

Loners' Letter ▪ **Gauteng & Districts** ▪

Together we can make it

May 2026

Dear Loners

I have just read about Concept Four: *Participation is the key to harmony*. I know the Twelve Steps help me find and heal myself as I work them, but I was beginning to feel the need for some help with my broader family and those at work.

What is participation? And why should it matter to me? My whole life I avoided joining in anything. To participate means involvement, engagement, and contribution. I thought about all the times I had been part of a group, committees, groups of friends, family get-togethers. Whether I liked it or not, I was part of lots of groups.

I didn't much like it. I preferred to do my own stuff, then hand the rest of it over to others and get out of there. That's how my job worked. On some projects I had to see things through till the end. I did this with tough leadership and very strict guidelines, so everyone knew where they stood. It didn't build friendships. I didn't actually know how to be a friend even though I knew how to run a business.

I wanted to participate more in groups, and I wanted harmony. I was tired of fighting all the time. I just had to learn how to do it, because it doesn't come naturally to me.

So hearing about Concept Four: *Participation is the key to harmony* sent me to my trusty Al-Anon daily readers. In "*Hope for Today*" [B-27] I found more about participation being the key to harmony. On page 192 I read: "I feel comfortable participating in Al-Anon meetings because in them I find an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect."

That's true, I thought. Did I need to replicate that atmosphere of "trust and mutual respect" in the other non Al-Anon groups I am part of? Could I be "the change in my life that I wish to see"?

I had an interesting opportunity to try that this week. I had to arrange a work function and there were a few people who were very negative about it, and very critical of the other people who were supposed to be involved. How could I use Concept Four to help me here? The reading in *Hope for Today* p. 192 said: "As always, Al-Anon teaches me to pray, look at myself and my attitudes, and then take action".

This sounds like the 3A's to me... Awareness, Acceptance, and Action. So I looked at my own awareness of what was going on. There was bickering and lack of tolerance in the group. I had to accept this. It was where we were at. Denial would not help. Having accepted it, I looked at my own part in this bickering. Was I doing anything to encourage or support the criticisms?

Yes, actually, I was. I was talking about things outside of the group, to my partner at home. Did I do this at Al-Anon? No, absolutely no. So why was I doing it now? I was arguing. I wasn't listening to the others. I had fixed ideas. Looking at myself was disconcerting, disappointing, but enlightening. I knew what to do. I had to stop doing the bad behaviour and start modeling the good.

I pretended our meeting was an Al-Anon meeting. I suggested, before we started, that everyone should have a chance to talk about their personal take on the issue for five minutes, without interruption, and without anyone giving advice. People could only talk about their own knowledge and experience, and I asked them not to speak for anyone else. When everyone had had a chance to talk, (participation) we could then talk about all the options, and see if we could reach some sort of agreement on how to move forward.

That opportunity for everyone to have their say had a huge impact.

At first I had to intervene once or twice, to gently stop the most outspoken from interrupting. I also had to encourage the shy ones to say their bit, and not to be too intimidated by the overbearing ones. It was harder than in an Al-Anon meeting, because no-one had months of role-modelling of how to do it. Even though we didn't get it quite right, and I had to take deep breaths every so often and ask my Higher Power to help me find the right words and keep me calm, generous and focused, we found a resolution.

One person came up to me afterwards and said, "Hey that's a great solution!" What he was actually saying was "*Participation is the key to harmony*". I felt so much more kindly towards the group as the process got under way. I felt so much more relaxed as we got into the swing of things.

A few times during the meeting, things threatened to go pear-shaped, but I remembered the sharing from page 192... "For me this action means detaching from people's behaviour and giving them the same acceptance, consideration and respect for which I long... When I don't expect perfection from others or from myself, I am free to participate and be a part of life."

None of us is perfect. I want to let go of the petty bickering and fault-finding that has characterised my life thus far. The *Hope for Today* reading also says, "A sense of belonging is as necessary to my spiritual health as air is to my lungs." So Concept Four is helping me to breathe life into my spirit and into my relationships with others... As the person in my group said, "Hey that's a great solution!"

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 Information Services

Bank Details

ABSA Bank, Oakdene, Current Account No: 1118881482 Branch code 632 005.

Please send proof of payment to alanontvl@absamail.co.za and use your **name, group and/or event** as the reference.

Yoco Payments

Please click on the link: <https://pay.yoco.com/AlAnonInformationService>

▪ 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/>

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