



Al-Anon Family Groups CAPE AREA ECHO

CAPE AREA OFFICE:
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Website <https://www.alanon.org.za/>

For information regarding meetings, please contact the numbers below or refer to "Find a meeting" at <https://www.alanon.org.za/find-a-meeting/>

NEWCOMERS ELECTRONIC MEETING Group for newcomers, newer Al-Anon members or those struggling with active alcoholism. Welcome to Newcomers <https://www.alanon.org.za/welcome/>

Cape Town: Wednesdays at 5pm
WhatsApp for login details: 066 158 0234

Al-Anon is a mutual support program for people whose lives have been affected by someone else's drinking. Alateen, a part of the Al-Anon Family Groups, is a fellowship for young people aged 12 to 17 years, whose lives have been affected by someone else's drinking whether they are in your life drinking or not. Opinions expressed herein are not to be attributed to Al-Anon as a whole. Members share their personal experiences and stories and invite other members to 'take what you liked and leave the rest,' to determine for themselves what lesson they could apply to their own lives.

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	Recovery - Through The Steps	Unity - Through The Traditions	Service - Through The Concepts
	The threefold guides of Al-Anon point the way to a normal, useful life for the individual. They are also a framework within which the groups can carry on their affairs in harmony.		

WHAT'S ON IN THE AREA

STELLENBOSCH GROUP

49TH

AT HOME CELEBRATION

AA and Al-Anon speakers
Thursday, 11 June 2026 - 7:30 pm
Stellenbosch Baptist Church
6 Merriman Avenue
Stellenbosch Central

We invite all members of AA, Al-Anon and visitors to celebrate this milestone with us. Doors open from 6:00 pm.

Al-Anon Family Groups

75TH BIRTHDAY PARTY!

SAT, 9 MAY 2026 | 10:00

LIONS CLUB HALL
DORREY STR., PROTEA HEIGHTS, BRACKENFELL

THEME: Progress not Perfection

Dear Cape Area Members

Thank you to all our members for supporting our celebration of Al-Anon's 75th anniversary. Held at the Lion's Club Hall in Brackenfell, the event was a great success. Guests enjoyed a presentation on Al-Anon's history, a speaker panel with AA, Alateen, and Al-Anon members, karaoke, a photo booth with props, and games, including a treasure hunt specially arranged for the children. Lunch of soup and bread was served, with tea, coffee, and sweet treats available in the afternoon.

We sincerely appreciate the gratuities received from members. Thank you to everyone who attended, participated, and offered service. The day ran smoothly, and everyone I spoke with said they enjoyed the event.

By Fatima D., Cape Area, May 2026

**"Believe more deeply.
Hold your face up to the light,
even though for the moment
you do not see."**

~Bill Wilson

The Power of Progress

I am an Alcoholic and my name is Kim; my sobriety date is 16 October 1999 (26 years). I have a home group Hope Street, a sponsor, sponsees and work the Twelve Steps of A.A.

What has changed and how have I changed?

From the get-go, I had to learn that although I was not responsible for my disease, I am responsible for my recovery.

I really like this spin on the Serenity Prayer: **God grant me the serenity to accept the people I cannot change.**

The courage to change the one I can, and the wisdom to know it's me.

1. I am sober today by God's grace.
2. I get God into my head in the morning before I can get there, with a daily ritual of prayer, meditation and self-examination.
3. I ask that love, tolerance and honesty be my spiritual guides through the day.
4. I have developed an absolute dependence on my Higher Power. He is my best friend.
5. I know there is a God and I'm not it.
6. I can see where my self-will (Ego) can run riot and stimulate my spiritual malady.
7. I practice my Step Ten on a daily basis, especially looking for resentments, dishonesty, fear and selfishness.
8. I try my best to live in God consciousness.
9. I move from self-reliance to God reliance.
10. I have become alert to the cry of the still suffering alcoholics, which I find to be such a gift.
11. I repeatedly work all Twelve Steps, smashing my Ego in doing so.
12. I work the Steps with sponsees and do service at my home group.

Today I experience a freedom like never before and a faith that works. In retrospect each step has been an ego deflation step, a spiritual experience and I have experienced a psychic shift with each step. All the Step Nine Promises have come true for me. I try my best to approach life and people with straight eyes and clean hands. Slowly I have learned to pause in conflict and not be so reactive.

At times when I'm struggling, I don't give up, success is failure turned inside out! Relationships with family and friends have been restored.

I have learned that Faith is fear that has said its prayers.

I unreservedly love and thank A.A. for saving my life and giving me a second

Schoenstatt
Retreat and Conference Centre

RSS
Regional Service Seminar
29 August 2026
R300.00

Save the Date

To book your place -
Contact Annalise at the Office:
Monday to Thursday: 9.30 - 2pm
Phone: 021- 5954517
WhatsApp: 0661580234
E-Mail: alanonct@iafrica.com

Don't miss the **Regional Service Seminar (RSS)** — a special day of inspiration, connection, and shared learning. Enjoy three workshops presented by fellow members, ending with an engaging interactive session.

Seats are limited, so book early to secure your place. At just R300 per person, your registration includes tea, coffee, lunch, and a wonderful day of fellowship, learning, laughter, and joy. Contact the office today to reserve your seat. Payment can be spread over the next three months.

chance which I have grabbed with both hands. Today I am happy joyous and free which is a far cry from where I was.

I have huge gratitude to the whole recovery community – A.A., Al-Anon and now Alateen, which has given me a magnificent life.

