

Loners' Letter • **Gauteng & Districts** •

Together we can make it

July 2026

Dear Loners

I grew up in an alcoholic home where things could become volatile very quickly. Even after my parents divorced, the fighting did not stop. The conflict continued, and so did the bullying among the siblings. I was the youngest of five children, and my sibling just older than me seemed to hate me. I felt bullied and attacked much of the time.

Growing up, I often felt as if I was under surveillance, waiting for the next criticism, argument, or crisis. My mother also struggled financially, and from a very young age I became aware that money was a problem. I learned to be responsible before I was ready. By age ten, I had developed shingles from stress. Looking back, I can see how much anxiety I was carrying as a child.

Those experiences shaped me. They taught me to keep my radar switched on at all times, always looking for danger, conflict, or problems that needed fixing. In my family, we coped with stress through fighting, swearing, teasing, and a warped sense of humour. We did not have healthy tools to manage fear, uncertainty, or difficult emotions.

As I grew older, I realised that I was not actually coping with anxiety – I was hiding it. My anxiety often came out as reactivity. I struggled to pause before responding. I felt an urgency to act, fix, defend, explain, or control. Looking back, I can see that this behaviour has cost me a great deal. I am still grieving some of those losses today: friendships, groups, relationships, and connections that were damaged by my inability to slow down and respond rather than react.

In Al-Anon, we learn to pause and to create space between ourselves and a problem. I have been in the program for many years, but knowing this intellectually did not automatically change my behaviour. Recently, after the loss of another important relationship and conflict with colleagues, I was forced to take a hard look at myself.

What I saw was painful. I realised that my anxiety was not only hurting me; it was affecting the people around me. My behaviour could be unloving, unkind, rushed, disorderly, and excluding. My intentions were often good, but my delivery pushed people away.

Today I am learning a different way.

I have learned that I need to wait before responding when I am emotionally activated. I try to give myself twenty-four hours. I say the Serenity Prayer. I ask myself whether I need to respond at all. If I do respond, I try to ask whether what I am about to say is kind, thoughtful, inspiring, necessary, and honest.

I am learning to stand up for myself without standing against my fellows.

I am learning to keep the focus on myself because I often become anxious when I am focused on what everyone else is doing. When I find myself in someone else's business, I usually find fear underneath it.

Today my tools are simple. I pray. I attend meetings. I call my sponsor. I read literature. I hand situations over to my Higher Power. I remind myself that things take time, and time takes time. I can get off other people's backs and get on with my own life.

Where I am today, I feel called to Step Six. I want to become entirely willing to have the defects of anxiety-driven control and reactivity removed. I want to respond to life in a way that I can respect. I want my actions to reflect my values rather than my fears.

My sponsor once said that anxiety has only one real purpose: to see whether a lion is chasing me. If there is no lion, I can let it go.

That simple idea has helped me enormously.

I have also learned not to fight my anxiety quite so much. Anxiety is part of me. The same trait that creates fear also creates passion, caring, commitment, and concern for others. Today, instead of pushing it away, I sometimes imagine my anxiety as a frightened little girl. I welcome her. I sit her on my knee. I listen to her. I reassure her that she is safe.

The hope I have today is that recovery is possible. I do not have to be ruled by fear. I do not have to react to every thought, feeling, or situation. I can pause. I can pray. I can trust the process. I can let go and let God.

Progress, not perfection, is enough.

Best wishes

Anonymous

▪ Tradition Seven ▪

"Every group ought to be self-supporting, declining outside contributions."

In Al-Anon we support ourselves. Please contribute towards our operating expenses so that we can continue to help ourselves and others

**Al-Anon Family Groups, Gauteng & Districts Area Office 28 Hennie Alberts Rd, Brackenhurst
Alberton 1448 SA Office Hours:** Mon, Wed, Fri - 9 am to 2 pm. **Phone:** +27 (0)11 867 0731
WhatsApp: 063 270 2535 **Email:** alanontvl@absamail.co.za **Website:** www.alanon.org.za

▪ How Al-Anon Works ▪

Al-Anon is a group of people who have been affected by the drinking of a family member or friend. We share our experiences with others like ourselves and share what has or has not worked for us. Having a common experience enables us to have insight into how we are being affected or have been affected, and what has helped us.

Al-Anon Meetings: In-person meetings and Zoom meetings are held throughout the week in South Africa and internationally. [Click Here to Find A Meeting](#) or phone our office on 063 270 2535.

Alateen Meetings: We hold Zoom meetings for young people (9 – 17 years) who have been affected by someone else's drinking. We help them to understand that they are not at fault and help them to keep a healthy focus on themselves and their own responsibilities.

Al-Anon Books: We have a range of Al-Anon books which detail the experiences of other Al-Anon members and what they have found works for them. Some suggested starter books are:

- *How Al-Anon Works for Families and Friends of Alcoholics* [B32ZA]
- *Courage to Change* [B16ZA]
- *Discovering Choices* [B30]
- *Alateen - Hope for Children of Alcoholics* [B03ZA]

These books and others can be ordered from the Gauteng Al-Anon office: alanontvl@absamail.co.za

Free Downloads: We also have a range of Free Downloads available on the Al-Anon website. <https://www.alanon.org.za/free-downloads/>

Al-Anon Information Services

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