

AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS CAPE AREA ECHO

ISSUE NO. 11-2020

IMPORTANT

Due to Covid-19 and the national lockdown, many of our Al-Anon groups are meeting electronically instead of face-to-face.

*** LATEST NEWS: NEWCOMERS MEETING Wednesdays 5pm to 6pm via Zoom***

A BRAND-NEW GROUP - for newcomers, newer Al-Anon members or those struggling with active alcoholism. WhatsApp message: 082 895 6815

For information regarding online meetings please contact one of the numbers below or refer to the 'List of Meetings' at <http://www.alanon.org.za/meetings/>.

CAPE AREA: WhatsApp message: 072 258 0986 / Tel: +27 21 595 4517 / Email: alanonct@iafrica.com

The opinions expressed here are strictly those of the person who gave them. Take what you liked and leave the rest.

THE STORY OF HOPE

I am an adult child of an alcoholic. For most of my life I felt like I was carrying a huge boulder of responsibility around, much heavier than my years on this earth.

When I finally came into Al-Anon my life was totally unmanageable. By then I was living on auto pilot. Showing up but zoning out. I felt fake. I smiled but it never reached my heart. I laughed but it didn't come from my soul. I felt disjointed and disconnected from life, from myself.

I had many people around me but was totally alone. I became a shadow and wore many faces. I was shifting, changing like a chameleon changes its colours to blend in and stay out of the way. I knew anger that could burn a hole through the walls.

Along the way, I had picked up many virtual friends, these friends were my constant companions. Their names were Anger, Disappointment, Rejection, Injustice. I could spend hours and hours in their company, and I took them everywhere I went. They choked me, wrapped their arms around me and most days I went to bed just barely even breathing.

I grew up, married, and felt a continuation of the same madness. I picked up more and more of the same kind of virtual friends. I couldn't give them up, they had become so familiar. My life was unmanageable.

One day Hope walked past and saw me with my friends. She called

me to her and asked me to come spend some time with her. Just one hour each week was all she asked. I went, though I was scared, frightened and alone, I went.

Slowly, slowly she started to introduce me to her other friends, Kindness, Joy, Love, Serenity, Gratitude, Peace and Courage. I had seen all of them fleetingly over the years but never took the time to acknowledge them.

My other friends called me to join them and I went but I started to spend less and less time with them. They didn't like it and tried many times to pull me back... but Hope's face was always there in front of me. I started going to bed and sleeping restfully and waking up refreshed for the first time in my life.

Nowadays my smile reaches my eyes and I can laugh from my soul. Life is more manageable. I can see my new virtual friends in everything big and small. Love in the eyes of a child, Peace in the sound of birdsong, Kindness in a warm hug, Gratitude in being alive, Hope from the touch of the sun on my face, Serenity in leaning on a Power greater than myself.

You may not always have a comfortable life and you will not always be able to solve all of the world's problems at once but don't ever underestimate the importance you can have because history has shown us that courage can be contagious and hope can take on a life of its own. -Michelle Obama.

From a life of despair and unmanageability to a life of serenity... a daily choice which is mine to make every day. I am not as powerless as I once thought I was. I realize now that much of that

boulder was not really mine to shoulder.

By Anita P, Courage to Change, Table View

Choice is the most powerful tool we have. Everything boils down to choice. We exist in a field of infinite possibilities. Every choice we make shuts an infinite number of doors and opens an infinite number of doors. At any point we can change the direction of our lives by a simple choice. It is all in our hands, our hearts, and our minds.

CHOICES



Elfie has made many choices over the last few months, but the easiest, and the most difficult had to be made this week. Lockdown in the retirement village still holds firm, in fact more so, as Covid-19 has entered the building.

I will be going to my daughter's home for a few hours every day to look after my grandson while she is working, but this means, at all other times, I have to self-isolate in my house in the village. I choose to do this to protect the village and to protect my family.

One of the best things I learnt from Al-Anon, has been the ability to make choices. To not stay stuck in indecision or to resent the circumstances requiring me to choose. I also learnt that doing nothing is also a choice. Choices

Help and hope for families and friends of alcoholics

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have consequences, and once I have made a conscious decision, I accept what follows.

