



Al-Anon Family Groups

Help and hope for families and friends of alcoholics

When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help - let the hand of Al-Anon and Alateen always be there, and Let It Begin with Me.

March 2025



Dear Loners

Welcome to the March edition of our Loners Letter.

In this edition we pay tribute to our co-founder Lois Wilson who was born on 4th March 1891.

Lois Wilson was the wife of Bill Wilson, co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous. Lois W co-founded Al-Anon in 1951, after recognizing that the spouses and loved ones of Alcoholics also needed support. The support group for Family and Friends of Alcoholics offered emotional support and understanding. Lois W was born on 4th March 1891, in Brooklyn New York. She grew up in a privileged environment, into an affluent family. She was well educated and attended The Pratt Institution. She worked as an Occupational Therapist. In 1918 she married Bill W.

They were a happy couple, shared the same interests and enjoyed each other's company. Their marriage was deeply affected by alcoholism during 1920 and 1930. She gave him her unwavering support, but the alcoholism continued. She gave up her job, made sacrifices, and tried to help him by taking over responsibilities in the home. Numerous attempts were made to get her husband to stop drinking until his breakthrough in 1934. Together with a friend Bill W found sobriety by spiritual means, which lasted until his death. A miracle happened and Bill's life transformed. He worked endlessly to assist other alcoholics through AA. Although there was sobriety in her life Lois felt isolated and frustrated. One day her husband asked her if she was coming to the meeting with him. In anger she threw a shoe and shouted at him. This shocked her. She started looking at her own attitudes, feelings of loneliness, self-pity and resentment. After many years of trying to sober up her husband, she felt her pride was hurt, because another alcoholic could do what she had tried for many years and failed. There was a void in her life.

AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS KZN AREA

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By using the same principles as AA, she started working on her own personal growth by changing her own attitudes. She endured years of emotional turmoil and realised that families of alcoholics needed their own support system. After seeing how spouses and family members suffered alongside their alcoholic loved ones Lois W and Anne B (wife of another member) formed a group of people affected by the disease of alcoholism. They shared their experiences and formed the Al-Anon Family Group in 1951. Due to Lois's dedication Al-Anon has over 24000 groups in more than 130 countries worldwide offering hope and support to countless individuals affected by a loved one's alcoholism. Lois Wilson's later life and legacy continue to support families of alcoholics and Al-Anon grew into a worldwide organisation. In her later years she lived in Stepping Stones, the home she shared with her husband. It is now a historic site. She passed away on 6th October 1988 aged 97 years.

So much of Lois's life resonates with me. When my partner is not drinking, we are happy couple, we share the same interests and enjoy each other's company. My life was unmanageable until I entered the doors of Al-Anon. I am grateful to Lois W for passing the message of hope and our amazing Al-Anon program. It is here that I am accepted with love and understanding. I am grateful to the members on face to face and Zoom meetings. who share my story and help me grow. I am grateful to my Sponsor who carried me through the darkest days of my life and my service sponsor who encouraged me to go into service. I am grateful to all the wonderful members for their wealth of wisdom and knowledge. I am grateful I married an alcoholic because it led me to Al-Anon. This is my safe place, a gift from my Higher Power, for me a lifelong journey of Peace, Serenity and Hope. JUST FOR TODAY I will be unafraid. I will not be afraid to enjoy what is beautiful, and to believe that as I give to the world, so the world will give to me.

MARCH being the 3rd month we will also focus on our 3rd Step, 3rd Tradition and 3rd Concept

STEP 3: *Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.* In Al-Anon I learned that when life overwhelms me, I turn to my Higher Power to ask for help. Made a decision tells me I have a choice; I will keep the focus on myself and surrender to a loving God. It is a slow process to let go, I keep an open mind, remind myself that God is in control, have faith and put my Higher Power first.

TRADITION 3: *The relatives of alcoholics, when gathered together for mutual aid, may call themselves an Al-Anon Family Group, provided that, as a Group they have no other affiliation. The only requirement for membership is that there be a problem of alcoholism in a relative or friend.* Coming together, reminds me that I am not alone. We all share the common problem of alcoholism, and the only requirement is that we affected by a loved one's drinking. By using the Al-Anon steps, literature, meetings and a sponsor, we guide one another to recovery one day at a time with love and understanding. Our primary purpose is to help those affected by alcoholism. Its comforting to know that help is always available. Our primary goal is to focus on the Al-Anon program and not dilute the program by discussing outside matters. Live and Let Live allows each one to grow at their own pace.

