ripened sufficiently to galvanize several members into action. Within two weeks of our faithful AMIAS team (who had patiently been holding the space at Christ Church Kenilworth) vacating the venue, an adult child meeting had started in exactly the same time slot. The cheek! If it wasn’t that I am so chuffed about a new group taking off with such ease, I would be quite annoyed. Jokes aside, the group has been functioning now for four to five weeks with four to six people attending. Success! In the meantime we discovered that, since the group next door is

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somewhat raucous, we needed to move. And, again without any trouble whatsoever, we have obtained a room on the other side of the road at the same time slot, in the Annex of the church in Richmond Avenue, Kenilworth. The group will be meeting there every Monday from 7 – 8:30pm.

## AL-ANON ADULT CHILD (AAC)

If you are the adult child of an alcoholic (like I am), you might find this meeting helpful in dealing with the legacy of a dysfunctional childhood and the long journey towards healing and recovery. Here is a summarised version of adult child characteristics which you might relate to: We...

1. guess at what normal is
2. have difficulty in following a project through from beginning to end
3. lie when it would be just as easy to tell the truth
4. judge ourselves without mercy
5. have difficulty having fun
6. take ourselves very seriously
7. have difficulty with intimate relationships
8. overreact to changes over which we have no control
9. constantly seek approval and affirmation
10. feel that we are different from other people
11. are either super responsible or super irresponsible
12. are extremely loyal, even in the face of evidence that our loyalty is undeserved
13. tend to lock ourselves into a course of action without giving serious consideration to alternative behaviors or possible consequences. This impulsivity leads to confusion, self-loathing, and loss of control of our environment. As a result, we spend

tremendous amounts of time cleaning up the mess.

Should you resonate with some of these characteristics, you might want to join the group. Alternatively, while this is not an Alateen group, it might offer a safe space for the young adult children of some of our members. Please join us in letting members in the fellowship know about this group and the hope, strength and healing it may offer.

Details of the group will be on our website.

Regarding finding a suitable alternative place and time for an Alateen group, we remain undaunted in our belief that when the space and time is right, the teens will come. So watch this space.

I have been in this position for three years and will be stepping back for a new recruit. I would love to mentor the incumbent and am happy to stand as Alternate Member Services in the coming year. Should anyone feel drawn to this service position, please feel free to email me (below) and find out more about what it entails.

~ **Natalie B.**

**Member Services Coordinator**  
[bossi@telkomsa.net](mailto:bossi@telkomsa.net)



## STARTING AN ALATEEN GROUP

“Starting an Alateen group is a spiritual undertaking. It takes time, commitment, the support of one or more Al-Anon groups, and patience. To use the Alateen name, the group must have Alateen Group Sponsors who are certified and meet all of the Area’s Requirements for service to

Alateen, and the Alateen meeting must be registered through your Area’s Alateen process, before the first meeting. Contact the [Members’ Services Coordinator] for information on your Area’s Alateen Safety and Behavioral Requirements and your Area’s process for distribution and submission of Alateen forms.”

## WHAT IS AN ALATEEN GROUP?

“Alateen is a place where members come together to:

- share experiences, strength, and hope with each other to find effective ways to cope with problems
- discuss difficulties and encourage one another
- help each other understand the principles of the Al-Anon program through the use of the Twelve Steps and Alateen’s Twelve Traditions

“Alateen is not a place:

- For teenagers seeking help for drinking or drug problems or a therapy program
- to complain about parents or anyone else.
- A social hangout.”

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS BY TEENS

“Why does my father drink too much?

Why can’t my mother stop drinking?

When will they realize they are alcoholics?

Is there a cure for this illness?

Can I get an alcoholic to stop drinking?

What if the alcoholic never stops drinking?

What to say when my friends see a drunk family member?”

Source:

<https://al-anon.org/newcomers/teen-corner-alateen/ & /teen-faq/>