Living in these weird times has forced us to make so many decisions that are so far out of our comfort zone, out of our everyday “normal”, all at the same time as sifting through insufficient or conflicting evidence, or through all the disinformation on social media, or just plain gossip and opinion and rumour.

I have the Al-Anon tools to help me stop – think things through, pray, and to the best of my ability, make a decision.

“Al-Anon shows me a different approach: I can live one day at a time. I can base my choices on what I feel is right for me today, rather than on what I fear I might lose sometime in the future.”

From Courage to Change B-16ZA, Pg.30



By Glenda W, Constantia

“I attend to the spiritual meaning embedded in the minute-by-minute details of my life. As I keenly notice the changes I undergo when I stretch myself spiritually by using a slogan, Step, or Tradition, I stay in today.

Living one day at a time, focusing on my best efforts rather than on outcomes, gives me a healthy framework for living.”
Hope for Today B-27ZA, Pg.153

GASLIGHTING

I was listening to the radio, as I so often do during this Lock down period, and there was a discussion about the term ‘gaslighting’. It grabbed my attention! It was a description of my present frame of mind, and it was a very accurate reference to the days of active alcoholism. Then they mentioned the movie called “Gaslight”, and I

immediately watched this 1940’s movie on YouTube.

So, what does gaslighting mean? Google explains: “Gaslighting” is used to describe abusive behaviour, specifically when an abuser manipulates information in such a way as to make a victim question his or her sanity. Gaslighting intentionally makes someone doubt their memories or perception of reality (and this is what happens in this movie).

While watching the movie, I recognised myself as a gaslighting victim (but thank the Lord, not to the extremes as in the movie).

Whilst being in the throes of those dark days, the reactions, responses and remarks of the alcoholic, and later the addict, have led me to believe that my opinion was not valued, what I had to say would be ignored, or be rejected as nonsense. I saw my plans and goals as being not worthy of pursuing. I ran a simple decision by so many people, just to ensure I was doing the right thing.

I had very little confidence and would hesitate before saying something. I was doubting myself; I was questioning my own judgement and at times also questioning my memory, for example “Did I say this?”

So, the effects of this gaslighting plus an inferiority complex, resulted in me being hesitant in paying anybody compliments, as I thought it would not be appreciated, or it would be made of as nonsense. If anybody, which I regarded as too 'high' for me, in terms of appearance, education or personality would pay too much attention to me, I would rush away, for fear of exposing my stupidity or inadequacies. I would be really uncomfortable in such company. I would blush, be clumsy and say silly unnecessary things! I do also believe, because I had this very low opinion of myself, and showing my insecurities, it was visible to others.

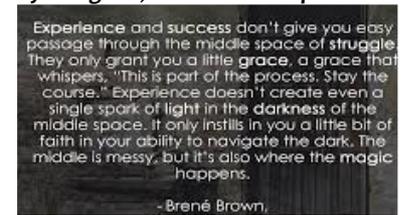
I have had many years of hard struggle. Ironically, life took me to

situations where I had to make particularly important, tough decisions. And, with this kind of baggage, I can honestly say that I 'overachieved'. And I admit, I depended heavily on the affirmation and approval of others. The continuous awareness of my Al-Anon tools was my saving grace... and I could have fared much better, had I been more focussed on this wisdom.

A short while ago, I perceived myself as being gaslighted. I got the impression that what I had to say was disregarded. Some of those feelings that were concomitant, to these perceptions, just surfaced. I found myself withdrawing into a shell of self-pity for almost a month. It was a time of suffering. My efficacy was so low, I did not even want to engage with my co-sponsors. Each time I heard the word 'Zoom', I would inwardly curse.

I prayed. My Higher Power reminded me of the rewards of doing good to others. I listened. Thank goodness for the AL-ANON SUNLIGHT that shone upon me each day and helped me back on the path of recovery and healing. And to enjoy this SUNLIGHT, something wonderful, but not new, has been revealed to me. I must use these God given Al-Anon tools with more vigour.

By Margie D, Maitland Group



Right Side Up

“To me, [Al-Anon’s] Step Three is a powerful commitment to change. Although I perceived myself to be a good decision maker, in truth, I let other people make decisions for me for many years of my life. I followed the rules and did what I thought good girls are supposed to do—listen to outside messages from others about how to make decisions. However, this did not produce the happiness I thought it would. Instead, most of the time, I felt anxious and afraid of what

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might happen next. In working Step Three, I became aware that I needed to make a decision and that no one else could make it for me... I had to decide to... change the direction in which I was looking for happiness."

