



Why Al-Anon helps me *Keep Coming Back!*

It seems like just a moment ago that I found Al-Anon. I was separated from my husband and we were on the road to divorce. Our three children were so unhappy. It wasn't like they had a very stable home. There were many moments of fighting, lots of sullen looks, silent treatment and of course, resentments. Why then, when a very good and close friend told me about Al-Anon, did I not jump for joy? Well, in the first place, I knew that just one thing wasn't going to put our family back together. We had already passed that point. I didn't even like my husband now, much less think that living with him would be a reality- ever.

Our relationship had begun to disintegrate at the exact same moment that he started drinking heavily. He replaced us with alcohol. I just knew that he didn't love us anymore. It was as if we had been given our walking papers, but allowed to stay to watch his slow decline into a certain death. It was torture.

My first Al-Anon meeting was very interesting. The people there seemed very happy, in fact, they laughed when they shared. I was not expecting this, and thought they were all quite off their rockers! Surely they weren't living with active alcoholism? Actually, many still were. Through this recovery program, they had discovered a serenity, detachment and **focus off** of the alcoholic. I wanted that. I wanted what they had. If I could learn the principles of this program, would my family get back together? I knew that I wanted to try, and I knew that it might take longer than I'd expect....*continued on page 8*

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Dear Serene,

Some of us in the group want to change the meeting format and others want to change our closing. (I say if it ain't broke don't fix it) What do you think our group should do?

Basic Betty

Dear BB,

Thanks for caring so much about your group you took the time to write. It seems you and others in your group would like to keep things the way are. And that's certainly valid. It also seems that there are some members in your group that want to make some adjustments before things "break." That's what makes for *a live healthy group* – those who want to keep things the way they are and others who want change. Fortunately, BB, there are tools for Al-Anon group growth (the Twelve Traditions), just as there are tools for personal growth (the Twelve Steps). And an important tool for resolving differing viewpoints within the group is the Second Tradition:

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.

And so it seems, it's time for your group to have a group conscience meeting. This can be done by having a separate meeting, usually before or after the regular meeting, and discuss any changes group members would like to suggest for the meeting format. Another opportunity to take a group conscience would be at your regular business meeting (and if you don't have one, situations like this may help your group decide to initiate one.)

Some tools available for taking a group conscience is available from the World Service Office. They are:

Taking a Group Inventory Group Conscience Decisions for Meeting Formats

Another tip is to read the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* and ask your District Representative to attend the meeting so that he or she can offer some suggestions from other groups. *There's no substitute for having an informed group conscience.*

Most of us in Al-Anon can live with black and white; it's the gray that drives us crazy. And interestingly enough the tool for that can also be found in the "second" -- Step that is: we come "to believe that a Power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity."

Good luck with your meeting. And remember, "whatever the group conscience is, it's right" if we trust our Higher Power. Sometimes our Higher Power has lessons He wants us to learn and we can always have another group conscience meeting if more adjustments are needed.

Now take a deep breath and go for it! Serene

Calendar of Events

February 2	Alateen Sponsor Workshop, Falls Church
May 17-18	VA Area Assembly, Massanetta Springs
June 20-22	Al-Anon State Convention, Richmond
July 4-6	International Convention, Pittsburgh
July 18-20	Mid Eastern Alateen Conference (MEAC), Front Royal

*To take one day at a time may seem slow,
but it is not limping, rather it is
steady progress toward the desired destination...*

Wanted Co-Editor

Immediate opening
available
for the Virginia Al-Anon
area newsletter.
Job Description:
Assertive Al-Anon with
computer ability,
writing and editing
experience needed
to work with editor.
Newsletter is published
four times a year.
If interested in this position
Please email the editor
nettles1@hotmail.com



Alateen Dilemma: Personal Sponsorship

Can you imagine trying to work an Al-Anon program without a personal sponsor? How would you do it? You might have the group act as your Higher Power, but could they substitute for a sponsor?

A personal sponsor is someone with whom you have a strong relationship. They know you quite well. You can tell them just about anything. They listen and pass on their suggestions as only a trusted Al-Anon can do.

Al-Anon sponsors are one of the strongest links to recovery for all of us. As we are sponsored, we learn how to sponsor others. As we pass on our experience, strength and hope, it creates a legacy of strong recovery.

