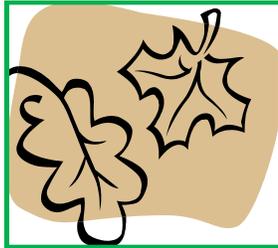


Growing Oaks

Oakland County Al-Anon Family Groups Fall, 2022

Fall begins officially in Mid-September! Are you pleased? Regretting or rejoicing that the lazy, hazy days of Summer have slipped away again? One writer describes the season this way:

“When we look for the first signs of Autumn, the leaves begin to change, the sun changes from a penetrating light to a hazy glow. Leaves change into vibrant colors and slowly begin to fall from the trees. Within weeks, we are left with empty branches, cool days, and a sense of stillness.” There is the paradox of the start-up of activities - school, clubs, football games (?) - with the slow down and storage for winter in nature and in our lives. Preservation becomes critical as does strengthening of important tools, and relationships.



So, let's look at Steps Eight and Nine from the point of preservation and strengthening. For Al-Anon members, these may be hard Steps. It may be useful that they are later in the 12 Steps. Making amends? Shouldn't we be receiving more from others whose choices we believe have made our lives so difficult?

Step Eight: Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all. One member suggests column heads for the list. Person harmed, relationship to me, my harmful act, reason for my amends, and my willingness. Start the list with anyone about whom we still feel any discomfort. Others on our list seem to be

people who have harmed us. If we still resent them, our own peace of mind is best served by forgiving them. Key words to define here are resentment, peace of mind, and forgiveness.

Step Nine: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. We call this an action Step in which we become humble enough to verbalize our regrets. We are not necessarily making an apology. There is a difference with amends and apologies. Saying “I'm sorry”, we hope for acceptance, pardon, or forgiveness. Amends means we will correct our behavior in the future. In many cases, our changed behavior indicated stronger amends than words could ever be. (from Paths to Recovery: Al-Anon's Steps, Traditions and Concepts, 1997, pp. 81,90,91)

Resentment means to re-feel. Like expanding air in a balloon, the feelings grow inside of us, often long after the precipitating incident, intensifying the hurt, despair and lack of trust.

And forgiveness? True forgiveness is a tool for our peace of mind, letting go, and at least living one day at a time in the present. Singer Garth Brooks wrote a song titled “We Bury the Hatchet, but Leave the Handle Sticking Out.” He sings “always digging up things we should forget about.” What do we do with the handle? Walk around it, knowing it's still there and try not to trip. Maybe we need more time to be able to chop that handle off permanently. Al-Anon can help.

- Shirley B.

CHANGING THE BOX



You have most likely heard the sentence “Think outside the box.” What does it mean exactly? Ignore the box, e.g. rules, ways we always did something? Trash the box completely? Might we keep the parts of the box worth keeping and introduce, redesign something new?

What may this year’s box look like?

This may apply when getting involved in Al-Anon, especially as we believe we are post-COVID, yet still following safety guidelines. Do I, for example, not get involved in service work, thinking “somebody else” will do it? Or, I still feel disconnected from people in general. What new ideas and talents might I offer in the upcoming year? Can I start small? How can I show my interest? Whom should I contact?

Al-Anon’s Concept Four: Participation is the key to Harmony.

A member sharing: Lois W., Al-Anon’s co-founder. said “Anyone can start something, but it takes many people to keep it going.” To me that’s the essence of Concept Four. I began my Al-Anon

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recovery as a desperately sick, suicidal person and was truly grateful to the members who were at the meetings and shared with me. As members shared their personal recovery, they also shared their service recovery with me. It amazes me that such a diverse group of people can gather, share, disagree, agree, and reason things out all for the common good of the Al-Anon fellowship. Members who participated in (service work) seemed to have a little extra spiritual strength and serenity. We do have to continue to participate in order to grow. (from Paths to Recovery: Al-Anon’s Steps, Traditions and Concepts, 1997, p.273).

Trusted Servants For our group purpose there is but one authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants—they do not govern. (Tradition 2)

2022 Board Members

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Treasurer: Jackie F. 248-321-0749

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District 12 alternate Rep. Mike K. 248-464-9415

Website editor: Greg B. 202-345-3681

Office contact: Jennifer W. 248-961-0415

Alateen contact: position to be filled

Meridian Outreach Mtg.: Monique B. 248-390-3982

Literature Coordinator: Doug D. 248-259-7027

How do I find a meeting?

In our time of connection with caution, what is available for me?

- Zoom meetings (ID and password provided)

- Hybrid meetings (both virtual on Zoom as well as in person)

- In person meetings (social distancing and masks may be required)



Much will depend on technology at sites, meeting room availability and Zoom account information. **For most updated list, please check: oaklandafg.org/meetings**

Is Al-Anon Service work on your horizon?

"I found myself in Al-Anon service work for many reasons. I wanted to enjoy the comradery of friends who shared my spiritual needs...What have I received from Al-Anon that I would most like to share?"

