

AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS CAPE AREA ECHO

ISSUE NO. 02 OF 2022 (February)

IMPORTANT

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

*****LATEST NEWS: NEWCOMERS ZOOM MEETINGS*****

NEW GROUPS – for newcomers, newer Al-Anon members or those struggling with active alcoholism

(Welcome to Newcomers - <https://www.alanon.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Introduction-to-Newcomers-Meetings-Website.pdf>)

Cape Town: Wednesdays 5pm

WhatsApp message: 082 895 6815

Gauteng: Sundays 5pm

WhatsApp message: 082 316 3673/082 626 0262

KwaZulu Natal: Thursdays 7pm

WhatsApp message: 083 411 6683

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 066 158 0234 / 082 212 1878 / 072 258 0986 / Telephone 021 595 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.

"I am right where I am supposed to be, here on
Step One, here in this room,
and showing all of you the love I feel in my
heart for you as best I can today."
sharing by Karen S., California, January 2013
the Forum p17

KEEPING SECRETS HIDING BOTTLES

As the child of an alcoholic, I struggle with trying to unlearn and distance myself from unhealthy, obsessive behaviour patterns that I had ingrained into me from a young age.

My teenage years were full of hiding bottles, keeping secrets, and marking half-empty bottles of vodka from the cupboard under the sink to track my dad's alcohol consumption.

I didn't ever need to do any of these things, as I could tell he was drunk from his mannerisms, body language and the snarling expression, as well as his dark, glazed eyes. After years of clashing and butting heads with my dad, I moved out, hundreds of miles away to start university. While I was living away his relationship with alcohol deteriorated even further.

Every time I came home to visit, my mum would have hidden a new bottle in a desperate attempt to curb his drinking weeks before. I would find the bottles hidden in my wardrobe and witness his attempts to sneak bottles of spirits back into the house, under the garden fence, in a coat pocket, or sometimes, he wouldn't try to hide it at all.

My dad is an aggressive, angry man when he is drunk. A man whom I struggle to even like, let alone love. When his drinking progressively worsened and my mum came out of her denial, she recommended I go to Al-Anon.

Walking into that first meeting, bawling my eyes out and unsure what I

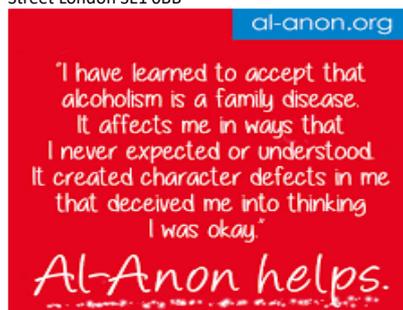
was even doing there, I found I was welcomed by the open arms of the Fellowship.

Whilst I don't quite remember what was spoken about or said, there was something powerful enough to draw me back every week since then. I quickly learnt that Al-Anon was not about my dad, but it was about me, and my progress through the programme.

Whenever I feel those unhealthy, obsessive behaviours creeping back, I just remind myself of Step One and that I am powerless over alcohol, and those behaviours will not help my dad or conquer his disease. I know today I didn't cause it; I cannot control it and I cannot cure it.

By Anon., Al-Anon Today Issue No. 023 September 2019

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IN AL ANON, I HAVE LEARNED. . .

Five years on this road. So many things observed, experienced, learnt, applied, or failed to apply and on it goes. There's no end, just a bend, a bend you can't see around. Scary? Sometimes. But I have learnt that only when I get around the bend, will I discover what's there and then can I deal with it. I can't assume, get anxious, jump to conclusions, even prepare myself... because that's just it. No matter what I say, think or do, it won't change what is around the bend.

