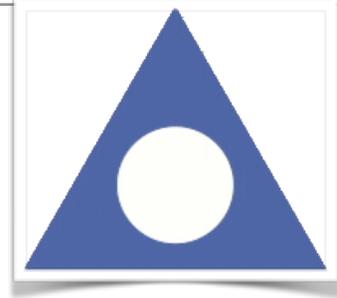


One Day at A Time

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



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By Carol

April 20, 2013!



When I first came to Al-Anon, I had no belief in a power greater than myself. Although I had grown up in a religious family, I abandoned God after events I took as evidence that no power in the universe cared about me. When my daughter was six weeks old, I took full responsibility for our lives when I realized that my alcoholic husband wasn't going to change. I remember looking at her and saying, "Don't worry. I'll take care of you." I relied on no one but myself, and I lived my life in fear for the next 30 years.

I came to Al-Anon almost 5 years ago because my beautiful daughter was addicted to alcohol and prescription drugs. I finally faced the fact that I couldn't go it alone.

As a newcomer I shared often that I had a problem with the idea of a 'Higher Power'. One day one of the members looked at me and asked, "Well, Carol, do you think you're God?" That one question got my attention.

First the group became a power I relied on because I always heard just what I needed to hear. I found a sponsor and told her about my lack of faith. She laughed and told me how her sponsor had once called her God's West Coast Representative and asked if I wanted the job. She kept encouraging me to pray for willingness.

Day after day I wrote in my journal the words TRUST, FAITH, TRUST, FAITH. By plugging along I finally developed a relationship with my Higher Power. And because of that trusting relationship, I let go of my loved ones and turned them over to their Higher Power - first my daughter and then my six-year-old granddaughter. And that is a miracle.

By turning away from self-will and toward a spiritual path, I have come to have trust, faith, and tremendous gratitude for the force in my life that sustains me through difficult times.



Into Service, Into Action



Hospitals & Institutions Service Volunteers Bring Al-Anon Values to Life

By Faye

Several years ago I began doing H&I service by going into San Quentin State Prison with a team of volunteers to bring a weekly Al-Anon meeting to inmates. Several volunteers go in each week to share our experience, strength, and hope with a small group of inmates in a typical Al-Anon meeting format. We have had the gift of witnessing and being part of the recovery of men who want to change and grow.

One of our regular inmate members has been steadfastly studying and working towards earning an associate's degree from Patten University which brings classes in to inmates, and he invited his Al-Anon family to celebrate his graduation this past June. I was one of six volunteers who attended the commencement ceremony for his and seven other inmates' graduation. I was struck by the willingness of the Al-Anon volunteers to show up and support him for this important accomplishment and be there for him as his Al-Anon family. No one from his family of origin was able to be there to witness this moment for which he had worked so hard and was so proud of, but six Al-Anon volunteers from the outside and three inmate Al-Anon members were there to show their love and support.

The graduation ceremony itself was one of those, "you had to be there" events to understand the energy, emotion, and support, but I will try to convey a bit of what transpired. It was held in the San Quentin Chapel with roughly 200 attendees – a mix of inmates, family, and volunteers. The ceremony began with the usual procession of graduates, but it wasn't usual at all. Seeing these inmates in cap and gown as they came down the aisle brought tears to my eyes – knowing the effort and determination it took for these men to get to this point. The program began with a delightful and entertaining rap song written specifically for this event and performed by two inmates accompanied by inmates playing in a band. This was followed by the keynote speaker, more entertainment, and a very moving valedictorian speech. The valedictorian shared his long and challenging path to get his degree...being transferred to different prisons that didn't offer schooling and his perseverance to get back to SQ so he could complete his degree. Next, a song about friendship which was especially poignant as I sat between two dear Al-Anon friends.

