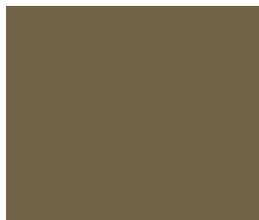


HELP AND HOPE

FOR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF ALCOHOLICS



AL-ANON

FACES ALCOHOLISM
2020



I Know That I Am Not Alone

The Safest Place I Have Found

Finding Hope in Al-Anon

FREE
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Statement of Purpose

Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism includes articles by Al-Anon members and professionals who share their personal perspective on how Al-Anon Family Groups can help people troubled by someone else's drinking.

Al-Anon cooperates with therapists, counselors, and other professionals, but is not affiliated with and does not endorse any organization or professional. Articles written by Al-Anon members do not speak for Al-Anon as a whole; they only reflect the author's personal experience with Al-Anon Family Groups.

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Anonymity in This Publication

In keeping with Al-Anon's tradition of anonymity, stories from members do not include their full names. No one whose picture appears in this publication is a member of Al-Anon or Alateen.

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Dear Reader,

Walking through the doors of my first Al-Anon meeting, I was concerned I was different and wouldn't belong. I didn't have a spouse or boyfriend who was drinking. I was not trying to cure someone else's alcoholism. I knew I was causing my problems, but I had lost all hope of finding a solution.

What I didn't know then, but gratefully understand today, is that I grew up in the family disease of alcoholism. Since alcohol had always been part of everyday life, I did not suspect it as the problem. The alcoholism in my family background, however, had provided the foundation for negative patterns of behavior in my life, which haunted me until I came to Al-Anon Family Groups.

It was my counsellor's recommendation that I "find support from people other than those involved in my immediate drama" that led me to Al-Anon. She felt that I had grown significantly through counselling but that I needed a support system to sustain my efforts between sessions. So, I researched and found the questions on the Al-Anon website to which I answered mostly, "Yes." But, still, I was concerned I wouldn't belong.

What I discovered at that first meeting in Canada and throughout my later experience at meetings around the globe is that Al-Anon Family Groups is a diverse fellowship of people seeking help and support in living with another's alcoholism. Groups consist of grandparents, parents, spouses, and siblings, along with others who have been affected by the disease. We all share the message of hope that comes from practicing the Twelve Steps and being of service to others.

Today my life is full of hope. My commitment to using the principles of the program has enabled me to have a vibrant career, which led me to become the Executive Director of Al-Anon Family Groups. Al-Anon tools also helped me improve my parenting skills. The program is designed to help with all aspects of life.

If you are wondering whether you belong in Al-Anon, why not come to a meeting—be it in your local community, online, or by phone? Face-to-face Al-Anon meetings occur globally and electronic meetings are available 24 hours a day—and they are all free. Members will welcome you and encourage you to decide for yourself whether the program can help you with your circumstances.

Most sincerely,

Vali F.

Executive Director, Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc.



I Know That I Am Not Alone

By Ben D., Washington

The last year of my life has been like a roller coaster—both physically and emotionally. At times, I have felt like it's me against the world. I have felt angry, confused, and very alone. About a month ago, however, I decided to start attending Al-Anon. I went looking for answers to all my problems. I was hoping someone would tell me what to do. What I found was so much more.

I found a group of people who knew what I was going through without ever meeting me before I spoke. They never offered opinions about what I

should do; they just listened. In turn, I listened to their stories and found comfort and hope that I thought I could never feel again. Now I know that I am not alone. If I ever feel that I cannot control my thoughts or anxieties, I find a meeting. They are everywhere. And in an hour or so, I feel better. It was awkward and intimidating at first to walk into a room with people I had never met and share some of my deepest thoughts and feelings, but it helped. I found people who cared about me and my recovery.

IF I

ever feel that I cannot control my thoughts or anxieties, I find a meeting.



Al-Anon and Alateen —Where You Can Find Help

Al-Anon is a mutual support program with meetings facilitated by members. Our program is for people who have been or are being affected by someone else's drinking.

