

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

December 2022

Dear Loners

In this Loners' Letter, Peggy shares how Al-Anon has helped her to grow and change through a new understanding of the daily choices she faces.

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One of my biggest realisations along my Al-Anon journey has been that I really do have choices. For so many years I felt "stuck" but in Al-Anon I have learnt that if I put my problems into perspective and open myself up to whatever each day offers I have so many choices and this frees me from my "stuckness".

Through attending meetings, reading Conference Approved Literature (CAL) and listening to other members share their stories, I have seen others putting choices into action and I have realised that when I choose different attitudes and behaviours, I get different results.

I have learnt that I have to accept the things I cannot change, but I do not have to accept unacceptable behaviour, and I have the right to make choices that are in my best interests. I am not forced to accept anything that doesn't feel right to me, and I can say so, even when others don't agree with me.

I have also learnt that I have the right to choose what I will allow, what and who I want in my life, and how I live my life. This all gives me great freedom, but with freedom comes responsibility and consequences – however the choice is always mine.

One of my first choices in Al-Anon was to accept the three Cs – I didn't **C**ause it, I can't **C**ontrol it and I can't **C**ure it. By accepting this, I was forced to focus on my life and my choices. It was not my choice to have alcoholism in my life, but it was my choice to stop it from taking away any more of my life.

I can laugh about it now, because when I came into Al-Anon I arrived with a number of Cs of my own; I was **C**onfused, **C**ontrolling, full of **C**ontempt, **C**onflict, **C**omplaining and **C**riticism, and jumping to **C**onclusions – in fact my life was full of internal **C**risis!

Today I have a new set of Cs that I have gained through practicing the Al-Anon principles in all my affairs. I have found **C**ourage, and I have **C**ontentment, **C**ommitment and **C**omfort in my life. I have more **C**ompassion and I **C**ommunicate so much better, I have **C**hanged and most importantly, I have learnt that I have **C**hoices.

Along my recovery journey I also realised that one of my biggest obstacles was reacting. I either spoke too quickly, said something sarcastic, or sulked.

I love my CAL literature and the second book I bought after my trusted daily companion, *Courage to Change* (B16), was *How Al-Anon Works* (B32). I remember reading the analogy of the rope and playing “tug of war” with the alcoholic. I realised that I automatically picked up the rope and started to tug – I reacted automatically. It had never occurred to me that I didn’t have to play, that there is only a tug-of war when both players hang onto their ends of the rope. I began to realise that I have options and that I can make choices... I can choose to drop my end of the rope.

Here are a few pointers that I have learnt along the way which help me make choices that are good for me:

- **Don’t react** – I can put time and distance between myself and whatever has been said or done. I can drop the rope and I can choose not to react. I also find that using these Al-Anon tools really helps me: “Easy Does It”, “How Important Is It”, “Pause” and “THINK” (Thoughtful, Honest, Intelligent, Necessary, Kind).
- **Get input** – Try to see things from a different perspective and get the facts. Speak to others, listen to other solutions, reach out and reason things out before exercising my choice and taking any action.
- **Put first things first:** I read in *Courage to Change* that “important things are seldom urgent, and urgent things are seldom important”. I now take my time to make important choices and never make a permanent choice about what might be a temporary problem. Choices also don’t always have to be about the “destination” – they can be about the “direction” I am taking and can be “Just for Today”. When in doubt... I do nothing. Doing nothing is sometimes the choice I make.
- Choose to stop obsessive thinking – I can’t stop thoughts from coming into my mind, but I do have the choice not to entertain those thoughts. I don’t want to be held hostage by my negative thoughts and if I don’t pick them up, I don’t have to let them go. I can change my attitude and change my thinking.
- Be honest with myself – Al-Anon teaches us to look to ourselves and our own shortcomings. I can solve my problems and make healthy choices by first taking a long, hard look at myself, my behaviour and my reactions. In *From Survival to Recovery* (B21) I read, “As we gain the ability to forgive ourselves, our families and the world, our choices expand.”
- Don’t ever make choices out of fear, always make them out of love and respect for yourself. Making healthy choices helps me regain a sense of balance in my life. No longer do I abandon my plans to fit in with my partner’s changed plans. I make choices that are good for me, that reflect my opinion of and my relationship with myself.

- Pray and meditate – When I “Let Go and Let God” I trust that my Higher Power will guide me in making the best choices. I have the choice to try and do it all by myself – but look where that landed me in the past, or to be willing to ask my Higher Power for guidance, to trust that guidance will come, to listen and then to do as my Higher Power tells me.
- Choose, every day, to be happy, grateful and serene. What priceless gifts they are and the choice to have them in my life is all mine.

Today, I choose serenity in my life thanks to the Al-Anon fellowship, and for this I am truly grateful.

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Thanks Peggy for sharing your journey of transformation as you chose to accept the Three Cs, dropped your unhealthy Cs and opted for new and improved Cs.

Best wishes

Clare

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