This was followed by a breath-taking (literally!) native Hawaiian performance by inmates who are part of a native Hawaiian religious group that is about peace, choice, self-awareness, inner strength, dignity, understanding, clarity, and balance. While their principles sound an awful lot like Al-Anon's, their way of expressing them is very different! Ten or so inmates came stomping, drumming, hollering, and yelping down the aisle looking very fierce dressed in traditional Hawaiian warrior clothing and face paint – an over-the-top display of testosterone that was a bit intimidating given the setting! I say it was breath-taking because I don't know if I took a breath until it was over and the emcee told everyone, "Ok, everyone take a breath"! When I met the performers sans warrior face paint after the ceremony I couldn't believe it was the same group of men – their genuine smiles and gentle faces made their fierce performance even more stunning.

At the beginning of the day, while waiting to get in to San Quentin, a few of us expressed that we were missing our regular Al-Anon meeting that morning in order to attend the graduation, and we were feeling in need of a meeting. We found that we ended up getting all we needed by being of service to our fellow. Throughout the ceremony we heard the messages of freedom of thought and choice despite one's circumstances, changed attitudes, the ability to change one's life by having the willingness to change, and the power of support from one's fellows. We came to be of service but left having gained more than we gave. Service truly puts the principles of Al-Anon into action.

Our act of service and putting Al-Anon principles into action was met with gratitude by all of the Al-Anon inmates, (not just the person graduating). Weeks later the inmates continue to express their gratitude and increased understanding of what Al-Anon is all about and their desire to pay it forward by doing H&I work upon their release. It is an honor and pleasure to be of service and be reminded of the love and peace of the program happening one day at a time in Al-Anon.

Crosstalk

Anonymous

Over the years, I have truly come to appreciate the guidelines for Al-Anon meetings laid out by our predecessors and have come to use those meetings as a rehearsal studio for real life. A place where I can learn from my mistakes in the kind reflection of fellowship.

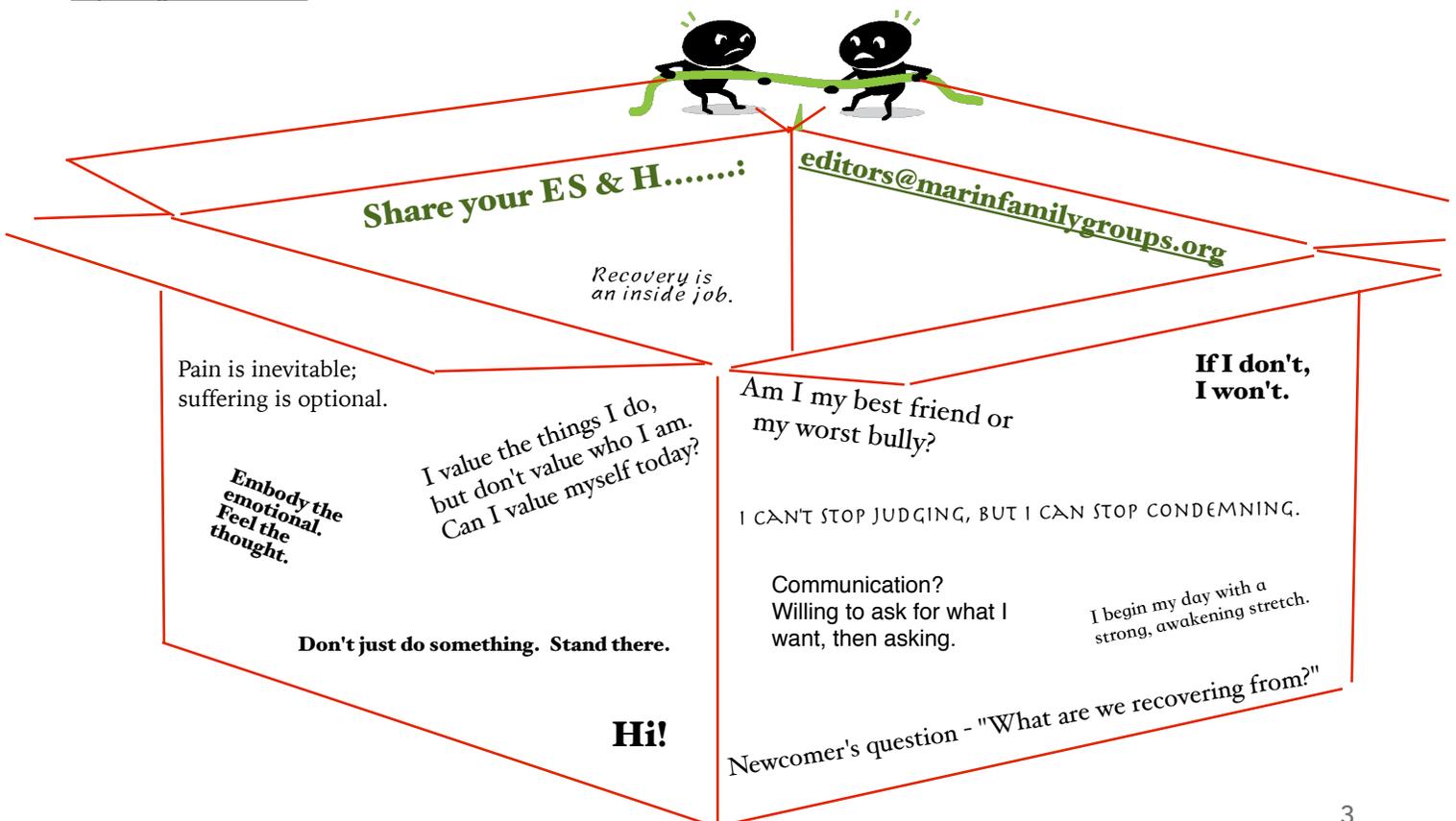
In the early days, I must admit that one of the most difficult rules for me to follow was the crosstalk rule, which asks that we listen to others share without comment, criticism, or advice. I thought to myself, how am I ever going to learn to listen to friends share about their problems and concerns without jumping in and helping them resolve their issues? After all, that was my role in life...but you know my husband was the sick one! I spent most of those early meetings biting my lip and learning how to keep my mouth shut, but it was surprisingly difficult. After a while, it was downright humorous to witness my own struggle with this. It felt like being in a straightjacket to stay quiet sometimes, and even still, there are days when I can't help myself.