Alateen meetings are for young people, usually teenagers, who have been affected by a relative or friend's drinking. While Alateen members conduct their own meetings, adult Group Sponsors are there for safety and guidance.

Explaining the Disease to a Young Child

"We may not want to think that our children know what is going on, but they often do know something is terribly wrong. Children have an amazing capacity for dealing with the truth. Shrouding the illness in mystery and lies is far more frightening than having a down-to-earth talk about the disease of alcoholism.

"In explaining the disease to young children, it is helpful to compare it to a chronic illness that they know. We can point out that the alcoholic is sick and doesn't mean all the things said while drinking. We should be careful to explain to our children that they are in no way responsible for the drinking and remind them that they are loved."
From the Al-Anon pamphlet, *How Can I Help My Children?* (P-9).



To Those Who Came Before Me

By Julie B., Florida

It feels good to be able to look back to my first Al-Anon meeting and see how far I have come.

When my son was in a rehabilitation center, I felt such relief to hear that he had a disease. Once I heard that, my mind and my heart opened to the possibility of hope and a brighter future. It was joyous news to hear that I didn't cause his alcoholism, I can't cure it, and I can't control it. Someone gave me a *One Day at a Time in Al-Anon* (B-6) daily reader and a meeting schedule, and encouraged me to attend more meetings.

That is exactly what I did, and it's what I continue to do with the encouragement of those who came before me. These members continue to give of themselves by offering their unconditional love and sharing their own experience, strength, and hope. Now it is my turn to share my own experience, strength, and hope and to embrace newcomers who walk through the doors of Al-Anon.



IT WAS

joyous news to hear that I didn't cause his alcoholism.

It Truly Is a Family Disease

By Timothy B., California

The term "adult children of alcoholics" confused me at first. It was only after I had been in Al-Anon for nearly a year that I realized how the effects of alcoholism could extend beyond someone's immediate relationship with an alcoholic. Although my parents did drink alcohol on occasion, I never considered them to be alcoholics. What I did learn was that, when my parents were children, their parents were alcoholics; therefore, my parents were adult children of alcoholics. The grandparents I knew were not drinkers, but their earlier drinking had affected my parents greatly, and those effects were passed along to me.

For instance, I had a need to try to take care of everybody and everything. I also had a superficial glibness that I used to deflect serious situations, as well as a tendency to shy away from expressions of love while expressing anger with ease. Furthermore, I learned to do everything myself because that was the only way to ensure things got done right, or so I thought. However, through Al-Anon, I not only recognized these traits in my parents and myself; I understood where they came from and how to correct them. I will always be a work in progress, but I continue to get better.

What “Anonymity” Is All About

Anonymity helps keep the emphasis on principles that can help solve personal problems, rather than on the personal situations that might be part of the problem. No one’s social status, professional standing, or level of education matters at an Al-Anon meeting.

Confidentiality ensures that members can speak from the heart at an Al-Anon meeting, because everything said at the meeting *stays* at the meeting.

Members don’t have to worry that someone from the Al-Anon meeting will approach them in a public place and start discussing their personal, confidential problems.



If the Al-Anon Meeting Is Held at a Church...

Al-Anon meetings include people of different religious affiliations, as well as individuals without any spiritual beliefs. An Al-Anon meeting held in a church is not connected to that church. Al-Anon is a spiritual program but is not religious or a part of any church or religion, just as it is not part of any other private or public organization. The location of the meeting place is irrelevant to the content and discussion at the meeting. Groups simply rent rooms to hold their meetings. Many Al-Anon groups meet at libraries, hospitals, and other facilities.

