



Al-Anon Family Groups

Help and hope for families and friends of alcoholics

AUGUST 2020

Dear Loners,

Unbelievably we are into five months of lockdown. With the pandemic peaking here in Kwa-Zulu, feelings of fatigue, vulnerability, despair and anxiety are escalating. Today as I was tending to the plants in my garden, I was thrilled to see early signs of small green shoots in some of the trees left bare during winter. Just as our Al-Anon suggested welcome reminds me that no situation is hopeless, these green shoots reminded me of new beginnings. With these feelings of renewed hope and faith, I am assured this pandemic too shall pass.

Every end is a new beginning... It is with mixed emotions I pen this my final Loners letter. I can't believe it's already been 3 years and my terms as WoW editor and Loners coordinator has come to an end. I hope you enjoyed reading the Loners letters as much I enjoyed compiling it. I believe rotation in service is very important as it strengthens our members in their personal growth, healing and recovery. Looking back, it's hard to believe how these service positions has transformed my life. My gratitude goes out to the God of my understanding for the serenity, sanity and smiles, my family and friends for their unwavering love and support, the keen members who so graciously submitted articles and to each one of you dedicated readers.

After I was enthusiastically given the go head to start compiling the Loners letters and the newsletters, the initial euphoria died down and the reality of the daunting task ahead set in. But the profound teachings of Al-Anon provided me with the support and comfort I needed. The Serenity Prayer was and is my go to tool. When faced with challenges, instead of holding my breath & counting to 10, I recite The Serenity Prayer. This simple yet so powerful prayer provides me with my constant reminders: I accept that I cannot change people and situations, I have the strength & courage to change my surroundings & thoughts, I have the wisdom to know when to take action and when I need to give it to God. All I need to do is be humble enough to ask my Higher Power for help.

It's so awesome that I get to compile my last edition during Women's Month. "U strike a woman, U Strike a rock." This famous quote rings true for majority of people I've come across in the rooms of Al-Anon. You'll possess the rare qualities of human beings who've gone through and survived some kind of hell. I came to believe in a better life through the powerful gift of you - hearing you share your experience, strength and hope, seeing your humility, spirituality and deep respect for life and watching the gift of recovery at work in your lives. Today by practicing the Al-Anon principles in all my affairs and being surrounded by God's grace, I am able to get strength from challenges. I am able to stand tall and face life fearlessly with enthusiasm and a smile. I am able to grow stronger daily with faith and hope.

We all look up to strong, independent women. But how do we become one ourselves? I do it by, treating myself with respect, by believing in myself, having a positive attitude, maintaining self-esteem, self-love and self-care. Most importantly I become strong by supporting other women, honouring and showing my love to all the wonderful women in my life & letting them know how special I think they are.

Happy Women's Month my dearest Al-Anon sisters. Thank you for your friendship, support & courage. I admire all of you and yes, as the Suggested Closing states, I have come to love you in a very special way. I'm so blessed to be sharing my life's journey with you. I wish each one of you lots of love, light & laughter. I hope that you enjoy your special month, do something good for yourself & realize that you are beautiful, you are strong, you are amazing, you are courageous & you are enough...

Lift each other up, cheer each other on and don't try to outshine one another. The sky would be awfully dark with just one star

Warm regards,
Angel

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TRADITION FIVE submitted by Shanta S

Tradition 5 sums up the entire purpose of Al-Anon and how this is accomplished. Al-Anon primary aim is to help families of alcoholics. How do we help these families is very interesting. Since this is a fellowship of equals, with MY only Authority is MY HIGHER POWER. I too like each member who wants to recover, can do so by practicing the 12 Steps of Al-Anon myself. Learn how to give constructive help to others and learn how to have compassion for the alcoholic. Showing up at attending meetings, sharing, using the tools I have developed, I can then share my recovery and help and encourage others. What a powerful gift this program gives to me. Helping others while I help myself, how extraordinary.

Reaching out to others is the primary purpose of the group and of Al-Anon as a whole... ..my own primary purpose is my own recovery. In the first years of recovery, I had a high focus on other people's needs. Because my own life was in chaos, I was trying to survive in everything I did. So I needed time to turn that around.

Someone once said it's a selfish program. I disagreed with that. I decided that (for me), I did not want to be self-centered, but centered on self. My self is a loving caring self. It is a safe self. But when I began in Al-Anon my life was clouded by other things. The phrase I use often is borrowed from Tradition 11. My personal goal in the program was to 'promote by attraction'. For people to see my growth and progress- in the way I worked the program.

Tradition Five tells me that my recovery is contingent upon helping families and friends of alcoholics. I don't get to keep it unless I can give it away. Showing up at meetings, welcoming newcomers, being willing to sponsor newcomers, sharing my wisdom and participation is key for me.

Tradition Five suggests that concern, care and love, through encouragement and understanding, be given to the families of alcoholics. I felt ready to do just that, after few months in the program. However, the Tradition is written in an order that leaves no doubt as to the way help may be given. I had to apply the principles of the program to myself and to my loved ones, before helping others.

To practice these principles of encouragement and understanding with myself, I had to gain some love of self, learn to respect who I was, treat myself with integrity and dignity, and the list went on. I also had to stop some destructive behaviors such as manipulation, control, judgement, criticism of myself and of others, among other things. This was a long and demanding process. That was worth doing. I am still working diligently at it today.

Encouraging and understanding my alcoholic relatives was not as easy, as I thought it would be. The progress was arduous at times and it was very gradual. I had many attitude and behavior checks to do. Although, things were not easy to grasp, I discovered what the disease was for them and to them. I also had to work at being a better person for them and to them. Encouragement and understanding came slowly, by trials and errors, but they did.

Today, I can welcome and give comfort to the families of alcoholics, when needed. I can understand their pains and struggles, help them to feel less worried and upset and show them the way to a better way of life, having been through it myself. Until, I walk the walk myself, I could not transmit our message of hope. Today I can and I do, just like it was done for me. Al-Anon is a miracle! Thank you to everyone who gave their time and effort to ensure Al-Anon was there when I needed it.

Kindly inform me should you have an email address, and future copies of the Loners letters will be emailed to you.

The opinions expressed in this letter were strictly those of the person who gave them. Take what you like and leave the rest.

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