

You don't have to drink to suffer from alcoholism. There is help for you in Al-Anon and Alateen.

To find a meeting or information about Al-anon go to: ncwsa.org/d23

Al-anon Answering Service
(831) 462-1818



September/October topic:
Tools of Recovery

Share your experience, strength and hope or any Al-anon related news to: Petra (Editor) at district23wayandpace@gmail.com



Way & Pace is produced by and for the members of the 23rd Al-Anon District, which serves Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties. It is distributed on the third Saturday of every other month to coincide with the District meeting. Your stories and Al-Anon related announcements are gratefully accepted.

Please submit via email: Petra (Editor) at district23wayandpace@gmail.com

Articles published at discretion of editors. Articles may be edited to fit the space.

NOTE: This is a local newsletter, not Al-Anon conference approved literature. We invite all members to submit material for publication. The opinions within do not necessarily reflect those of Al-Anon or District 23.

AL-ANON NEWS

Alanon from your Desktop:

World Service Office: www.al-anon.alateen.org/
Northern California Area: www.ncwsa.org/
District 23's own webpage: www.ncwsa.org/d23
Online Meetings: www.ola-is.org/
and so many more – if you google Alanon, you'll find lots of us.

Next District 23 Speaker Meeting

Friday, August 17, 2012
5:30 Potluck Dinner, 6:30–7:45 Speaker Meeting with
AA, Al-Anon, and Alateen Speakers
Quaker Meeting House, 225 Rooney St., Santa Cruz



What I learned in my first year

Finding out that the alcoholic was not the cause of my unhappiness was my first revelation in Al-Anon. Even though he had made me so unhappy, I discovered another window through which to view the situation. I took a good look at myself: at my attitude; my arrogance; my selfishness; and my lack of faith, prayer, and spirituality. Through that new window, I tried to take another look at all my life experiences.

I discovered the power of the written word on the mind: the slogans—brief yet so powerful; the literature, so useful in helping me to see my own defects and, at the same time, a tremendous tool of encouragement and connection to the fellowship.

I still have not truly learned the lesson of detachment but, most important, I've learned that detachment means to turn the focus on myself. Some times are harder than others not to feel sorry for myself because of the alcoholic. At times, it's a real challenge to react lovingly, and not coldly, but I am learning with the help and example of my Al-Anon family.

In our meetings, I was surprised, and moved, by the “thank you’s” to one another. I am trying to remember to thank my Al-Anon family when they share. Being on the receiving end of “thank you” is very powerful.

I was introduced to the concept of doing God's will. Somehow, I missed this lesson in my upbringing. It was there, but I guess I did not heed it or really listen. I remember learning that we had a free will, but I guess my mind stopped listening at that point. I thought I could just do what I wanted; God had given me the green light.

I'm learning that to do God's will takes patience, just as growing in Al-Anon takes patience. My Al-Anon family members have all helped me on my road to patience. If I truly take the time to listen to their experience, strength, and hope, I will learn something about recovery. That lesson is not always immediate, but it usually comes.

The slogan “Progress Not Perfection” has helped me to keep moving forward, and to keep trying. These tools are such a gift because they give me hope that I

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A Summer time thought ...

Remember to water your seeds of serenity with loving kindness and self respect. They will blossom into happier tomorrows by the warmth of our fellowship and the use of our tools from the 12 Steps.

Happy Gardening my friends !

Nita L., Soquel

What I learned ... continued

can, and will recover. I must make the effort—over and over again.

I have learned the power of humor. Some situations involving my husband—where I first felt anxiety—were sometimes humorous in retrospect. I have loved to be a part of all the laughter that at times surfaces in these Al-Anon rooms.

I have often heard many of the members say that these rooms are filled with love. Then one day, I knew it to be true. I could feel the love. How did that happen? The members have been very courageous in sharing with me who they were, who they are now, and who they hope to become or continue to be, by practicing the principles of the program. They have given me the gift of being themselves, and this has helped me in my healing. They have been my comforters.

I, too, am learning that I must make the effort, be brave, and share about myself, because maybe something I've experienced and learned can also help someone else. In this sharing with one another, my Higher Power speaks to me. Tradition One talks about the common good, and I think part of that is my realization that I too must do my part in sharing who I am with my Al-Anon Family group.