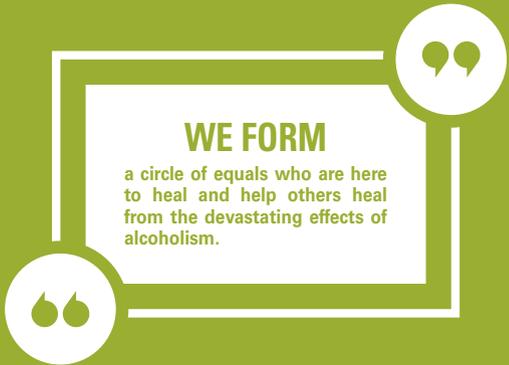
A Disease of Uniqueness

By Josh P., South Carolina

Mine is a disease, at least in part, of uniqueness. I came into Al-Anon in my early twenties at a time when I had just begun to admit to myself and others that I am gay. I knew after my first meeting that Al-Anon was for me because, as mixed up and shaky as I was having grown up in the disease of alcoholism and addiction, I found great comfort in the hugs and the love I received from the other members. However, I was not sure that they would feel the same way about me if they knew I am gay. So, I swapped pronouns when I talked about my dating life—"she" instead of "he." Growing up, I felt different and alone, and the insanity of my home life only helped to perpetuate those feelings.

The longer I stayed and began to heal from the effects of having lived all my life with the disease, though, I realized that, if I was going to continue to grow, I was going to have to become completely honest. So, I shared my secret with my first good friend in the program. She looked at me, smiled, gave me a big hug, and said, "Sweetie, I know, and I love you just for being you." At that time, I was still learning who I was and to accept myself exactly as I was, so her acceptance meant the world to me.

In the years since then, Al-Anon has become a place where I feel safe, accepted, and welcome. In turn, I see it as my responsibility to other members and particularly newcomers to greet them with that same unconditional love that was given to me. Interestingly, I find that the more I give, the more I get back. Today, I am grateful to be able to truly be myself—one of many other members. I am no better or less than anyone else. We form a circle of equals who are here to heal and help others heal from the devastating effects of alcoholism.

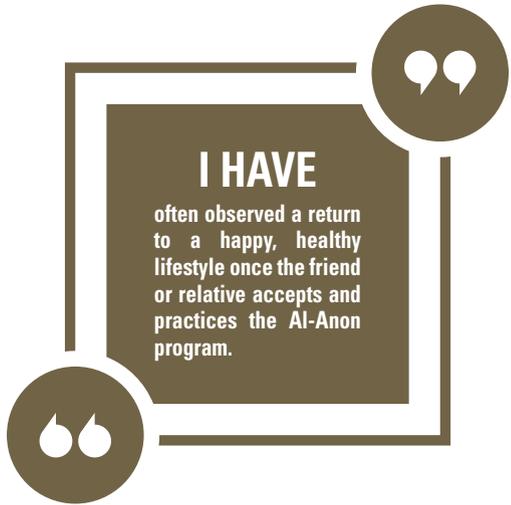


Finding Hope in Al-Anon

By David L. Nelson, M.D., D.Sc., Board Certified in Pediatrics,
Allergy and Immunology, Virginia

Alcoholism is a chronic, progressive primary brain disorder with characteristic signs and symptoms. In the progression of continued drinking despite mounting negative consequences, alcoholics reach a point where drinking alcohol is no longer a choice, but a matter of life or death. At this point, the alcoholic has progressed beyond human aid and nothing much matters in his/her life but the next drink.

However, I have observed that those troubled by another person's drinking can usually benefit from Al-Anon. I have even seen distraught families reunited following the acceptance and practice of the principles suggested in Al-Anon's program of personal recovery. Family members often don't understand that alcoholism, like many other diseases including cancer and asthma, is not a matter of choice or self-control. Relatives and friends attempt to control the alcoholic's drinking or help the alcoholic control the drinking in a variety of ways. Attempting to manage, manipulate, or control the alcoholic leads to progressively greater suffering and confusion. The results are anxiety, anger, depression, shame, guilt, low self-esteem, and difficulty with interpersonal relationships.



So, while the untreated alcoholic suffers from an unhealthy, dysfunctional, maladaptive relationship with alcohol, so too the affected, untreated relative or friend suffers from an unhealthy, dysfunctional, maladaptive relationship with their alcoholic loved one. This entanglement is usually so complex that the loved one cannot detach from these relationships on their own.

