

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

May 2022

Dear Loners

Today we hear from Marlene as she shares her condensed Twelve Step journey of recovery.

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As a result of being chronically affected by my late husband's excessive drinking, I found myself in the rooms of Al-Anon, emotionally battered and bruised, and with a dire need to find a better way of life for myself and my family. Thankfully, I took to the program like a duck to water and it was not long before I started putting the tools of the program to work in my life. Slowly, but very surely, my life started taking a turn for the better.

In *Hope for Today* (B27), one of our daily readers, the reading on page 326 provides me with guidance about the order in which I need to live my life using my Twelve Step program of recovery.

### **Steps One, Two and Three – my relationship with the God of my understanding**

**Step One:** *Admitted that I was powerless over alcohol and my life had become unmanageable. (I can't)* Admitting my powerlessness does not mean that I am helpless, by acceptance of this Step, I gained personal power and freedom. Today, upon awakening, I thank the God of my understanding for this brand-new day and acknowledge that I am powerless over people, places, and things.

**Step Two:** *Came to believe that a Power greater than myself could restore me to sanity. (God can)* When I walked into Al-Anon, I was told that there is a God and I am not it. I needed to trust and allow the God of my understanding do the work in my life.

**Step Three:** *Made a decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I understand Him. (Let God)*

This means that I needed to step out of the way and to let go and to let God take a handle on things.

### **Steps Four, Five, Six and Seven – my relationship with myself**

**Step Four:** *Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of myself.*

I had to look at my own behavior, perceptions, and attitudes with genuine honesty. With this searching and fearless moral inventory, my Sponsor told me that I had to look at my defects as well as my assets. This was very difficult to do. It was easy to look at my defects; I hadn't inculcated the habit of looking at my assets as these were very well hidden as I focused on everyone and everything outside of myself.

**Step Five:** *Admitted to God, to myself and to another human being the exact nature of my wrongs.* The first two parts of this Step were easy for me 'admitting to God and to myself' the nature of my wrongs. The challenge lay in admitting to another human being. Initially I did not trust another person enough to share intimate details of myself with them. I knew that I had to find someone who

was supportive, loving, and compassionate, and who would listen without judging or condemning. I did and I found that my Higher Power spoke to me through another human being.

**Step Six:** *Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.*

This Step reminds me that I am in a partnership with my Higher Power. My role in this partnership is to accept myself as I am, flaws and all, and to let go of all that stands in the way of my health and growth.

**Step Seven:** *Humbly asked him to remove my shortcomings.*

In this Step, I have learnt that when I speak about humility, I speak about self-acceptance and that God will do for me what I cannot do for myself. True humility is letting go of my self-will and relying upon the will of my Higher Power.

### **Steps Eight, Nine, Ten, Eleven and Twelve – my relationship with people outside of me – family, friends, colleagues, strangers, etc.**

**Step Eight:** *Made a list of all persons I had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.* When I started reflecting on all the persons I had harmed, I realised that I needed to put myself on the top of this list. I began to see how much I had harmed myself by playing the martyr and rescuer in all the roles that I fulfil. I had to make a sincere effort to improve myself through the program.

Next on my list were all the family members that I had harmed. Then I listed all people outside of my family circle i.e. friends, colleagues, and strangers. One may ask why I would put strangers on this list; I had to reflect on how I treated shop assistants, people in queues, drivers on the roads, etc. and actively work on being kind and gentle in all aspects of my interactions with people.

**Step Nine:** *Made direct amends to such people except when to do so would injure them or others.*

This is an action Step where I humble myself enough to verbalise my regrets, if appropriate, to the people that I have harmed. I realise that I build character by engaging my Higher Power to provide me with the courage to change the things that I can.

**Step Ten:** *Continued to take personal inventory and when I was wrong promptly admitted it.*

This Step helps me to keep the principles and tools of the previous Steps working in my daily life. To maintain my serenity and to continue to grow, I continue to take inventory of myself and to make amends to others.

**Step Eleven:** *Sought through prayer and meditation to improve my conscious contact with God as I understand Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for me and the power to carry that out.*

This Step introduced me to a new action – the action of seeking through prayer and meditation to improve my conscious contact with God.

**Step Twelve:** *Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these Steps, I try to carry this message to others and to practice these principles in all my affairs.*

Having found a new way of life in Al-Anon and to keep what I have found, I have to continue appreciating the gift and giving it away. Through this spiritual awakening, I have found more inner peace and have less interest in judging myself and others. I find myself giving and receiving unconditional love. Becoming aware that I have spiritually changed, I am now ready to carry the message to others. Before Al-Anon, I was lonely and isolated. Attending meetings and sharing the program has helped me break my isolation. Now it is my turn to give back.

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Thank you Marlene for sharing your journey through the Twelve Steps – how you work the steps and how they have worked for you.

If you would like to send a share for possible publication in the Loners' Letter, please forward your contribution to [alanontvl@absamail.co.za](mailto: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.

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Current Account No: 1118881482

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