CONCEPT 3: *The right of decision makes effective leadership possible.* In our fellowship we are trusted servants, and we carry out our duties responsibly for Al-Anon to function smoothly. We are guided by our Higher Power and trust the process without judging. We have confidence in each other to carry the message of hope. In our groups we trust our leaders and trust one another to make proper decisions. In service I trust in my fellow members, and I trust in God to guide me to carry out my responsibility effectively. I am thankful to members for their trust in me as I carry out this task to the best of my ability.

In KZN our Al-Anon members are keeping busy with the planning of events.

- For the month of March, Lois Birthday month each group is having something special in her memory.
- The Barnyard fundraiser on 16 February was a success.
- The Al-Anon Rally is taking place on 18 May at Mowat Park School, Montclair.
- There is a planning committee in place for Convention 2026 which KZN is hosting.
- Zoom meetings are ongoing with many overseas members joining SA meetings.

Please see the beautiful share below from Sunitha on 'Keeping the Wheels Turning', which I hope you enjoy as much as I did.

Sending love, light and warm Al-Anon hugs.

Keep smiling ... it is contagious.

God Bless You.

Valerie M

Loners - Coordinator

Keeping the Wheels Turning

Lois W, Co-founder of Al-Anon was 60 years old when Al-Anon Family Groups officially started. She would have been 134 years old on March 4 had she still been alive. She always said, "It takes one person to start something but many others to carry it out". Before Al-Anon formally started in 1951 families of alcoholics were informally gathering as early as the 1930s. When Alcoholics Anonymous was officially started in 1935, many spouses and friends of alcoholics attended meetings alongside recovering alcoholics. However, they soon realised their struggles were different – while AA focused on sobriety, these family members and friends needed a space to cope with the emotional and relational impact of alcoholism. Even after Bill got sober Lois still felt deep resentment and pain from the years of struggle and realised that she too also needed a spiritual and emotional recovery process.

I am indeed deeply grateful for Lois W and the formation of the Worldwide Fellowship of The Al-Anon Family Groups, for her realisation that people closely associated with alcoholics also needed healing and recovery. I am deeply grateful for the fact I do not see Alcoholism as a moral weakness but instead understand that it is a disease that affects people spiritually, emotionally, mentally and physically. I am deeply grateful for the compassion and love of a programme that allows me to in turn have love and compassion for the alcoholic. I am deeply grateful for the healing and recovery that has touched my life. I am deeply grateful that I can in turn pass on the message of hope to the still suffering and keep the wheels of this great legacy turning.

What does keeping the wheels of the God-given Fellowship turning mean to me? I don't know where me or my family would be today had I not joined this Fellowship. I was a slow starter in Al-Anon but there was always something that kept me coming back. That something was the love, acceptance, understanding, warmth and the fact that I was not alone. Being a loner and isolating myself from people for most of my life, Al-Anon felt like a key that would open all pain, frustration, suppressed anger and sadness that I carried around like a permanent fixture. Recovery is a process, and it is ongoing. Nothing happened overnight but slowly over time I felt the clutches of this disease ease as I worked my program. I began feeling better, I felt that I could now start giving back. I felt that I could make a difference, and I started getting more involved in the different aspects of Al-Anon service. This was another life changing decision for me because I found that when I gave of myself it increased my feelings of feeling better. I have always had a struggle with organisation, decision making, retaining information, low self-esteem and speaking up for myself.

Through serving the Fellowship I can maintain discipline and structure because I now have responsibilities to be fulfilled. By changing myself I help to keep the wheels turning for another member to enter. When I was younger, I wanted to change the world, today I know even if only my life is changed then I have made a difference. Today I know I can pass on healthy recovery and keep the doors open for people that come in hopeless and helpless. I am helping to keep the wheels turning. When anyone reaches out for help let the hand of Al-Anon and Alateen always be there and Let it begin with me.

Sunitha. M

Grateful Al-Anon member - Sunday 5:30 Group

TRADITION 7:

Every Group ought to be fully self-supporting declining outside contributions. In keeping with our Tradition Seven, I would like to humbly encourage members to continue honouring their monthly financial obligation to our Area Office. Contributions are voluntary.

Should you wish to send a gratitude donation, our bank details are:

Bank name: ABSA

Account name: Al-Anon Family Groups Kwa-Zulu Natal (KZN)

Account number: 4074787557

Branch name: Musgrave

Branch code: 632005

Reference: Your name