Paths to Recovery: Alanon's Steps, Traditions and Concepts (p. 125-126)

Openings to be filled are:

- Alateen Coordinator for Oakland County
- Oakland District 14 Rep (and alternate)

Contact for further information: Paul S., Board Chair, paulrosen@gmail.com.

Mark Your Calendar



Open Talk with Al-Anon speakers

Saturday, Oct, 15, 2022. 7 p.m. at St. David's Episcopal Church. 16200 W 12 Mile Rd, Southfield, MI 48076

September is National Suicide Prevention Month

An A-Anon member shares:

Suicide. There, I said it. We don't really speak about it at meetings. In my two decades -plus in the program, I've only heard it once, and that was just recently. Too much pain to touch. Yet untouched is unhealed.

988 is new national suicide line to call or text.

Grampa was the rock of the family. He saw a family through the Depression, worked hard, and had the joy of his wife for more than 50 years. Then she died. I said to him after Gram's funeral, "by surviving, you have spared Gram all the hardship of carrying on," as Viktor Frankl, a Nazi concentration camp survivor suggested to another to give the grieved a purpose. Grampa's beloved brothers had died. He had no social life, no friends left. Grampa was alone. For seven years he struggled. Two months before he died, I had an urge to visit him and tell him I loved him. Little did I know that shortly after he'd take a tube, attach it to his car's exhaust, sit in his beloved car, inhale and collapse. My uncle found him dead. It seemed impossible that this rock would succumb in this way. I learned that elderly males are a high suicide risk group.

This moment has touched my life many times. I've had five dark nights of the soul, the last one being worse than the prior four put together. For 13 months I struggled to stay alive. "Just get to tonight when I can lay my head down" was my mantra. The thought of overdosing was ever encroaching into my will to live. I survived, with the considerable help of my friends, one of whom called me every morning for months. Throw in lots of therapy and an antidepressant. I made it in this riskiest "dangerous toil and snare." Amazing grace. If you find yourself in this utter despair, grab anything useful, a friend, a reading, a prayer, a hope, a phone, just until tonight, then the next night...

Sue F.

AL-ANON SHARE: COPE WITH HOPE

My Al-Anon journey began three years ago when my life was dark, dreadful, dreary, and depressing. I was going crazy because nothing I did was working to "fix" my qualifier. I knew something was wrong: I assumed it was me. I felt I was a failure so as a last resort, I went to an Al-Anon meeting and I am so glad that I did.

I am grateful for this program of recovery. My first year was very difficult but I kept attending meetings and reading the literature. I found a way to cope with hope. It was like finding a "fresh water oasis in the desert" as described in Step One of the book "How Al-Anon Works." I discovered hope.



When the pandemic started, new problems arose. As in person meetings shut down, I was faced with the dilemma of how to continue to work my program and stay connected with Al-Anon members. The answer became clear - Cope with Hope.

Today I am able to attend many more ZOOM and phone meetings with my sponsor and other members. My three years in Al-Anon have given me courage, confidence, and a conscious awareness of the presence of my Higher Power. I know He will guide me in any situation. My journey of Cope with Hope continues. It is a new way of life built on accepting God's will, taking one day at a time, and being grateful for the things I have. My journey in recovery is teaching me to have great hope.

Happy Our Program Exists, Champa

AL-ANON SHARE: THOUGHTS ON STEP NINE

When I think of the 9th step - "Made direct amends to persons we have harmed whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others," I'm reminded of a number of things. First, I'm reminded of a conversation that I had with my sister. At the time, I was working Steps 8 and 9 with my sponsor, and I told my sister that I wanted to make amends to the family for hurt I had caused them. Her response was blunt and to the point. She said - "Ruthie, what are you talking about - you never hurt anyone in your life - never, ever." She responded - "I don't know what the purpose of this is, because you aren't mean to anyone."

And she was right. The reality was that when I was working Step 8 and making the list of those I had harmed, I realized that I needed to put myself at the top and start making amends to myself first, because as my sister said - I never hurt anyone in my life. So often, I would just keep the hurt inside and internalize it and make myself feel bad; that I wasn't good enough, wasn't pretty enough, wasn't liked by others, and certainly didn't deserve to be hurt-free. In working Step 9, I realized I had to forgive myself first - to "get off my own back," and accept the fact that it didn't matter if I wasn't perfect in every way.

I'm reminded that with Step 9 we have the opportunity to step back and wipe the past years' slates clean. Whatever happened in the past is over - there is no going back and nothing we can do to change it - to make the hurt go away, to forget the chaos, the sadness, the dishonesty. The beauty of Step 9 is that we can make a fresh start. We ask for forgiveness from our higher power - the God of our understanding. We say we're sorry to the people we have harmed, we commit ourselves to changing our ways and we actually modify our behavior- stop blaming others; stop minding everyone's business; we make our necessary amends and move on.

- Ruthanne O.