It has certainly been Progress Not Perfection, slowly at times but always trudging forward with purpose which brings to mind the lovely words of Bill W. ***“Believe more deeply, hold your face to the light even though for the moment you do not see.”***

I am Kim, a Grateful Alcoholic.

By Kim, Hope Street A.A. Group, May 2026



Progress Not Perfection

To win, the goal is experience. If so, then I have won. Not because everything turned out perfectly, but because I kept going! I take Al-Anon co-founder, Lois W's words to heart “There is no standing still.” Al-Anon has taught me to live each day, and I am adhering to that.

I grew up as a girl with no confidence. I was bullied, and when I tried to speak up, I wasn't believed. At home, we were taught to stay quiet and not make trouble. My father was a quiet drinker, and my mother carried so much anger about it. That anger was often taken out on the children, which I took into my adulthood and marriage. The only difference was that, unlike my mother, I did not act upon that anger. I kept it inside, as I was too much of a mouse to use my voice.

When I met my soon-to-be husband, there were red flags. I lacked the courage to act on them. So, I moved on, dating, marriage, had my son, bought a house, and with each step, alcohol was there. Eventually divorce, remarried to the same man and then the loss of his life.

For a long time, I thought that my journey thus far was a failure! But today I see it differently. I'm here. I'm aware. I'm changing. And for me, that is progress.

On my professional journey, as for most of my life, courage has never been a natural part of me; it was something I had to painstakingly pray for and gather from within me. There were countless times when I encountered very difficult situations, dealing with misconduct issues, having to go to labour courts. Those were times when I was filled with immense fear. Yet I can say with a quiet pride, that I never

ran away. I faced those moments, because I stood in truth, I left with greater strength and quiet confidence. It's the decision that my goals or values are more important than my immediate comfort.

The programme held me up when I couldn't stand on my own. Fellow members listened patiently to my struggles, and my sponsors gently encouraged me forward.

Even after retiring, I continued taking on projects in schools – highly specialized work that truly stretched me. The success of these projects showed me how much I have progressed in terms of personal growth and having courage.

My journey of pleasure entails extensive travels, adventure and lots of lovely experiences. Hiking is my passion and this has brought me some truly memorable experiences. Most recently, I completed a five-day Camino in Sedgfield.

Each of these adventures has called for courage, and at times I can hardly believe that the frightened person I once was, is the same person who has lived through such rich and rewarding moments. I learned in the rooms of Al-Anon about being brave enough to take risks.

My journey in Al-Anon is the cornerstone of so many of my successes.

I came into Al-Anon in 1991 during one of the darkest chapters of my life. It was that very darkness that led me into the rooms. I wish I could say that over the past 35 years, all my growth happened smoothly, but it didn't. My journey has been uneven, with times of commitment and times when I drifted away for months.

One of the greatest gifts Al-Anon has given me is awareness. Today, I can catch myself when my thoughts begin to spiral. I can gently bring myself back to the present when my mind drifts into painful or imagined fears.

For the past six years, one situation around our family home, has weighed heavily on me. I've spoken about it again and again, and I'm sure my sponsor, my group, and fellow members have heard my struggle many times. And yet, they kept listening.

I often think of the story of the stonecutter who strikes the rock a hundred times before it finally splits. It wasn't just the last blow that did it, it was every strike before it. In the same way, something finally shifted within me. The penny dropped. And in its place came acceptance, serenity, and a sense of detachment I had long been searching for.

Some lessons and gems I picked up in meetings:

Let Go and Let God – In Hope for Today (B-27), April 27, the focus is on receiving a

phone call from a family member who wants to discuss something important. The writer describes feeling immediate fear and apprehension, and how easy it is to start imagining all kinds of possible scenarios.

The reading reminds me that, instead of letting my mind run ahead and build anxiety, I can choose to “Let Go and Let God.” But I have learned here to use my voice, to be assertive, so I want to know what the person wants to discuss and conclude the discussion.

Detachment – There have been many areas in my life where I have had to practice detachment to safeguard my sanity and serenity. Looking back, I believe God allowed those experiences to prepare me for the greatest application of detachment of all – living on the same premises as my son and his family.

I have learned to stay in my own lane, focus on myself, and sometimes simply look the other way. By practicing these principles, the result has been peace and gratitude. Today, I am a very happy mother and grandmother, thankful to have my family close to me.

Doing Service – I can take positive criticism with an open mind. I currently hold two service positions, and at times I still feel that the responsibilities are beyond me. I have attended a few conferences, yet I still feel nervous about the next one in June.

Through doing service, I receive far more in return; for example, confidence, a sense of purpose, and gratitude for being trusted to help. Whenever a function is planned, I make sure to offer to transport items from the office. It makes me feel useful and gives me a real sense of belonging. To me, that is one of the greatest gifts and goals of service

In Conclusion – And now, as I look back over my life, taking risks with courage, I realize that my strength was never entirely my own. There is a profound grounding truth in my journey: God has always been my source. I will admit that I don't always turn to Him first. I often first endure the turmoil, trying to carry the weight on my own tired shoulders before I remember that I can surrender the challenge to a Higher Power. In that surrender, I find a peace. I have learned I don't need perfection. I only need to be willing.

I look forward to the great adventures ahead, a case in point, the Camino. I go forward no longer relying on my own fragile stature but fully armoured by God's grace.

By Margie D., Cape Area, May 2026



That's something a lot of people say, but not enough people actually understand. Especially as teenagers. We grow up thinking we need to have everything figured out already. Perfect grades. Perfect body. Perfect life. Perfect future. But life doesn't move in a straight line like that.

