

# ***Loners' Letter***

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

June 2024

Dear Loners

Today we hear from an anonymous Al-Anon member who shares her thoughts on boundaries and how helpful they are in navigating our lives and our relationships with others.

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Setting boundaries is the foundation of having a healthy relationship with anyone. It's about reclaiming our lives. Boundaries are for our own safety and protection. They are also our responsibility. Boundaries aren't rules we can enforce on others. They are standards of conduct we set for our own benefit. If we repeatedly allow our boundaries to be violated, we are volunteers, not victims.

We set our boundaries that we don't allow anyone to cross. Boundaries don't help if they are set too loose or too rigid. Boundaries are flexible, changeable and removable. It is up to us, how open or closed we are, at any given time. The best success comes when we set our limits, one day at a time.

Boundaries let us decide what behaviour is acceptable from others and ourselves. We can say no with love, instead of hostility. As we decide what is and what isn't acceptable, we learn to live without building walls around us. Building walls around ourselves leads to loneliness and resentment. Setting boundaries helps us to look for healthier ways to protect ourselves.

As we apply the principles of our Al-Anon programme to our day-to-day lives, we begin to respond to situations differently. We learn how to say "yes" when we mean "yes" and "no" when we mean "no". We no longer give to others out of obligation, control or fear... and we say what we say without being mean about it. Many well-meaning people offer us advice. We don't have to let other people's opinions, morals or religious beliefs determine what decisions we make.

In the past, we may have put our lives on hold hoping things would get better. Al-Anon teaches us that we are responsible for our own lives and our own happiness. We set boundaries and allow others to have their feelings without believing we are responsible for them. Our compassion for others can sometimes make it difficult to set limits. Having boundaries doesn't mean ignoring our responsibility to others, but rather learning to balance those responsibilities while also putting ourselves into the equation.

When we stop living our own life, we become preoccupied with the lives of others and our behaviour is motivated by fear. Detachment is one of the most valuable techniques Al-Anon offers us. We can reclaim ourselves by detaching, and we can stop being hurt by insults, lies

and unacceptable behaviour. When we set good boundaries, we can be safe and free to be ourselves. Healthy and happy relationships can be a lot of hard work. We first have to understand ourselves as flawed, imperfect human beings. When we accept ourselves, it's easier to accept others.

Setting boundaries is a way of showing ourselves we are worthy of respect. Many of us confused the absence of personal boundaries with love and caring. When the alcoholic goes out, we sit and worry, thinking obsessively about them. We lose the ability to distinguish between the alcoholic and ourselves. The alcoholic's past, current and potential actions become our sole focus; this is not love, this is obsession.

One of the effects of living with alcoholism is that we question ourselves as parents. Did we do enough to protect our kids? Were we too hard on them? We wonder if we devoted enough time and energy to our children because we spent so much time focusing on the alcoholic.

Sometimes our children blame us for their problems, but even if we made mistakes in the past, we didn't cause anyone to become an alcoholic. Whatever problem our children are facing, it's theirs to face. They have their own path, their own journey, for reasons we might not understand.

When our adult children don't behave as we think they should, try to remember "Live and let live". Though it's hard, we must "Let go and let God". It's hard enough to stay on our own path; we can honour our children by letting them walk their own path. We need to learn to let go of others welfare so they can turn to their own Higher Power. Being clear about what is acceptable to us is a tool we use to take care of ourselves. It falls under the category of "changing the things I can" as stated in the Serenity Prayer.

Thought for the Day: Accept what is, let go of what was and have faith in what will be.

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Thank you for sharing how having healthy, flexible boundaries can help us with our recovery and our relationships with others.

Best wishes

Clare

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

#### **Soweto Al-Anon Meeting**

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

#### **Middelburg Al-Anon Meeting**

Saint John's Presbyterian Church, Middelburg.  
Mondays 19h00 – 20h00

**Glenferness Al-Anon Meeting**

125 Duncan Road, Glenferness, Midrand.  
Tuesdays 19h00 – 20h00

**KwaThema Al-Anon Meeting**

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

**Midrand Al-Anon Meeting**

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

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**Thank you to everyone who contributes.**

**#Tradition Seven**

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