

# AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS

## CAPE AREA ECHO

ISSUE NO. 22–2020–AUGUST 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**

**Gauteng: Sundays 5pm**

WhatsApp message: 082 895 6815

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

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 OFFICE:** WhatsApp message: 072 258 0986 / Tel: +27 21 595 4517 / Email: [alanonct@iafrica.com](mailto:alanonct@iafrica.com)

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



### LEST WE FORGET!

A share from a special long timer that was written in 2013. Her last share at the "At Home" of the Hanover Park Group, and again shared by her daughter Yolanda at the 41-year thanksgiving last month of her spouse Uncle George of the Klipfontein Group.

Despite the age difference, she played a big role in mine and my husband's recovery, together with her spouse. We have made many memories together, traveling, inside and outside of AA and Al-Anon which are treasured moments.

Today she suffers from a disease which impairs her mental functions, caused by damage and deterioration of the brain, causing failure of the memory, and personality changes – dementia.

Thanks for keeping the doors of Al-Anon open for me and many others Aunty Edna.

I visit her and know there is a glimmer of acknowledgment from this quiet, serene individual to an opera singer of note. So that's what our visits entail, a walk down memory lane and with a bit of laughter.

"Lest we forget"

**By Debbie, Lansdowne.**

### FROM DESPAIR INTO THE LIGHT WITH AL-ANON AND AA

Good evening everybody. I am Edna and I am a member of the Klipfontein Al-Anon Group. I was

introduced to Al-Anon a few years before becoming a member of the Klipfontein Al-Anon Group in 1979. I was taken to a few meetings by a fantastic couple who are no longer with us. Unfortunately, Al-Anon was not for me because every time I was taken to a meeting my husband was at his drunkest when I got back.

Life was not easy being married to someone that thought alcohol was more important than his family. He became unemployable and a disgrace to everyone closely related to him. I went to many institutions to find help for him, but nothing seemed to help and then I decided that I was going to ignore him and tried the "stay quiet" attitude, not that it made any difference to his drinking.

My health was deteriorating, and my children were not performing well at their schoolwork. Eventually I went to see the social worker at Coloured Affairs and between the two of us we got him into a rehab in Kraaifontein called Denovo. He was an inmate for seven months and when he was discharged, I thought he would be cured, but it looked as if he became worse after that. He stayed in trouble and then he got sick and swelled up twice his size and landed in hospital for six weeks. He was apparently warned that if he drank again, he would die, but that did not stop him because he got home drunk after being discharged. That was when I discovered that I was powerless over his drinking and I let go and let God.

One day he came home quite sober and told me that he had booked himself in at Avalon

Treatment Centre but I was very sceptical, but he was admitted and he was kept for three weeks. During that time, we were introduced to AA and Al-Anon. It was amazing the dramatic change in my husband after meeting and mixing with these people in these beloved fellowships. I tried to live my life to the teachings of Al-Anon and slowly but surely my house became a home.



We have been working our programs for close to 34 years and we will be married for 42 years in a couple of days' time. I can't thank Al-Anon enough for changing my life and giving me friends like you. I want to thank my husband for all that he does for me. I must mention it, he spoils me rotten and I in turn spoil my grandchildren rotten. They are the love of my life.

Once again thank you Hanover Park for asking me to share at your "At Home" and may you keep on with the sterling work that you are doing. God bless.

**By Edna, Klipfontein, 2013**



**TRADITION 8 ~ Al-Anon Twelfth Step work should remain forever non-professional, but our service centres may employ special workers.**

Help and hope for families and friends of alcoholics

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What is Twelfth Step work? Twelfth Step work is the special task of carrying Al-Anon message to others. It takes many forms: including sharing at a meeting, welcoming newcomers, sponsoring another member, and volunteering time on a telephone answering service. Special workers, on the other hand that our offices may employ or consult, are people like IT specialists and bookkeepers.

