

growing oaks



OAKLAND COUNTY
AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER - SPRING 2016



Watching Your Child Commit to a Slow Death

Mike A.

It isn't easy watching your child choose to die. I know, because my son has chosen to go back to using drugs and alcohol. It hurts me to see him make such a choice, however I must remember that it's his choice. The only thing that I can do is pray that he discovers that he is a valuable individual, someone who is loved. Does he realize that every time he makes a choice to get "high" it's poisoning him, killing off brain

cells, brain cells of a very engaging and creative individual? Does he realize that every time that he makes the choice to use, that I die a little each time? What can I do? How do I convey this to him without sounding like a nag and without preaching? He's been through rehab and knows what to do; why does he choose to use?

I have to remember that no matter how I feel about his using, it's his choice. I have no control over what he does; he is

an adult. I can love him, but I don't have to like him all the time, nor do I have to like/condone the choices that he makes. I can tell him how I feel. I can choose not to enable him. I suppose that this is what they mean when they talk about detaching with love. It isn't easy. I think God wired us as parents so that our heart is tied to our brain. We know what we have to do, but our heart often gets in the way. We rationalize reasons why we can't do the

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Need to find a meeting?

You can find an up to date list of Oakland County Al-Anon Meetings at our website. (link at right.) You can email us at the newsletter or contact the office through the website for information on locations and times for Alateen meetings.



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Phoenix Square Office Building
3720 Elizabeth Lake Road
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248-706-1020

oaklandafg.org

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This is **YOUR** newsletter: Your articles and
announcements are welcome! Please email to:

BroWCarey@wowway.com

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SUMMER'S A-COMIN'!

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.

Al-Anon/Alateen Second Tradition

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Co-Chairperson: Theresa M. - tjmac1207@gmail.com

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Members at Large:

Ruthanne O. - rokun7@yahoo.com

DeeZee - denisez@sbcglobal.net

Milena C. - milenac0217@gmail.com

VITAL TRUSTED SERVANTS

District 12 Rep:

Bill C. – BroWCarey@wowway.com

District 12 Alternate Rep:

Debbie D. - debdrop@wowway.com

District 14 Rep:

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District 14 Alternate Rep:

Lynda E. - lynda_easterday@yahoo.com

AWSC Liaison:

Heather D. – mason.H321@gmail.com

Alateen Sponsors/Contacts:

Mitch S. - mitch@mitchmaster.com

Alisa B. – alisabell422@gmail.com

Ron V. – rva59@aol.com

Office email: oaklandcountyafg@aol.com

Literature Coordinator:

Mike A. – mikeandrus49@gmail.com

Public Outreach Contacts:

Josie C. - connolly900@comcast.net

Therese Marie – tm@meettherese.com

Website Contact:

Karl W. – surcuitpac@aol.com

Newsletter Contact:

Bill C. – browcarey@wowway.com

Reflections on "Let Go and Let God"

Our readings teach us that alcoholism is a family disease. A passage in "How Al-Anon Works" describes the entire family holding the alcoholic above water; one person lets go and the alcoholic falls. At that point, the alcoholic may become so uncomfortable that he chooses recovery.

Maybe my letting go had something to do with my family member seeking recovery. Realizing that my well-meaning help had ended in failure, I had to turn my life and his future over to a higher power. I realized my powerlessness, but I wasn't helpless or alone; there was hope.

With Al-Anon, I recognized my own role in the family disease of alcoholism. I read in the literature that we all have choices as to how we will react – what we will do. All of us have a different definition of our higher power, and that's ok. I don't really know if I can explain to you what my higher power is. I only know it's there and it's a power greater than me. In Al-Anon, we learn that we didn't cause the disease of alcoholism, and we can't control it, nor can we cure it. But we learn that by "letting go and letting God" and working the Al-Anon program, we are offered the alternative of sanity. With a new perspective on what is and what is not within our control, we can begin to experience a newly-found hope.

My dad taught us kids a lot of things, but one thing I'll always remember was something he said often - "When bad things happen, take the good out of them and move on." And that's what I've done with Al-Anon. For me, the program has opened an entirely new dimension to my life. I now have a better understanding of other people, a whole new group of friends, and a deeper sensitivity to the challenges that so many of us face in life. If I had the choice, would I wish to qualify as a member of the fellowship? Of course not. But a passage in the Foreword to "Man's Search for Meaning" by Viktor E. Frankl (not Al-Anon approved literature, but still good) resonates with me today. It says there – "Forces beyond your control can take away everything you possess except one thing, your freedom to choose how you will respond to the situation. You cannot control what happens to you in life, but you can always control how you will feel and do about what happens to you."

Being a grateful member of the Al-Anon fellowship has allowed me to re-gain that sense of control – control over how I will react and respond to my situation. Al-Anon has helped me to "let go and let God" - and for that, I am forever grateful.

