

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

June 2022

Dear Loners

When I walked into my first Al-Anon meeting I was a washed-out wreck exhausted from trying to help my loved one and everyone and everything else on my long list of responsibilities. In Al-Anon, I learnt that one very important person had been left off that list of responsibilities – me. I had prioritised everyone else above myself and it was quite a shock to realise how tuned out I was to my own feelings and needs.

In the beginning at Al-Anon, I was a taker absorbing everything I could while trying to find answers for myself and seeking a route out of the unhappy, wretched place I found myself in. I felt uncomfortable talking to people before and after the Al-Anon meetings, finding it easier to help put out the chairs and tidying up after meetings.

Over time though, the Al-Anon message I was taking in started to work its magic. As my confidence grew, I felt more capable of giving to the group and started to chair meetings, to share and to organise shares. It was nerve wracking at first but gradually I got used to it. All the while my knowledge of the Al-Anon programme slowly grew and I loved the feeling of healing that was taking place inside me. (There were often delays and detours, and periods of parking off, but on the whole I was making progress with my recovery.)

I wasn't that interested in Al-Anon business discussions, especially if they went on for too long, and the Traditions and Concepts were way over my head. My immediate needs were being met by Al-Anon members' shares at meetings and the Conference Approved Literature. Gradually though I began to understand that the business discussions were important for keeping Al-Anon going and that the Traditions helped to keep Al-Anon a healthy organisation. I knew I needed Al-Anon in my life so keeping my Al-Anon group going, was worth some of my attention, money and time.

Four years down the line, I am often surprised at how my journey of recovery keeps evolving and at how much I still have to learn about myself and the Al-Anon programme. Member shares using the *Reaching for Personal Freedom* (P-92) workbook have recently helped to show me how the principles underpinning the Traditions and Concepts can be applied at a deeper level in my life.

Just recently, I was reading about Tradition Seven and discovered how much more there was to this Tradition than I realised.

“Tradition Seven: Every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.”

This Tradition encourages the development of healthy Al-Anon groups that are supported financially and service-wise by their own members. That financial contributions may only come from Al-Anon members ensures that members' voices are always taken into account and that the interests of Al-Anon cannot be

side-tracked by outside interests. These self-sustaining Al-Anon groups are in turn the building blocks of a self-sustaining worldwide Al-Anon organisation.

What I didn't realise though was that Tradition Seven can also be applied to our troubled loved ones. They need to be self-supporting too and they also need to decline outside contributions. They need to stand on their own two feet and experience the self-growth and enhanced self-esteem that come with being self-supporting. This is a reminder to me too, that wanting to help my loved one is not always helpful. It might make me feel better about myself to provide financial help, but is it truly helpful to my loved one who then misses out on an opportunity to learn consequences or to learn a new skill. I need to pause and think carefully when these situations arise.

And last but not least, Tradition Seven can also be applied to me. I too need to be self-supporting. I need to put myself front and centre in my life. I need to learn to give some of that love and energy to myself. I also need to be financially self-supporting and financially responsible especially as I get older. In turn, I need to give back to my home group so that it can be self-supporting and also so that the group can continue to provide help to me and to newcomers to our group.

Working my way through the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts is helping me to identify and unravel my complicated short comings which all boil down to fear and lack of trust. Practicing Tradition Seven is going to provide me with new opportunities to deepen my spiritual journey. I now understand that in order to be self-supporting emotionally and financially, I need to accept that I feel fearful, I need to place my trust in a Higher Power and I need to continue to take leaps of faith into self-supporting territory.

If you would like to send a share for possible publication in the Loners' Letter, please forward your contribution to alanontvl@absamail.co.za with the subject "Loners' Letter Submission".

Best wishes

Clare

Tradition Seven: Every group ought to be self-supporting, declining outside contributions. If you would like to contribute towards our office expenses, payment options are provided below. Thank you to everyone who contributes to the running of Al-Anon.

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