

# ***Loners' Letter***

***Gauteng & Districts*** ▪ ***Never alone in Al-Anon***

February 2024

Dear Loners

This month, an anonymous Al-Anon member shares how she learnt about leadership while doing service in Al-Anon.

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At first, I battled to get my mind around Concept Nine. “Good personal leadership at all service levels is a necessity. In the field of world service the Board of Trustees assumes the primary leadership.”

It seemed a daunting concept, but then I realised that all of us have done leadership service. Listening to another member is service and leadership. So is turning up to meetings regularly and sharing on a topic at a meeting. Actually if you don't do service in Al-Anon, you won't build your leadership abilities. It is built into the program. Also, we need this ability at home, when looking after our families and ourselves. So it does apply to us.

There is value and benefit in being a leader. Most adults end up leading or being role models in one way or another. We do it helping the kids to get ready for school in the morning, planning the week's activities, organising events at home, managing visits from family or arranging holidays. How about when the expected salary cheque doesn't come in and we have to re-budget or do extra work? Right now in South Africa, with our water and power issues, we are all doing a lot more leadership and management just to keep the wheels turning.

Sometimes, in an alcoholic setting, we end up doing more leading than we really want to, and Concept Nine shows me that how I lead others is pretty important.

Conscious leadership is not just making decisions that affect others and taking responsibility for the outcome of decisions and actions we've taken. It also means encouraging and supporting and enthusing people... getting them to join in, helping them to get involved. What helped me here was Concept Four: “Participation is the key to harmony.” An idea I only learned in Al-Anon. This helped me to open myself up, share more about myself and invite people to join me. This was very, very hard for me to do as my ability to trust was around zero.

A lot of management decisions are hard, but in Al-Anon we believe that “together we can make it”. So management from the Al-Anon perspective is drawing people together, all on the same page... enthusing and encouraging them, and especially... *listening* to their thoughts and suggestions and *involving* them. You are not there as the big boss with the

big stick. In fact as a leader, maybe you're *not* even sharing your solution at all... but instead *listening* to others first. In Al-Anon, everyone gets a turn to talk.

Our founder, Lois said: "We believed that Al-Anon leadership should initiate ideas, offer choices, and perhaps emphasise aspects but leave it up to the fellowship to make the decisions. A detached, clear-headed ability to respond with courage and creativity is a quiet strength we seek in our leaders and ourselves."

In "*How Al-Anon Works*" (B-32), it says about Concept Nine: "The qualities of leadership include responsibility, tolerance, stability, flexibility, judgement and vision. Leaders reflect confidence, patience, dependability and wisdom."

This sounds pretty overwhelming to me, and I'm glad I didn't read this the first few months I was in Al-Anon. I don't think I had patience, or tolerance, or stability or flexibility or vision. Instead I had anger, frustration, bitterness, grief, resentment, hurt and hopelessness. This meant that I wasn't a particularly good role model or leader. But as I practiced the Al-Anon programme, I started to develop more useful qualities.

I am more confident now; more patient, more tolerant than when I first arrived in Al-Anon. I was always quite responsible, but today I am certainly more flexible, and I think my judgement is more detached and slightly less judgmental, though I am still working on that one too. My experience has been that the Al-Anon programme – when I work it, when I attend meetings, work the steps, stay in regular contact with my sponsor and Al-Anon friends – has helped me to become less aggressive, less blunt and brutal in my dealings with others, more easy-going, less demanding and lighter in spirit. I laugh more now and listen better. All of these quite newly developed skills have been a game changer in my relationships with others.

In fact, after I had been some years in Al-Anon, my daughter started sharing her deepest thoughts and experiences in growing up with me... and she said "Mom, I can see you're in a much happier place now. That's why I feel safe telling you this..." and she proceeded to tell me how much my unknowing behaviour in the past had hurt her... and how much happier she had become, seeing my own growing happiness, calm and peacefulness. It was a totally unexpected share from her and knocked me sideways. Later she started looking to me for guidance and leadership, which was a huge surprise.

I learned my new behaviour in Al-Anon, by working the programme and doing service over a long time. And I will continue learning because, like all of us here, I am only human. My new skills vary depending on my state of mind and how hard I've been working the programme.

Back to the comments in "*How Al-Anon Works*": It says, "As we grow in Al-Anon, we often find that we have cultivated management skills without even knowing it." Indeed, all of us in Al-Anon have opportunities to become leaders.

Good personal leadership could be a game-changer. What we say and do might inspire others to try a new way of life. Or it might just mean we get on better with the family and the neighbours. This is pretty good too. Also in Al-Anon, we practice rotation of leadership so

that everyone gets a chance to build their leadership skills and no-one is overburdened. This is real democracy in action.

Finally, there are some lovely readings in “*Hope for Today*” (B-27) about leadership. They are worth reading and re-reading. They cover the difference between leading and obsessively controlling people (dominance), and the opportunities available to learn how to make decisions in Al-Anon, and how to turn your “followship skills” into “leadership skills” (p. 251).

The reading ends with the quote: “Al-Anon encourages me to develop as a leader in my Higher Power’s time, in my Higher Power’s way”. So the pressure is off us, absolutely. But it really is up to us. The next sentence makes it even clearer... “In Al-Anon we learn we can take charge of our lives. We are the leaders of ourselves.”

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Thank you Anonymous for this lovely share on how you found yourself transforming through working the Al-Anon programme, how you learnt healthy leadership skills and how you learnt to lead yourself.

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](mailto:alanontvl@absamail.co.za) with the subject “Loners’ Letter Submission”.

| Upcoming Events                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| <p><b>Lois’s Birthday Picnic</b><br/><i>Date:</i> Saturday 2 March 2024<br/><i>Registration:</i> 08h00 – 09h00<br/><i>Venue:</i> St Francis Methodist Church, 1 Talton Road, Forest Town, Johannesburg.<br/><i>Entrance:</i> R80 (Children under 12 are FREE)<br/><i>EFT reference:</i> Name + Lois (See banking details below).</p> |
| <p><b>Convention 2024</b><br/><i>Date:</i> 29 to 31 March 2024<br/><i>Venue:</i> Linkside High School, Milpark, Gqeberha/PE.<br/><i>Entrance:</i> R150<br/><i>Register:</i> <a href="http://www.aasouthafrica.org.za/event/convention-2024/">www.aasouthafrica.org.za/event/convention-2024/</a></p>                                 |

## New Face-to-Face Al-Anon Meetings

### **KwaThema Al-Anon Meeting**

Khristo INkosi, Dladla Street, Highland, KwaThema.  
Wednesdays 17h00 – 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 – 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.

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#### **PayFast: Al-Anon Information Services**

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

Please use group or event and members name as reference.

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