For me, life started with struggles I didn't fully understand when I was younger. I dealt with abandonment issues from not having my mom around the way I needed her to be. And for a long time, I carried that pain quietly. I kept asking myself questions like 'Why wasn't I enough?' or 'Why did things happen this way?' Even when people don't see it, things like that affect how you think, how you trust people, and how you see yourself.

There was also a time when I lived with my granny while my father was trying to get himself right. Growing up like that teaches you things early. It teaches you how to survive before you even fully know yourself. My granny became one of the strongest people in my life. She showed me that love doesn't always come from perfect situations. Sometimes it comes from sacrifice, patience, and simply being there.

For a long time, I thought my pain meant something was wrong with me. I thought I had to hide my struggles and act strong all the time. But over time I realized healing isn't about pretending to be perfect. It's about accepting your past while still choosing to build a better future.

That's where I truly learned the meaning of progress over perfection.

Progress is waking up every day and trying to become better even when your past still hurts. It's learning how to love yourself after feeling abandoned. It's choosing not to let pain make you bitter. It's understanding that your struggles may shape you, but they don't have to define you.

And one of the things that has truly helped me grow is Alateen. I want to genuinely thank Alateen and all the literature they provide. Reading their material made me realize I'm not alone in

the way I feel or the things I've experienced. It helped me understand myself better, my emotions better, and the importance of healing instead of hiding pain.

Their message about growth, recovery, and becoming a stronger version of yourself really connected with me. I know the lessons and guidance I've learned through Alateen will continue helping me become a better person in the future. Not perfect, but better. Stronger. Wiser.

And honestly, I also want to thank my dad for introducing me to it. Even through everything we've both been through, that decision helped open a new chapter in my life. It showed me that growth is possible no matter where you come from or what you've been through.

A lot of teenagers carry pain nobody talks about. Broken homes. Feeling unwanted. Pressure. Anxiety. Feeling alone even in a room full of people. And because social media makes everyone's life look perfect, we start believing we're behind. But the truth is, everyone is fighting battles you can't see.

Progress isn't always loud. Sometimes progress is just not giving up. Sometimes it's learning to trust again. Sometimes it's becoming the kind of person you needed when you were younger.

I still don't have everything figured out. I still have days where I overthink, doubt myself, or feel the weight of my past. But I've learned that healing takes time. Growth takes time. Becoming who you're meant to be takes time.

And that's okay.

Because perfection isn't the goal. Nobody is perfect. The goal is to keep moving forward. To keep learning. To keep growing. To turn pain into wisdom and struggles into strength.

Your story doesn't end with what hurt you. Sometimes your story begins the moment you decide your past won't stop your future.

So, if you feel broken, lost, or behind in life, remember this: you do not need to become perfect to become successful, loved, or strong. You just need to keep making progress.

Little by little. Day by day.

Because progress will always matter more than perfection.

By Christopher B., Alateen, Cape Area, May 2026



Early Beginnings History of Al-Anon South Africa

75th Anniversary of Al-Anon Telegrams, ships, and letters!

A.A. reached South Africa in 1946, and in those days all meetings were open, with wives attending alongside their husbands. The only literature available was the chapter "To Wives" in the Big Book, which was published in 1939. Around 1949, there was discussion in Durban about the formation of some sort of family group.

A lady named Ayesha read an article on A.A. published in the Cape Argus (written by Pat O'F, who had founded A.A. in Cape Town). She was prompted to write, as she was very concerned about her husband's drinking, and in March 1949 she received a telegram in response saying that someone named Christie would call her.

The earliest South African wives' group on record was held at Christie's home by his wife, whose name was Baby van DM. There was no preamble, literature, One Day at a Time, or Traditions to guide them, and this small group eventually faded and closed.

A piece of literature opened doors for South Africa.

It had been used by a non-A.A. group in America and was given to Jess O'F. by a gentleman passing through Cape Town by ship – Imagine the excitement. Jess asked Irene D. of Kalk Bay to write to America for literature; the letter was dated 1 November 1949.

A response was received on 16 November 1949, suggesting that she use the name Auxiliary A.A. rather than non-A.A. On 6 March 1950, the Auxiliary A.A. (Family Group in Cape Town) registered with the A.A. Foundation in New York.

America had received 87 letters from across the globe that led to the creation of the "clearing office," ultimately leading to the formation of the Al-Anon Family Groups (AFG) – and Irene's was one of them. I have personally seen Irene's letter in the AFG Archive in Virginia Beach and was moved to tears, by her sheer determination to seek hope and help for families in South Africa.

Ruth, an important American pioneer, continued to write to Irene. Lois said of Ruth that she was creative and energetic, and that without her, Al-Anon could never have gained the impetus it did. Ruth went

on to become the first editor of The Forum, as it is known today. Three letters from Irene to Ruth are preserved in our very own South African archives.

The “clearing house” was formed by Lois and Ann to respond to these 87 letters from Lois’s home. The replies were typed, and these letters began crossing the oceans in 1951.

In 1952, the first publication of literature was the pamphlet “Purposes and Suggestions,” followed by “Freedom from Despair,” “So, You Love an Alcoholic,” and “Alcoholism: The Merry-Go-Round Called Denial.”

Within three short years, Al-Anon had incorporated, established an office, employed a paid worker, produced a newsletter, received voluntary contributions, and formed literature and publicity committees.

In the Western Cape, the first groups were: Kalk Bay, Claremont, Rondebosch, Hout Bay (1953). In 1955, the Bellville/Parow group, as well as the Ceres and Diep River Al-Anon Family Groups, were established. By the end of 1955, South Africa had eleven groups registered with the World Service Office (WSO).

