

God grant me
the **S**erenity
to accept the things
I cannot change
Courage to
change the things I can
and the **W**isdom
to know the difference

STAIRWAY STORIES



1974—1979

Did You Make Your Bed?

As a child I often heard the saying: “As you have made your bed so much lie in it”. It did not worry me much, My mother made my bed beautifully. Sometimes I heard adults say: “ well, she made her bed, now she must lie in it”. And I used to think, what a silly girl, why didn’t she let her mother make it.

When I grew older this saying meant to me, resignation, and I did not like it very much. Then I came across something that Chesterton had said about it: “If I make my bed and I don’t like it, I jolly well will not lie in it, I’ll remake it”. This puzzled me for a very long time. Not any longer—in Al-Anon I have learnt to remake my bed.

By changing my attitude towards life in general and in particular towards the problem in the home, I have remade my bed. I discovered that it is not half as uncomfortable as I thought it was.

The clue is in the first half of this old saying, “ As you have made your bed.” since you made it yourself, you also have the power to remake it. But you must do it yourself in your own way, no one else can do it for you. Thanks to Al-Anon I have discovered my way.

KEEP IT SIMPLE:

Page 143 in O.D.A.T. Is a favourite page of mine. [I love them all]. When I was a newcomer to Al-Anon, a member said: “For a while you will feel quite confused and perhaps try to absorb too much too soon, so it is better to just ACCEPT BLINDLY and try to analyse all that you hear and read” so, for me, this works beautifully.

“To get a good, firm hold on the Al-Anon idea,” said a speaker one evening, “Keep it Simple!” Because it IS simple, our slogans prove it. The whole purpose of Al-Anon is to help us iron out the rough spots in our living, that can be done only ONE DAY AT A TIME.

“Do you see what I am trying to tell you?” he went on. Those were two of our slogans, part of our Al-Anon Therapy: KEEP IT SIMPLE AND ONE DAY AT A TIME.

Lets take a look at the others and notice how all of them are aimed at a relaxed approach. ‘Away with grim determination, hurry and fretting’ says Al-Anon to her confused and struggled-waery members.

Joan

Continued

If we are battling with a problem and cannot work it out for ourselves, there is always an Al-Anon member at the end of a telephone who is happy to lend an ear and suggest part of the program which could be applied. Some problems are better dealt with promptly rather than battle with them alone until they can be aired at the next meeting anyway.

In order to explain just what the problem is and how it came about sometimes means going into detail about other members of our family and can be long and complication. Doing this during a meeting can be time consuming when it could be discussed confidentially over the phone or a cuppa after the meeting. We come to meetings to speak about the program, not other members of our family.

A member once mentioned she felt it is good to come to a meeting to get things off one's chest. If meetings became a place simply to unload one's burdens and problems then this is not good.

We all have our own problems burdening us and do not need to be laden with others. This can have a very depressing effect on a meeting, certainly not uplifting or constructive, particularly for newcomers who are battling to grasp and work the program. If we are feeling down and feel we can not give a message of strength and hope then it is much better to decline when asked to speak. Hearing a message of strength and hope from others can uplift us, if not give us an immediate solution to our problem.

I believe I must include in my daily inventory, the words and manner in which I speak at meetings and ask God as I understand him to help me pass a message of strength and hope.

Margaret O'D

My Name is Jean.

I am proud to say that I am a member of Al-Anon and have been for many years. I do wish to thank, most sincerely, all who introduced me to Al-Anon and all the wonderful friends I have made since I joined.

I, like most people who have lived with an Alcoholic problem, was full of self pity and resentment. After my first meeting instead of feeling sorry for myself I felt ashamed because there were so many so much worse off than I was, so I began to count my blessings instead.

I soon learnt not to fight against realities and to accept things I could not change. I always try to forget the nasty things that happened in the past and try to live "Today" to the best of my ability. Tomorrow is a mystery to us all so I try to treat each new day as a start to a new life and I am sure that if I live a good life today it will take good care of the tomorrow.

If anyone with an Alcoholic problem is interested enough to read our "Stairway" "Hope Highway" please do not hesitate to join our big happy family and learn to cope with your problems and most importantly, learn to lough again and enjoy life because, remember, we go to Al-Anon for ourselves alone.

The reason why I joined Al-Anon was to try to help John, my husband, who has had a desperate drinking problem for many years involving hospitalization very many times and three prolonged periods in mental hospitals. However, he is now back with Alcoholics Anonymous, which he joined just over four years ago, and this time has been sober for five months and feels that at last he is really getting on to the A.A. Program and is on the road to permanent sobriety.

Without in any way boasting I simply repeat what he has said to me many times and that is "I would never have had a hope of recovery without your help".