And around the bend, aargh, may be family... What is it about this 'f'

word – the people that you couldn't choose. For years, I lost sleep and put my head and heart through the wringer, holding so many things against family members, thinking I was the victim. Every situation was one sided and oh how hurtful and upsetting the things they said and did. But now in my process of inventory and reflection, it made me realise how many times I have had both my feet in my mouth or the annoying, upsetting things that I have also done. That I was not the victim nor did the world owe me something. Boy, does that searchlight shine brightly. So, I finally let it go and applied:

- ◆ DON'T feel guilty about not inviting them to everything.
- ◆ DON'T make excuses for why you would not say yes to their invites.
- ◆ DON'T be hasty in your responses.
- ◆ DON'T answer when you are feeling emotional.
- ◆ DO lay down your boundaries humbly and respect theirs. All this can still be done with a smile and in kindness.

Every day possesses a situation, challenge or blessing that test what I've learnt. I have had some days when I failed to apply and feel wretched. But a WhatsApp message on the group or Monday reading doesn't leave the wretchedness unattended. So, I stop being so hard on myself, forgive myself and/or others, make amends.

I've learnt to ask myself certain questions: Is that one weed the focus or the twenty beautiful roses? Will Christmas get ruined if dad toppled the tree in his drunken state? Should no acknowledgement from others result in a long sulk, self-pity and sinking self-esteem? When I am hurt, do I have to resort to hurting others?

The huge lesson – the real work isn't trying to change people, it's speaking my truth and sharing what I

feel, my needs, the place I am in. There must be a purpose to taking my stand (respectfully) and a result to self-investment. Is it to make them see that they need to be different or is it to establish how I have grown and who I have become, in spite of their reactions or responses?

By Amanda, *Courage to Change*



JOURNEYING INTO RECOVERY

Good day all my fellow Al-Anoners.

Please forgive me, as this is my first share for the Echo, which has only taken five years to achieve 🙏.

What a journey, what a ride to self-discovery and healing in all aspects of my life.

Gone is the (well not gone, but much improved) unconfident, stressed and totally out of control me. The strength, peace, and spirituality I have received in this program has literally saved my life.

I still struggle with certain things, but my head is definitely screwed on the right way and that is looking to the future and forgiving the past. Don't get me wrong, I still have a way to go, but with the love of the fellowship, I finally see a clear path for myself and hanging on to what was is no longer in my future (praise to my Higher Power).

I welcome 2022, bring it on.

Due to this reawakening, I have enrolled in an online caring course which is definitely going to open new doors for me. I would never have had the confidence to do something like this in my past. Being called stupid my whole life, I thought I'd be a co-dependent (now I know what it means) for the rest of my life, but lucky me, I found Al-Anon.

I can't thank this program enough for the freedom from entrapment from my past life and receiving the love and light from everyone I've met in the fellowship that have aided me in my evolving recovery.

Thank you for reading and a big shout out to my Bellville family.

Love you all lots ❤️

By Claire J., Bellville



ACCEPTANCE

“Acceptance does not mean submission to a degrading situation. It means accepting the fact of a situation, then deciding what we will do about it.” Acceptance can be empowering because it makes choices possible.” *Courage to Change (B-16) p.256.*

I came into Al-Anon three years ago knowing very little about addiction and alcoholism. It happened to other people, other people's children, and I was highly judgemental of those families. I had never considered it happening to my child, alcoholism didn't fit in with my vision of the “white-picket-fence-happily-ever-after” family I had planned.

Nothing could have prepared me for my son's alcoholism and drug addiction, or the way I reacted to it. I became obsessed with trying to help him and change him. Driven by fear, I became dangerously enmeshed in his life and his every move, spending all my energy trying to rescue and protect him from the consequences of his addiction. What if his marriage failed? What if his business suffered? What if he got into trouble with the law? What if he ended up homeless?

Over and over again, I tried to fix him and his life. I tried everything – manipulation, rescuing, begging, threatening, controlling, even believing I could love him sober. Despite my son living on another continent, I could only focus on one thing and that was his addiction and his well-being. The harder I tried to help, the deeper he sank into full blown alcoholism... and as his situation deteriorated, so did mine. My life was falling apart, my marriage was suffering, my health and my mental health were suffering, other relationships were neglected and damaged. I felt like a failure and sank deeper into a chaotic world ruled by obsessive thinking, fuelling my own fear and anxiety and ultimately leading to severe depression. I crept into my own little world and started isolating myself from everyone. My life had become completely unmanageable... AND THEN SOMEONE RECOMMENDED AL-ANON...