Now, back to the Alateen dilemma. Alateen groups have Alateen Sponsors. These sponsors guide **the group** in their meetings. What Alateens don't have, is a network as Al-Anons do....**personal sponsors**....

One would imagine that if an Alateen started looking, an Al-Anon room would be a good place to start. All too often, many Al-Anon groups aren't as attached to their Alateen groups as we would like. It may just be that they don't know each other. Getting to know adults in recovery is not easy for some Alateens.

A great suggestion for this dilemma would be for the Al-Anon groups to invite the Alateens to their meetings, perhaps once a month or once every other month. As teen Alateens began to form relationships with Al-Anons as their sponsors, perhaps the Pre-teen Alateens would soon have experienced sponsors in the teen Alateen groups.

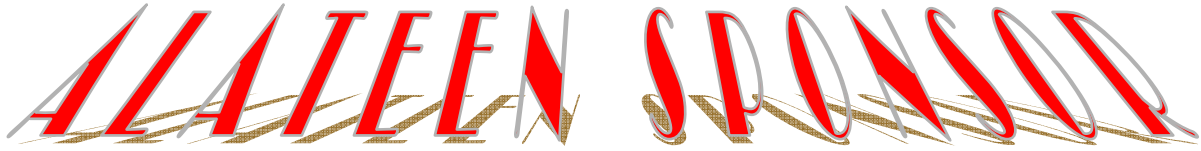
What would life be like if there were no personal sponsors? Just ask an Alateen for your answer....

Jane T.



*Habits are changed by
replacing them with other habits.*

**Are You Young or Young at Heart?
Looking For a Fun and Energizing Service Commitment?
If so , Choose to make a right turn & become an**



**Please Join the
ALATEEN FORUM
FOR AN ALATEEN SPONSORSHIP WORKSHOP**

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2008
9 A.M. TO 3 P.M**



**WE WILL HAVE A PANEL DISCUSSION
PLEASE BRING A BAG LUNCH & A GOODIE TO SHARE
THE FORUM WILL SUPPLY DRINKS**

**HOLY TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH
3022 WOODLAWN AVE ~ FALLS CHURCH, VA**

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ~ PLEASE CONTACT

**Karen B.
(703) 830-0667
GrannyKLR@aol.com**

**Jeff H.
(703) 330-5712
Jeffham3@verizon.net**

DIRECTIONS

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church is located on Route 50 half way between Annandale Road and Graham Road. The proper address is on Woodlawn Avenue, which is a small side street between the two major roads.

Traveling East on Route 50, you would reach Graham Road first. Cross over Graham and stay in the left lane. Take the first left (a left turn lane will open up). You'll see the church from Route 50 on the left, a large red brick structure.

Traveling West on Route 50, you will reach Annandale Road first. Cross over Annandale and stay in the right lane. Turn right on Woodlawn. Again, the church is visible from Route 50. From this direction, you will also pass by another church about a block before Holy Trinity (Iglesia de Santa María). If you turn right too soon thinking this is Holy Trinity, just stay on the access road to the next intersection, which is Woodlawn, and you'll see Holy Trinity.



33RD ANNUAL VIRGINIA AREA CONVENTION

BACK TO BASICS

JUNE 20 ~ 22, 2008

Holiday Inn Select ~ Koger South Conference Center

1021 Koger Center Boulevard ~ Richmond, VA 22635-4756

Early Bird Registration
May 23, 2008

Late/Walk-In Registrations
Cash of Money Order Only



Hotel Reservation Deadline May 30-2008
(804) 379-3800 Mention "Friends of Lois"



Need a Roommate to Share Hotel Expenses?



