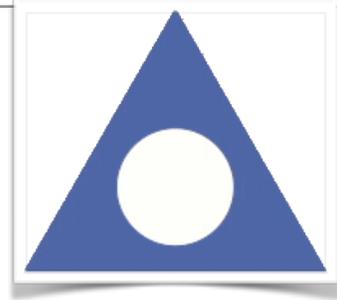


One Day at A Time

Stories of recovery, news, and fun in the Marin County Fellowship



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Does hearing other's stories, tools, 'moments' help you?

Are you willing to share an Al-Anon or Alateen recovery story, wisdom, insight, or a news item ?

**Email us at
editors@marinfamilygroups.org
or call Lee D. at
(415) 302-0356**

One Member, Two Programs: How to be a Good "Bothie"

By Tim B.

I was first introduced to the Steps, (not through Al-Anon), in 1982 when I was in my early 20s. I started working them in earnest in April of 1985 and the Steps and my Higher Power have been a part of my life ever since.

In the early '90s I felt as if my *derrière* was falling off and I did what I had been told to do by others more experienced than me; I put my *derriere* in a paper bag and took it to a meeting. In an attempt to embrace willingness I didn't just take it to one meeting, but to lots of meetings. In fact, almost any meeting that ended with an 'A'.

Then things settled down. My willingness paid off and I got back to the job of living; I paid less and less attention to meetings and the 12 Steps and more attention to having a family and finding the right job. Then again in 2009 my world seemed to turn upside-down. My *derriere* didn't just fall off, it was hacked off by events. Again I put it in a bag, but this time I carried it into an Al-Anon meeting and I have been here content and more or less serene ever since.

When I began Al-Anon I learned that I am a "Double-Winner". A member who maintains more than one 12-Step affiliation, (usually AA and Al-Anon). I was told to leave the other program at the door and not mention it or its readings in my shares.

This seemed impossible to me. How was I going to work these steps, which I needed desperately, without referencing my experiences with the steps from the other program?

Then it dawned on me; I was being given a chance to start over. To check my program-ego at the door and begin anew. Considering how many people I've known over the years who've only found such opportunity after many additional months/years of suffering from actively re-living behaviors that had brought them to the Steps to begin with, I was being given a beautiful gift. If I chose to accept it.

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One Member, Two Programs: How to be a Good "Bothie" (Continued from pg. 1)

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I humbled myself, left my program-ego at the door, and learned to leave it all – the books, pamphlets, witty sayings, anything that identified my affiliation with the other program – behind. I learned to do this because of the advantage it offered me – I was “new” again. I didn't experience the shame I expected to feel having spent 24 years working the Steps only to find myself in the situation I was in. A situation that anyone with any spiritual enlightenment would have avoided, or so my mind said.

With my willingness, I learned that it wasn't so hard and began hear things that I had not heard before. I was able to hear the Traditions as clearly as the Steps and understand that it was as important to embrace the Traditions as it was to embrace the Steps. The opening readings mention the importance of Anonymity to our program and I was able to hear that my it wasn't just about my name or my membership in Al-Anon, but also about humbling myself with respect to other members by respecting the Traditions that our Conferences have approved.

Unfortunately I have one of those minds that loves to argue. Especially when it believes that others are making suggestions on how I should behave.

As I worked my new program I noted that Tradition 5 talks about "practicing the Twelve Steps of AA ourselves". There it is in black and white. My mental defenses kicked in. How could I possibly practice AA's Twelve Steps if I couldn't use the 'Big Book'? And if I do use it then I shouldn't be telling anyone in Al-Anon about it...? Wasn't that literature the source of Al-Anon's Steps and Traditions to begin with? I had to be able to discuss the 'Big Book' in Al-Anon.

The answer is no.

Not, no I shouldn't be using the 'Big Book' to study and learn the Steps. I can do that if I choose. But no it is not appropriate to be talking about the 'Big Book' in Al-Anon meetings.

We are asked very clearly in our opening statements to “Keep the focus on our own program”. That request is often read in other Twelve Step meetings also. In fact, delegates at the Alcoholics Anonymous Second Annual General Service Conference in 1952 the spent a fair amount of time discussing whether they believed that the 'Family Groups', as Al-Anon was initially called, were impinging upon the AA name. It was decided that because AA had its own committees and program this was not an issue. But keeping the focus on themselves was a concern of AA members as a whole. To not be distracted by outside issues; namely issues from the Al-Anon program.

We are separate programs. Al-Anon's development came from that of our AA brothers and sisters both figuratively and literally. It was the spiritual development of the Alcoholic as observed by the wives who followed their spouses to AA meetings that helped give birth to Al-Anon. They followed the alcoholics to AA meetings and, as they made coffee and cake, it dawned on them that something good was happening to their sobering spouses. So they started working the Steps. They discovered the benefits of living by AA's Twelve Steps. Saw how this improved family relationships which often remained difficult even after the alcoholics became sober themselves.