Step 1 and accepting my powerlessness took time.

With the love, understanding and encouragement I received in Al-Anon I came to realise that I had two options – continue with the drama and chaos and unhappy life I'd been living for years, full of anxiety, fear, blame and resentment; or accept my powerlessness over the alcoholic and choose the path offered by Al-Anon, where there was the hope of serenity and happiness again.

With a growing awareness, I came to the realisation that if I were to survive, and ever be happy again, things needed to change, I needed to change, starting with accepting the reality of the situation and my powerlessness over alcoholism and my son's life. The evidence was there... everything I tried had failed. It took months to fully accept reality and my powerlessness, but with this came the beginnings of a new and changed attitude. I'm a work in progress, I can still slip back into the old, familiar controlling behaviour, but as I grow in Al-Anon it becomes easier to correct myself and bring myself back to a place of accepting my powerlessness.

Step 2 – I accepted that I needed help, that I couldn't travel this journey alone. Learning that no situation was hopeless, I chose to accept help from Al-Anon and in time I accepted that I needed the help of a power greater than myself. My son and his addiction were way too big for me to handle. I needed to Let Go and Let God and put the focus on myself and my recovery. Slowly my relationship with my Higher Power has grown and has now become an integral part of my every day.

In Al-Anon I learned more about alcoholism, and I came to accept that alcoholism is a disease, that there's no quick fix, and that the alcoholic deserved compassion. When I feel myself struggling with being compassionate, I remind myself that it is only by the grace of God that I am not an alcoholic. No one chooses to be an alcoholic. I have certainly drunk more than my share of alcohol over the years, but I do not have the disease, I do not have a compulsion to drink alcohol and then more and more of it. Remembering this helps me remain compassionate towards the alcoholic who has to either work very hard to overcome that compulsion if he chooses recovery or lives with the consequences of his addiction.

I had to accept my family and I had flaws and challenges. No more secrets, no more denial. I had to stop trying to

make them all live up to my standards and I needed to learn to love the family that I have, and not the family I once I thought I had or wanted to have!

I also had to accept the role I've played in the crazy family situation. My controlling, manipulating, fixing, obsessing, rescuing, enabling behaviour had negatively affected me, and my family... and it did absolutely nothing towards my son's sobriety.

I had to acknowledge and accept that I was my son's primary enabler. This was difficult, it was difficult and humbling to admit my part in his journey ... but I am finally able to own my part in the merry-go-round of alcoholism in my family.

The 3 C's really helped me come to terms with this. "I didn't **Cause** it; I can't **Cure** it; I can't **Control** it". Before recovery in Al-Anon, we can feel so guilt-ridden about alcoholism in a loved one. I struggled with feelings of failure, of guilt, how could I not have prevented this, where did I go wrong as a mother? Why can't I help? In recovery we have a chance to recognise and change this pattern, we can learn to accept we are human and admit our limitations, mistakes, and imperfections. It's such a relief to let go of trying to be perfect and the fixer of all things. I have grown to accept that my son's life and his addiction are his responsibility, he is an adult and I needed to let him go, I needed to Let Go and Let God take care of him

With the help of the program, My Higher Power, my sponsor, and the love and understanding of my Al-Anon family, I can now accept that I am responsible for my own life, and only my life. I'm responsible for my own happiness. I have choices, and I'm not dependent on anyone else to find joy, something I really struggled with before. I make a conscious choice every day as to how I am going to live the day, I make choices that help maintain my serenity, and despite some still challenging circumstances, I can honestly say that most often I am serene, and very often happy!