Fortunately, however, I have often observed a return to a happy, healthy lifestyle once the friend or relative accepts and practices the Al-Anon program. Members often find others in meetings who are experiencing similar difficulties with the alcoholics in their lives as they share their experience, strength, and hope. Further, reading Al-Anon literature and gathering support and guidance from more experienced members further aid members in their recovery. I recommend Al-Anon to relatives and friends of alcoholics because it works.



How Do I Know if Al-Anon Can Help Me?

Heavy drinkers commonly say that their drinking is not as serious a problem as some people think. People who are close to them also tend to minimize how seriously the drinker's alcohol abuse has affected *them*. They are trying to keep things as normal as possible under conditions that are sometimes unbearable.

These questions can help you decide if you could benefit from visiting an Al-Anon meeting.

- Do you worry about how much someone else drinks?
- Do you have money problems because of someone else's drinking?
- Do you tell lies to cover up for someone else's drinking?
- Do you feel that if the drinker cared about you, he or she would stop drinking to please you?
- Are plans frequently upset or canceled because of the drinker?
- Do you make threats, such as, "If you don't stop drinking, I'll leave you"?
- Are you afraid to upset someone for fear it will set off a drinking bout?
- Have you been hurt or embarrassed by a drinker's behavior?
- Do you search for hidden alcohol?
- Have you refused social invitations out of fear or anxiety?
- Do you feel like a failure because you can't control someone else's drinking?
- Do you think that if the drinker stopped drinking, your other problems would be solved?

If you answered "yes" to one or more of these questions, Al-Anon or Alateen may be helpful.



I Felt Welcomed

By Bev., Ohio

Like many others, I came to my first meeting at the recommendation of a counselor. I was filled with a feeling of nervousness in my stomach. *What if someone knows me?* I thought to myself. I walked into the room and was immediately greeted by an Al-Anon member. She sat by me and when the meeting was over, she told me to “Keep Coming Back.” I now know that, because every meeting is different, I needed to “Keep Coming Back” to find the meeting that was just right for me.

WHAT IF

someone knows me? I thought to myself.

My Professional Experience with Al-Anon

By Hugh A. King Jr., M.D., Board-Certified Psychiatrist, Louisiana

During my 53 years of working in mental health and addiction recovery, I have seen a number of changes and improvements in care. However, alcoholism continues to remain a huge problem, even though opiate drugs are getting most of the attention now. Alcoholism is much slower and more insidious when compared to opiate

addiction. Gradually we have become more aware of the imperative nature of whole-family recovery, whether the alcoholic is drinking or not. I try to reassure my patients that Al-Anon is a support group for families and loved ones of people who have alcohol problems. It does not necessarily mean that I think they are alcoholics.

Al-Anon has been and continues to be the foremost source of help for the family members of alcoholics. I tell them that it is crucial to understand that alcoholism is an illness. Unfortunately, many well-meaning family members attempt to help and take care of their alcoholic loved ones. These attempts, which seemed to be so helpful in the



early stages of the illness, eventually become counterproductive and lead to enabling and attempts to control amid an uncontrollable situation. This often leads to severe anxiety, depression, feelings of hopelessness, and stress in the family members. I try to impress upon them that they deserve a place where they can go and receive the proper information, love, and

support that they need. Furthermore, I try to impress on them the importance of taking care of themselves.

Al-Anon is a worldwide fellowship. There, they may learn that the disease is not their fault. It provides a safe environment for understanding how the disease has affected them and helps them embark on a path of personal growth. I also remind

them that it is crucial to continue in Al-Anon even if the alcoholic gets sober, separates, or even when there seems to be no hope. Moreover, I have noted that people who remain in Al-Anon over time seem to deal much better with stress and relationships, make better decisions, experience less anxiety and depression, and live much happier and more hopeful lives.



AL-ANON HAS

been and continues to be the foremost source of help for the family members of alcoholics.

What Is the Difference between “Open” and “Closed” Meetings?