Throughout my first year in Al-Anon, members have given me these words of wisdom:

- Surrender the problem to God.
- I don't have to react to what other people do.
- Knowing you have a choice is empowering.
- Give love; "Let It Begin with Me."
- Gratitude reduces fear.
- When you change the way you look at things, things you look at change.
- Consider what's in the hula-hoop and what's outside it.
- Relax — God is in charge.

I learned the importance of service. Once I started setting up for the meeting, reading the opening and closing, or choosing a topic for discussion, I really felt like I was a part of the fellowship. Service was the beginning in giving a little bit of myself and helping me feel more comfortable with the members of my Al-Anon family.

The spirituality of the Twelve Steps has helped melt my heart; it has helped me to be unafraid. It has helped me to accept my husband, as well as other people in my life. It has given me the means to maintain a positive attitude.

I have often heard many of the members say that they are grateful to the alcoholic who brought them to these rooms. I am not yet ready to say that I am grateful to the alcoholic. I know it would be my wish that he never had a problem with alcohol. Yet I know that in wishing that, I would have never walked into the Al-Anon rooms, and I probably would never have met the God of my understanding. Perhaps my reluctance to say it is a sign that I still have so much to work on. Perhaps it is a sign that I still have resentments. Should that time ever come where I can say I am grateful for the alcoholic in my life, I will celebrate that milestone with all the members of my Al-Anon home group!

Thank you for sharing in my first year anniversary!

**Catherine R., Connecticut
The Forum, November 2011**

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I let go – and my husband's temper cooled off

My husband moved back into our home following an 18-month separation. We are slowly mending our marriage.

For the most part, we attend our respective meetings and socialize with our respective friends, but we do very little together. I have refused to travel with my alcoholic husband because I was not able to tolerate his abusive language.

We are planning a week-long trip together this coming summer to celebrate my father's 90th birthday, so I decided to begin with short trips, to practice detachment. We headed to a town that was about an 80-minute drive from home, to do some antique shopping.

For the first 15 minutes in the car, I noticed that my husband was driving 10 miles under the speed limit, fidgeting nervously, and making critical remarks about other drivers. I found myself staring at the speedometer and thinking, "I'll be a nervous wreck if I don't stop focusing on him!"

I forced myself to watch the scenery, and began to talk briefly about pleasant things, allowing silences, if he wanted to respond. If he didn't respond, I mentally quoted a slogan or recalled a bit of a Step or Tradition and allowed my mind to quiet. I ran through some repetitions of the Serenity Prayer, and found that I was relaxing, feeling connected to my Higher Power and so was my husband. He even joined in with some humorous conversation, which was rare for him.

When we got to our destination, we walked around and looked. I talked to some of the antique dealers about their merchandise. At first, my husband waited outside—disinterested. However, when I took time to listen to his recollections about an old toy or car, he began to engage in the spirit of the day, maybe finding a treasure.

The town was dotted with small cafes and diners; we stopped at one and ordered lunch. When the food came to our table, it was the wrong order. "Oh, boy! Here it comes," I thought. But because of the relaxed atmosphere and nice time we were having, my husband didn't fly into a rage. He suggested that if we tried the food we had been served; we might like it! On the drive home, he was even more talkative about the town, the food, and what a great day we had.

Before Al-Anon, a day like this was impossible. I felt I had to monitor my husband's driving, make sure he went the right speed, turned at the right place, etc.—ad nauseam. I got upset if we didn't have conversation. I got upset if we did have conversation that was not pleasant. I had so many rules in my mind about what constituted a "good time" that a good time was impossible.

I've thanked my husband many times for the lovely day we had, and he just about burst with happiness. I suspect that, over the years, he has wanted to give me many lovely days—but couldn't, because I wouldn't let him. I'm going to keep practicing detachment, stay in my own hula hoop, and maybe—just maybe—we can have a nice vacation together this summer. This is why I keep coming back to meetings—you all teaching me how to work this wonderful program. Thank you. I have my treasure.

**By Paula C., Florida
The Forum, August 2011**

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