However after my experience of the Al-Anon program I have found that Al-Anon has helped ME far more than I have or can ever help John. Among other things it has shown me that I am powerless over myself and my weakness and that God as I understand him is the only person who can help me to live a happy life free from resentments, distortions, and failures. Further, it has taught me to improve my way of thinking and speaking and looking after my appearance.

Gradually I am learning to change my ways, to acquire some humility, and to be kind to others, and not vent my feelings on the heads of other people around me. I am also learning to be constructive rather than destructive in my attitude and approach to others.

John has often told me that he needs my affection, tolerance and understanding of alcoholism as a disease, especially when he is going through a rough patch, so I am all the more grateful to Al-Anon for showing me the way to treat an alcoholic husband.

Continued

I am hoping to renew many friendships next year with the Convention being here, so please everyone, try to make it. We know already that our home is in Adelaide and it is only a matter of time before we will be with you all once more, caring and sharing.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

What do we come to Al-Anon meetings for? In the preamble to the twelve steps [Al-Anon/Alateen Groups at work] it states in the first sentence we share our experience, strength and hope in order to serve our common problems.

Let us look at our experiences. When we first came to meetings we have plenty of experience to feel sorry for ourselves, at battling to control the drinker and at receiving all the hurts, physically and emotionally from living with the disease of Alcoholism. These experiences need to be spoken about briefly in order to let a newcomer know he or she is not alone and that we have all felt like this at some or another.

Perhaps the experience we ought to concentrate on at meetings are those on how we make the program work for us, how we use the Slogans, Steps and Traditions. This then is where we gain strength and hope from one another.

We shouldn't feel our meetings are places where we can report all the happenings of our family and home situation that have no relation to working the program. When we do this, perhaps we are feeling sorry for ourselves and maybe looking for sympathy rather than applying the program to overcome them.

Continued

Here, we are disappointed to find no A.A.'s in town so we rang a lone member "Leslie" and ended up at her home for a lovely evening and many laughs. From there we went to Esperance a truly beautiful place and spent a week just relaxing and meeting more wonderful people who were only too happy to invite us to their home.

Perth was our next stop and this is where I really had to remember all my Al-Anon, as once settled and unable to find work for some six weeks, I was prone to the "Miseries" and had to really take things "One day at a time".

I forced myself into a routine and went to a Tuesday group in the city, a Wednesday morning group close to where we are and a Thursday night group even closer to us. I had to have the company of these wonderful people and I would travel anywhere to be with them.

In those days I met many people and everyone was only too willing to help me settle in. I have learnt so much and feel at times that it is all just too wonderful, however, I do not intend questioning my life as it is.

I have since found work and can only go to a Monday night meeting across town. It is called the "Sunshine Group" and that is exactly fitting of all it's members as everyone shines with the true Al-Anon warmth of caring and sharing.

I went to my first workshop about eight weeks ago. It was on the Traditions and it was a lovely day with a good turn up. There was an Al-Anon meeting in the afternoon, I certainly hope to attend the next one.

Story Continued

John himself is also grateful that I joined Al-Anon-for one thing, he says he can never pick a fight with me when he becomes irritable.

I will finish by just saying that the way to have a friend is to be a friend; therefore, I do ask that I may be a friend to you all and pull my weight in the wonderful association of Al-Anon.

Step 4

One of the steps of our program certainly needs a lot of self analysis;- this is the 4th step.

Made a searching and fearless Moral Inventory of ourselves. After many years in Al-Anon—I find myself trying to do this without hindrance from the other steps.

After reading a book recently I found these words:-
"We should remember that this business of building self is something which we are constantly working on. We are not born with a complete self, but we can strive to keep building up our potentials and not only breaking down the self with which we were born"

When in Al-Anon we hear how a certain person has grown and we feel we have not, it is then we should start and really take stock of ourselves. In no time the picture of our own self becomes clear, we then fearlessly try to clear our conscience of that particular failure. As a result we no longer carry a sense of guilt or any inner conflicts, thus allowing us to continue with the other steps and feel more of inner peace for at least one day at a time.

From a Contented Al-Anon Member

My Search for the truth

Many years ago the thought was suggested to me, we need to spent time searching for the truth, if we fail to do this we can not really come to know ourselves, then how can we expect to function as balanced human persons. These remarks make a big impact on my life because, on reflection, the realization came that most of my time had been spent avoiding the truth about my thoughts and actions resulting in a person who was sick in body, mind and spirit.

My search for the truth led through various paths to A.A. and finally Al-Anon, by the time I was convinced that some how I was responsible for the problem of alcoholism in our family. However it was mentioned alcoholism is a threefold disease which effects every member of the family and others, and we can be in a far more serious state than the alcoholic.

