

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

August 2022

Dear Loners

Today Lindsay is sharing her thoughts on Concept Five but before going ahead, I thought it might be beneficial to provide some background. Many of us are familiar with the Twelve Steps and may have heard about them before joining Al-Anon, but the Traditions and Concepts are less widely known.

Al-Anon's Twelve Steps were adopted from Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and adapted as guides for personal growth and recovery for the friends and relatives of alcoholics; the Twelve Traditions were put together to foster and protect the unity of Al-Anon and prevent it from splintering over differences of opinion; and the Twelve Concepts were designed as guides for people doing service work for Al-Anon. The Steps, Traditions and Concepts are known as the three Legacies of Al-Anon and are very helpful when put to work in our personal lives, in our interactions in Al-Anon, and in the wider world in which we live.

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"The rights of appeal and petition protect minorities and insure that they be heard." I'm quoting this description of Concept Five from *How Al-Anon Works for Friends & Families of Alcoholics* (B-32) pg.133/134 as I find it the easiest to understand. I also appreciate these wise words from the same source, "Whenever we have a decision to make, it is important to remain open-minded."

For me, Concept Five aims to protect the minority's feelings and opinions. The words "right of appeal" acknowledge that minorities can be right, and a well-heard minority in turn protects us against an uninformed majority.

The words "right of... petition" permit any person to address a grievance, complaint or idea directly to the Board of Trustees, without fear of prejudice. There is no guarantee of course, that the decision will be overturned but everyone has the right to be heard, especially if it is an informed point that hadn't been thought of by the majority and considered during the discussion. As trusted servants our leaders must always be ready to do for the groups, what they cannot do for themselves.

Concept Five helps me to trust other people's opinions. In Al-Anon, I have the privilege "to be heard". This humbles me and helps me to be respectful, honest, and open-minded. It inspires me to be patient and tolerant, especially when I am expressing myself. I love listening to others opinions and ideas expressed easily and openly. I have learnt to "Listen and Learn".

As a child I was told "children should be seen and not heard". That had a profound impact on my life. I brought it into my adult life until I realised I had to speak up for myself. Over time, I developed coping and survival skills that protected me.

My children were the minority opinions in my home, I was the dictator mother and my word was law. I was the decision maker. Al-Anon taught me to start listening to them and to allow them to make their own decisions and to be part of our decision making. They loved it when I started having round robin table discussions as I learnt in Al-Anon.

They enjoyed being part of the decision making and loved being heard. We healed and recovered together as a family in AA, Al-Anon and Alateen. We are blessed as a family that communicates now.

I will close with Concept Five from *Paths to Recovery* (B-24) pg. 278 second paragraph..."The right of appeal found in Concept Five reminds us that we need to listen with consideration to everyone"... and the fourth paragraph... "Sometimes in the heat of debate, we can only see things in terms of winning or losing."

There is also a reading in our daily reader, *Courage to Change* (B-16) pg. 29, that's appropriate for Concept Five. It refers to learning to realise the value of self-expression and how giving voice to one's feelings is important. It also reflects on "the difference between expressing ourselves and using words to control others."

Lindsay S
KZN Al-Anon

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Thank you, Lindsay, for sharing your thoughts on Concept Five and how it has guided your personal growth and helped your family to develop healthy ways of communicating and working together. If you would like to learn more about Concept Five and the Three Legacies of Al-Anon, you can do so by reading some of the Al-Anon literature mentioned by Lindsay. Literature orders using the titles and catalogue numbers can be emailed to your local Al-Anon area office (alanontvl@absamail.co.za).

Tradition Seven: Every group ought to be self-supporting, declining outside contributions. Al-Anon is operating under financial constraints and we appeal to all Al-Anon members to contribute towards our operating expenses so that we can continue to provide help to the friends and relatives of alcoholics. Our banking details are below.

Best wishes

Clare

<p>Al-Anon Information Services, ABSA Bank, Oakdene, Current Account No: 1118881482 Branch code 632 005. Please use your name or group as the reference.</p>

<p>PayFast: Al-Anon Information Services http://www.payfast.co.za/donate/go/alanoninformationservices Please use group or event and members name as reference.</p>
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