

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



November/December topic:

What Al-Anon tools do you use during the Holidays?

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

Al-Anon 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/Potluck Dinner

Friday, October 19, 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



I'm grateful for an orange plastic chair...

My first Al-Anon meeting was court ordered. I sat in an orange plastic chair in the back of the room, legs crossed, bouncing my foot angrily, too mad to cry. I was furious at the alcoholic who was at home while I was sentenced to a meeting. After my requirements were met, I did not return to the meetings. After all, he was the one with the problem, right?

I came back to Al-Anon a few years later, more willing to listen and get help. I came to realize I was the one with the problem. Anger and rage were my addiction. I learned I was not a victim of anyone but my own choices. In the past I felt justified in my bad behavior and sometimes violent actions. I actually believed his alcoholism drove me to act that way!

Today I am 100% responsible for my own actions. If I react poorly in response to anyone else's actions, I am the only one accountable. I am eternally grateful for all the wise sharing in Al-Anon that rubbed off on me over the years. I am grateful to my sponsor who helps me through the steps. And even though I didn't appreciate it at the time, I'm grateful that Al-Anon had an orange plastic chair in the back of the room for me.

Mel, Santa Cruz

Coming out of my shell

One beautiful morning, while sitting on my back porch drinking coffee and reading One Day at a Time (B-6), I noticed a snail had poked its tiny head up through a floorboard and was looking all around.

The night before, a friend had asked if creatures had ever come up through the boards, and I had responded, "Never." We all know about saying "never." I was thinking my Higher Power has a sense of humor and such amazing timing.

As I sat watching the snail look all around, I was marveling at one of God's tiniest creatures, an animal that generally lives in dark places, and how on this day it was giving me quite a show. As it stretched its neck further, ever checking for approaching danger, it eventually dragged its shell through the crack. It proceeded to move, very slowly, across the porch floor—antennae out, moving back and forth like radar, long neck stretched out, and a cumbersome shell rocking awkwardly back and forth as it moved.

That got me to thinking about how I came into Al-Anon—from a very dark place. I stuck my head into the rooms, antennae out checking for safety, and dragging my heavy protective shell that I had developed as a child growing up in an alcoholic home. Slowly, I started to stretch my neck as I learned to work the Steps, call my

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Coming out of my shell ... continued

trusted Sponsor, and use the other tools of recovery that Al-Anon offers.

When I placed my focus on me, working the Al-Anon program, I began to shed my awkward protective shell and discovered the unique talents that God had given me. Today, if a situation feels threatening to me, I can put on my shell or use one of my many Al-Anon tools. Unlike my little snail friend, I have choices about when and where I carry my shell. Even though the snail is an interesting and unique creature, I am grateful that God and Al-Anon made me who I am today; I don't have to live my life like a snail anymore.

Dee H., South Carolina

The Forum, October 2011

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A man, not a hero — accepting my father for who he is

I now know that my dad is just a man. For the past 30 years, I put him on a pedestal. He was a beacon, an example of how the program really works. He had 15 years of sobriety, then five years, and now after less than a year, he slipped again. My world is shattered and I feel lost. I hate this disease! It is, however, because of my father that I can recognize it as a disease—and for that, I am grateful.

When he has sobriety, he is wise, compassionate, and someone I look up to and confide in. When he isn't sober, he is a stranger to me. Thank God for Al-Anon. Now, I see my dad for who he really is, instead of how I want him to be.

I know that this is a family disease. I can have compassion for him. He is not a hero. He is simply a man who needs to find his own way. He grew up with this disease, just as I did, and cannot do it alone. He has changed my life and given me the greatest gift of all—our program.

It is my turn to be a light to him. Let him know that when he is done living in darkness, the light of this program will bring back my dad and restore hope and peace in his heart. Just for today, I will put him in God's hands and trust that he is safe there. I have a Sponsor; I have tools to help me through this difficult time.

Jennifer L., Alberta

The Forum, September 2011

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How will Al-Anon help me?

Many who come to Al-Anon/Alateen are in despair, feeling hopeless, unable to believe that things can ever change. We want our lives to be different, but nothing we have done has brought about change. We all come to Al-Anon because we want and need help.

In Al-Anon and Alateen, members share their own experience, strength, and hope with each other. You will meet others who share your feelings and frustrations, if not your exact situation. We come together to learn a better way of life, to find happiness whether the alcoholic is still drinking or not.

Who are the members of Al-Anon and Alateen?

Al-Anon and Alateen members are people just like you and me—people who have been affected by someone else's drinking. They are parents, children, spouses, partners, brothers, sisters, other family members, friends, employers, employees, and coworkers of alcoholics. No matter what our specific experience has been we share a common bond: we feel our lives have been affected by someone else's drinking.

Is this a religious fellowship?

Al-Anon Family Groups is a spiritual fellowship, not a religious one. We avoid discussion of specific religious doctrine, and members of all faiths (or of none) are welcome. Our Twelve Steps ask us to find a "Power greater than ourselves" who can help us solve our problems and find serenity. Each member is free to define that power in his or her own way.

What is alcoholism?

Alcoholism is widely recognized as a disease of compulsive drinking, which can be arrested, but not cured. It is a progressive illness, which will get only worse as long as the person continues to drink. Total abstinence from drinking is the only way to arrest the disease. Alcoholism affects the entire family; indeed, everyone who has contact with the alcoholic is affected. Unfortunately, the only person who can stop the alcoholic from drinking is the alcoholic himself or herself.

Who are alcoholics?

They could be anyone, from all backgrounds and walks of life. Over 95 percent of alcoholics have families, friends, and jobs. They may function fairly well, but some part of their life is suffering. Their drinking causes a continuing and growing problem in their lives, and the lives they touch.

How do alcoholics affect families and friends?

Alcoholism is a family disease. The disease affects all those who have a relationship with a problem drinker. Those of us closest to the alcoholic suffer the most, and those who care the most can easily get caught up in the behavior of another person. We react to the alcoholic's behavior. We focus on them, what they do, where they are, how much they drink. We try to control their drinking for them. We take on the blame, guilt, and shame that really belong to the drinker. We can become as addicted to the alcoholic, as the alcoholic is to alcohol. We, too, can become ill.

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