Attending regular meetings, learning about detachment and boundaries, lowering my expectations of the alcoholic, doing service in Al-Anon, practising gratitude, reading Conference Approved Literature, sharing with my sponsor or other Al-Anon members, all these things help me move forward in recovery. And the Serenity Prayer provides a comforting, regular reminder to accept and let go

of the things beyond my control and focus on what I can control, ME.

Finishing with one of my absolute favourite quotes

"And acceptance is the answer to all my problems today. When I am disturbed, it is because I find some person, place, thing, or situation – some fact of my life – unacceptable to me, and I can find no serenity until I accept that person, place, thing, or situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment." Author Unknown

By Caroline F., Courage to Change



LOOKING BACK

Our alcoholic is our younger daughter. Thankfully, she has been dry and sober now for the best part of 3 years. Our family life is normalised, and we have largely returned to the good relationships we enjoyed before she became entangled with the bottle. She is now on cordial terms with her elder sister and has stayed on several occasions at the sister's new home in the south of England. She will shortly be staying there again for a short while in the next month whilst she is again in the UK on business.

She has a steady job at last in the travel and tourism industry and despite the Covid lockdowns in various countries is earning a comfortable living. She rues what she labels the wasted years of her alcohol obsession.

Three years ago, and the ten years before that, it was not a rosy picture. It was more difficult that her alcoholic behaviour took place in the UK as well as locally. We suffered the all too familiar symptoms:

- *A fortune spent on rehabilitation and general financial assistance – much of which we suspect went on drink.
- *Arguments, tantrums, rows.
- *Calls from the police when arrested in the UK and locally.
- *Many promises to mend her ways – none of them fulfilled.
- *Ignoring our advice.
- *Worry that she was driving around in an inebriated state.
- *A terrible fear of the next ring of the phone with news of a fresh disaster.

*Ruined relationships and gross embarrassment with relatives and friends.

I could go on. I am sure we have all been there. We were at our wits end when the alcoholic daughter in question - who was attending AA meetings - suggested our attendance at Al-Anon. Never heard of Al-Anon! Why do we need them? It's not us that needs help – it's you, my daughter, who has the problem not us. Surely, we can resolve your problem together and follow a sensible line to recovery? Oh yeah?

So essentially at my daughter's suggestion we went to Al-Anon and completed Step Zero – the step that is not in the books and literature but probably the most important – which is the realisation that we needed help. There we realised our focus had been on sorting out the alcoholic's problem and more importantly not paying attention to our problems.

What was most mystifying was that before I retired I was in a senior position at a leading insurance company with many people reporting to me. Much of my time was spent on giving sensible advice to them – which they mainly followed. Here I was dishing out similar wisdom to my own daughter to no noticeable effect.

So, I came to Al-Anon and heard for the first (and certainly not the last) time the magic slogan "Let Go and Let God". That became our mantra. We were there to assist our daughter if she wanted help but not to substitute for her personal responsibility to herself.

Our first action was to cut off the financial support we had been giving and then an absolute refusal to have her stay with us at home if she was inebriated. We then concentrated on dealing with our recovery.

It was hard to do this, and it took a long time, but the effort was worth it. Fortunately, my daughter came to understand that she had wasted 10 years of her life with alcohol with little to show for it. But as I said earlier, she is well on her recovery path. She is no longer a financial drain on us.

I still come to Al-Anon every week as there is always a nagging doubt that something could go wrong and there could be a relapse. It is always good to keep your hand in as they say and to hear other stories and learn new techniques. The signs are fortunately that a relapse is not on the cards... but... then you never can be sure.

The fundamental lesson that we had to learn is that we cannot sort out an alcoholic's problems by letting them divert attention away from their personal responsibilities. We should try to be there as much as possible to support and assist when asked. We cannot assume responsibility for the alcoholic's problems. We have enough problems of our own.