Anyone troubled by someone else’s drinking is welcome to attend any Al-Anon meeting, whether it is listed as “open” or “closed” in a local meeting schedule.

A meeting listed as “closed” is only for families and friends concerned about someone’s drinking.

A meeting listed as “open” welcomes families, friends, and observers. This includes guests, students, and interested professionals who want to observe an Al-Anon meeting.

Observers attending one of these Al-Anon meetings are requested to abide by the principles that guide participation in all Al-Anon Family Group meetings, especially the principles of confidentiality and anonymity that protect the friends and families of alcoholics.



How To Find an Al-Anon or Alateen Meeting

Visit al-anon.org or call 1-888-4AL-ANON (1-888-425-2666) for local and electronic meeting information.

When Someone Close to You Drinks Too Much...

Sometimes the problem drinker is a spouse or partner. Sometimes parents are concerned about their son’s or daughter’s drinking. Sometimes the drinker is (or was) a parent, another relative, a coworker, or a friend.



No Appointments Are Necessary

Anyone concerned about someone else’s drinking is welcome to attend any meeting. Reservations or referrals are not required.

There Are No Dues or Fees

Members make voluntary contributions because each group is self-supporting and declines outside contributions. Most groups pass a basket at each meeting to help cover routine costs, such as renting the meeting room, supporting Al-Anon services, and buying literature.



Al-Anon Members Report Improved Well-Being

According to the most recent Al-Anon Membership Survey, members reported, on average, an 88 percent improvement in their assessment of their mental health from before they began attending Al-Anon meetings. Visit www.al-anon.org/surveyresults for the complete report from the most recent Al-Anon Membership Survey.

Someone Close to Me Has a Drug Problem

Al-Anon Family Groups have one focus: to help friends and families of alcoholics. Al-Anon's most recent membership survey reported, however, that 35 percent of Al-Anon members *first* came to Al-Anon Family Groups because of a friend or relative who had a drug problem. The survey also showed that 78 percent of these members eventually came to realize that someone's drinking had also negatively affected their lives.

Find Al-Anon Family Groups on Facebook by searching for Al-Anon WSO (English), Los Grupos de Familia Al-Anon OSM (Spanish), and Les Groupes Familiaux Al-Anon BSM (French).

I Had No Idea My Wife Had a Drinking Problem

By Pat Q., Montana

Before I came to Al-Anon, my wife's family confronted me about some of my behavior that they didn't appreciate. When they had barbecues, they didn't like that I wouldn't drink with their friends. They accused me of being antisocial and rude. I wondered what was wrong with me. My impression was my wife and her family were normal drinkers, and the person who had the drinking problem was me.

When a counselor sent me to my first Al-Anon meeting, I attended

without knowing why. The meeting leader said I was welcome and to "Keep Coming Back" until I knew for sure whether Al-Anon could help me. After I attended a few meetings, my wife asked what was going on. She said I seemed to be feeling better—not so depressed and lonely. She asked me where I'd been going in the evenings. I said a counselor had sent me to Al-Anon meetings, and I wanted our kids to start going to Alateen. I don't remember what she said, but



WHEN A

counselor sent me to my first Al-Anon meeting, I attended without knowing why.

within a couple of weeks, she started going to Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.).

I had no idea my wife had a drinking problem until she told me. When I said I'd only seen her drunk three or four times in the 18 years we'd been married, she said I'd never really seen her sober. She said she kept a constant level of alcohol in her bloodstream at all times. She said for her every day was like coming out of the dentist's office. She could drive, talk, and eat, but she couldn't feel anything.

Eventually, my wife told me the real reason why she went to A.A. She was afraid she was going to lose her kids. As a result, she became a lifelong member of Alcoholics Anonymous and has kept a very close relationship with our children. All of our lives have gotten better because a counselor recommended that I go to Al-Anon. I continue to benefit because so many members have invited me to "Keep Coming Back." I will always be grateful.