To me, Al-Anon offers a caring and sharing program, the little book "One Day At A Time" offers endless help and strength and I find if the day is begun with the reading for the day, I am able to "Let Go and Let God" and live one day at a time to the full, needless to say when the reading and resulting thoughts are neglected the old habits of thought and action return and that situation does not help anyone. The serenity we eventually gain through adopting the offered program does spread over those we love in a very special way and who can ask more than that.

Kathie W

When I feel like finding fault I always begin with myself and then I never get any further.

Ray S Baker

S.A. A.A. Newsletter Feb 1976

What Al-Anon has done for Me

I came to Al-Anon feeling a no-body and unloved and found wonderful friends who really care and share.

I have learnt that today is the only day I have, and for that I am grateful. Al-Anon has given me a set of tools and with my Higher Power to guide me I hope to use them with increasing success.

Our 'One Day At A Time' reading each morning gives me the first tool to use and our Steps and Slogans are very necessary in our daily living situations.

Since Al-Anon, A.A. and Alateen have become a part of our lives we no longer have to think whom we were, whom we become, we can really enjoy the people we are now. We all practice awareness and tolerance and hope to share this with many others. Today well lived makes yesterday a dream, tomorrow a fresh vision of hope.

At last I am able to put pen to paper and say "Hello" to all of my friends in Adelaide and to the new friends I have made in Pt-Pirie, Whyalla, Ceduna and now Perth. Since leaving Adelaide I have shared many wonderful moments with lone members and country groups.

I must mention Ceduna as we missed their meeting night, however the A.A.'s rallied around and had a combined get together on the Saturday afternoon. They had just started Al-Anon and I would like to think that perhaps I was of some help in some small way. The warmth shown was ample to carry us on to our next meeting in Kalgoorlie.

THE NAME OF THE GAME

My life's path reminds me of the old game of snakes and ladders. Prior to coming to Al-Anon, each time the dice was thrown I would land on the longest snakes but occasionally the small snakes would be responsible for my descent. Once in a while I managed to get one foot on the first rung of the ladder which gave me a false sense of security which was usually very short lived as another snake was waiting to engulf me.

After joining Al-Anon my luck with the dice slowly started to change, I began to land on small ladders, dice games being so fickle, I often still slid down the snakes although they were becoming smaller, eventually I managed to place my feet firmly on the ladder and started to climb.

After nearly two half years I have reached the half-way mark of the longest ladder and I am hoping it won't be too long before I reach the top rung where I will be safe and secure from all the snakes.

I wonder if my ladder has twelve steps? Who knows
Lorna.

Member

I am grateful for what Al-Anon has done for me. I know I am a better person now than I was twelve months ago when I first came into Al-Anon. I can now stand up to things instead of letting things upset me like they used to do. Now I can talk to people and make friends because Al-Anon has taught me to be myself instead of being in a frightened shell, hidden away as in the past. I can now also manage my own life with the help of my Higher Power and I have friends too. The best thing of all is that I will always have Al-Anon to help me.

A Few Words from a Grateful Member

When we planed our trip of nearly 2000 miles by car to another state, I felt a little doubtful about the prospect. Surely travelling with 5 children and a dog for three days would be very trying. Now I realize that while we have this wonderful Al-Anon and A.A. program to live by I should never have had those doubts. What a wonderful holiday it was!

There was no hustle and bustle or cross words to get on the road on time. "Easy does it" and we were packed up and moving within our planned time each morning.

Even the mishaps of two blown out tyres were treated with out a ripple. The comment from our eleven year old when her father was struggling with the spare wheel brought smiles to our faces and made realize that life really had changed.

I was able view the countryside, much of which I had seen before, through different eyes this time. It was really beautiful and I had never notice before. In the past I would have been too busy worrying about the next blow out or what else could happen, to relax and appreciate the view.

On our arrival at my parents home we were surprised to find we were not tired, as expected, after such a long trip. No doubt this was due to taking things "One Day At A Time" and excepting the mishaps as they occurred.

Our stay on the farm with my family was really great. I found beauty there which I hadn't noticed before. The trip back home went smoothly too.

Life is so much easier now. I am indeed very grateful to the Higher Power for guiding me to Al-Anon and showing me another life.

RECOVERY

“Please Higher Power help me to find the serenity, courage and the wisdom I am searching for”.

This beautiful prayer was at the end of a delightful letter in the N.S.W. May Newsletter.

I too knew the road was not easy throughout the years when the sickness of Alcoholism was in our home. We would not be so happy now had things not been so hard then. Had we not needed to work so much on our A.A. and Al-Anon recoveries, they would not mean so much to us both.

Many members have told me that, only by working on the program would we gain confidence in each other and so in ourselves.

