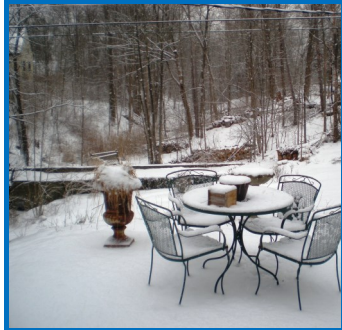


# Growing Oaks

## Oakland County Al-Anon Family Groups Winter, 2022

**So, we begin again.** Another year, the second in a decade of challenges we never expected, or prepared for, even as we endured what has happened. We begin again our daily meditations books and our group discussions with the Twelve Steps of Al-Anon, adapted from Alcoholics Anonymous. Both groups were started many years ago and have been part of how thousands of people have coped with our history — personal, local and community, national and across the world.



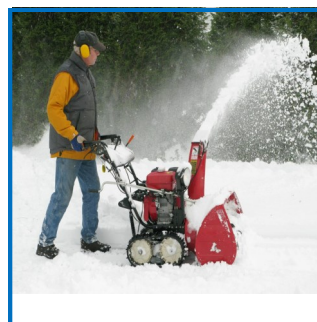
Now, perhaps is a good time to look at the Steps again, especially the first three. Many groups like to do the Step that matches the month of the year. So, in January, let's consider Step One: "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable." Some folks in Al-Anon like to expand the word "alcohol" to "people, places and things." Feels appropriate now, with our sense of confusion, search for good choices, desire for good health, strong friendships, steady, solid ground for safety and sanity. How has our life become unmanageable?

The slogans — there are 14 listed in Hope for Today — is a good place to start. "One Day at a Time" or "Keep It Simple." How about "Live and Let Live"? Or "Together We Can Make It."

Our daily meditation readings can help to center us as we deal with constantly changing "constants," such as how to keep safe in the pandemic, jobs and income sources, how to stay connected with loved ones — anybody important to us for that matter — if only by little boxes on a computer or phone. Maybe manageability involves creativity, patience, a bit of laughter, healthy food and a restful night's sleep. A smile, even if it's just on Zoom, from an Al-Anon friend. Your face, also on Zoom, for newcomers to know they are not alone.

So, how about Steps Two and Three? As winter in Michigan promises to hang around for awhile, let's consider the first three steps, as some do, like a waltz. One, two, three...one, two, three. Step Two: "Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity." Step Three: "Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*."

Maybe, we bundle up, and just focus *on* "restore us to sanity" from Step Two. Moment-to-moment, knowing things change frequently, like Michigan weather. Step Three? Maybe just "turn our will" over to...not me, and let space come for the serenity we look for. "Let Go and Let..." my Higher

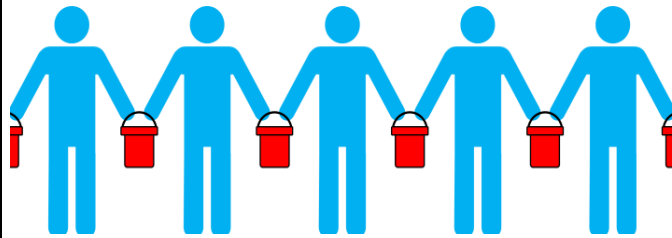


Power's gifts arrive.

Like the neighbor who offers to snow blow your driveway.

- Shirley B.

## Step Twelve: “ to carry this message to others...”



Do you ever think about a bucket brigade? Trying to put a fire out? It's a bunch of folks working together. Some stronger, some working longer than others, some with special equipment (think jackets and rubber boots), some smiling, some in tears, all for the same, caring end.

Al-Anon works like that and members joining the “bucket brigade” are what keeps the groups and resources available for all who want it. It keeps our program strong, too, within ourselves.

Please note the committee positions available in Districts 12 and 14 in our area. You may not want to direct a “brigade”, but maybe help in some way.

*“There are as many ways to work the Twelfth Step as there are stars in the sky.”*

Hope for Today, p. 175.