Paths to Recovery says: We come to Al-anon in different circumstances, we are freely given the gifts of experience, strength and hope that have been acquired by those who went before us. And all that is asked of us is to pass them on. Recently, when we had a combined memorial for some of our members who had died during lockdown, the person hosting the memorial said, ‘we were coming together to honour those who came before us’. I found this very touching because these were part of keeping this fellowship alive here in the Western Cape, so that I too could have its benefits.

Crux of this step is, as Paths to Recovery says, in Al-anon we find something available nowhere else – a community of people who share many of the same life experiences we have had and who understand as perhaps no one else can. This cannot be bought; it can only be shared. How Al-Anon Works says: We who know the loneliness and frustration of living with alcoholism, can provide an extraordinary form of help and support. We help each other by sharing what we have felt and what we have learned rather than by giving advice. By sharing what we have learned with those who know little about our program but a great deal about the desperation of an alcoholic environment, we strengthen our own recovery while helping others.

So, our membership is non-professional and is a fellowship of mutual support. Talking of **mutual support**, let us remind ourselves that this is how the original

fellowship, AA started ... one alcoholic helping another through mutual support ... they were not experts. Bill became sober when his old friend visited him and told him of his own recovery through a religious idea and a practical program of action. Bill had been sober for a while but got wobbly at some stage because a business venture collapsed. He suddenly realised that to save himself he must carry his message to another alcoholic... so, he found another alcoholic and that other alcoholic turned out to be Dr Bob. This was 1935 by the way. Eventually Bill and Bob formulated what they were doing to keep each other sober and the twelve steps were born. When asked how Bill had helped him, Dr Bob answered “He was the first living human being with whom I had ever talked, who knew what he was talking about regarding alcoholism from actual experience. In other words, he talked my language.” I always thought of the 12-step groups as the original self-help group until my sponsor told me “**but it’s not self-help... we have a Power greater than ourselves**”.

We recover by using the 12 steps and sharing our experiences with each other. We don’t give professional guidance to each other... it would be so easy to hide our VULNERABILITY behind our EXPERTISE! So, there are no experts here which means we are all EQUAL. This is quite radical, don’t you think? There was a time in my life when I would have said **NO EXPERTS?! Oh no, that’s the blind leading the blind!** Coming from an uneducated background, I LOVE experts. My first therapist was a psychiatrist and I always addressed him as Dr Wynberg even though I went to him for seven years. One day he asked me “Everyone calls me David... you are the only patient who calls me doctor... why?” And I answered, “**Because now I have a father figure with a title, I’m definitely going to use it!**” Now I have come to love this principle of equality. So, there is no

power differential between us. **Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern it says in Tradition 2.**

This is so different to our childhoods where power might have been exploited. You know in the ancient art of alchemy, the transformation of lead into gold happened in an open container called a crucible. I often think that this principle of equality in this fellowship is the SACRED crucible that allows us to heal.

**EQUALITY...** it is probably no coincidence that this is a principle of Al-anon. It is something I have lots of difficulty with. I either feel less than... and when I do, I feel like the daughter of uneducated immigrants (I’m 60 years old and **posh accents still intimidate me**). I have a history of putting people on a pedestal and as a therapist explained to me once, when I do this, I dig a square of earth out of the ground and put the exalted person on it... and then I step into the hole! And believe me, these relationships never end well. OR I feel superior... above others and looking down on them. At work, behind the dispensary counter I can be quite undermining.

**EQUALITY** also means we can learn from anybody here. The authority here is our Higher Power and we never know whose mouth our Higher Power is going to use to utter the words that we need to hear. This reminds me of when I first went to another fellowship. I was new and was looking around at everything and I saw a poster that said something like “**Be kind to the newcomer, he might be your sponsor one day**”. **How’s THAT for bringing home the principle of Equality??**

In the spirit of this equality, we all have a voice here at Al-anon and each voice is important. So, there is a special procedure to make sure all voices are heard when a decision needs to be made in one of our groups. It’s called taking a group conscience.

