


Al-Anon Family Groups
Help and hope for families

Gauteng & Districts

Loners' Letter

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

Dear Loners

October 2021

I received this article last week and felt sad. I thought it a good reminder to all of us to remember why we are at the meeting and to adhere to our 36 principles that are contained in our Twelve Steps of Recovery, Twelve Traditions of Unity and Twelve Concepts of Service.

“We welcome you to the Al-Anon Family Groups and hope you will find in this fellowship the help and friendship we have been privileged to enjoy.....Al-Anon in an anonymous fellowship. Everything that is said here, in the group meeting and member-to-member, must be held in confidence. Only in this way can we feel free to say what is in our minds and hearts, for this is how we help one another in Al-Anon.” extract from the suggested Al-Anon welcome *How Al-Anon Works* [B22] page 8.

We read this welcome at every meeting because it is important to remind us to keep our groups safe.

I recently watched a movie about a boxer who won all his fights. There was only one problem his face always got beaten up. Because of his fiery nature someone hit on his wife in order to provoke him. He took the bait and his wife died with a ricochet bullet. He then lost everything including custody of his child. He then met a new trainer who taught him how to defend himself so that he wouldn't get so hurt and most of his training became defensive versus aggressive.

I was recently in a group where people gossiped after the meeting. I realized how gossip can really be harmful to meetings from my own experience. It breaks trust, it recreates the family of origin environment of don't talk, don't feel. It plays people up against each other. Advice is given and anonymity is broken.

In my family of origin, we gossiped about the alcoholic and gossip was used as a tool to make allies. Whoever got to tell the story first was the 'winner'. I often got scolded because I wasn't the first to tell. The other side of the story didn't really matter. In this group I had the same experience. Gossip is one of the three obstacles of success in Al-Anon.

from *Many Voices One Journey* [B31] page 76 “ To insure the success of our meetings in solving our common problems, we must recognise and control three deadly enemies that can destroy the group.....The three deadly enemies:

- Discussion of religion
- Gossip
- Dictatorship”

It takes away the very loving environment that Al-Anon stands for.....

From *How Al-Anon Works* [B22] page 380 “....reason things out with someone else, but let there be no gossip or criticism of one another. Instead let the love and peace of the program grow in you one day at a time.”

So how does this all relate to the boxer story. Well, I have a fiery personality and within this group there is a lot of crosstalk, advice and opinions given in the meeting, breaking of anonymity, and generally not adhering to most guidelines and suggestions. So, what is my part, I am like the fiery boxer with my self-righteousness, I got hurt in the process even though I felt I was right. So, what have I learnt from this experience and with my family of origin?

I needed to learn how to protect myself. How to be loving and kind when I bring any point across and also to do it in private. Staying away from an unhealthy group instead of trying to change them. Letting go of my need to be right. What other people think of me is none of my business, but it can still hurt. I don't need to stay with groups or individuals where I don't feel safe and if I don't feel safe to guard my tongue. I love Al-Anon, it has saved me from lots of heartache. I will attend groups and be friends with people where I feel valued and loved and remember the slogan *Live and Let Live*. Gossip dies in a wise man's ears.

The loner committee welcomes all share for consideration in our newsletter. Please send to the office. If you would like to attend an online meeting, please go to our websites www.alanongauteng.co.za or www.alanon.org.za to find contact details for online meetings. Tradition Seven: Every group ought to be self-supporting, declining outside contributions. Although we are under lockdown our office expenses still need to be paid. If you are able to help our bank details are below.

Stay Safe, Juliet

ABSA Bank, Oakdene, branch code 632 005). Current account no 1118881482.....in the name of Al-Anon Information Service . Please put your name or group as a reference .

P.S. If you do not want to receive these letters send email to alanontvl@absamail.co.za with the word **unsubscribe** in the subject and we will remove your name from the distribution lists. If you know of new members who would like to receive our newsletter, please let the office have the details