Ruth O. 1/11/16

Step 4 – What it Means to Me

In thinking about what the 4th step means to me, I am reminded about what is said at almost every Al-Anon meeting. Before we can help our alcoholic, we must first focus on helping ourselves. And the only way we can help ourselves is to know ourselves - to really know ourselves – the positive and the not so positive. And Step 4 helps us in this journey of self-discovery by allowing us to take a searching and fearless moral inventory.

I often say that Al-Anon is the cheapest form of therapy I've ever had. In prior therapy sessions, I learned about my lack of self-worth; in working Step 4, I learned that a great deal of my self-worth was based on circumstances and what others thought of me. After many therapy sessions, I realized as a child, I never learned how to express my anger. When working Step 4, I learned that because of this, I internalized my anger and turned it inward; most of my resentments are that I haven't stood up for myself.

But I learned good things about me too. I learned that I'm a pretty good person, respected by others, with a good set of values and someone who cares genuinely about other people and the world in which we live.

As it says in our literature - after working the 4th step, we have a better understanding of who we are and why we are this way. Completing the 4th Step inventory provides us with tools that can keep us on the road to

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next best thing. Perhaps we are afraid of the pain we may endure, or we are afraid to upset our alcoholic/addict.

So, what can I do? I can use my Al-Anon program. I can go to my sponsor and my Al-Anon friends; these are the people that I can bare my soul to, people who accept me as I am. They are nonjudgmental. I can read my Al-Anon approved literature. I can go to my "Higher Power." I can remember that I am not alone, that there are others in the fellowship experiencing the same, if not worse, pain as I. I can choose to love him, or I can choose to walk away and let him die. I chose to use my program and all of the options that I have. I choose to love him for what he is and not what he does. Why? Because, I love him and I see in him the potential for greatness, the potential to be the best that he can be. I can pray to God and ask him to convey to my son that he is loved and that his father thinks that he is a very special individual, no matter what happens. This is the way that I take care of myself.

Do I want to watch my son commit to a slow death? No! But, I have to remember that he too has a "Higher Power," and that his life is in that Power's hands.



**Recovery is 12 Steps
to the Bay of Serenity**

**MICHIGAN AL-ANON AND ALATEEN FAMILY GROUPS
44TH ANNUAL CONVENTION
WITH AA PARTICIPATION**

FRIDAY, MAY 13 TO SUNDAY, MAY 15, 2016

SPEAKERS

Friday: Mary Jane K. Evanston, IL and Chuck K. Milwaukee, WI
Saturday: Tina H. St. Louis, MO • *Sunday:* TBD
Alateen Speaker: TBD • *AA Speaker:* Bill H. St. Louis, MO

LOCATION

DoubleTree - One Wenonah Park Place, Bay City, Michigan 48708

[online registration](#)

For more registration information contact:
44thmiafgconvention@gmail.com

Finding My Serenity

We all may have a similar story, many are similar. This is my version of our story. Alcoholism was not prevalent in my family of origin. I did have an uncle through marriage who was alcoholic, and I did marry an adult child of an alcoholic. I came to Al-Anon with the help of my cross-addicted son. This was a trip that I believe no parent wants to make. As parents and co-dependents, we hate to admit our failures, and having an alcoholic child in some of our minds is admitting that we have failed as a parent. My parents were not what one would call heavy drinkers. Mine was a fairly loving home. My father worked and my mother was a homemaker. My brother and I knew we were loved, but mom and dad set boundaries for us, and we were aware of what the consequences would be if we overstepped those boundaries. My quest for recovery begins with the Serenity Prayer.

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
The courage to change the things I can, and
The wisdom to know the difference.

What is serenity and how do I achieve it? The dictionary defines serenity as the state of being serene. But, what is serene? Once again the dictionary describes serene as “calm and peaceful.” This peace can be attained by working “The Program”; how we work that program is up to us. I was once told that there is no wrong way to work the program. Do I work the program well? Not always. I make progress sometimes in leaps and bounds; more often than not my progress is in the form of baby steps.

It was not hard to work the first step. I knew that I had no control over my alcoholic and that my life was definitely unmanageable. My son lives with me, and in the beginning it was parental hell. He would stay out late and I would fret. I would blow his cell phone up in an effort to keep track of him. When he was late from work (he was working at the local bowling alley) I would go to his place of work and check if his car was still there. If I didn't hear from him in what I deemed a timely manner, I would call the area police stations to see if he was a guest of their establishment. After all, being a good co-dependent, I had all of the departments within a six city radius on speed dial. Fear was my constant companion. My stinking thinking would go into overdrive, and I would picture him lying in a gutter, in an accident, or even worse, dead! I did not take care of my health. My life revolved around my alcoholic, and as a result I threw a pulmonary embolism that the doctor said should have killed me. This was my wakeup call, my bottom. I realized that whatever I was doing to “save” my son wasn't working. I came to believe that a power greater than myself could restore me to sanity, whatever sanity was. All I knew was that I needed help.