For Additional Information ~ Call Khayriyyah A. (703) 222-3517
or email: hisawzmkyd@aol.com

For Registration Information, please email Melissa W. ~ savvymom926@yahoo.com

Registration FORM

DESCRIPTION	QTY	AMOUNT	TOTAL
Adult Registration – Name _____ Phone # _____ ___ Al-Anon ___ Alateen ___ AA Name on Badge _____ Early Registration Late or Walk-in Registration		\$35.00 \$40.00	\$
Alateen Registration - Name _____ Phone # _____ <i>(Must be accompanied by Adult)</i> Name on Badge _____	XXX	Free	0.00
Saturday Night Buffet Dinner		\$45.00	
Tee Shirt (circle size) S M L XL 2XL 3XL		\$13.00	
Back to Basics Travel Mugs		\$7.00	
Total/Amount of Check (PLEASE DO NOT SEND CASH)	XXX	XXXXX	\$

Make Checks or Money Orders Payable to: Virginia Area Convention 2008
(*\$35.00 Charge for Returned Checks*)

Mail Registration & Checks to: Virginia Area Convention 2008
P.O. Box 820 ~ Centreville, VA 20122

News from the Delegate.....

Hi everyone and best wishes for a wonderful and serene 2008!!

I've just learned some exciting news and want to get it out to all.

Many of you may have had an opportunity to participate in one of the "Using the Concepts in Our Personal Lives" workshops that have been presented by Ric B, Executive Director of Al-Anon/Alateen. Most recently it was a part of the South East Regional Workshop held in Charleston, WV last year.

Ric has begun a year long monthly blog on the members website and it is up now! This blog begins with an introduction explaining the Steps and Traditions and how they build upon one another to the Concepts. His blog on using Concept One is now posted and ready for your sharings. February 1 he will post his comments on Concept Two and so on throughout the year.

All of our members will be able to subscribe to the sharings and to post **your** comments during the month. At the end of the month the Concept and posts will be archived so that newcomers to the blog will be able to read the earlier writings, even though they will only be able to post comments to the current Concept. The link will appear on the Member page which is www.al-non.alateen.org/members. The password is your home group name followed by AFG. (ie if your home group is named the "Virginia is for lovers" group you would use "Virginia is for lovers AFG" as your password)

Ric's comments will be translated into Spanish and French and posted on the Spanish and French Members' sites. Only members who can write in French and Spanish will post to their blogs. English sharings to the English blogs will not be translated to the Spanish and French blogs. The reverse is also true.

If possible, please try to share the blogs through out the year with those who do not have access to the internet.

Special news for our Spanish groups. The Spanish (and French - but I don't know of any French speaking members in our Area) *Service Manuals* and *Groups at Work* will be mailed out to registered groups and should be received in the next couple of weeks.

Warning - When ordering *Groups at Work* be sure to ask for P-24. On the back cover it is incorrectly shown as P-24/27 which is the number for the Service Manual. This error may have been corrected on the Spanish version since it was printed later.



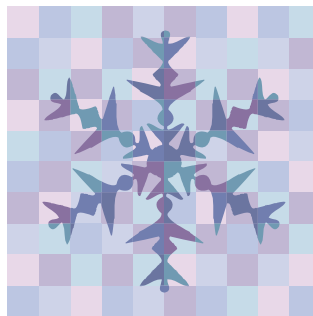
Keep Coming Back....

My first few months in the Al-Anon program were rocky. I truly wanted to stop and not go back several times. I kept hearing what was said in the meetings and I began to realize that I was embarking on a journey of recovery that would impact my entire family...each in a different way. I had heard that one person's recovery had an impact on the whole family. I wasn't sure if that was going to be true in our case. Our family was so broken and seemed unfixable. At first I was attending to fix the alcoholic and my children. After awhile, I was coming for myself!

I found a sponsor. She has so kind and so nice. She helped me see how I could just work this program one day at a time. She guided me to see that the alcoholic in my life was also suffering. His disease was different than mine. I could "love him anyway", in spite of his behaviors and actions. I began to let go of my own controlling behaviors. Our family began to change. There were little changes at first. And soon I saw a few huge ones. I am now the proud mom of two Alateens. I was never sure if anyone was going into recovery. My husband is still not in recovery, and I pray for him each and every day.

I am certain that this is where I am supposed to be. I know that I can start my day over if I am having an awful one. I can ask my Higher Power for help, even when I have taken back everything and need to give it back. I know that I am a "work in progress." I know that I can't do this in one year and graduate. So, I keep coming back. Each and every day I am getting better and better! Brenda M.

*Once we recognize that we are
broken we have a chance to mend...*



Thanks to all who contributed to this issue.
All contributions were from Al-Anons.
Interested in sending us an article?
Email the editor: nettles1@hotmail.com
Send by snail mail to:
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