Confidence in ourselves gives us-

Courage to face each day

Wisdom to carry out that which we feel is right. In the days when I was so self-righteous and sorry for myself I was never happy. But now, thanks to the Al-Anon program, life is for living and happiness. Is reborn.

If I help to pass on all these treasures, my own coffers will never be empty, and I can say “thank you” to my Higher Power for teaching me not to be sorry for myself.

“One Day at a time”

On awakening each morning I like to feel this is a new day. It could be the beginning of a new life. It could be a good day, it could be a bad day, but it is a new day, and it mainly depends on me as to what I do with it. I try not to think and grieve about all the yesterdays, and try not to think or worry about the tomorrows, but try to live this new day to the best of my ability. By doing this I feel that it will take care of my tomorrows.

ARE YOU WELL

So often we carry the distress of yesterday into today, it's pains, it'd worries, guilt's, troubles etc., they enter today by our talking about them. Yesterday is history and there is nothing we can do about it. Let yesterday and all the troubled yesterdays go.

So often we are anxious about tomorrow, the “What if” syndrome. We have fears of the future, there is nothing we can do about that it is a mystery and best we do not live it in advance, God will take care of it if we let him.

We are to live in the now.

We are to live today well.

as well as we possibly can, today,

not commiserating about history, our history,

Not fearful about the future.

In the Bible we read in the Lord's Prayer, ‘Give us this day our daily bread’. Our loving God [Tradition 2] will supply all we need. We also can read ‘The Lord is the strength of my life’. Psalms. I need to remember this, if I wish to be well today. As I do step eleven and the just for today card, thanks to Al-Anon I feel very well. A.A. members say it this way, Yesterday is History, tomorrow is a mystery so live well today.

Continued

At that time I couldn't understand those feelings, now I do—it was a Higher Power showing me the way out of my darkness and it was up to me to walk in the sunshine of Al-Anon. I give thanks to that Higher Power for choosing to work the Al-Anon program.

At my first meeting and later, I was able to slowly break through the darkness that held me over the years, now I am happy and it is behind me.

Once I was rid of these feelings, I wanted everything at once, I forgot that "Easy does it" and nearly missed out on this wonderful program.

I have had to learn humility, squash my pride and do away with resentments. I can only do it 'one day at a time' however I have a life time to put into this program so there is no need to rush.

With A.A. and Al-Anon in our home, we have adopted a new way of life and have made many terrific friends. Because our needs are now simple, we don't have complications, our human feelings are not as black as they once were, we work each day as it comes and can help each other when the need arises.

At last I can say:- 'I belong' because Al-Anon is for me. I don't fight it any more and I enjoy the 'light' that is granted to me each day that I 'Care' and 'share'.

Jan

Continued

and try not to think or worry about the tomorrows, but try to live this new day to the best of my ability. By doing this I feel that it will take care of my tomorrows.

How many of us ruin a perfectly good day by grieving about what could have been? All the money that has been wasted on alcohol, etc, then worrying about what is going to happen in the future. Some things we worry about never eventuate in any case so all that worry had been in vain. Try to remember that the past is history and the future a mystery. Who knows by living the Al-Anon way of life, having faith and doing a little kind deed along the way, the future could hold something very special for all of us.

I live one day at a time –because I use the Al-Anon program.....

Today I am free. I am free from the thoughts and words and actions of those around me. I am free to choose what I take from these influences about me, thus I am free from worrying about what others think of me-or say about me, behind my back. This is sick thinking, and I won't indulge in it. What others say to my face I am free to take or leave.

I have learned in Al-Anon to take one day at a time—and today I am practicing my freedom. Thank you, GOD, as I understand you—for giving me your power to be free today.

Before Al-Anon I was so worried [bound—not free? "what WOULD OTHERS THINK?" - about me—my husband- and my family. But today I am FREE—and this freedom is mine as I start this new day. As I write this I am so happy.

from Hayseed

THE EARLY DAYS

How grateful I am to my first group for the way they treated me in those confused early days. I often feel that if it wasn't for their careful observation and love for me, and their deep knowledge of the program, I might never have stayed.

We had our meeting A.A. style, with the chairman sitting at the table and others in a semi-circle. Speakers came forward and stood to speak. It was a worry to me that I should be asked to do just that, but it never happened until the others were sure I was ready. There were many times when I would like to interrupt, but because of their policy I was made to sit and listen and usually got the answers anyway.

The collection tin was never passed around during the meeting time, members just came forward with their donations during supper. I never even noticed this until about my third meeting and then it was explained to me that I didn't have to put anything in if I didn't have the money and that there were no dues or fees for members.

Business was not discussed during the meeting either, it was discussed over supper while sponsors took "Newies" aside for personal chat. It was several weeks before I heard the business side of Al-Anon and I found it so confusing with its GSO's and CSC's but by then I had gained confidence with my sponsor and could ask her what it all meant without feeling silly.