Our first male member on record was Mike of Ceres, who wrote (I am sure out of desperation to find another male member!) to Anne B., the secretary in America, and received a response from her who told him that the American experience was similar – very few men in meetings.

Our first daily reader, One Day at a Time (ODAT) (B-06), was published in 1968. A highlight for South African Members was Lois’s visit to South Africa including Cape Town, in February 1972, and local members took her to Cape Point, up Table Mountain, and to meetings.

Our Cape Town Information Office, as it was known, was established in 1974, and the Chairperson was Jo B. (who coincidentally was my first sponsor at the Rondebosch group).

It is heartwarming to reflect on the lengths our founders went to in carrying a message of help from distant shores to America – reaching out on behalf of families in need of hope, experience, and strength. Those early beginnings laid the foundation for all that we have today, and South Africa played a meaningful and leading role in the origins of the Al-Anon Family Groups.

I am so grateful to those who have gone before, making my recovery possible.

I am thankful to have been asked to present this very shortened history today – congratulations to us all on our 75 years.

By Gillian G., Cape Area, May 2026



Listening, Learning and Healing

My share is about my Al-Anon experience of showing up, listening, feeling unsure, healing and still returning.

I’m still finding my place in Al-Anon. I did not grow up with an alcoholic, I don’t live with an alcoholic, and sometimes I struggle to relate directly to some of the shares. This has made it difficult for me to know what to share or even whether I belong here at times.

What keeps bringing me back is the feeling of safety and support in this community. I may not identify with every circumstance, but I do understand that alcoholism affects families and relationships in ways that are often subtle and far-reaching.

I’m beginning to realize I don’t need to have the same story as someone else to benefit from listening, learning and healing. Right now, part of my journey is simply becoming more comfortable sharing honestly, even when I’m unsure and don’t have everything figured out.

I’m grateful for the acceptance in these rooms and hopeful that, over time, more understanding and connection will come.

My theme is about belonging, uncertainty, and finding connection even when experiences differ. Sometimes it’s hard to know what to share, especially when we’re still finding our place. I hope the combination of acknowledging uncertainty, emphasizing belonging, and inviting simple participation is welcoming for all of us. Tonight, I am trying to create shared participation with equal voices.

At a recent meeting I chaired, I included a few interactive activities to encourage more comfortable sharing. The questions below may also support others on their recovery journey. You’re welcome to share your responses with our readers by email at alanonct@iafrica.com or via WhatsApp on 0823422102.

1. **Share one word describing ‘What Al-Anon means to you right now?’**
2. **In our opening preamble, there is a phrase, ‘Take What You Need’:** Choose a statement, take a quiet moment to reflect on it and share how it resonates with your Al-Anon experience or recovery journey. Here are a few suggested phrases:
 - Progress not Perfection
 - Acceptance brings freedom
 - Letting go can be an act of love

- I can choose how I respond
- I don’t need the same story to feel supported
- I am learning I do not have to fix everything
- I do not have to rush my healing
- Grieving is also for someone who has distanced themselves
- I am allowed to set healthy boundaries

I’ve also been carrying quiet grief. I think grief has made me reflect more deeply on family relationships, connection, and the ways pain affects us quietly. I’m learning that grief, loss, and the impact of family pain can create common ground.

3. Grief and healing can look very different for each of us. Without sharing anything deeply personal unless you want to, what has Al-Anon helped you let go of, accept, or grieve?

Grief looks different for each of us, and there is room here for every experience, every feeling, and every stage of healing.

To close on an inspiring note, let’s share why we keep coming back.

4. Share one word describing ‘What Keeps Us Coming Back?’

What I appreciate about Al-Anon is that I don’t feel pressured to have the ‘right’ story. I can simply arrive as I am, even while still processing all that is going on.

I have shared honestly about connection, uncertainty and grief. I hope this conversation has been meaningful and this meeting holds us all gently. Thank you!

By Lisa S., Cape Area, May 2026



Van Pyn na Doelgerigheid

Toe ek die eerste keer by Al-Anon aangesluit het, het ek geen idee gehad hoe ingrypend my lewe sou verander nie.

Na vyf jaar in die program het ek my man aan alkoholisme verloor. Saam met die pyn van verlies het daar ook ’n diep vrees gekom dat ek dalk nie meer in die Al-Anon vergaderings sou hoort nie – die plek wat my veilige hawe geword het.

Maar ek was verkeerd! Die liefde van my Sponsor en mede-lede het standvastig gebly. Hulle het my toegelaat om te huil en te rou, en my daarna sagkens terug verwelkom in hierdie vergaderings. Ek het aangehou werk aan die Stappe en Tradisies. My Sponsor het my aangemoedig om voort te gaan met die diensverpligtinge wat ek aanvaar het, en dit het my redding geword.

Deur dienswerk het ek begin genees. Dit het my weer doelgerigheid en ’n verbintenis met die wêreld gegee toe my eie wêreld leeg gevoel het. Met verloop

van tyd het ek geleer om te vra: “Hoe kan ek help?” — en dan te luister vir die antwoorde.

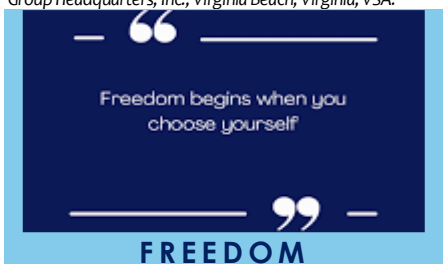
Toe ek my huidige dienspos by die Algemene Dienskantoor (GSO) aanvaar het, het my Sponsor my herinner om wyer te kyk as my groep, my stad en my Area. In Indië het ons begin om elektroniese vergaderings te verwelkom en vertalings van Konferensie-Goedgekeurde Literatuur (CAL) vir ons meertalige gemeenskap moontlik te maak. Die vreugde van diens het ons aangemoedig om maniere te vind om die boodskap van Al-Anon na afgeleë gebiede uit te dra.

