


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

January 2022

Dear Loners

I would like to thank Nicolette for sharing on how she has been learning to take care of herself using guidance from Chapter 12 in *How Al-Anon Works* (B32ZA), "Taking Care of Ourselves".

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Alcoholism is a threefold disease: physical, mental, and spiritual. It affects the alcoholic in this way, and it affects us this way too.

In January 2019, I came back from yet another holiday (this one was by far the worst) where the order of the day was a drink by 7 am – because "I am on holiday". I think it was more a case of no need to stop because I am on holiday. Constant arguing, led to more drinking, etc. You know the drill. I knew things had to change, something had to give. I was unhappy, overweight and overworked. I now realise that this was my escape. I was just existing.

On 3 January 2019, I started exercising, planning to do just 30 seconds. Why I can't tell you, but I did. And I started getting physically and mentally stronger. I remembered how determined I used to be and I started losing weight. This led to me gaining self-confidence. Over the years, the mental abuse had become so normal, I didn't even recognise it for what it was. I believed the lies.

By May 2019 it was all over. By now there had been some professional help involved. I was told we had a complete co-dependent relationship. I remember thinking she was referring to him being the co-dependent... I had no idea. Things could not get worse, or so I thought. And then he gave me an ultimatum. Imagine that. But I chose, and I chose life.

I gave him three months to get out. I learned later he had started drugging then. Over-the-counter meds, anti-depressants, narcotics, anything he could lay his hands on, all washed down with alcohol. By September 2019, he was gone. Out of my life, after 24 years. Twenty-four years of always worrying, 24 years of self-neglect and 24 years of believing the lies. There were good times and I realise now that not everything was his fault. I have a huge number of problems that contributed to our problems.

Through Al-Anon I realised that my Higher Power would lead me if I let Him. And I did. I confessed that I was helpless and that my life was out of control. And so my journey to recovery started.

Below are a few tips on how I have been practicing self-care:

- *Physical:* I found an exercise routine that I liked and started small. I made small changes. Easy manageable things such as 30 seconds of jumping jacks, Yoga, stretching, walking, whatever I felt like. I included nature... going to the beach, a mountain, or a park, at least once a week. I also realised that I needed sleep. I went to bed as early as possible to try and get at least seven to eight hours sleep.
- *Mental:* I started taking a personal inventory of my life (Step Four). I wrote everything down. Good and bad. Just wrote. I didn't use this as a whipping tool but as a healing experience. I worked on the bad and worked even harder on the good. I reminded myself daily about my good points.
- *Spiritual:* I found myself living in a fantasy world. One where a knight on a white horse would gallop in and save me and take me away from the mess. Then I realised that wasn't going to happen. But I also realised that my Higher Power, the God of my understanding, is real and He would save me. He is never drunk; and I am the most important person to Him. He is always listening to me and he never fights with me about nonsense, nor does He ever abuse me, in any way.

There were times when I was more tired than other times. When I felt like giving in. When everything was too much for me. But I just kept going. One day at a time.

How did I do this?

- I was honest with my Higher Power. I told Him exactly what is going on in my life. He knew everything anyway. I told Him every emotion, every hurt, every disappointment, everything. Step Three says to turn your will and your life to the care of God. I came to realise that He loved listening to me and was waiting for me. Seven of the Twelve Steps are about connecting to the God of your understanding and I connected.
- Step Seven says humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings. I arrived at Al-Anon thinking: there was nothing wrong with me. He had the problem so why did I need to get help? Humility involved admitting I needed help and asking for it.
- "Let It Begin With Me": I acknowledged the need for change and started focusing on the positive things rather than the negative. Chapter Ten in *How Al-Anon Works* speaks of having an attitude of gratitude. So I started small. I made a list, writing down everything I was grateful for. When he was passed out or not at home, I took it as an opportunity to have some quality quiet time with my Higher Power. Instead of worrying about him, I focused on myself.

- Staying focused and working the steps. Step Two says that our higher power can restore us to sanity. So, I put Him first in everything I did. I asked for guidance and strength and my life started to change for the better.
- And last of all, I kept coming back.

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Thank you for sharing your journey of recovery with us Nicolette and for letting us know how you have been putting the Al-Anon programme into action for yourself.

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".

Tradition Seven: Every group ought to be self-supporting, declining outside contributions. If you would like to contribute towards our office expenses, our banking details are below. Thank you to everyone who contributes.

Best wishes

Clare

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