

AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS

CAPE AREA ECHO

ISSUE NO. 15-2020

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 ZOOM MEETINGS* - BRAND-NEW GROUPS - for newcomers, newer Al-Anon members or those struggling with active alcoholism.**

Cape Town: Wednesdays 5pm to 6pm

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/>.

Gauteng: Sundays 5pm

Whatsapp message: 082 316 3673/082 455 2977/082 626 0262

KZN: Details to follow

CAPE AREA OFFICE: 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.

ONS WILDSTE DROME OORSKREI

Goeie dag my vriende. Ek dink nou terug aan die dae wat als so negatief was in my lewe. Alles in my lewe was hopeloos. Die lewe sal nooit verander nie. Ek was nie 'n mens vir vriende nie. Ek was bitter.

Een ding het ek bly glo, "More is nog 'n dag en miskien sal dit beter gaan." Om met my te leef, het baie energie geveer. Ek het nooit geglimlag nie, en grappe was nie snaaks nie.

Vandag is ek 'n ander mens. Ek is dankbaar vir als, klein en groot. Ek vind dit genesend om oor my verlede te kan praat. Die pyn en hartseer wat daar was, het my sterker gemaak. Die lewe is 'n lied.

Ek sien uit na die dag van môre en ek voel vol lewe. Ek is positief en kan iemand inspireer. Wat 'n wonderlike program! Dankie aan Al-Anon vir die deure wat altyd oop is. Dankie vir die slagspreuke soos 'een dag op n slag'. Die genade is groot.

Dit laat my dink nou aan die eerste jaar toe ek in die program gekom het. Ek het die mees onromantiese man gehad. Kyk, ons het op skei gestaan. Na so paar maande van vergaderings het ek skoon vergeet dat ek op skei staan en het ek toe weer begin 'date'.

O la la laa! ek was weer soos n tiener. Ons het Maandae en Dinsdae AA en Al-Anon vergaderings bygewoon en Woensdae was ook 'vergadering' maar met 'n 'twist'. Dit was tyd vir opmaak.

Ek onthou dat ek daardie jaar my huwelikshedenking nooit sal vergeet nie. Vir die eerste keer in dertig jaar was daar nie drank betrokke nie, en vir die eerste keer het net ek en hy uitgegaan.

Ek het nie geweet dat hy my sou uitneem nie. Hy het net die oggend vir my gesê dat ek mooi moet aantrek en in die kar moet klim. Gevaar of ek iets by die winkel wil koop om te eet, of ek sal wag. Ek het verkies om te wag.

Hy het my asem weg geslaan toe hy my vir ontbyt neem in Jeffreys Bay, middagete in Plettenberg, en aandete in Knysna, met 'n middag stappie so al langs die see, kaalvoet op die strand.

Glo my, die program werk!

As iemand nou vir my kom sê dat daar nie hulp is vir jou nie, sê hulle my hopeloos te laat.

Ek is een van die wonderwerke van 'n Hoër Mag. Sy Wil, nie myne nie.

Neem daardie stap vandag nog.

Deur Soet Rissie, Kaap Omgewing

Hope your wildest hopes, dream your maddest dreams, imagine your most fantastic fantasies. Where your hopes and your dreams and your imagination leave off, the love of my Heavenly Father only begins.

— Brennan Manning —

COPING WITH LIFE'S REALITIES

Well lockdown suddenly came upon me; I sort of stumbled into it. We all knew the President's announcement was coming. That evening I was so tired that I missed the actual speech. I did not hear the details and the regulations.

Then came our last Al-Anon meeting. What? No meetings? But it is a mental health issue. No AA meetings even.

Cold panic. Anger. Rebellion.

On the eve of lockdown, I came home from a lovely nature walk. On our front steps stood a bottle of bubbly with a mask and a pink ribbon. Cold panic again. Who left

this here? It was meant as a kind gesture or a little joke, but to me it felt like a death sentence.

I hid the bottle behind a rock. I got up at the crack of dawn, dashed to the neighbours in the semi-darkness and left the bottle there wrapped up and disguised.

"Where's that bottle of bubbly?" (I thought I hid it so well.) I promptly admitted my shortcoming. "Thank you, I didn't want it here."