Gedurende die pandemie het ek die Internasionale Al-Anon Algemene Diensvergadering (IAGSM) aanlyn bygewoon saam met verteenwoordigers van ander GSO's. Hierdie verbintenis met betroubare dienaars regoor die wêreld verskyn dikwels op my dankbaarheidslys! Deur dienswerk, ontmoet ek lede wat hul pyn in vrede verander het deur ander te ondersteun wat geraak is deur 'n geliefde se alkoholisme. In Europa het vreemdelinge, ten spyte van die taalprobleem, vriende geword, en ek is met dieselfde warmte ontvang as wat ek tuis onder mede-lede ervaar het. Terwyl ek in Australië was, het ek mede-Al-Anon-lede ontmoet wat gelyk het asof hulle die Nalatenskap met stille waardigheid uiteleef.

Die onlangse besoek van verteenwoordigers van die Wêrelddienskantoor (WSO) aan GSO Indië het my nóg 'n blik gegee op hoe hierdie wêreldwye gemeenskap gegrond is op liefde, nederigheid en 'n gemeenskaplike doel. Daardie vriendskappe bly groei terwyl ons ons ervaring, krag en hoop oor vastelande heen deel. Dit maak my steeds 'n dankbare lid van die wêreldwye kameraadskap van Al-Anon en Alateen, diep verbind deur dieselfde beginsels wat ons lewens gered het. Ek wil aanhou om hand aan hand met baie ander op hierdie pad van herstel te stap en die boodskap van hulp en hoop uit te dra.

Deur Upvinder K., GSO Indië, Die Forum, April 2026

Herdruk met toestemming van Die Forum, Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc., Virginia Beach, Virginia, VSA.



When I think about freedom, and what it means to me today, I realise that there was a time in my life where I had lost more of it than I was even aware of.

During my wife's active alcoholism, there were certain freedoms that slowly disappeared – not all at once, but gradually, almost without me noticing. The freedom to be myself, to do the things I enjoyed, to choose what I was responsible for. It's only in recovery that I've been able to look back and see just how much of that I had given up.

The Freedom to Be Myself

Having a meaningful conversation with someone who is intoxicated is very difficult. Trying to make a point using logic... following a clear train of thought... that was something I never really managed to achieve when speaking to my wife during her active drinking days. The anger. The belligerence. It made me reluctant to engage in conversation in the first place. If I did engage, I would rehearse it in my head beforehand. “If I say this... she'll say that... I'll respond like this... she'll come back with that...” All of it designed to avoid confrontation. But what it actually did was silence me. What came out was a watered-down version of what I really wanted to say. It sounded like compromise, but it didn't feel like it. It felt like I was losing something. And eventually I realised what it was. I had lost the freedom to be myself. I had become a version of myself that was filtered, diluted, cautious. Almost transparent. A ghost of who I used to be, all to maintain some semblance of peace in our home.

The Freedom to Do What I Enjoy

I enjoy cooking. For me, it's therapeutic. It's completely different from what I do on a daily basis. It allows for creativity, for adaptation, taking something ordinary and making it your own through small changes. I used to batch cook on weekends. Open a bottle of Merlot. Put on some soft jazz. Completely immerse myself in the process. That combination, the cooking, the music, the wine, it created something that felt good for me. And slowly, that disappeared. Not because I couldn't cook without the wine. But because it no longer felt like a choice. It felt like something had been taken away from me. I remember thinking, “I don't ask for much, and now I can't even have a glass of wine while cooking because my wife's an alcoholic.” That resentment stayed with me for a long time. The cooking remained. But the enjoyment changed.

The Freedom to Choose What I Was Responsible For

For the most part, I took care of the financial side of our lives. Even when my wife was working, I carried most of the responsibility. In many ways, that was fine. That's how we functioned as a team. She handled what happened inside the home. I handled what happened outside of it. But as the alcoholism progressed, that balance

shifted. Slowly, I started taking on more. Not by choice. But out of necessity. Cleaning. Cooking. Running the household. And what used to feel like a partnership began to feel like something else. It didn't feel like a team anymore. It felt like I was carrying the burden on my own. With that came frustration. Resentment. And a growing sense that something wasn't right.

Coming into Al-Anon, I didn't immediately experience freedom. If anything, I felt the opposite. Even though the external situation had stabilised, internally I was still living in the same patterns. Still controlling. Still managing. Still carrying more than I needed to. I had lost my freedom externally, but I was still holding onto the behaviours that kept me stuck internally.

One Day at A Time (B-06), May 8 says that newcomers to Al-Anon often feel overwhelmed, confused and hopeless. That described me perfectly.

Step One, Letting Go of Control

The first real change for me came with Step One. Admitting that I was powerless over alcohol and more broadly, powerless over other people, went against everything I believed about how to deal with life. My instinct had always been to step in. To fix. To manage. To make things work.

On page 9 of Paths to Recovery (B-24), letting go of the illusion to control others and their addiction brings relief.

That word, **illusion**, was important. Because I had believed I was in control. In reality, I was exhausting myself trying to control things that were never mine to control. When I began to let go, even slightly, I felt it. Not a dramatic shift. But a quiet easing. Less mental noise. Less tension. A small sense of space and that was new.