How About Meditating?

By Joe E.

Meditation: To reflect upon, study, ponder; to plan or intend; to think deeply and continuously, (Webster's Dictionary).

Al-Anon often encourages us to meditate on different readings, steps, slogans, and ideas to help us in our self-work and I found a framework that works for me. It does take time to learn to sit. Each day at a general time to sit as comfortably as I choose in a chair, on a meditation cushion, the floor, a blanket and eventually enjoy the experience.

The main ingredient I am learning is to BREATHE – let the air go into my belly and fill it, and then exhale in a relaxed way. Short breaths which remain in the chest often lead to feeling anxious and I hear a lot about this problem in meetings. What works for me is to just sit comfortably with my back straight against the wall.

I started with a few minutes and worked up to longer meditations. You can choose open or closed eyes, although closed may cause drowsiness. If you keep them open and relaxed, use “soft focus” by lightly staring ahead at a fixed point. Keep your feet planted on the ground and your hands in lap with palms up or down or one each way (try it out!).



Then I JUST BREATHE; in and out filling my belly with air.

I let all the breath out and after few seconds the process starts over. My lungs start filling up again all by themselves.

My mind may do a variety of things: focus on worries of the day; say, "This is dumb," or "I am doing it wrong"; or allow insights about issues I am working on.

I JUST BREATHE; in and out. I acknowledge each thing that comes up and return to the breath.

Sometimes it is easy and other times it is difficult, but I do it every day at a certain time – usually when I wake. I have been going through different stages in this process: *Non-Judgment, Beginner's Mind, Trust, Non-Striving, Acceptance, and Letting Go* to name a few.

I get stronger each time that I persevere in this daily practice and learn more about myself. I get a really warm feeling inside for me – plus more direction – and I am doing something for me! I find it really rewarding and encouraging. The more I do it, the more I get to know myself.

Meditation may be helpful and become meaningful to you, too. I encourage you to JUST BREATHE.



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We are fortunate that we had the AA writings to help us find our way, but over time our fore-bearers discerned the differences between the two programs. At some point we had to detach, and slowly we did. We kept the core values of the original program; our Steps and the Traditions mostly the same. Yet we wrote our own literature and found our own method.

News

- ◆ **A Day In Al-Anon** will be on June 14th at the San Rafael Community Center. Stay tuned for details.
- ◆ Let the thoughts begin. **Writing Workshop** on a new pamphlet for grandparents of alcoholics coming up in May. Date and time TBD.
- ◆ Going strong: **Alateen meetings on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings in Novato and San Rafael** respectively (check your meeting list or marinalanon.org for times and locations). Alas, the Monday evening Mill Valley Alateen meeting has been shuttered.
- ◆ **Seeking Marin Al-Anon Website coordinator.** Do you have website/content management experience? Want a fun district-level service commitment? Contact Tim B. at (415) 328-6100.
- ◆ **Save the date. Buy a t-shirt at the 2014 NCWSA Convention** April 4-6 in Concord, CA. <http://www.marinalanon.org/> for details.

It may be that Al-Anon used the 'Big Book' in the beginning and it may be that other programs use it to work with other issues. However, Al-Anon does not today. And it's not just the 'Big Book' that we don't use. There are a number of wonderful repositories of spiritual knowledge in this world. I am free to study them, to absorb them, and to share them with my friends, but not at group level in an Al-Anon meeting.

It's pretty simple really. All I have to do is humbly accept it.

So at group level I avoid mention of my other affiliations. I try not to talk about literature other than CAL, (Conference Approved Literature). I've found it's pretty easy to do. I haven't come close to reading everything that Al-Anon has to offer in pamphlets, books, Forums, and websites. Sometimes, on my own or with my sponsees, I also read the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. There's a lot of wisdom in there. I just don't bring it into meetings.

So with humble acceptance of the wishes of Al-Anon's World Conference decisions, I am able to free myself to concentrate on my Al-Anon recovery. And when I need recovery from another program, I go to their meetings and leave Al-Anon out of those group discussions. But I do still belong in more than one program.

For awhile there was a discussion about how members of more than one program should identify themselves in Al-Anon. Some thought "Double-Winner" made it sound like Al-Anon-only members were being left out of something good or are somehow less. There was a suggestion to try and get the term "Dual Member" into common usage, but that sounds too clinical to me. Since the phrase still seems to be at issue, I'd like to propose the term "Bothie." It has a certain modern internet hipness sound to it.

In the end it doesn't matter what we're called. We all belong when we identify others in the room working on their Al-Anon recovery. And for the serenity I've gained, I'm happy to leave other program(s) at the door when I walk into an Al-Anon meeting.

