

Experience, strength and hope from Al-Anon members for times when you can't get to an Al-Anon group

Dear Loners

November 2019

It is exciting to open up my mail and read letters from grateful Al-Anon members. Thank you!

THE STEPS – member shares

One of the practices of my home group is to study one of the Twelve Steps on the first meeting of each month. Each person discusses what the step means to him or her and how it has helped in his or her recovery. Visiting a different step every month helps me to obtain a deeper understanding of the Al-Anon program. I am learning by re-visiting the program's principles and seeing how I can apply these principles in my life. This journey of discovery and growth often reminds me of peeling an onion. Layer by layer, and sometimes with tears, I peel away. I do this in order to remove the damaged layers so I can move forward in my recovery. I focus on each step month by month and write my reflections in a journal. I can then compare my progress with earlier years.

I came to believe the steps are my path to serenity and peace. I take these steps beside my program friends and we are led to a new understanding and insights, personally and collectively. I feel blessed and grateful to have a structure for measuring my progress. As I grow in my recovery, the understanding of the steps helps me to grow, change and mature.

Thought for Today: Studying the steps is important to me, as they are the foundation of my recovery. I can apply them to all of the problems I encounter. They also remind me that I do not have to face life alone; I have my Higher Power and my Al-Anon family.

And from another letter: My name is Ruth and I'm a grateful member of Kibler Park- Al-Anon Family Group for over 9 years. When I married my husband 27 years ago, we had many expectations of a happy life together, we lived life, we socialised and both drank socially but not excessively, he entertained in the music industry and was very talented and good at it, though it was not good for him, I brought up the children, my daughter and my son, carried on working throughout –life was functional but fair.

Alcohol then became a daily occurrence whereby he would drink, and then go to do his entertainment/music, comedy shows, I think at that point it became a have to thing, where drinking/drugging was part and parcel of the entertainment industry. I continued to be the main bread winner, focused on the children's school and my own insecurities in my Career and perhaps chose to ignore any excessive behaviours, lived very much in denial. When Trevor got shot and hijacked in Linmeyer, this just became the point of no return, whereby drugs became expensive and alcohol the cross over which turned out to be a lot worse as it was easily accessible.

We sold our townhouse and for the next 5- 7 years our lives became an emotional hurricane of financial loss, survival and very much moving closer to rock bottom. By this stage we had moved to Meyersdal and then back to the South in a tiny flat in Linmeyer, whereby I was a bag of nerves, continual mind games, manipulation and going out for any reason, not a happy home..... I saw no end to the absolute destruction of this addiction that had taken over our lives on a daily basis. His health started deteriorating, I saw no hope, but had no way of leaving with our two children aged 9 and 11 years.

We lived with obsession of the drinker, trying to get him to stop drinking, diluting the alcohol, hiding the keys and our bags away, we lived with anxiety and anger, and most of all denial by covering up for him, delaying payments of bills, isolating ourselves and becoming totally fearless in our search for him in bars. I snapped at our children, I had no answers for them and life was just one complete struggle.

Once Trevor entered the AA programme and did his 90 meetings and more in 90 days I had very much given up, I had *let Go and Let God*, I think that is when the miracle happened, I could no longer do this on my own power. When I came to Al-Anon, my main aim was to help and assist my husband in his AA programme to get sober, but I soon realised I had to learn to change my own way of thinking. He had crashed the car again, lost his job and I was an emotional mess.

Little by little we started to see through the haze, he stayed away from slippery places even if we struggled financially for a bit. Whatever takes 7 years to destroy does not miraculously recover, no quick fixes or magic wands. I read as much AA literature as I could especially the Big Book, the family afterwards. A little Old lady Denise gave me many Al-Anon forums/books to read, I wish I could thank her someday for having the courage to point out the way things really are. Just as those bad years start to fade, I started to detach, love and find forgiveness also to myself for making ridiculous choices, for doing the best I could at the time, for sticking to my commitment before God and my marriage of in sickness and in health until death do us part.

In Al-Anon we learn to reclaim our own lives and start focussing on ourselves. We learn to lose that fear in our stomach, the suspicion and obsession with the alcoholic which is so destructive. As we both worked our programmes, I learnt to be less suspicious, less offended, realising my partner is still working with his own struggles and demons, I learnt to live one day at a time, detach from the disease and not the person, and started being kind and loving again, and started laughing again

Our journey has certainly not been an easy one, even after Trev has stopped drinking 13 years later, we are so grateful for our lives which have turned out way better than we ever could imagine. We love our lives working together, spending time with our family, travelling together, winning numerous Top achiever Real Estate awards and perhaps if we had never experienced this disease called alcoholism, we would not appreciate every aspect of our colourful lives.

To our many friends in the fellowship and for those that have passed and played an important part in our journey, we will meet again. I keep coming back to meetings because this is a lifetime commitment to my recovery in all aspects of my life. Today I am grateful even for things that surprise me if I practice the slogans, keep it simple, and remember that this too shall pass and with God all things are possible.

“When anyone anywhere, reaches out for help, let the hand of Al-Anon and Alateen always be there, and *let it begin with me.....*”

New Al-Anon groups are starting up all over! Please check the website for details. Remember help is a phone call away. We do care and would like to help you. Our office relies on contributions from members to keep this service running. If you would like to contribute 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**.

P.S. If you do not want to receive these letters send email to alanontvl@absamail.co.za with the word **unsubscribe** in the subject and we will remove your name from the distribution lists. If you know of new members who would like to receive our newsletter please let the office have the details