Reprinted with permission of The Forum, Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc., Virginia Beach, VA, March 2019



THE UNIVERSAL REACH OF THE AL-ANON PROGRAMME

On 27th March 2020, our lockdown period started because of the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic. That filled me with concern because I love the outdoors but soon I realised that it was going to change my life on so many levels, amongst other things I would also not be able to attend Al-Anon meetings. Overnight I also became, according to Covid-19 specifications – senior and vulnerable.

Immediately, because I am in the Al-Anon program the Serenity Prayer came to mind. "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference." This prayer has helped me face a lot of situations in the past, this time the situations were on so many levels, but I knew it would help me again.

Very soon I learnt a new term – Zoom platform. Many Al-Anon meetings were going to be accessible through the Zoom platform. Being of the vulnerable age, it also means I am technologically disadvantaged. Technology doesn't come naturally, I can do EFT's, take photos with my cell phone, send and receive emails and oh yes, I can go anywhere because the friendly lady on the cell phone's GPS guides me.

Now I had two choices, I could for the unforeseen future – lose contact with Al-Anon which was inconceivable, or I could learn to Zoom.

The Three A's of Al-Anon was my saving grace. I was AWARE of the situation; I ACCEPTED the situation and I immediately took ACTION. I learnt how Zoom worked and it was surprisingly easy.

Now I still 'attend' my homegroup's weekly meetings, other groups join us and that is wonderful. I have 'attended' so many Al-Anon meetings through Zoom, not only in South Africa, but all over the English-speaking world. Including Al-Anon's 69th birthday celebration, I 'attended' a seminar in the USA with numerous speakers from all over America. A completely new world opened to me, but what is so absolutely amazing is that wherever the meeting is, from wherever the person who shares comes from, be it the USA, the UK, Qatar or our own country, it resonates with me.

We go to our first Al-Anon meeting with the hope, with the expectation that we will be given the secret of how to help the alcoholic recover. Soon we realise that it is ourselves who need help, we have to work on ourselves, care better for ourselves and be kind to ourselves, set boundaries and detach with love.

The other amazing thing is that we all work and recover because of the same Twelve Step programme, reading the same literature which has been around for so many years and has stood the test of time. In fact, the program has remained the same for so many years and it works if you keep on coming back.

We all treasure our Al-Anon friendship, we heal by talking to our Sponsors, we come to realise and understand that alcoholism is not a choice but an illness. We all forge a deeper connection with our Higher Power.

By Vida S, Belville Group



PLEASE NOTE

CAPE AREA OFFICE AND LITERATURE PURCHASES

Kindly note the Cape Area Office is open and fully operational.

Literature may be ordered telephonically or by email from the Office Administrator. You may collect your order from the office, or it can be mailed to you via a courier service (door-to-door or counter-to-counter via Pep Stores or the Post Office). Kindly note the courier cost and packaging will be at your own expense.

Payment can be done via EFT or Snapscan. Proof of payment must be sent to the office before your order is posted or collected. You are welcome to pay in cash when collecting your literature. To minimise the handling of cash the exact amount would be appreciated. A price list is available upon request.

Kindly note Covid-19 regulations apply when visiting the office. We appreciate your support and cooperation in adhering to government regulations during these trying times.

Take Care, Stay Safe, Stay Healthy.

By Gail S, Office Administrator

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### REGIONAL SERVICE SEMINAR 2020 (RSS)

Due to safety concerns for all our members and the unpredictability of how long the roll out of the phased opening up of the lockdown will take, especially with regard to those who are above 60 and who are vulnerable due to health issues, it has been decided that it would be best not to go

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through with our plans for RSS at Mizpah in Grabouw this year.

We would like to hold a virtual RSS over that weekend, at a much-reduced rate, via ZOOM. We will keep you posted on that one.

We will keep the space in Grabouw for next year instead.

We will be sending details shortly. Please keep an eye out on your WhatsApp groups and in the Echo for further details.