Right from the first all the members took my telephone number and rang me at regular intervals, "Just to see how you are." It was at least three months before I was asked to chair a meeting, but then I was asked the week before and supplied with literature and encouraged to read it all and decide the way I would like the meeting to be conducted.

FROM DARKNESS INTO LIGHT

In 12 months, I have come from 'Darkness into light' by coming into Al-Anon. I could have saved myself 6 years of anxiety. If I had got down off my perch and stepped through the door into Al-Anon.

It took so long because I was engulfed in my own personal darkness that I couldn't believe anyone else could possibly begin to understand. I wasn't even sure if I wanted to discuss it with anyone.

Oh! If only I had known that I had so many wonderful friends that I hadn't yet met, and all had found their place in the light.

To actually accept Al-Anon into my life, I had to have an awakening which came in a wonderful way and I will remember it always. I was at a meeting with a friend who was to be a guest speaker for Al-Anon. [Already I had denied Al-Anon by saying I didn't need it, only a short time before] However, before the end of the meeting, I had heard my friend speak and had hung onto every word. It was an awakening from deep within and suddenly I could see sunshine at the end of a very dark tunnel. How could this women speak for ME with so much feeling and say every thing about my life and my emotions without even knowing me very well?

I felt as though the pent up emotions I had were going to explode right then, and I wanted to grab her and tell her exactly what was happening to me at that very moment, but words failed me. It was a strange eerie feeling and I was very humble.

Continued

I don't need to rely on anyone but GOD for a serene life and Al-Anon guides me towards a far better life than the one I used to lead.

ANONYMOUS

The lord is my sponsor: I shall not want. He maketh me go to many meetings. He leadeth me to sit back, relax and listen with an open mind; he restoreth my soul, my sanity and my health; he leadeth me in the path of sobriety, serenity and fellowship for mine own sake. He teacheth me to think, to take it easy, to live and let live, and to do first things first.

He maketh me honest, humble, and grateful; he teacheth me to accept the things I cannot change, to change the things that I can and giveth me the wisdom to know the difference. Yea though I walk through the valley of despair, frustration, guilt and remorse I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy program, thy way of life, thy twelve steps, they comfort me.

Thou prepares a table before me in the presents of mine enemies— rationalization, fear, anxiety, self-pity and resentment; thou aniontest my confused mind and jangled nerves with knowledge, understanding and hope; no longer am I alone, neither am I afraid, nor sick, nor helpless, nor hopeless: my cup runnith over.

Surely sobriety and serenity shall follow me every day of my life, twenty four hours at a time; as I surrender my will to thine and carry thy message to others and I will dwell in the house of my Higher Power as I understand him, daily, for ever and ever Amen.

Continued

Eventually it dawned on me that I been observed and that nothing was ever asked of me that the others thought I wasn't capable of. This I did not resent because it was not done in a criticizing way, but full of love and understanding by people who knew enough about themselves and human nature. I have mentioned this before and doubts have been voiced that it was all so calculating—I disagree—our common welfare should always come first, surely an integral part of our common welfare is the new members who bring new life to Al-Anon and make it grow as it should.

Meetings were always interesting and varied, there was no set format, the person in the chair had full control and could dispense with the twelve steps altogether or have them read at the beginning, middle or end the meeting. One of my favourites was question time, when two of the older members became the panel and the rest of us wrote questions on little pieces of paper and put them into a basket. The panel would give their considered opinion and those from the floor were permitted to join in when they were asked to do so.

We also had visiting A.A.'s and made up groups to visit A.A. ourselves. This was such a help in understanding alcoholism as a disease. I will always be grateful to that group who, with their care and understanding for both Al-Anon and myself helped us both to grow.

Betty C.

Disenchanted with Al-Anon Meetings

After years of being a four letter nothing it was very rewarding to discover I was the most important member in the group, the new one. I was loved and I loved it. Always made welcome, not even expelled those times I had to look the other way when the basket came round. Because I felt special, you all became very special people to me. Mind you, I could have done without some of those long winded one's, good grief, sometimes they didn't leave enough time to fit me in.

Then I was given the lovely bonus of being sponsored by a remarkable person who not only offered me support, understanding and encouragement, but met me for lunch before the meeting.

Then one day she wasn't there. Now, being quite sure that at least she must have broken a leg, I was rather shook up to find her at the meeting and SITTING WITH SOMEONE ELSE!

Worse was to come, they asked me to do chores, sometimes I even had to make my own tea!

That old Al-Anon magic might have died if I hadn't remembered I always have a choice, I could be dreadfully hurt or I could accept the compliment I had been paid.