By An Anonymous Father, Cape Area



Hope and Help for Young People who are the relatives and Friends of a Problem Drinker

A MAP TO SERENITY AND HAPPINESS

I am surrounded by alcoholism – both active alcoholics and those in recovery. These are people very close to me, whom I love. Yet, I am a happy person! How is it that I can feel so joyful? Why am I content? How do I have peace in my heart with all this around me? Because in Al-Anon, I have been blessed with a program that gives me a map to serenity. I have found tools I can use in any situation: the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, service, and slogans. I have an amazing Sponsor, who guides me in the direction I should be heading. I am part of a home group, filled with the most amazing people, where I feel tremendous support and a connection with my Higher Power.

My mom took me to my first Alateen meeting in April 1973. It was there that I learned I was not alone. As a teenager, this was the most important thing to me. Keeping the secret that my dad was a violent person when drinking, and that the police were at our home several times a year, was incredibly challenging and weighed heavily on me. In Alateen, I learned that I was not responsible for my father's behaviour; I was only responsible for myself.

As a young adult, I had to handle the fact that my baby sister also was caught in the grips of the disease of alcoholism. Even with my program, this was hard for me to understand. How could she do this? She hated when our dad was drinking, yet here she was, her third wreck and third DUI. I started going to Al-Anon instead of Alateen. The perspective was a little different there. Again, the emphasis was on taking care of myself, but I also learned from the group about the insidiousness of the disease. I came to understand it as an actual illness. With my tools, I

certainly coped much better. (The bonus is she is now 31 years sober.)

As life progressed, my husband became an alcoholic and still struggles with his recovery. Thus, I needed the program tools more than ever. Did I always use them? No. Did I still make many attempts to control the situation(s)? You betcha! Did I succeed? Absolutely not! Did I cope well when my son was arrested for his third DUI? Not at all. (He's in recovery eight years now.) But I did have all the tools to do so; I just had to use them.

After a move, I joined an Al-Anon group in my new area, which turned out to be another blessing. It was there that I found the support and wisdom and knowledge to use all my tools and resources to live a serene, and yes, a very happy life.

By Susan C., Georgia, The Forum, July 2021

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ALATEEN
Hope and Help for Young People who are the relatives and Friends of a Problem Drinker

Alateen, part of the Al-Anon Family Groups is a fellowship of young people who lives have been affected by alcoholism in a family member or close friend. We help each other by sharing our experience, strength and hope.

When: Thursday
Time: 6 to 7 pm
Where: Online
Contact 084 547 2804 for login details
Age Group: 12 to 17 years

Alateen can help

Al-Anon Helpline 086 125 2666 * www.alanon.org.za

Q How has sponsoring an Alateen group influenced your recovery as an Al-Anon member?

A "I get more out of serving my one hour a week in Alateen, than any other form of service."

Do you feel like a failure because you can't control someone else's drinking?

Not everyone trapped by alcohol is an alcoholic. Families and friends are suffering too.

Public Outreach

Pearl N. – Public Outreach Coordinator Claire J. – Alt. Area Public Outreach Coordinator
All Public Outreach literature is readily available from Area/GSO office.

Al-Anon contact details:
Office no.: 021 595 4517
Helpline no.: 0861 425 2666
GSO email: alanongso@iafrica.com
Area email: alanonct@iafrica.com
Website: www.alanon.org.za
Members' website: www.alanon.org.za/members/

Upcoming Events & Fundraisers

A.A. National Convention
Cape Town 15-17 April 2022

<https://aaconvention.co.za/>

Alcoholics Anonymous South Africa
Celebrating 75 Years of Hope

with Al-Anon participation

Three days of unforgettable fellowship at
Wynberg Boys' High School,
Lover's Walk, Wynberg, Cape Town.

