

Loners' Letter *Gauteng & Districts*

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

April 2023

Dear Loners

This month we have a letter from someone who has been with Al-Anon for almost two years. This person, who chooses to remain anonymous, shares how helpful Al-Anon has been to them and encourages others to keep coming back so that they too can find healing and serenity.

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I joined Al-Anon out of sheer despair and desperation. A wise Al-Anoner introduced me to Al-Anon and told me to let my alcoholic husband join Alcoholics Anonymous.

I remember attending my very first Newcomers Zoom meeting on a Sunday. My service sponsor was also at this meeting to introduce me to how Al-Anon works.

My first meeting was confusing; I had so many questions to ask. I heard the meeting preamble, the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts. My first meeting left me unsatisfied. I wanted to know more, I wanted to absorb everything I heard and made frantic notes during the meeting.

I spent a week researching, reading, and finding out everything I could about Al-Anon. Unfortunately, Conference Approved Literature (CAL) literature was not available to me immediately. The country was isolated due to the Covid pandemic and the Gauteng office was closed for three months. I ended up buying CAL literature through an electronic platform that is available on the Al-Anon international website. Two daily readers and *How Al-Anon Works* (B32) were available and these proved priceless to me during my time of need.

At each meeting, I heard the Al-Anon Preamble to the Twelve Steps being read and this had a profound effect on me. Hearing the message of hope, trust, faith, peace and serenity was the start of my journey of healing in the Al-Anon program.

I attended more than 90 meetings in 90 days and the suggested welcome in the preamble differed from meeting to meeting, but the message always had a common thread. The possibility of finding contentment, and even happiness, whether the alcoholic was drinking or not.

Wow; serenity, happiness, contentment, was this really possible?

At meetings I was introduced to the concept of my Higher Power, to the God of my understanding, and I was told that Al-Anon was a spiritual program. It was also a One-Day-at-a-Time program. I could not change my past and I could not predict my future, but I had the gift of the present.

I shared at a meeting about how responsible I felt for my alcoholic husband. That I kept looking into the past to see how I could have made mistakes that resulted in the disease of alcoholism.

My first share was full of self-pity, blame, shame, resentment, denial, regret, remorse, anger and pain. I was told that I did not cause the drinking, that I cannot control the drinking and that I cannot cure the drinking. I was told to take my hands off the alcoholic and to place them on myself.

I learnt about self-care, self-love and about putting myself first. I was told to be gentle with myself. That being human, was not a character defect. Progress not perfection was the aim. I have come to see that my Higher Power has the same gentle way of protecting me, guiding me and loving me every day.

Why do I keep coming back to Al-Anon? It's too easy to slip back into old behaviours when I don't make my recovery a priority. Making it to a meeting, keeps me on track and without spiritual help from the program I cannot maintain a rational perspective on life. The Thirty-Six Principles help me to put structure into my daily life. The slogans guide me to live life with acceptance and courage.

I know now that when I become anxious, it's because I am trying to control the outcome of a situation I have no control over. Whenever I feel fear, I know now that I am not in a safe space and that doubt and worry is residing in my mind rent free.

The saying, "Keep coming back. It works if you work it, so work it, you're worth it," reminds me that my personal recovery is top priority. To be the best version of myself, I need to be diligent and patient, to keep attending meetings, to work the steps, and to apply the principles in every aspect of my life.

It's true that I have to live life on life's terms, but when I am on the point of giving up; my Higher Power shows me a way.

My changed attitude, living with gratitude and humility, and knowing that my circumstances are never permanent, helps me face my life "One Day at a Time", sometimes one moment at a time.

I am worth it, so I will work it. There is no situation too difficult to be bettered and no unhappiness too great to be lessened.

Anonymous

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Thanks very much for sharing how attending Al-Anon meetings and working through the Twelve Steps is keeping you in a healthy frame of mind and helping you to cope with life's ups and downs.

Best wishes

Clare

P.S. If you would like to send a share for possible publication in the Loners' Letter, please forward your contribution to alanontvl@absamail.co.za with the subject "Loners' Letter Submission".

UPCOMING EVENTS

Al-Anon 72nd Birthday Rally

When: 20 May 2023

Venue: St Francis Methodist Church, Forest Town.

Cost: R60 (Alateen members free)

Registration: 08h00 – 09h00

Payment: See banking details below. Send proof of payment to alanontvl@absamail.co.za using this reference: **Rally and your name**

Al-Anon is a self-supporting organisation – we rely on financial contributions from our members to keep our offices open and our meetings going. Thank you to everyone who contributes.

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.

Al-Anon Information Services

ABSA Bank, Oakdene, Current Account No: 1118881482 Branch code 632 005.

Please send proof of payment to alanontvl@absamail.co.za and use your **name, event or group** as the reference.

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