Vulnerability, A Different Kind of Strength

To stop trying to force life into the shape I wanted required something I wasn't used to, vulnerability. Not the kind of vulnerability I had avoided for years but a quieter, more honest version. The willingness to admit, “I don't have the answers”, “I can't fix this”, “I need help”. For most of my life, I had associated strength with certainty. With having a plan. With being the one others could rely on. But in Al-Anon, I began to see that strength could also look like openness. Like honesty. Like being willing to sit in uncertainty without trying to control the outcome. And that was uncomfortable at first. But it was also freeing.

Changing My Thinking

One of the biggest changes for me was understanding that freedom doesn't come from changing other people. It comes from changing myself. That wasn't an easy

concept to accept. Over time, I saw the truth in it.

One Day at A Time, August 11 says that despair and frustration ease when I change the attitudes *in myself* that keep causing me pain. That meant looking at my expectations, my reactions, my need to control. Gradually, I began to change those. Not perfectly. But consistently.

Learning to Be Myself Again

One of the greatest gifts of Al-Anon has been rediscovering the freedom to be myself.

April 20 in the Courage to Change (B-16) says that I'm learning it's safe to be myself in Al-Anon.

For a long time, I didn't feel safe. So, I adapted. I filtered what I said. I held back what I felt. But in the rooms, I heard people speak honestly. About fear. About anger. About confusion. I recognised myself in those shares. I started small. Sharing a little. Being a little more honest. As I did, I realised, nothing bad happened. In fact, I felt more connected. Less alone. I began to reclaim the freedom to be myself again.

Receiving Help

Another change for me was learning to receive help. For years, I was the one giving help. That was my role. But receiving help meant admitting I needed it. And that required humility. It required letting go of the idea that I had to carry everything myself. Another realisation was when I close myself off, I don't just block pain, I block support. When I open up, even a little, I create space for both.

A Higher Power

Developing a relationship with a Higher Power has been a key part of my recovery. What I appreciated about Al-Anon is that it allows me to define that in a way that makes sense to me.

January 13 in Courage to Change says that Al-Anon gives me spiritual freedom by helping me develop my own understanding of God.

That freedom allowed me to begin trusting something beyond myself. To let go of the idea that everything depended on me. And over time, that trust has grown.

Letting Go of Guilt

Another area where I found freedom was in letting go of guilt. Guilt about things I had said. Things I had done. Things I wished I had done differently.

August 29 in Courage to Change says guilt keeps me from fully living in the present.

Holding onto guilt was keeping me stuck in the past. Working the Steps gave me a way to begin letting that go. With that came more freedom.

HOPE

Today, when I think about freedom, I see it very differently. Before Al-Anon, I thought freedom meant: Other people changing. Circumstances improving. Today, I understand that freedom is internal.

Personal Freedom

One Day at A Time, September 25, says Personal freedom means being free to be myself and live my own life. And that has changed how I live.

Living One Day at a Time

I no longer try to solve everything at once. I focus on today. August 29 in Courage to Change says that I can meet challenges with confidence one day at a time. And that has changed how I live.

Freedom to Live My Own Life

Perhaps the greatest hope I have today is this, I am learning to live my own life. Not one shaped by fear or control but one grounded in honesty, acceptance and connection. That doesn't mean everything is perfect. It just means I have tools. I have support. I have a program that works.

What Freedom Looks Like Today

When I look back at those freedoms I lost, the freedom to be myself, to do the things I enjoy, and to choose what I'm responsible for, I can see now how Al-Anon has helped me begin to reclaim each of them. Not with the snap of a finger, rather in a way that feels real and sustainable.

The Freedom to Be Myself

Today, I don't rehearse conversations the way I used to. I don't try to anticipate every possible reaction before I speak. I'm learning to say what I mean in a way that is honest, but also respectful. Not every conversation goes smoothly but it does mean I show up as myself. Not a filtered version. Not a watered-down version. And that, for me, is freedom.

The Freedom to Do What I Enjoy

I still cook, still find it therapeutic. What's changed is not just what I do, it's how I experience it. The resentment has eased. The sense that something was taken from me has softened. Today, I have more acceptance. More choice. More awareness of what I can and cannot control. That allows me to enjoy things again, maybe not in exactly the same way as before, but in a way that is mine. For me, is another form of freedom.

The Freedom to Choose What I'm Responsible For

This has probably been one of the biggest changes for me. Today, I understand something I didn't understand before, I am not responsible for everything. I am responsible for myself, my choices, my actions, my responses.

Paths to Recovery (B-24), page 10 reminds us that trying to control others makes us lose control of our own lives.

That has lifted a burden I carried for a long time. It doesn't mean I don't care. It means I care in a healthier way, with boundaries, with clarity. That has brought a level of peace I didn't have before.

Freedom Today

When I think about freedom today, it's no longer something abstract. It's something I experience in very practical ways, in how I speak, in how I spend my time, in what I take responsibility for and none of it came from changing someone else. It came from changing myself. One day at a time.

There's a line in Courage to Change August 29 that says, "Life can either be a burden and a chore or a challenge and a joy."

For a while, life felt like a burden. Today it feels more like a challenge. Sometimes even a joy and that is the freedom that Al-Anon has given me.

By Eddie, Cape Area, April 2026

CAL quotes reprinted with permission of Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc.



I have been in Alateen regularly for eight years. My dad is in A.A. and my mom is in Al-Anon. Even though we don't have active alcoholism in our home, my family thinks it's important for all of us to be in recovery. I think we have a pretty positive family.

I have learned how to be a service-oriented person from my parents and my Alateen groups. At my Alateen meetings, I like to set up the room and get the books. We rotate being the Chairperson and picking the topic.