Yours in service

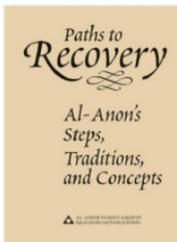
**By Natalie ~ Policy and Planning Co-ordinator (Cape)**

### AVAILABLE RESOURCES

#### \*CONFERENCE APPROVED LITERATURE (CAL) AVAILABLE

#### SPECIALS

#### Paths to Recovery—Al-Anon's Steps, Traditions, and Concepts – Locally Printed

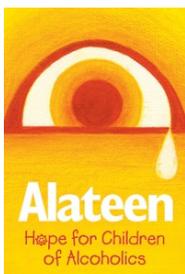


Paths to Recovery—Al-Anon's Steps, Traditions, and Concepts B-24ZA

**Special Price: R240**

Thorough study guide for our programme's three legacies: the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts of Service. In-depth chapters on each Step, Tradition, and Concept of Service provide insight, and includes thought-provoking questions for group or individual study. Indexed. 366 pages. (Soft cover, local print).

#### Alateen – Hope for Children of Alcoholics – Locally Printed



Alateen—Hope for Children of Alcoholics B-3ZA

**Special Price: R108**

Basic introductory book for teens affected by someone else's drinking.

Easy to understand explanation of alcoholism and the Alateen program.

Extract from the book:

*"To Sum Up*

*A person who has an uncontrollable desire to drink is an alcoholic and has the disease of alcoholism. The alcoholic uses liquor to escape from reality and responsibility.*

*Although he feels guilty, he cannot make himself stop drinking. This is true even when he sees it destroy all that makes life worthwhile and bring suffering to those dearest to him.*

*He is emotionally dependent on alcohol and truly believes he can't live without it. He is also physically addicted and has withdrawal symptoms when he tries to stop.*

*He tries to escape from his remorse by more and more drinking. This occurs until the pain he suffers as a result of the drinking is greater than the pain he's trying to avoid by drinking. Only then will he be ready to stop. The desire to stop drinking must come from within. No one can force an alcoholic to stop drinking.*

*Because the alcoholic is sick, he hurts himself and others. Due to our close association with him, we too develop problems. The best way to help the compulsive drinker and ourselves is to build our own strength, correct our own attitudes, be kind, and learn how to detach from the problem.*

*Alateen can show us the way."*

**Please contact the Literature Coordinator or the Office Administrator for CAL prices.**

#### \* 69TH ANNUAL STEPPING STONES LOIS FAMILY GROUPS PICNIC ONLINE SAT. JUNE 6

Time 7 to 11pm SA time

If you would like to participate in the Picnic, please register at the following website link:

<https://www.steppingstones.org/events.html>

#### \*AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS SA

All details for local electronic meetings can be viewed at <http://www.alanon.org.za/meetings/>

#### \*AL-ANON WITHOUT BORDERS – MEETINGS/WORKSHOPS/OTHER

##### Meetings and Workshops:

Listen to shares from members around the world on varied topics relating to recovery at the following link:

<http://msbrecording.com/al-anon-zoom-meetings/>

*Hope is the only thing stronger than fear.*  
**Robert Ludlum**

#### MAKE THE ECHO YOUR OWN

We at Al-Anon are looking at continuing to publish the Echo on a regular basis.

Please continue to share your experience, strength, and hope. We are looking forward to hearing from you. Send your articles marked "Echo" to [alanonct@iafrica.com](mailto:alanonct@iafrica.com) or [afgc2c@gmail.com](mailto:afgc2c@gmail.com) or WhatsApp to 082 342 2102.

#### GRATITUDE AND THE SEVENTH TRADITION ~ Every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

Please continue paying your group contributions. There are many Zoom meetings throughout the Cape Area as well as the KZN and G&D Areas which are open to anyone affected by the problem of someone else's drinking. The meeting details are available on the website <http://www.alanon.org.za/meetings/>.

Payments of group contributions may be done via EFT into the Cape Area account, using a reference indicating group contributions or via SnapScan.

##### Banking details:

Bank: ABSA

Account Name: Al-Anon Family Group Cape Area

Account No: 407 321 5579

Branch No: 632005

Type: Cheque

Ref: GC, Group Name, Member's Name (if necessary).

##### SnapScan:



Snap here to pay

SnapScan