I Learned Self-Care through Alateen

By Sienna, Missouri

Before coming to Alateen, I thought taking care of myself was selfish. Whenever I woke my dad up so I could get to school on time, I thought I was being selfish. Reminding him that we needed dinner was being selfish. And even asking for my basic needs to be met seemed selfish. As my home life got worse, my need for Alateen grew. When I had to stop talking to my dad, I looked at it as self-care. When I had to ignore his texts, I saw it as self-care. When I went back on my own terms, it was out of self-care. Through Alateen, I've learned my needs are not selfish if they help me maintain my safety and sanity.

What Kind of “Answers” Will I Find in Al-Anon?

Al-Anon members find support and understanding as they share their experiences in applying the Al-Anon principles to their lives.

This peer-to-peer exchange helps them discover new choices and new ways of thinking about how to handle the effects of alcohol abuse. They do not give each other advice or specific direction.

Lasting Effects...

Even if active alcoholism is not in your life now, sometimes a relationship with a problem drinker can have long-lasting effects.

Al-Anon and Alateen members help each other understand and unravel the effects of someone else's drinking and offer an opportunity for healing and growth.

The Weight Finally Lifted

By Gerri D., British Columbia

I will never forget the words I heard at my first Al-Anon meeting. A member shared the three Cs regarding alcoholism: I didn't cause it; I can't control it; and I can't cure it. I had attended Al-Anon several years before when my children were young, but I thought I had no problem—my husband did. I left feeling it wasn't for me. I reached another pit of despair when I found I was the mother of an alcoholic and drug addict. So, there I was, at my first meeting again.

Those three Cs were amazing to me. With them, I felt like a ton of weight had been lifted from my shoulders. I felt so light and free and relieved. I continue to come back, share, and live my program. I am so grateful for Al-Anon, my serenity, and all my Al-Anon friends.



How Serious Does the Drinker's Problem Have To Be for Al-Anon To Help?

From the Al-Anon perspective, it doesn't matter whether the drinker is an alcoholic or not. What really matters is: Does the drinking bother *you*?



The Safest Place I Have Found

By Leslie E., Vermont

I walked into my first Al-Anon meeting on a Wednesday night. The weekend before, my sister, who's in A.A., had given me a book to read about adult children of alcoholics. I identified with what it said, and it mentioned that there might be help in an organization called Al-Anon. The only requirement for membership was a problem with alcoholism in a relative or a friend. My sister had been in A.A. for a year, and my dad's drinking really bothered me.

When I went to that meeting, I was hoping to find a way to stop Dad's drinking so I could feel okay and learn the language my sister was using so we could communicate better. What I found was a warm, welcoming group of people who shared honestly about themselves and their feelings, which was totally lacking in my life. Yet, I felt like I had come home. I felt safe and hadn't even realized how unsafe I had felt before. They were in a big circle of chairs, and when someone else came into the room, rather than having to pull up a seat in the back, the circle widened for them.

I learned that I was there for me and that I was powerless over anyone else's drinking—no matter how much I loved him or her. However, I could take care of myself and be available if my alcoholic father asked for help. Members encouraged me to try six meetings before I decided if Al-Anon was for me. What stays with me the most is the warmth and safety I experienced there. I knew I was there to stay.



Al-Anon: Penicillin for the Family Disease of Alcoholism

By Jeffrey Roth, M.D., FASM, Psychiatrist, Illinois

Alcoholism is a disease of isolation. Because many alcoholics become intoxicated in the presence of others, the illusion persists that their drinking is merely social. Therefore, the alcoholics, their families, and their friends deny and minimize the alcoholic's impaired thinking, feelings, and behaviors that are direct results of the drinking. The disruption of relationships that results from intoxication affects both the alcoholic and anyone who is attached to the alcoholic loved one, and all of them suffer from the consequences of this family disease.

Pretending that this disruption can be fixed, managed, or controlled by the family member or friend of the alcoholic leads to chronic, progressive, and relapsing patterns of irrational beliefs, feelings, and behaviors on the parts of family members and friends.

