



# Al-Anon Family Groups

## Help and hope for families and friends of alcoholics

LONERS LETTER- MAY 2023

Greetings Loners,  
Happy to be back in SA after our holiday with family in New Zealand.

Thanks to Logas (WOW) for doing Loners for me in March 😊

May month is Al-anon birthday month!

We celebrate 72 years 🙏🙏

Last year we celebrated on Zoom with shares from Longtimers 🙏  
Northern KZN is hosting Rally next Sunday 21st May, inviting the Public to attend.  
The month of May is usually a beautiful Sunshine month in KZN and last year we experienced flooding that caused a lot of damage and we lost one of our Members

from Tongaat washed away in her car 😞  
This year we have had sunshine and beautiful days up till this weekend where it's

pouring with rain again down South KZN 😞  
Its still sunny in Durban though!

Do you have a gratitude journal? The Al-Anon program helps us to be grateful for everything we have and find gratitude in all our situations.

I'm grateful for my Life

Grateful I found the 12 Step program

And Al-Anon friends.

Grateful for my Children and grand children

Grateful for Sobriety in my home

Grateful for my Health

Grateful for my garden and home and fresh air and beauty around me...

What are you grateful for?

Send me an email and share your thoughts with me!

Gratitude turns what we have into enough, and denial into acceptance chaos into order and makes sense of our past with a vision of tomorrow.

My Step for this year is Step 10....I call it my maintenance step, continuing from step 4....a daily commitment to continue looking at myself and keeping the focus on me..and when I've slipped, promptly admitting my wrong, Step 10 helps me to be honest and therefore frees me of living with guilt. Taking responsibility for my actions and leave the rest to our Higher Power.

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Another meeting I attended on Zoom we shared on DETACHMENT LOVE AND FORGIVENESS!

Detachment is a valuable technique, it means to separate ourselves emotionally and Spiritually from the other person.

Love is what we learn to do unconditionally even when we find it hard to 'like what they doing'.

Forgiveness is not forgetting, it's letting go of the hurt!

I hope this May month has brought you peace and serenity as we slowly slip from Autumn into Winter.

Our Zoom meetings are still very active with many visitors from around the World.

I'm grateful for Zoom as I don't have many meetings in the Area I live in.

I thoroughly enjoy sharing my ESH with the members around the Globe and I attend some overseas meetings myself.

I have learnt so much in my senior years even though I have been in Al-Anon for many years. We're never too old to learn.

The program has been constant although the World and technology changes. We live by our Steps, maintain our Traditions and adhere to our Concepts.

I have attached a share from Sigrid from the Kloof meeting on Tradition 4 and I'm sure you will enjoy it as much as I did.

God Bless

Lindsay S

Loners Co-ordinator KZN

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*Gratitude*

HELPS YOU  
SEE WHAT IS  
THERE,  
INSTEAD OF  
WHAT ISN'T.



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### Tradition 4

Recently 2 members of our group have led meetings where they looked at traditions and concepts and what really intrigued me, is how these apply not only to Al-Anon as a fellowship, but how we can apply them in our personal lives, our families etc. And to this end I have been looking at them with new eyes.

And I am in awe of our programme, the wisdom it contains and the practicality with which it is applicable to all areas of our life.

Tradition 4 states: each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting another group or Al-Anon or AA as a whole.

**In relation to Al-Anon: (this reading is from an Al-Anon blog on the internet)**

When I first attended **Al-Anon**, it was quite a culture shock to hear that in the program “there are no rules.” Based on my alcoholic upbringing, I expected other members to tell me what to do and how to do it. Instead they said, “Follow your heart,” “take what you liked and leave the rest” and “our groups are autonomous.”

As I became familiar with our Twelve Traditions, I realized that there is a “yes, but...” attached to the group autonomy referred to in Tradition Four. (“Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting another group or Al-Anon or AA as a whole.”) Abiding by the Traditions has helped me follow this caveat that I not bring harm to the program that has helped me so much.

Al-Anon adapted these suggested guidelines from the hard-earned experiences of early A.A groups, so that we might avoid the same pitfalls they faced and assure that Al-Anon can continue to exist. While “there are no rules in Al-Anon,” there is a “yes, but...” to that statement too: “but we remain obedient to the unenforceable.”