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are welcome!  
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Openings to be filled are:

- One at-large board member
- Alateen Coordinator for Oakland County
- District 12 Rep (and alternate)
- District 14 Rep (and alternate)

Contact for further information: Paul S., Board Chair, paulsrosen@gmail.com. There are several other ways you can support Al-Anon as we serve out communities. Events coordinator, Al-Anon World Service Committee Liaison. Your group rep may have suggestions, or would be willing to pass along your name and interests to our board members and other trusted servants.

**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**

Chairperson: Paul R. 248-330-3631

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**Please contact Jennifer W. at  
248-961-0415 for help with finding  
a meeting.**

## 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 required)



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

## Children of Alcoholics Week - Feb. 13-19

Research has indicated that for every one person who has been abusing alcohol or drugs, up to seven people have had their lives impacted by that life. Many of them are children.

One way Al-Anon helps is through sponsoring Alateen meetings and programs.

It's very difficult when a parent, stepparent, grandparent, friend, sibling, or any one else in one's life has a drinking problem. It affects how young people are treated and it shapes their world. Alateen meetings are where young people can find support and understanding from people their own age who are going through similar difficulties. In 2021, Alateen celebrated its Diamond Anniversary—that's 60 years!

"Teens were always welcome in Al-Anon meetings. They began meeting separately with each other as early as 1956, prior to the formation of Alateen in 1957—just as family members met together prior

to the founding of Al-Anon in 1951. A 17-year-old, Robert, started the first meeting for teenagers in Pasadena, California, in 1956. In a letter to Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Robert wrote:

*"My father has been in A.A. for some time. My mother goes to Al-Anon. I went with her several times. There were other teenagers there too. I wanted to talk over my problems but I didn't think the adults would understand, so we started an Al-Anon group for teenagers. We call it Alateen.*

*I have made more real friends than I ever had before. We understand each other and can help by talking out our problems.*

*We learn that alcoholism is a disease and that they [alcoholics] are sick people, not bad. They can't help what they do and say.*

*We learn to get over our resentments and self-pity. When we plan on going somewhere or doing something and something happens and we can't .... Well, instead of feeling bad or getting mad, we get busy and call our friends and try to do something nice for someone else.*

*Also we try to look at the other person's side and take our own inventory.*

*Alateen has helped me to get along better and understand people and get better grades in school. I'm a lot happier, too. It's a good deal!"*

From *Many Voices, One Journey* (B-31), pages 74-75. Retrieved from [al-anon.org/blog/how-alateen-started/](http://al-anon.org/blog/how-alateen-started/)

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"Becoming an Alateen sponsor allowed me to open my heart and reclaim all the lost sorrows and joys of my past. Sitting in a room full of young people every week - seeing parts of myself in each of them and hearing aspects of my story retold in their words - finally turned me around to face the mirror. My Higher Power spoke through the teens' vivid personal sharings, allowing me to remember and to heal my dark, buried memories."

Hope for Today, Jan. 21 (p. 21)

## A SHARING

Asked to come up with some thoughts for the next year, our Friday group created do and don't lists.

### Do:

Play

Push the PAUSE button

Postpone action until a solution emerges

Look at how far I've come

Follow the Golden Rule

Stay in the present

Ask my Higher Power to direct my thinking

Stick up for myself

Be open for guidance & inspiration

Relax & take time for self care

Remember serenity is an inside job

### Don't:

Complain

Indulge in negative thinking

Interrupt others

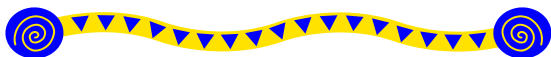
Be self-righteous

Be so intense

Cling to resentments

Take things so seriously

- Bonnie



When a loved one's alcoholism brought me to Al-Anon. I found a new second family, a family that helped me discover the me that had been hidden for so long, a family that will always be there for me. Today I will enjoy having a place where I belong.

*Courage to Change, One Day at a Time in Al-Anon*  
II, January 11, p. 11.

## Zoom Meeting Etiquette

Prior to entering the meeting, please make sure that you are in a quiet place and alone to protect the anonymity of the other members in the Zoom meeting.

If this is your first-time using Zoom, please test your audio and video prior to entering the meeting.