I am such a stubborn soul and quite the reluctant student when it requires me to climb down off my righteous soapbox. It took something subtle and just a tad bit sneaky to teach me this important lesson. Therein lies one of the truly brilliant tactics of Al-Anon. It keeps me distracted in the kitchen while it sneaks a lesson in the side door.

As I learned to stay quiet, I noticed that I was starting to truly listen to others. Up until then, I really had no ability to "hear" others, because I hadn't been listening to them so much as I was listening for an opportunity to jump in and help them, and by doing so, create value in my life, (again, let me remind you that my husband was the sick one!). I listened so I would know how to behave, not to learn how another felt. But when I cannot run to the rescue, there's really nothing else to do but listen, and without my reactions getting in the way, I slowly started to learn how to hear, without becoming involved.

The crosstalk rule was in fact my segue towards learning about detachment. I used to think of that as a dirty word, something selfish people did to protect themselves when they were in trouble. But struggling with crosstalk compliance taught me the other side of that coin. I needed to learn that listening without commenting or offering advice was the most effective way to not only show compassion, but also respect for the other person. Something I desperately needed to learn. I didn't always have the solution, and I certainly didn't need to take advantage of another's pain in order to create value in my own life. The crosstalk rule taught me to listen with humility and respect for those whom I listen to, and magically when I practiced what I had learned out in the "real world" it had amazing results.

Especiallly with the sick one — me.