These patterns constitute the family disease of alcoholism, which may show up in a psychiatrist's office as anxiety, depression, or even psychosis. They may also appear in a doctor's office as fatigue, chronic pain, gastrointestinal disturbance, or a host of other physical complaints. Unless the physician or patient is aware of the presence of alcoholism in a family member or friend, the diagnosis and treatment of a mental or physical disorder may leave the underlying family disease of alcoholism untreated.

Some family members and friends of alcoholics only become aware of the alcoholism when the alcoholic enters recovery by going to treatment and/or Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.). If we consider A.A. as the pharmacological treatment for the chronic disease of alcoholism, we may understand that ongoing participation in A.A. may be essential for the alcoholic to maintain sobriety. Moreover, if we accept that alcoholism is a disease that affects the



entire family, then hoping that the alcoholic's participation in A.A. will be sufficient for the family or friend does not seem rational. And, therefore, family members remain untreated and continue to suffer from their own disease.

Conversely, some family members and friends of alcoholics find their way to Al-Anon during a loved one's active drinking. Participation in Al-Anon—taking a regular dose of the “penicillin for the family disease of alcoholism”—will not treat the active alcoholic. Among the many miraculous characteristics of this penicillin is that as family members and friends learn new beliefs, feelings, and behaviors, the environment for the alcoholic changes from one that supports the drinking with control, judgments, and resentments to one that offers an opportunity for genuine love and acceptance.

Family members and friends begin to recognize that they did not cause and cannot control or cure their alcoholic loved ones, but that they do have choices. They also begin to feel gratitude and joy as other members freely share their feelings of fear, shame, loneliness, hurt, and anger. They also become able to set boundaries that are consistent with detaching with love from the alcoholic.



Since the introduction of this “penicillin” in 1951, many different forms of this medication have been developed. While all Al-Anon meetings share a basic structure using the same Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, each meeting is free to adapt its meeting format to its size, structure, schedule, and other details to meet the needs of its members. Most members suggest to newcomers to attend at least six to eight meetings before deciding whether Al-Anon is for them.

What Is and Is Not Mine To Control

By Gwen K., Indiana

When I walked into my first Al-Anon meeting two years ago, I was a broken woman, although I didn't realize it then. I went because our marriage therapist suggested it to me. I was hoping to learn how to make my husband sober. *He's the one with the drinking problem*, I thought, *not me*. I thought that he chose to live an alcoholic lifestyle. He did not seem to care that he was ruining his life, my life, and our marriage.

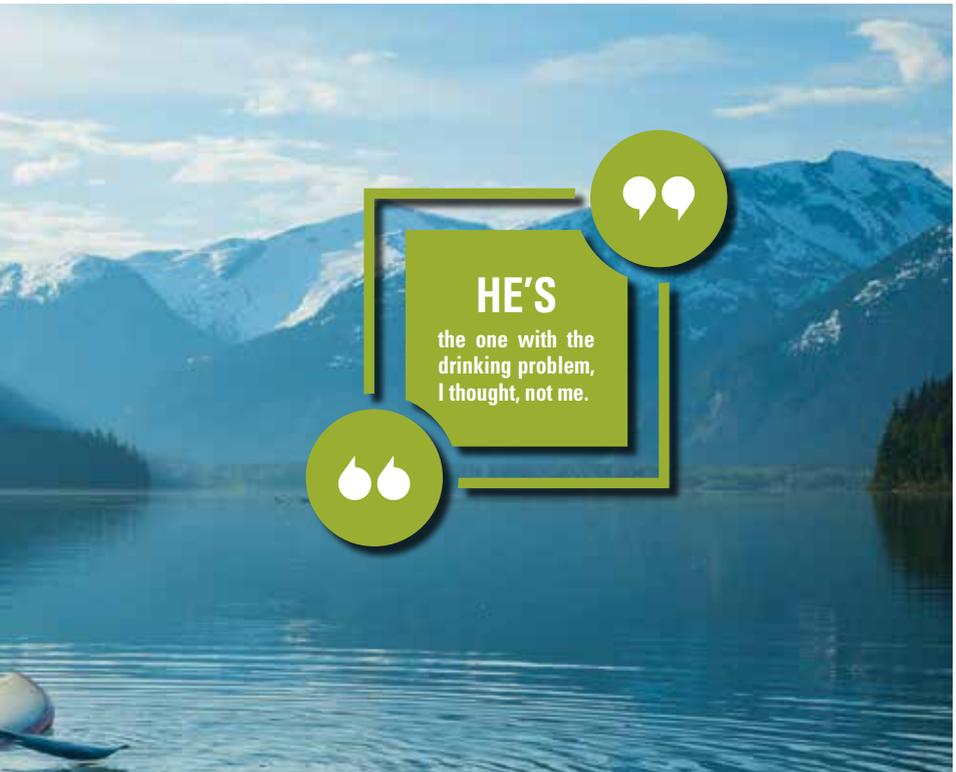
In these past years, I have learned to accept that alcoholism is a family disease and to accept how I let this sickness affect me. Al-Anon showed me the way to a better life through attending meetings and using the tools of this program. Moreover, I learned that, when it comes to my loved one's alcoholism, I didn't cause it; I can't control it; and I can't cure it. I caused my own pain and suffering by giving my loved one control of my