This little incident made it truly clear to me that my lockdown resolution should be to start my Al-Anon programme all over again. After years I was still nowhere near at peace.

I had recently bought my own copy of One Day at A Time (B-6ZA). I had always wanted one. I like the strong clear and direct messages. This was going to be my study material. I also have a little Just for Today card (M-10) which has been a rock to me in times of trouble. So tiny you can just peep at it quickly in the middle of a storm. It also had to come out every day.

The strict lockdown was actually great. A happy stay at home holiday. A chance to rest and catch up on household tasks. Each day was the same as the other. With no outside obligations, days do not have their usual character. It was so quiet. Little bird voices started to be louder. One starts to hear the different barks that dogs have for things.

"Just for today I will be happy... I will not be afraid to enjoy what is beautiful."

And so, it was.

After three weeks of blissful lockdown, the time came that work had to be done at home. Now the

Help and hope for families and friends of alcoholics

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'sacred' home space was no longer the hiding place. Work must be done online. WhatsApp started to 'bleebibliblibleep' all day. That scary silence before the storm started to hang in the air.

I realised I would have to do something to separate work from home life in a tangible way. Clandestine operations were beginning to sprout up everywhere. I did not want to go there...

"Just for today I will have a program" got a wider meaning. Each day had to be planned carefully. Get up at a specific time. Have a quiet time and a busy time. Work time and family time. Alone time and together time. All at home.

Another thing came to my mind - I don't have to keep the ringtone on, I can turn the phone to mute and decide when I answer outside contacts. Just tell people. I can decide, I don't have to be a victim.

Meetings had to be conducted online and on WhatsApp and tempers flared up over the tiniest of things. I became aware that I was becoming emotionally involved in my own opinions, also, I realised I was not practising Live and Let Live at all. I was not tolerant at all.

The last straw came when I was physically ill after a very unpleasant online discussion. Something had to change.

In desperation I randomly opened the One Day at A Time at 28th February. The reading was on detachment. "When I learn to disentangle myself from a difficulty it will be easier to think it through. I will remind myself to pause and analyse. This will keep me from impulsive decisions and give me time to devise constructive action."

This was the absolute breakthrough moment. There is so much to tell... I could not be a mental loafer. I had to learn an enormous amount in many areas of my life.

Now I can be connected to the wider Al-Anon family in a new way. That is a great lockdown gift. I needed a push to get there.

Al-Anon has helped me "... to say with confidence... I became able to cope with the realities of life." I am above all so grateful.

By Anna N, Cape Area



TO DO OR NOT TO DO?



How many of you made a To Do list in the first weeks of lockdown? Now, be honest, how many of you have done all

or some or none of the things on the list.

Elfie found that original list and literally rolled on the floor laughing. Not one photo has been sorted; not one old document, of a huge box full, has been shredded; the weeds in the garden have not been eliminated. Somehow the will to do these things just hasn't been there.

What I have found helpful is doing a list every day of the simple things that need doing. It helps me keep some kind of structure and tells me the date and day (for when I completely lose track.)

I had stopped doing this check in over the last few bad weeks but am back to some kind of peacefulness, back to the basics of our program, back to the basics of getting productively through the day with some joy and serenity.

I know now that I will cycle through all the different feelings many times before this is all over, but I know I can find the courage to get out of the dark times and to reclaim my serenity.

Elfie got so excited this week... we went on a massive road trip... to Newlands. It felt so good to just do

something different, and I was very relieved I hadn't forgotten how to drive!!!!



Road Trip!!

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.

By: Glenda W, Constantia Group



A GREATER POWER

Could I have gone through my journey without a Power greater than me? Throughout my life I always knew that there was a 'Power' that was always with me. I didn't know what it was, nor could I have explained it, but it was always there. A comforting 'presence', nameless at first, but always there. I didn't give this presence a name at first, that came later, but I knew that this invisible force was guiding and helping me.

Around twelve years old, as my understanding grew, I eventually gave a name to my Higher Power. Childhood was chaotic and downright scary at times, adolescence had its own challenges, but there were also good times. Little windows of peace and laughter and hope and I felt that all of it was happening for a specific reason.