They evidently felt I had grown enough in the program to let me go.

Continued

I found a wonderful spiritual side to life which gave me strength, hope and faith, I am so grateful for GOD coming back into my life.

I have found some things very hard to do, leaving my husband sprawled out on the floor, keeping quiet without causing an icy silence, not covering up for him anymore, going out to meetings leaving him lonely and sad, knowing his sickness of compulsion, guilt and confusion could make him think I had stopped loving him when reality I am detaching emotionally from him, making him responsible for all his daily living.

I believe there is nothing the family can or cannot do that will make any difference towards stopping the downward slide which, sooner in some later in others, happens to all compulsive drinkers. The sooner step one is accepted the sooner the alcoholics family and friends find freedom from guilt, confusion and responsibility then let the drinker work his own way up from his lonely miserable existence to a happy restored life without alcohol.

It was strange that my home life became worse after joining Al-Anon but I stuck it out on that steady course knowing that the Al-Anon program worked for so many, families that had been sick and miserable were now happy and well.

I can't always remain on this program as it isn't an easy one working daily on oneself, each time I go back to the old pre-Al-Anon me, I get tense and sick, depressed and headachy, I am now aware of these changes and start to be gentle with myself, I know I can be happy again as I read more Al-Anon literature, go to more meetings then gradually my peace returns.

PROGRESS

Each year in Al-Anon I get a little closer to my goal of peace and serenity, the more I work at it day by day I realize how lucky I am to have found Al-Anon.

I was at the end of my tether before coming through that door of hope. Having tried just one meeting five years before and having given it away thinking they were all a lot of cranks; "Fancy telling me that maybe changing my attitudes I could help my husband find sobriety or at least find a happy life for myself whether he went on drinking or not". Well, it sounded so stupid, because I knew the whole house front was kept together by me and I had been managing it for years. I guided the children with all their problems, I waited up very late for my husband and tried to talk sense to him of how we loved him and how he was ruining our happiness and lots of other suitable lectures. I cleaned up his messes, always undressed him and put him to bed. I smiled through all the parties where he embarrassed me, saw that all bills were paid and reminded him of everything he had forgotten, I cried and pleaded with him to try and come home early, to stop drinking for just day or night. I always agreed with him so he wouldn't get angry and drink more. HOW could I possibly change my attitude and do more to help than I was doing right now? Well, I went to lots of Al-Anon meetings and learnt to try what others had tried, some things worked for me, others had to be modified to suit our situation, but I didn't look back at the terrible past, I found plenty of help in living for today and not worrying about all the things in the future which had consumed many needless hours of misery.

The Road to Recovery

Maybe one of the hardest things Al-Anon people have to endure is the loneliness, not the loneliness of being alone but loneliness of not being able to share problems and not having any support.

When a newcomer attends a meeting, let us all remember that she is a desperate human being, crying out for help. We should allow her to unburden herself. Of course she is full of resentment and has been stripped of every vestige of human dignity and self respect over a period of years. The joy of living and confidence she once had is now only a dream. Surely something that took so long to manifest itself can't be put aside overnight. It will take quite a while for her to free herself of the resentment she feels. We can help her by being good listeners. Maybe her problem does not appear all consuming. In time she will realize that she is able to look at her problems more objectively, it will take time.

There are two well worn expressions which sound very good in theory but not so good in practice:-

1. "There is always someone worse off than you". It is very hard for someone to appreciate that quotation when they are so weighed down with worries that they are afraid of losing their mind.
2. "Money isn't important". This remark is usually made by someone with enough money and I'm sure the underprivileged don't share those sentiments.

Let us be friend and listener to the newcomer.

Lorna.

Give a Dog a Bad Name

Recently I attended yet another Convention [I am an addict]. It was a super weekend full of love and spiritual awareness. There was something though that bothered me, this was a reference by some Al-Anon members, old and new, to “my alcoholic”.

Surely this is a derogatory term, however lovingly meant. First of all, is the kind to refer to the husband I love and respect by the disease he is recovering from? Would I be ready to call him “My Diabetic” or “My Epileptic”? If we were suffering from these illnesses.

Secondly, if I have completely let go of the alcoholic problem, is not “My Alcoholic” a contradiction in terms?

Clichés are easy to catch and I don’t want to catch this one, so I have made myself a promise. I will never refer to my partner as “My Alcoholic” and I hope that he will never refer to me as “My Newrotic” or any of the other labels he could if he so wishes hang on me.

Olga [Leeds]

Continued

Our ears pickup the early morning bird-song, the rustle of the breeze through the trees, the gentle sounds of the baby cooing to himself, and the “mmm” of total acceptance from the friend to whom we are opening up the very centre of our being. We chant hymns of praise for the very ears that once picked up only the sad sounds of our misery.