feelings. However, today I have control of how I feel; I make myself stronger and happier by working the Al-Anon program. I can also control my needs, wants, happiness, and sadness. I can live my life by my standards and trust in my Higher Power and myself.

Thanks to Al-Anon, I am having a transformation. I lived for years in the cocoon of alcoholism. Suddenly I have the commitment, strength, and desire to break free, live my life, grow, and

feel serene and content. I am broken no more. I no longer take everything my husband says personally when his disease is raging within him. Most of all, I have hope that my present and future life will continue to fulfill my desires and dreams.



I Was Welcomed Back to Al-Anon

By Caryn V., Ohio

Several years ago, a therapist recommended that I go to Al-Anon. I had been attending sessions with her because my life was lousy. I had no idea that the therapist I chose to go to had been in Al-Anon many years before. She told me that I could not continue to come to her until I went to Al-Anon. I was shocked. *Me?* I thought, *I don't have a problem! I'm not drinking!* It took some time for me to work up the courage to go to my first meeting.

I sat in the parking lot of the meeting place for quite a while. When I finally got up and went in, I was welcomed warmly at the door. This began a journey that has been evolving ever since. My life was so unmanageable. I had no idea at the time that alcoholism had affected me in ways that would continue to reveal themselves over and over again. At first, I was resistant to reach out to others by phone. As time went on, I began making excuses for not going to meetings and stopped going altogether. It finally took a crisis with my son's addiction to lead me back into Al-Anon.

When I did return to meetings, I was welcomed warmly, but I was still reluctant to get a Sponsor or reach out by phone. Finally, my facade began to crack. I could not overlook the pain of coping with alcoholism and addiction any longer. In a particularly low moment, two members handed me their phone numbers and asked that I simply call to say I was okay. I found it difficult to pick up the phone that seemed to weigh seven hundred pounds, but I did. The messages I left were simple, but they had me doing something I did not think I was capable of. In time, I asked one of the women to be my Sponsor. The progress I have made has been nothing short of remarkable. My life has changed in ways I would not have thought possible.





What visitors to the official Al-Anon Family Groups Facebook page have to say:

- "Peace is what I feel every time I walk out of my meeting."
- "Al-Anon has brought sanity to my life. I appreciate being able to learn from others who have and are dealing with alcoholism in their lives."
- "Before Al-Anon, I thought I was alone, but I discovered that I only had to be alone if I chose to be."
- "What I love about Al-Anon is that no one tells me what to do. I have the freedom to choose, learn from my mistakes, and appreciate my strengths."
- "Al-Anon was the answer to my problem, and my problem was me."
- "I have learned so much from Al-Anon. I apply the principles in all aspects of my life, not just when dealing with the drinkers in my life."

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