As I got older my concept of my Higher Power started to evolve. At times it felt like my Higher Power was around but far removed from my everyday life, watching from a distance but never getting involved. I decided at which times I let this force into my life to help me and when I wanted to push away and rely on my own strong self-will.

We're all in this together! Even if we can't hold hands right now

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Al-Anon taught me that to move ahead, to attain the elusive Peace and Serenity that I so desperately sought, I needed to have an awfully close relationship with this Higher Power.

I have many questions for Him, some angry ones!! Whenever I need to remind myself that my Higher Power exists, I think of an ant. A tiny little creature going about its business in the big world. He is joined by an army of ants populating the entire planet, even in the remotest darkest places. This little 'being' works tirelessly doing whatever ants do, contributing in his little way to a greater eco system. He shows me that teamwork and togetherness can make a huge impact. Where did this little intelligent creature come from?

Or a bee flirting with the flowers, taking and giving in return. Helping to spread a little bit of cheer everywhere it goes through the process of pollination. A complex process that eventually produces an amazing, healing, nourishing and nutritious golden product that we call honey! Honey is used to cure many of humankind's illnesses. Where did this ingenious creature come from?

Finally, me? Knitted so carefully in my mother's womb, wonderfully made piece by piece. 37 billion chemical reactions happen in the human body daily. The body works like a finely tuned machine. How? Who was the mastermind and engineer behind this? I search my soul with these questions every time I feel life's pressure closing in on me. Why do I even question this Power? Instead I will take time every day to thank this Power, this force, for all things big and small.

Infinite gratitude floods my soul to this Power that's more than me. The gesture of acknowledgement and thanks is all I can offer and yet it feels so small, so insignificant. Living a good life knowing that this Power is always with me makes me feel comforted, able to enjoy the smallest kindnesses or biggest

achievements. I can breathe a sigh of relief knowing that I am here for a reason. There is a bigger picture and I need to rest in that and believe that my Higher Power is in charge and He controls all things big and small.

So, my answer to this question, is a resounding No!!! I could never have done life without the love, the grace and guidance of a Power greater than me.

By Anita P, Courage to Change

"We don't have to believe in a specific Higher Power, but we do need to understand that it isn't us."

MEETINGS ON THE ZOOM PLATFORM

In 2020 our lives changed, our everyday talk was filled with a new vocabulary, Corona Virus, worldwide pandemic, frontline workers, self-isolation, lockdown, face masks, the vulnerable over sixties and we now live in 'Phases'.

Of course, I knew these words but never had reason to use them in my everyday talk, but that changed. They have now become a part of our everyday vocabulary.

We soon learned about Zoom and we met each other on the Zoom platform. We were excited and grateful for the technology which helped us carry on with our Al-Anon meetings, not only our own meetings, we could now join other groups, we could even join groups in the UK, in the USA and we could attend the 69th birthday celebrations of Al-Anon at Stepping Stones, the beautiful home of Bill and Lois Wilson in Katonah, Bedford Hills, New York. What a joy and a privilege.

But what I always find in the rooms of Al-Anon is missing, the warmth and the strength I derive from my fellow Al-Anoners. Never has the sentence "the doors of Al-Anon are always open" had so much meaning.

Of course, the doors are still open but to be able to enter the

rooms I need a meeting ID then a password and then the host will invite me in. This is not the Al-Anon language that I am used to.

For now we all sit on the Zoom platform, some only half visible, some completely invisible only a black square with a name, we are muted and when we want to say something we unmute ourselves, sometimes we forget to unmute ourselves and the rest can only see the lips moving before it is corrected. But we remain ever grateful for the opportunity to attend Al-Anon meetings.

After a recent meeting I switched off the computer, I said thank you for not having to go out in the cold and drive to and from meetings – but my heart felt cold and I really did not feel energized in the same way as I always do after a meeting. I miss the laughter even the tears and above all the personal interaction.

I paged through my Al-Anon books and, like so many times before, stopped at the Serenity Prayer. I know that this is a time where my wisdom has to tell me that I cannot change the situation. I know that if I tried I would make my own life unmanageable like so often in the past. If I want serenity during these uncertain times, I must accept the things I cannot change.