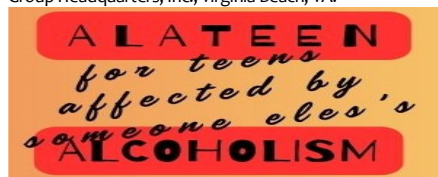
Some of the kids in my Alateen group live in homes like mine where nobody drinks. Some of the kids have parents who are still having troubles. At our meetings, we read from our literature and talk about ways to feel better about ourselves and our lives. We tell new members that alcoholism is a family disease, and that they didn't cause it, they can't control it, and they can't cure it.

During our meetings, we focus on a topic, like feelings, slogans, the Steps, Traditions, or a sharing from our Alateen literature. Then we share what we are doing well and what we need to work on. Next, we share our "Happies and Crappies," and we end with our

“Gratitudes.” Our meetings go quickly, and we have fun. Parents might think we are talking about them, but we really focus on ourselves and our own problems. I notice that I always feel better after I go to a meeting.

By Anonymous, The Forum, April 2023

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Alateen is for teenage relatives and friends of alcoholics. Alateen is part of Al-Anon Family Groups. For information about Alateen meetings contact the Area office or the Alateen coordinator.

Office contact details:

Email alanonct@iafrica.com,

Tel 0215954517, WhatsApp 0661580234

Although you cannot stop anyone else from drinking, you can get support for yourself in an Alateen meeting.

Although you cannot stop anyone else from drinking, you can get support for yourself in Alateen meetings.

ALATEEN

Hope and Help for Young People who are the Relatives and Friends of a Problem Drinker

Alateen, part of the Al-Anon Family Groups, is a fellowship of young people whose lives have been affected by alcoholism in a family member or close friend. We help each other by sharing our experience, strength and hope.

When THURSDAYS **Time** 6 - 7PM **Where** ON LINE

WhatsApp 084 502 2542 for login details.
Age group: 12 to 17 year olds
Al-Anon helpline 086 125 2666
Visit www.alanon.org.za for more information.

Concept Five – The Right of Appeal

"The rights of appeal and petition protect minorities and ensure that they be heard."

The Twelve Concepts help me work with others in unity and humility. When I apply them, I experience less control, more cooperation, and deeper spiritual growth.

Service – Concept Five reminds me that minority opinions deserve to be heard. This protects unity and prevents misuse of authority.

- Encourages open communication
- Protects against domination
- Helps resolve conflicts respectfully
- Builds trust

Home – At home, Concept Five helps me listen when others feel unheard. It promotes understanding and fairness.

- Encourages respectful disagreement
- Helps resolve misunderstandings
- Builds emotional safety
- Strengthens relationships

Community – In the community, Concept Five reminds me to value differing views. It supports fairness and justice.

- Encourages respectful dialogue

- Protects minority voices
- Builds understanding

By Madelein O'B., Cape Area, February 2026

LITERATURE NEWS Conference Approved Literature (CAL) Cape Area Literature Colleen C. & Lauren S.

Visit the literature desk at upcoming events or the office to view specials and other literature available.



How Valuable Is Our Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual" (P-24/27)?

When I started attending Al-Anon, I certainly had no idea about the value of our Service Manual. I did not know I could consult it when I had questions about the basics of group meetings, needed clarification about an Al-Anon policy, wanted to know our Delegate's role in the World Service Conference, or desired to better understand one of our Concepts of Service. Who knew all that information is contained in our Service Manual? I sure didn't!

As I continued attending meetings and became involved in service as part of my recovery, I discovered that the Service Manual is a great resource for me as well as for every Al-Anon and Alateen member. "It gives a clear and concise picture of the Al-Anon fellowship, its purpose and functions, and how it helps us to resolve group problems and maintain unity" (p.1).

My home group kept a copy to reference when needed.

The Service Manual contains four distinct sections, formerly published as separate books:

- **"Al-Anon and Alateen Groups at Work"** – provides a framework within which each group can develop and grow.
- **"Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies"** – reflects policy statements that grew out of questions and experiences from the Al-Anon fellowship worldwide.
- **"World Service Handbook"** – explains how Al-Anon is held together worldwide, how it is structured, and how our trusted servants can best function within our structure.
- **"Al-Anon's Twelve Concepts of Service"** – deals with the "why" of our service structure so that the valuable experience of the past, and the lessons drawn from that experience, can never be forgotten or lost.

Two other excellent resources are also contained in the Service Manual:

- The **"Al-Anon World Service Conference Charter"** – a body of principles and

relationships through which Al-Anon as a whole can function.

- An Appendix with the 2003 Alateen Motion from the Board of Trustees – a resource for all Al-Anon members that provides a deeper understanding of the Alateen Policy, including the safeguards that apply to both in-person and online meetings.

What does the Service Manual mean to us?

To our groups? To our Areas? To Al-Anon worldwide? I invite you to explore for yourself! The 2026–2029 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual is available for purchase in print. It is also available as a free downloadable PDF

<https://al-anon.org/pdf/P2427.pdf>

By Suzanne M., Associate Director – World Service Events & History, The Forum, May 2026

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You can buy a copy of the Service Manual from the local Al-Anon office or visit the website to download an electronic version <https://al-anon.org/for-members/members-resources/manuals-and-guidelines/service-manual/>.

PUBLIC OUTREACH Cape Area Public Outreach Janice C. & Anita P.