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

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Although we help each other as equals there is nothing stopping us from seeking professional help when we need it. Just as our offices can consult bookkeepers and IT specialists, we are free to consult therapists or counsellors or psychiatrists. However, if a psychiatrist came to this meeting, she would be considered an equal... **a friend or relative of an Alcoholic** and not a psychiatric expert.

What I did next in my preparation for this share is I started to look for words that echoed this principle of equality and mutual support in places other than Tradition 8.

One of the things we take for granted but which fosters equality is that we rotate the role of chairperson.

**Tradition 2** echoes this. It says Our leaders are but trusted servants – they do not govern.

Pre-lockdown we used a much more comprehensive meeting format compared to what we use during Zoom meetings. I looked through this longer format for anything that re-enforced equality and lack-of-expertness and this is what I found: **“Anonymity assures equality between newcomers and long timers alike and safeguards against self-appointed spokespersons.”**

In the preamble to the Twelve Steps I found: **“Al-Anon Family Groups are a fellowship of relatives and friends of alcoholics who share their experience, strength and hope in order to solve their common problems.”**

**We keep Al-Anon’s gifts by sharing them with others. This sharing makes Al-Anon the vital, forward-reaching fellowship it is.”**

In the ‘Long Statement on Sharing’ it says: **“We try not to lecture or give advice...”**

It also says we do not play psychotherapist.

We speak about our own experience, strength and hope using the word I.

One of my favourites: **“We accept without comment what others say because it is true for them. After the share, we share consecutively in a round-robin style, allowing EVERYONE an opportunity to share or pass.”**

In the ‘Suggested Al-Anon Closing’: This is another favourite of mine: **“The opinions expressed here were strictly those of the person who gave them. Take what you liked and leave the rest.”**

**Talk to each other, reason things out with someone else...”**

**Question:**

As I said I have come to love the principle of equality of this fellowship – **WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT THIS FELLOWSHIP AND THE MEETINGS?**

By *Sabrina, Constantia*

**THE BEST WAY TO FIND YOURSELF  
IS TO LOSE YOURSELF  
IN THE SERVICE OF OTHERS.  
GANDHI**

**SERVICE IS PART OF RECOVERY**

We are fast approaching the time where we elect members to service positions. And while some of the pressure of finding willing members to serve has been alleviated by the fact that most of our position are filled and are in the first year of a three year service period, we still have a number of alternate position vacancies that need to be filled. These are: Alternate Public Outreach; Alternate Fundraising; Alternate Policy & Planning; Alternate Delegate; Alternate Finance

The beauty of an alternate position is that you can learn and prepare for a position by observing and assisting the full-service position holder with their work. More importantly you get to know other members in the process, from other groups and areas. You also observe that service is never a one-person job, but a team effort. You are not expected to do anything

alone! Which is what I had become so used to in my life. And last but not least you find out with some relief and astonishment that mistakes are made, processes are NOT executed perfectly and horror of horrors, often members do NOT agree, without wanting to scream and shout or wanting kill each other.

Being involved in service means a certain intensification of the level of your active participation in the programme and organisation, allowing you to start experiencing how a loving and healthy family should operate, one I had been sadly lacking most of my life. That family gives freely and generously of their love, acceptance, wisdom, assistance (sometimes too much...) and support. Like a warm and protective soft, thick blanket. These are the subtle healing influences of service.

More directly and with less comfort is of course the undeniable fact that service in Al-Anon brings you face to face with your personal inventory of character defects AND strengths, allowing you to address and work on the former and allowing you to revel and blossom in the latter. My recently purchased piece of CAL, “How Al-Anon Works” B-32 has two consecutive chapters that speak about this, one in particular (Chapter 8) is titled: “The Healing power of Service.” The following paragraph pretty much sums what I am trying to say. In fact, it seems to be written about me personally (and haven’t we come across that idea before when reading CAL literature...). It says *“That’s when my lessons in service began in earnest. Sponsoring an Alateen group turned out to be (this phrase to be read through clenched teeth) a glorious opportunity to really get to know my character defects. One by one these defects – my need to control others, my arrogant assumption that I know what is best for everybody else, and so on – were paraded in front of me. It wasn’t easy, it wasn’t comfortable, and I couldn’t come up with an*

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explanation of why it seemed to help, but as I continued to show up for Alateen meetings, I continued to get better.” (Pg.196).