The new creature we are becoming, starts to take off the dark glasses and perceives great beauty around. Smiling faces at the meetings, love on our children’s faces, blue sky in place of gray, sunshine playing on a pile of golden sand-colour, colour every where. Riotous combinations of brilliance and shade in the garden even down to the subtleties in a rock [or even the gaudiness of a plastic rubbish tin.] our eyes are opened to loveliness everywhere and are thrilled again and again by the feelings that these sights engender in our hearts.

Perhaps counting our blessings is a mere by-product of our healing, but later we go out and deliberately seek the good. Our attitudes have started to change. Stumbling blocks are miraculously turned into stepping stones. We are far freer than we ever imagined possible. Each single human being has his own right to live, and need not dwell in the shadow of another. Al-Anon gives us the recipe to make happy fulfilled lives from the same ingredients that once caused us hopelessness. We are taught to merely change the combination-to try it one day at a time, instead of a life time.

Finally we may see that pain is the pre-requisite for growth, and are even grateful for that which forces us to find “Courage to change the things we can.”

Group News Victoria

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

Whatever reasons we give for seeking Al-Anon, there is despair, anger, anxiety, bitterness and resentment compounded into an insistent pain that motivates us to find new ways of solving our problems.

Immediately we hear that Alcoholism is a family disease, and that changed attitudes can often aid recovery. We are gratified to learn we did not cause the illness, nor are we able to cure it. Our guilt and sense of responsibility to control another's destiny is allayed. Thereby we begin to glimpse the many blessings once hidden behind our obsession with alcoholism of a relative or friend.

Most us feel the tremendous relief of identification at our first meeting. No longer are we the only ones drowning in the sea of fear. Others tell our story, and have found contentment and serenity. Our hope is reborn.

Slowly we begin to sense the world around us and the dawning divinity within us. Our ears have for so long listened only to the ugly words from the mouth of the drinker, suffering the deep anguish that is projected onto those nearest and dearest. As we detach from the words themselves, we hear instead, the pain behind them and the cry for love and understanding. Our first stirrings of compassion warm our hearts, benefiting us far more than the one whom we feel.

We are gladdened and comforted as the need for condemnation and hatred leaves us. Our self-worth is enhanced as we are slowly released to be the person we would like to be.

A Country Girl Helped

I feel I personally must say thank you to Al-Anon and A.A. for when I came to my first meeting I was indeed a very sick personality. Fear, resentment, anger, pride, self-pity, inferiority complex, you name it, I had it.

Learning the first step, "We admitted we were powerless over Alcohol and that our lives had become unmanageable" means to me that I admit I am powerless to manage any life other than my own. To say it was the easiest part; to put it into practice, Wow! It hasn't been easy however I have been to "Let Go and Let God! I believe I have attained self esteem and surely this has been an important factor in my personal growth. It is good to let other people live their own life for I believe that nothing happens without plan or purpose.

I find it hard to believe that I once wanted to dig a hole and crawl into it. The bouts of deep depression, the migraines, the crying, now, thanks to my friends in Al-Anon, my group, my sponsor Moira and to our wonderful Al-Anon program, I am now able to put the past where it belongs. My friends do not walk in front of me or behind me but with me. Thank you for being my friends.

I have learned what responsive love is.

One of the secrets of life is to give of myself, the more I give, the more I get. I have learned about the disease of Alcoholism and much of my learning has come from the A.A. members, hearing how their program has helped them has been a tremendous experience for me.

Hearing of their battle and guilt, fear and remorse and the way they have overcome these problems enabled me to see for the first time, the self-pitying world I had been living in for surely my partner had experienced all of these emotions. Thankyou A.A.

I shall never lose sight of the fact that A.A. and Al-Anon are complementary to each other and that each and everyone of us is unique as we have all come up the hard way, thankfully, on our knees. I was very encouraged to meet a couple from Whyalla whom I had not seem for several years, I know I raved on about them all the weekend, they then reminded me I too had grown. Nobody sees ourselves as others do so let us never cease the practice of caring and sharing with one another just as we are doing.

A smile is the light in the window of your face
to let others know your heart is at home.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

When I first heard this slogan, I wondered what on earth it meant. Consequently, I spent a good deal of time thinking about it.

My “First things” after a few years in Al-Anon are not the same as they were when I walked in through the “Door of Hope”. The very first thing for me was to get well emotionally I was a crazy-over re-acting-tearful-angry person. “First things” were ME and I knew it.

How could I be happy? How could I trust the world around me not to hurt and squash me? How could I get rid of my fears? As I look back I know that I had to re-train my thinking. This took time and constant effort for me to detach from situations which I knew would “toss me”.