Our cofounder, Lois W., first applied the term “obedience to the unenforceable” to the Traditions in 1966, when she included a chapter about them for a revision of our first book. There she wrote:

“Al-Anon ... holds together by means of a loving understanding among its members. Al-Anon is united ... by its members’ willingness to be obedient to the unenforceable. ... Willingly they apply the Twelve Traditions to the affairs of the groups. Nobody compels them. They are learning to overcome self-will, false pride, resentment and self-pity by recognizing that principles are more important than personalities and by accepting a program on which they

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know they can depend for help.” (*The Al-Anon Family Groups—Classic Edition* (B-5), pages 166-167)

In *Lois Remembers* (B-7), Lois described love as “a regenerating force,” and on page 196 stated, “I now realize loving is our supreme function.” I agree with her, and truly believe that love is what keeps our program alive. I feel compelled by my love of the program to follow the Traditions to the best of my abilities. Without the love that Al-Anon has provided me, there’s no telling where or whether I would be (...Tom C. Associate Director of Literature March 2018)

On a *personal level*, this speaks to how we find a balance **between** our personal individual autonomy and responsibility **to (not for)** others....and it works in 2 directions:

### **On the one hand, our personal autonomy:**

This in turn can be out of sync in one of two ways – either we can be too independent and potentially selfish, or we can feel too responsible for others and make our needs invisible, so as to “help” others.

A minor example...When I first met my husband many years ago, he’d ask eg. would you like tea or coffee? – and I’d say: whatever is easiest...even though I disliked coffee! And I didn’t do it only with him: - it actually took quite some learning for me to be able to say what I’d really like in many areas of life. Over the years this has gotten much better and I’m actually quite shocked when I think back to those early days. Most of this learning has come via Al-Anon through my gaining self-esteem and through practice.

Again from a blog on the internet:

Al-Anon has set up this tradition 4, so that we are able to define our needs as important and establish them within a defined set of guidelines. These guidelines and principles are workable in all situations. I do not have to be a yes-man or make myself invisible in order to belong. Being able to find my autonomy and remain a functioning supportive member of a group or organization is a powerful gift that this tradition has taught me.

Autonomy doesn’t mean you don’t need the other person. It means that I can be who I am and not try to mould myself to be what others want me to be. I can still have my goals, desires, and dreams while intertwining them with the goals, desires, and dreams of another.

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### The flip side of the coin:

#### Our responsibility to others / our family / a group South Africa Al-Anon:

Hope for Today pg. 139 – letting others make decisions without trying to judge, interfere, control or manipulate.-

Practising tradition 4 in our personal and family life involves 6 steps:

1. knowing myself and my needs, desires etc.
2. listening to the needs, thoughts and opinions of others eg family members
3. communicating our needs etc. clearly
4. appreciating differences and respecting others
5. coming to decisions and making choices that honour both ourselves and the unity of the family or group.
6. Always, asking our HP for guidance

Tradition 4 helps us to understand the boundary between what is within our control and what isn't. Learning to find the right balance between our autonomy and someone else's is the mature alternative to the loneliness of total freedom or absolute control. It makes healthy relationships possible. ( R f P Freedom pg. 82 )

Looking back to my birth family, I realise that we had patterns of manipulation, creating triangles, my parents powerfully modelled patterns of putting their own needs aside to keep others happy and I adopted that .... and can see that I have passed that pattern on to my children, especially my daughter.

My husband grew up in a family with an alcoholic father and he flips between the two extremes – being totally independent and just going his way regardless and then on the other hand, also not being clear on declaring his needs and trying to keep me happy and I can see so clearly, how this can lead to major frustration too – on both our parts.

Also, of course, I need to constantly be aware of my tendency to try to control my husband. My children I don't really have an issue with – for some reason I found it easy early on to let them go and to be themselves, but my poor husband can bear the brunt of my tendency to judge and my attempts to control.

Looking at all these patterns through the lens of tradition 4 has given me so much food for thought: I can see where I've gone wrong in the past and still do, it's shown me in what areas I need to work and grow and where I need to make changes, I understand why these patterns can lead to misunderstandings, resentment and frustration as well as quite simply

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stuckness in family / group situations and I am just so very grateful to have a tool with which I can work on myself:

1. to become clearer as to my own needs, wishes etc.,
2. to communicate better and more honestly
3. to learn to listen more deeply and be open to change my mind if necessary
4. to be aware of my attempts to control and to take a breath and *stop* before I intervene and do so
5. with my HP's guidance to do my part in helping our family or groups to which I belong to come to better decisions which benefit all.

RfP Freedom has a number of texts and questions that can help us work with this tradition.

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