If you are a Group Rep or District Rep, I encourage you to take the next step and stand for one of the above positions. You are welcome to contact me or speak to your group and get yourself nominated. Once that happens, you can nominate someone else in your group to take over the reins of being Group Rep or District Rep and give someone else a chance to grow. You know what they say: if you are not moving forward you are not standing still, you are moving backwards. Doing service in a new position is a way of moving forward in recovery.

**By Natalie B, P&P Coord, Alateen Coordinator.**

**VIRTUAL FUNDRAISING EVENT USING ZOOM**  
**Women’s Day Celebration – Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> August 2020**  
**Theme: Evolving as a Woman, in and through Al-Anon**

**FEEDBACK RECEIVED**

I just wanted to thank the strong leadership of women in South Africa for such a beautiful event. I am overwhelmed with joy by the warm welcome and strength of recovery in South Africa.

I appreciate each and every one of you who are of service to the Worldwide Fellowship of Al-Anon and Alateen. You have undoubtedly enriched my life in the United States as well as South Africa.

It is my prayer that one day we meet one another face to face. My heart will never be the same since I’ve met so many of you extraordinary women. God Bless you all!

With Gratitude, Love, and Service.

**By Catherine, Dallas, USA**

**AVAILABLE RESOURCES**

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

Literature may be ordered telephonically or by email from the

Office. Payment options are EFT, Snapscan or cash, a pricelist is available upon request.

**LIMITED TIME OFFER**  
**Hurry Up !!**

**Literature specials for August and September**

~Paths to Recovery B-24ZA R240  
 ~How Al-Anon Works B-32ZA R195

**Literature featured in this Issue:**



When I Got Busy, I Got Better  
 P-78  
 Price R112

The secret to recovery is service. Members share how Twelfth Step work builds self-esteem, confidence, and trust while reducing fear and isolation. 64 pages.

**\*SHARE YOUR STORY**

Please continue to share your experience, strength, and hope. Send your articles marked Echo to [alanonct@iafrica.com](mailto:alanonct@iafrica.com) or WhatsApp to 082 342 2102.

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

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

**\*AL-ANON WORLD SERVICE OFFICE (WSO)**

<https://al-anon.org>  
<https://al-anon.org/for-members/>

**\*UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Area Service Committee meeting**

26 Sep 2020. Details to follow.

**Virtual Saldanha Spring Rally Open Al-Anon Meeting via Zoom**

**Theme: Willingness to grow**

19 Sep 2020 2pm to 3:30pm  
 Join the Zoom Meeting at the following link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8396121124?pwd=UllYzYwSohwajErRE8xWDczbk5XZz09>  
 Meeting ID: 839 6121 1124  
 Passcode: 736503

**A-....-Without Borders**

5 Sept 2020 from 6pm SA time  
 Mtg ID 787378014  
 PSW 912936  
 Topics: Literature the R in RPM – Read, Pray, Meditate

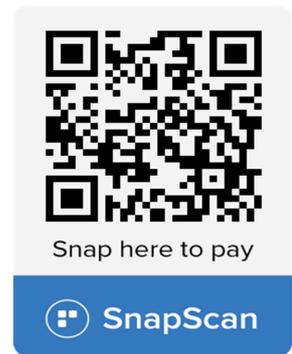
**GRATITUDE AND THE SEVENTH TRADITION ~ Every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.**

Please continue paying your group contributions electronically. Payments 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:**



**Our Al-Anon Declaration**  
 Let It Begin With Me  
 When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help let the hand of Al-Anon and Alateen always be there, and—Let it Begin With Me.

*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.*