Cost R 130/person including meals.
Payments to: AA Western Cape HPO,
Nedbank Acc. No. 121 552 7403,
Branch Code: 198765

PLEASE USE PAYMENT REFERENCE:
For AA: AALCON+Your Name
For Al-Anon: ALCON+Your Name

Email or WhatsApp proof of payment to:
-AA: Gary B. - 081 364 0926, garyb@alafkansa.net
-Al-Anon Fatima - 082 342 2102, af@cc@gmail.com

Registration Enquiries

JUBILEE YEAR
18 Oct '21 - 17 Oct '22

Or book at www.aasouthafrica.org.za

TRIPLE AAA 2022 RALLY

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
WESTERN CAPE

SUNDAY, 30TH JANUARY 2022
9:30 AM - 3 PM
9:00 AM REGISTRATION

LET'S BE FRIENDS, WITH OUR FRIENDS
AA, ALANON AND ACA SPEAKERS

VENUE: HANS ROUÏX GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL, NEW LANGE

MEETING I.D: 2100839350
RESERVED: BillAndBob

TICKET COST: R50 (IF ABLE)
CASH PAYMENT AT REGISTRATION

ONLINE REGISTRATIONS BANKING DETAILS:
ACCOUNT: ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
RMB: 4055087230
BANK REFERENCE: ("NAME TRIPLE AAA")

TEA AND COFFEE ON TAP

CAPE TOWN CONVENTION '22 75 YEARS OF HOPE

WESTERNCAPE.AASOUTHAFRICA.ORG.ZA OFFICE CONTACT: 021 5161000

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.

NOTICE BOARD

FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS & E-MEETINGS

Meetings details can be found at <https://www.alanon.org.za/meetings/>

Inform the Area office once your group returns to face-to-face meetings.

Covid protocols should be strictly adhered to where face-to-face meetings are taking place.

WHERE DO I BUY CAL?

Order your literature by visiting the office, email alanonct@iafrica.com, telephonically on 021 595 4517 or 066 158 0234. Payment options are direct deposit, EFT, Snapscan, Payfast or cash.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Fundraisers

***T-Shirt** Ongoing – To order, contact the office for more information.
Price: R130 each

AVAILABLE NOW

70 Years of Hope T-shirt = R130.00
Sizes: Small Medium Large
(Darker shade of blue available)



Rallies/Conventions

*Triple A Rally

Date: Sunday, 30 January 2022
Time: First meeting 9am.
Registration from 8:30am.
Venue: Sans Souci Girls' High School, 4 Esme Rd, Newlands
Price: R50 per person

*National Convention

Dates: 15 to 17 April 2022
Venue: Wynberg Boys' High School, Lover's Walk, Wynberg, Cape Town
Price: R130 per person
Registration open – Visit www.aasouthafrica.org.za for more information.

Meetings

*Area Assembly

Saturday, 22 January 2022 from 1pm.

*Service Committee/Policy & Planning Meeting

Saturday, 19 February 2022.
Time to be determined.

Group/Area Notices

Is your group holding an event? Send the information to the Echo and we'll advertise.

NEXT ISSUE

The topic/theme for the next issue is Step 1:

Step 2 "Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

Hope Belief



Faith in a Higher Power for a solution.

Please share your experience, strength, and hope on this or any other topic, by sending your shares to alanonct@iafrica.com or WhatsApp to 082 342 2102.

FEEDBACK FROM MEMBERS:

"Thank you so much what a wonderful read. The honest sharing about the battle with naming a Higher Power was very moving. I read a prayer the other day that begins with thanking God for sending us to this life in His "unfathomable goodness". Living in an alcoholic situation many, many times I have thought it is unfathomable why we have to endure this disease. Al Anon has truly helped me to learn it is perhaps precisely the task of bringing hope that we are called to.

Many blessings for the new year."

We value your feedback. *Thank you.*

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

A gentle reminder to all members to pay group contributions on a regular basis. The Area needs every member's contribution to continue to keep its doors open. **Every member and group are part of the solution.** Thank you to all who continue to pay their contributions and to the groups who fundraise among their members during these somewhat difficult times.

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

Payfast link: Click on or copy and paste link and select the amount or manually enter the amount you want to contribute and follow the prompts.

https://www.payfast.co.za/donate/go/alanonfamilygroup_scapearea

SnapScan:

