

Loners' Letter *Gauteng & Districts*

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

December 2023

Dear Loners

Many of us have found the Al-Anon slogans useful when trying to navigate serenely through the complications we encounter in our lives. "One Day at a Time", "Keep It Simple", and "First Things First" are slogans that I try to focus on when feeling overwhelmed.

In this month's letter an anonymous Al-Anon member explains how she makes use of another one of Al-Anon's slogans.

~ ~ ~

One of the most difficult tools in my toolbox of Al-Anon slogans is "Live and Let Live". It is a hard concept for me to wrap my mind around, especially when dealing with the disease of alcoholism. I feel an urgency to fix everything that goes wrong in my alcoholic loved one's life. I want to help him with his daily struggles so that he does less harm to himself and our family.

How do I live, when I am in the constant shadow of my alcoholic loved one? When there is ongoing chaos and crisis in my life because of the alcoholic's behavior. When I am faced with emotional, mental, physical and financial challenges, how do I live?

Before I came to the rooms of Al-Anon, my life was out of control and unmanageable. I was trying to fix my loved one and everything in his life. I did things for him that he could do for himself with the hope that if I took away some of his burdens, he would cope better.

Things did not work out this way. He became lazy and took me for granted and I grew tired, frustrated, resentful and angry. I became a master manipulator. I mothered him, I managed him, I monitored him and I smothered him with my controlling tactics.

I was enabling him, and in doing so, was making myself feel better by relieving my anxiety and trying to lift some of the guilt, shame and responsibility I felt for my loved one.

In Al-Anon, I learnt that I did not *cause* the drinking, I cannot *control* it and I cannot *cure* it. However, I did contribute to the chaos, crises and the drama in my life. There was no peace, serenity or joy in my home.

My family and I lived with constant stress, anxiety, tension, animosity and unmanageability. We as family lacked trust and respect for each other, and we had no faith or hope. I now know that when I try to control my loved one's life, I am acting out my own fear and anxiety.

In Al-Anon I learnt about the slogans and I have found that one in particular is helping me, “Live and Let Live”

“Live and Let Live” is a two-part slogan. I have to practice the first part “Live”. I do this by taking care of my own physical, emotional, mental and spiritual needs. I place the focus on myself with self-love and self-care by putting my needs first. And also by taking time out, without feeling guilty, when I feel tired. When I “Live” I remind myself that I can only save myself.

This quote from the Al-Anon Conference Approved Literature also reminds me of my responsibility to myself.

“Our only concern should be our own conduct, our own improvement, our own lives. We are entitled to our own view of things, and we have no right to inflict it on anyone else.” *Alcoholism, the Family Disease (P-4)*, p. 17

How do I practice “Let Live”?

I have learnt that I need to allow the alcoholic to find his own way. I need to let him learn to function, to take responsibility for his own mistakes and to be accountable for his actions. By enabling my loved one, I am actually teaching him dependency and not responsibility. I know now that I can help my loved one by allowing him the freedom and respect to make his own decisions and choices.

“Let Live” reminds me to allow my loved one, the dignity of making his own decisions and experiencing the consequences of his decisions and choices. By minding my own business, I am freed from feeling responsible for changing my loved one.

I have found that I am able to practice the “Live and Let Live” slogan daily by doing the following:

- *Love*: By loving myself I become stronger and able to share my love with my loved ones. In turn, my self-esteem and self-confidence grows.
- *Boundaries*: The most difficult part of setting and maintaining my boundaries is to do it with love. My boundaries protect me and my loved one. Arguments and resentments are replaced with mutual respect when healthy boundaries are in place.
- *Detachment*: Detachment with love is another way I can allow my loved one to “Let Live”. Loving detachment for me doesn't mean detaching from the person I care about, but detaching myself from the agony of involvement.

When I do lose my serenity, and I find myself slipping into insanity, I remind myself, that I am not practicing the slogan “Live and Let Live” and that I am not handing over and surrendering to my Higher Power. I also ask myself, whose body, mind and soul am I nourishing today? When I stay out of the affairs of others, and focus more on my own affairs, I have a much better chance of finding some serenity.

I remain a work in progress, never graduating from this gentle, yet supportive program. My progress is constant and consistent, as I work and live the program in all my affairs, I remind myself daily to “Live and Let Live”.

~ ~ ~

Thank you for sharing with us how you are using this slogan to bring serenity into your life. By focusing on what you can change in your life, *you*, you are finally able to make a difference in your life.

It seems selfish at first, but by focusing on ourselves and acknowledging our role in the chaos, we become more at ease with ourselves, our relationships with others improve and our life takes on a whole new meaning.

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”.

New Face-to-Face Al-Anon Meetings

KwaThema Al-Anon Meeting

Khristo INkosi, Dladla Street, Highland, KwaThema.
Wednesdays 17h00 to 18h00

Mbombela Al-Anon Meeting

St Michael’s Anglican Church, Ferreira Street, Mbombela.
Mondays 18h00 -19h00

Middelburg Al-Anon Meeting

Saint John’s Presbyterian Church, Middelburg.
Mondays 19h00 -20h00

Midrand Al-Anon Meeting

Cavalry Methodist Church, Halfway House, Midrand.
Wednesdays 19h30 – 20h30

Soweto Al-Anon Meeting

Entokozweni, Early Learning Centre, Moletsane, Soweto.
Sundays 11h00 to 12h30

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 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.

PayFast: Al-Anon Information Services

<http://www.payfast.co.za/donate/go/alanoninformationservices>

Please use group or event and members name as reference.

If you would prefer not to receive this newsletter, please send an email to alanontvl@absamail.co.za with the word **UNSUBSCRIBE** in the subject and your name will be removed from the distribution lists. If you know of new members who would like to receive our newsletter, please inform the office.