I have always thought that I had a relationship with a Higher Power (whom I chose to call God), but I was too ashamed to ask Him for help. I felt that I had let Him down by allowing my son to become an alcoholic. The program and the members of the fellowship taught me that my son's alcoholism was not my fault. It taught me that it was a disease and that if I didn't take care of myself I would surely die. I am learning that it is okay to ask for help. This is something that is not always easy for me. I have learned that when I have events in my life that are making me crazy, I have a Higher Power that I can turn things over to. I have learned somewhat grudgingly that I have to have faith in my Higher Power, and that however much I would like to pull a problem back, I can't. I have realized that in attempting to do this I am getting in my Higher Power's way and impeding His progress. I have also learned that my desired outcome and my Higher Power's outcome may not be the same. Admitting that I made a decision to turn my will and life to the care of a Higher Power showed me that I had to find what was preventing from doing this on a consistent basis. This brought to the Fourth Step.

I had to make a searching and fearless moral inventory of myself. I recently had the privilege of taking this step with a sponsee. In doing so, I discovered that I had a fair amount of demons and unnecessary baggage in my life. I also discovered that I had more going for me than I thought. My demons were a result of my childhood, and peer taunting because I was epileptic. I still struggle with that issue and am working at putting it behind me.

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Finding My Serenity

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I have trust issues as a result of this, and have a hard time accepting compliments and help from others. I can sometimes be suspicious of their motives. I also learned that I have a lot to give. I have found that I am a loving individual and that I do care about others. I learned that I have to think, not once, but twice, or three times before I speak, so that I do not say anything hurtful or mean to others. I think the main thing that I learned is that I am still a work in progress.

Am I entirely ready to have God remove these defects of character? I would like to think so. I also realize that God works on his own timetable and that it may be different from mine. I am ready to ask him to remove my shortcomings; however, I have discovered that I sometimes want to put a hold on that request, thinking that I can handle it in a more expedient manner. I WANT TO TAKE IT BACK!

I guess what I am trying to say is that I have flaws. I realize that I am not perfect and that I have to work at obtaining recovery. I know that I have amends to make and I am constantly working on it. I add a few, I remove a few. Some names on that list I am ready to make amends to, and others not. I realize that I do have to make amends to my family: my son and daughter, my deceased wife and parents, and most of all, myself. Have I made amends to all those that I owe them? No. I have a long way to go. I once heard in a meeting that amends are more than saying you are sorry. It means that I have to be willing to change the behavior that required the need for amends. I have learned that the primary obstacle to my making amends is my ego. I have to learn that making amends is not a sign of weakness; on the contrary, it is a sign of strength. Making amends gives me a sense of freedom. It is as if a great burden has been lifted from my shoulders. Like I said, the only thing that really keeps me from making my amends is my ego, because in doing so, I am admitting that I was wrong.

Have I found serenity? Yes. Is it always lasting? Not always, but I have learned to roll more with the punches and to trust my Higher Power. I am a work in progress, and I have come to realize that there is no graduating from the Al-Anon program if I want to avoid a major relapse. I now know that by working the program and by talking to my friends within the fellowship that I am not alone. Help is just a phone call away and that all I have to do is be willing to ask for it.

I have found that prayer is a useful part of my tool belt. I shouldn't be afraid to ask my Higher Power for help. I know that He wants me to be the best that I can be. But I have to be willing to put in the work. I have learned that meditation is more than sitting in an awkward position and chanting a mantra. To me, it is the chance to sit in peace and listen to my innermost thoughts. It is my chance to listen to my Higher Power guiding me through the perilous curves of life. It is my chance to gain serenity.

I have to admit that I have also been able to allay my feelings of low self-esteem by giving back to the program. I am currently the Oakland County literature coordinator; I am involved with Public Outreach, and have been a Group and District Rep.

This is how I have chosen to find my serenity. I hope that it has given you some insight and that it may be helpful to you.

Mike A

from his open talk at Beyond The Steps AFG, Feb. 29, 2016

Step 4 – What it Means to Me

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a more manageable life. These tools help us find balance, acceptance and love for ourselves as well as for the other significant people in our lives, including our alcoholic relatives or friends – whether drinking or not.

Step 4 helps us to change the role that we play in the family disease of addiction. It helps us to take the most helpful and most loving action that any family member can take – and that is to get help for ourselves. Step 4 allows us to serve as an example of the joy and serenity that recovery can provide and to respect the rights of our loved ones to make their own choices.

Ruth O., 1-11-16