News/Alerts

- ✦ Elections were held! D-11's new Admin. team begins in 2015 with our **New DR — Congratulations, Darby!**
- ✦ **AMIAS TRAINING** open to all interested in Alateen. Saturday **November 8th, 2:00 - 4:00.** Hosted by D15. Questions to Christina O. @ colson3@horizon.csueastbay.edu James @ jhyatt1053@aol.com
- ✦ **36th Annual Northern Calif. Alateen Conference - November 14, 15, & 16** DoubleTree 1150 9th Street, Modesto, Omar H.: nocacchair@ncwsa.org or Darrell R.: (925)895-5028, nocacsponsor@ncwsa.org Abides by the NCWSA requirement for Alateen safety
- ✦ **Save the date! November 21 - 23 Yosemite Summit Conference** Al-Anon and Alateen participation. <http://www.serenityyosemite.com/> or (209) 966-8300. Abides by NCWSA Requirement for Alateen Member Safety
- ✦ **Plan Ahead! May 15 - 17, 2015 33rd Growing Together Weekend!** 2015 Westminster woods, Occidental, GTW2015@gmail.com Abides by the NCWSA requirement for Alateen safety

Ways to Connect

- **Alcoholics Anonymous** (S.F. & Marin 24-hour Hotline (415) 499-0400 or help@aasf.org Website: www.aasf.org)
- **Al-Anon Phone Meetings:** 712-432-8733 - code 52639# or www.phonemeetings.org/
- **Electronic Al-Anon meetings** Try e-mail, or chat @ <http://www.al-anon.alateen.org/electronic-meetings>
- **El grupo "Nuevo Amanecer"** Domingos 9:30-11:00 Mercedez 415-892-6031
- **General Al-Anon Web** - <http://www.al-anon.org/>
- **Members' Web** - <http://www.al-anon.org/members/> for CAL publications, The Forum, Calendar, blogs, WSC Summary, Service Manual, other newsletters,
- **WSC Meeting Information:** (888) 4AL-ANON [425-2666] (8am-6pm Eastern Time M-F)



Gender Neutrality

The NCWSA Assembly (October 10-12, 2014) heard a Thought Force Report on Gender Neutral Language. Seventy percent of the voting group representatives were against pursuing efforts to change language in the Twelve Steps. However, in a separate and somewhat ambiguous vote, 39% voted to continue working toward changes as a means of increasing inclusivity for individuals who are uncomfortable with the current male-dominated language in our literature. Both votes revealed a sizable minority opinion and substantial unanimity did not occur.

District 11 encourages every group representative to educate his or her meeting regarding this issue, including the following information submitted by The Area Thought Force on Gender Neutrality Language:

Cons:

- ✦ It would require three quarters meetings world wide to change wording in the Twelve Steps;
- ✦ A majority of the Area Group Reps wish to retain the masculine gender used to refer to God in the Twelve Steps in order to honor the historical record, but substantial unanimity on this was not present (a 30% minority disagreed).

Pros:

- ✦ 39% of the Area Group Reps expressed a desire for the Thought Force to explore ways to increase inclusivity;
- ✦ Some women express difficulty with language that feels like a sect of masculinity. Sensitivity to gender has increased since the Twelve Steps were written, and will probably continue to increase in the future;
- ✦ Others expressed discomfort with assigning any gender identity to a Higher Power.

Groups that would like Al-Anon to pursue ways to increase inclusivity regarding gender issues can bring this issue to the District level through their Group Representative.

I believe that passing this information on to members of Al-Anon in District 11 will in itself contribute to increased inclusion. If enough meetings want the District to pursue the issue further, we can ask our District Representative to raise it at the Area level.

Respectfully Submitted,
Tim C.

"The Healing is in the Sharing!"

It works to share your ES&H with newcomers. "Intimacy in Alcoholic Relationships" is looking for your shares and will cover emotional, spiritual, and physical intimacy. Think closeness, together, affinity, rapport, attachment, familiarity, friendliness, friendship, amity, affection, warmth, confidence; a private cozy atmosphere - "the room had a peaceful sense of intimacy about it"; an intimate act, sexual intercourse, lovemaking.... Download a share sheet at:

- www.al-anon.org/members/pdf/intimacysharing.pdf
- Submit online: www.al-anon.alateen.org/members under "Submit a Personal Sharing." Get started today!