June – Doctors, Hospitals, Rehabs

June is National Drug and Alcohol awareness month. The target this month is all health-related facilities: doctors' rooms, pharmacies, hospitals, rehabs, clinics. Also approach retirement homes, frail care units, nursing and medical training colleges. Make full use of this opportunity to have information tables at community events, rehabs, and wellness days. Be willing to join in organised community wellness days at clinics, hospitals, etc. Members are challenged to visit their doctor's office, pharmacy, rehabs and drop off literature.

Public outreach is each member's responsibility. Create an awareness that there is help for those affected by someone else's drinking.

Contact the Public Outreach Coordinator or the Area office to find out about public outreach literature.

WhatsApp: 066 158 0234

Area email: alanonct@iafrica.com

Website: www.alanon.org.za

Al-Anon Declaration

Let It Begin with Me

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

Serenity Prayer

God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can,
and wisdom to know the difference.

AFG CAPE AREA NOTICE BOARD

NEW SITE, NEW LOOK – Visit Al-Anon Family Groups South Africa's NEW website at <https://www.alanon.org.za/>

Visit Al-Anon Family Groups South Africa **NEW ONLINE BOOKSHOP** at <https://online.alanon.org.za/>

CAPE AREA OFFICE CONTACT DETAILS: Tel 0215954517/WhatsApp 0661580234 / Email alanonct@iafrica.com

WHERE DO I BUY CAL (CONFERENCE APPROVED LITERATURE)?

Order your literature by visiting the office, email alanonct@iafrica.com, telephonically on 021 595 4517 or 066 158 0234 or visit the online bookstore at <https://online.alanon.org.za/>. Payment options are direct deposit, EFT, Snapscan, or cash.

Visit the literature desk at upcoming events to view CAL available. Our friendly literature coordinators will be happy to speak to you.

IN-PERSON & ELECTRONIC MEETINGS

Visit <https://www.alanon.org.za/meetings/> for up-to-date meeting information. Inform the Area office of any changes in group's information. Please contact the office for more information.

UPCOMING EVENTS

SAVE THE DATE

MEETINGS

*AFG SA National Service Conference Thursday, 4 to 7 June 2026 (in person).

*Service Committee Saturday, 20 June 2026 at 9.30am (in person).

*Area Assembly Saturday, 18 July 2026 at 9.30am (electronic via Zoom).

RALLIES/CONVENTIONS

*Regional Service Seminar (RSS)

Date: Saturday, 29 August 2026

Registration fee: R300 includes lunch.

🚫 Limited spaces available - Book your seat by contacting the office: 0215954517, WhatsApp 0661580234, Email alanonct@iafrica.com. More information to follow. 🙌

*AA West Coast Spring Rally (with Al-Anon & Alateen Participation)

Date: 25 to 27 September 2026

See flyer in the next issue of the Echo.

Theme: Moving forward in unity

Venue: Schoenstatt Retreat and Conference Centre, Constantia

Theme: A Design for Living

Venue: Weskus School of Skills, Saldanha Road, Saldanha

FUNDRAISERS / GROUP NEWS

Is your group celebrating a special occasion, holding a combined meeting, arranging a fundraiser? Advertise here. Email details to alanonct@iafrica.com or WhatsApp to 066 158 0234. Visit <https://www.alanon.org.za/meetings/> for meeting details.

*AA Stellenbosch Group 49th At Home Celebration on Thursday, 11 June 2026 at 7.30pm.

Venue: Baptist Church, 6 Merriman Ave, Stellenbosch

AA and Al-Anon speakers. **Please support.** See flyer on page 1.

NEXT ISSUE

ISSUE 06 OF 2026

Send Your Shares

Submissions due by 17 June 2026

For the next issue the topics are

June's slogan, '**Keep It Simple**,' offers a gentle reminder to clear away mental clutter, let go of overthinking, and resist the urge to complicate what is already difficult. For those affected by someone else's alcoholism, it can be easy to imagine worst-case scenarios, guess what others may be feeling, or become caught up in complicated attempts to fix things. This simple slogan invites us to pause, return to the present moment, and find calm in what is true right now.

How has 'Keep It Simple' supported your serenity in daily life?

"...When we 'Keep It Simple,' we try to take things at face value, looking at what is actually happening rather than the 50 things that might or might not follow." *How Al-Anon Works (B-32), page 66*

- 36 Principles – How has Step 6 Tradition 6 or Concept 6 helped in your recovery process?

You can share your thoughts by emailing alanonct@iafrica.com or sending a WhatsApp message to 0823422102.

Send your suggestions to alanonct@iafrica.com. How long should my sharing be? <https://alanon.org/pdf/writing-guide-for-the-forum-F1.pdf>. Most sharings are 300 to 400 words long but can range from a sentence or two to a 1,200-word personal recovery story.

TRADITION SEVEN ~ Every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

We have no dues or fees; according to our Seventh Tradition, "Every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions." This Tradition suggests that Al-Anon is fully self-supporting at all levels of service – in our groups, Area Office, and General Service Office. We contribute in gratitude for what we have received from Al-Anon. We do this through our own voluntary contributions by passing the basket to cover group expenses, including rent or platform fees, purchase of literature, and support of our service arms. A reminder to all members to pay group contributions on a regular basis. The Area needs every member's contribution to continue to keep its doors open. Every member and group are part of the solution. "If you have received help, and no doubt have, why not give to further the cause for the peace and serenity of future members." —Anne B., Al-Anon Cofounder.

Bank: ABSA, Branch No: 632005 Type: Cheque
Acc Name: Al-Anon Family Group Cape Area
Account No: 407 321 5579 Ref: GC, Group, Name

SnapScan

<https://pos.snapscan.io/qr/uLjixXn>