The next first thing was to keep with Al-Anon-people here were kind-not only to me, but to each other and to other newcomers. They were not critical, and I could move at my own pace-which by the way, had been a gallop for years. [I still have to keep this ever before me—to remember—SLOW DOWN].

Another early ‘first think’ was to tidy up—not only my thinking, but our home! After years of living with the problem, I just didn’t care- no one came to the house anyway—and I was sick of being the ‘tidy—upper’ after the children. I still have one awfully untidy room-the sewing room, I call it-but the rest of the house-little by little has grown pretty tidy by now, and is comfortable at least for me to look at.

Now that I’ve got quite a bit of confidence I have a different set of ‘first things’. I need to constantly remind myself to let others in Al-Anon-my husband and my children work out for them-selves what are their first things in other words, I must not tell others what to do. If they want to do other things, that is good-and I can be so happy for them as they make their choices, even if they would not be my choices. I still have one untidy one at home, but this I can mostly leave quietly with me-neither doing it for him nor nagging that he is still in a mess. This has been quite an achievement, as at one time, pre Al-Anon, I used to regularly ‘blow my top’ at him.

Continued

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My daily “first thing first” is to talk to my Higher Power— he makes all the difference to my “calm serenity” for which I pray. My life now is pretty well ordered, very, very happy, sometimes to busy, so I suppose that is where I should be concentrating and working now, to get my priorities into better order, to gracefully say NO when I have not enough hours in the week to do anything more.

Betty F

Continued

Both types need to change their pattern. One, by gaining courage to speak up; the other gaining power to keep quiet.

Thus, both coming to the point where they are able to start the relationship again on a different basis.

The shock, although subtle, is most profound on the active partner. It may seem that for a short period, the situation becomes much worse, but this does pass. In my experience, even though the actual drinking and it’s effects continue to progress, during the sober months and finally during some of the drinking times, there can, by this consistency of attitude and dignified courtesy, be created a communication which would otherwise have been impossible.

To go further, this in it’s turn, may reactivate in both partners a need and a love that was perhaps thought to be as dead as a doornail.

Aldyth Peace Group

FROM A VERY HAPPY AL-ANON MEMBER

Recently at a meeting of Al-Anon we were reading and discussing resentments that most of us had as regards living with a person who was addicted to Alcohol. These discussions led up to the joy we receive when the partner gets sobriety, one of the readings from O.D.A.T. seemed to give such a full meaning of the word JOY: perhaps we could interpret it this way:- To dwell on our troubles will certainly shut out the happiness to be had if only we can observe and enjoy what is good and pleasant in the world around us. It is often said at a meeting that we live “One Day at a Time” so let us remember to do this, it is amazing how much happier we can be, helping us to shut out the past and our resentments.

RESTORED TO SANITY

During the pre-Al-Anon days one of my greatest faults was humiliating my husband in public. I seemed to achieve a sadistic pleasure in watching him squirm. I stupidly thought that by telling everyone what he was like, I would win their sympathy and could make him suffer. Did that eventuate? No of course not. I only succeeded in making myself appear in a bad light and my husband was given all the sympathy, and so he should have been, for what right did I have to humiliate another human being. It never entered my head that my behavior was neurotic and undignified. My one aim was to get revenge, I even thought it would be funny to tape-record his tirades and play it back to his workmates. Surely that was not the thoughts of a sane person.

Someone once said, 'we were given two ears and only one mouth' so we can hear more than we can speak. I was all mouth and no ears.

How wonderful it is to be free of much of the bitterness and desire for revenge. I am going better.

Thank you Al-Anon for restoring my sanity.

ARE YOU A STGNANT POOL OR A BABBLING BROOK?

Living with an active problem, I have ground an attitude of courtesy and consistence to be most important. Never underestimate another's good qualities, although often hidden, believe me, they do exist.

Courtesy in face of various outbursts can only add a portion of dignity to an otherwise degrading situation.

Consistency on the other hand is a subtle continuity of actions which eventually result in the confidence and perhaps trust of one human in another.

To me, there seems to be two distinct groups of people who come to Al-Anon; those who have become withdrawn and can not open their mouths to their partners, and those like myself, who could never manage to keep their mouths shut.

Anon

HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

"The story of my life" or "It always happens to me", are not only great springboards to a bout of self pity, but an opting out. Each saying is referring to my life, and are silently accusing other people or circumstances of being my greatest problem. All too often the only common feature of the events which lead me to utter these words is ME.

The remedy to all three is the forth and tenth steps. So let me have a good look at the part I play, and honestly see where I have gone wrong. Once I do this, history will stop repeating itself, the story of my life will become one of hope and happiness, and hopefully, what always happens to me in the future will be guided by the principles of AA and Al-Anon.

Anon