By Vida S, Belville Group



SO, I'M A ZOOMER

So, I started out with great excitement with these online meetings. Me and my LTA router, which I wasn't sure if it was 5 Gigs of data or 10 Gigs, or what that meant.

First month – April, when my router showed 5 gig and I was only halfway through the month I got worried, would I make it or not, was this the end of my meetings half way through the month!

I tried contacting my service provider to find out what my contract entails – was I on 5 Gigs or

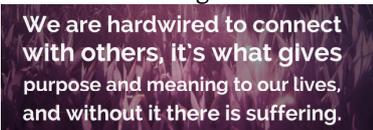
We're all in this together! Even if we can't hold hands right now

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10 Gigs, with lockdown at level 5, nobody seem to be working, so nervously I logged in to the next meeting, and the gig metre ticked on until the end of the meeting passing the 5 gig mark. My spirit was light again.

Now it was two days to month-end, and I was asked to share at a thanksgiving. I was anxious, would I make it through the meeting. I told the person who asked me to share that I might run out of data, and ask them not to have a long introduction and allow me to share first please, and should I disappear then they would know the data was finished. I prayed to my Higher Power "Please have mercy; I don't want to be embarrassed." I made it to the end of the meeting, and the end of data. I then realised that I had made it through the first month.

During the second month of lockdown, I felt confident, me and my 10 Gigs. By the third week of May, my 10 Gigs of data finished. I was so disappointed. I resorted back to my WhatsApp group chat to stay connected to my group. I then started asking questions about fibre and unlimited data, and I was nervous to commit to another contract, but the feeling of being cut off was worse, so I did my research and now I am connected unlimited. I am not going to miss out on another meeting.



I wonder if I am addicted because I have done a meeting nearly every evening and some daytime meetings at the office too. I am loving it. The best investment I have made in a while.

I am not being bombed out of meetings either. I get to 'travel' all over the world, even getting up at 1am to 'travel' to Canada for a meeting.

I find it does not matter where we are, we tell the same story, we have the same challenges.

Attendance is growing, we are listening to other speakers, and my knowledge is growing. I am journaling lots of pearls of wisdom. THANK YOU AL-ANON

By Janice, Bellville Group

UPCOMING EVENTS REGIONAL SERVICE SEMINAR 2020 (RSS)

RSS Zoom Rally
THEME: "Al-Anon in the time of COVID-19" (Relying on our Conference Approved Literature (CAL) for serenity if not our sanity)
DATE: Saturday, 18 July 2020
TIME: 10.30am - 2.30pm
FEE: R50 (includes a lucky draw ticket to win one of these CAL books)
 Contact office for more details
 021 595 4517
 email: alanonct@iafrica.com

LITERATURE PURCHASES

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. Costs for packaging and courier will be for your own expense.

Payment options available EFT, Snapscan or cash. A pricelist is available upon request.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

*AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS SA

Details on local electronic meetings are available at <http://www.alanon.org.za/meetings/>

*CONFERENCE APPROVED

LITERATURE (CAL) AVAILABLE



In All Our Affairs: Making Crises Work for You
(B-15)

Price R342

Facing difficult situations, members reveal how they applied specific Al-Anon principles. Includes overcoming problems with abuse,

death, infidelity, and more. Indexed, softcover. 255 pages.



Many Voices, One Journey
(B-31)

Price R450

Al-Anon's story of growth and recovery as experienced by individual members and the fellowship over Al-Anon's first 60 years. Indexed, softcover. 426 pages.

SHARE YOUR STORY

We continue to publish the Echo on a regular basis. Please continue to share your experience, strength, and hope. Send your articles marked Echo to alanonct@iafrica.com or afgc2c@gmail.com or WhatsApp to 082 342 2102.

FEEDBACK

"Such a gift, thank you. Strange how it takes so long before one understands some things. The conflict resolution article again immensely helpful."

GRATITUDE AND THE SEVENTH TRADITION ~

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

Please continue paying your group contributions electronically. Payments of may be done via deposit, EFT or 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

We're all in this together! Even if we can't hold hands right now