When not sharing, ensure that you are muted. If you want to temporarily unmute yourself, you can use the space bar to acknowledge an individual that is sharing.

If you will be using your video feed, please make sure of the following things:

That you have proper lighting so other members can see you clearly and background items are respectful of the program and others.

During meeting please be aware that any movement within your video can be distracting to other members. Be conscious of any non-verbal movements.



Please be respectful while others are sharing by giving them your full attention. Please turn off your video if you will be moving or rearranging your position for a prolonged period of time

Once in a breakout room please do not leave and go into another breakout room.

Please familiarize yourself with the Zoom tools 'Participants' and 'Chat'.

Make sure your name is displayed in the way that you wish. If you want to change it, under the *Participants* you will need to point to your name and choose More and click on Rename. If you are not using video and want to display a picture instead you can add a profile picture. You will need to point to your name and choose More and click on Add Profile Picture.

Chat is available to post to Everyone or to an individual in the list.

(Prepared by Amazing Grace AFG. Email to contact: amazinggrace2.hvh@gmail.com.)

## A SHARING

### On First Thoughts

Sometimes you hear someone repeat at a meeting the saying, "Never act on your first thought. It could be dangerous." Another way of saying this is: "It's the stinking thinking (ego) speaking."

As a recovering impulsive person, I can definitely relate to this. It's kind of like when you're having an anxiety attack and your friend says to you, "Breathe. Count to ten." I've been contemplating this topic, and actually led a table (a Zoom Breakout Room) last week with a related question, "What comes first? A thought or feeling?" I got a lot of interesting shares. One got me thinking (ah oh), How do you define a 'first thought'? Aren't we thinking all the time? The answer I came up with is: First thoughts in pressing situations.



One important shift in my recovery occurred early on – this is my 14th year in Al-Anon – when I began to wake up from the delusion that I am not my thoughts. This was the realization necessary to begin liking, and then, loving myself. After all, my first thought then was more often a judgment about You, which, we know is always a judgment about the accuser. And so began a shift in my growth in being more comfortable with myself, and in all persons, places and things.

I continued to contemplate on this topic on first thoughts, and ultimately became aware that I hadn't included my Higher Power in the conversation. After all, we are a spiritual program. So I asked Her. "Dear, Goddess. Why did you not create us to have loving thoughts for our first thoughts?" No answer.

So, I closed my eyes this time, breathed slowly, counted to 10 and waited for an answer. It came immediately. "Beloved, David. I did. But you didn't listen. You wanted to jump in with your own thought. I've been waiting patiently for you to consult with me before making your first thought. Now, at last, you can find peace and love in the situations when you really need me."

- David R.

## MORE SHARING

### What it's like to Volunteer

As Step 12 states "Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs."

I didn't realize how much I had isolated myself; I would attend meetings thinking this is one hour a day or maybe a couple days a week attending a meeting and that's all I needed to do. I remember someone asking me for my phone number and my first thought was why?

Thanks to many meetings and shares, I began to recognize my character defect of pushing people away and I began reaching out. The opportunity to become Group Rep. seemed like a big step at the time. Looking back now, it's plain for me to see what a great opportunity it's been. Volunteering helped me in many ways to address how I deal with people.

Volunteering has taught me we ALL have something to offer. It has given me a sense of purpose, I belong. I have a community of people with common interests. By volunteering I have learned how the organization works on a County, State and World platform. Practicing the Traditions and Concepts has helped me to understand how they are used as a group and my personal life. The benefits in volunteering far out weight the work involved. I urge you to give it a try, I believe you will be glad you did.  
- Kathy S.



#### Ready for a Fourth Step?

*"An inventory is a practical thing— a list of stock on hand. It requires seriousness, time, and effort. To get a total and accurate picture, we take a written inventory to see where the business of living is going well and where it is not...the more information we learn about ourselves in a broad range of categories, the better we can understand who we are and how we got this way. In order to measure personal progress, it has proven advantageous to date our answers. This will provide a clear point of reference for the future and a way to compare the results over a period of time."*

Blueprint for Progress, Al-Anon's Fourth Step Inventory p. 9