

YOU ARE NOT ALONE! In the complicated society we live in today, many families don't realize they share similar pain, anger, anxiety, shame, self-pity, and fear caused by their concern about the disruptive, destructive behavior of a loved one involved with substance abuse or related behavioral problems. Although just one person in the family may be using drugs, the problem rapidly expands to include the entire family in "a kind of madness," often called *codependency*.

We at Families Anonymous (FA) have found a safe haven where we can share our problems with others who understand. The details of our personal stories may differ, but our feelings and heartbreak are the same. In FA we learn to recognize the roles we play in our families—and how these roles aggravate our situations, making them worse. We learn how to change ourselves; in doing so, we achieve serenity in spite of turmoil.

WHAT IS FAMILIES ANONYMOUS? FA is a Twelve Step self-help fellowship based on the adaptation of the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. We who belong to FA are family members and friends concerned about our loved ones who are involved in substance abuse.

FA began in the early 1970s and has become an international fellowship that helps people who suffer the fallout of substance abuse in their homes and families.

IS FAMILIES ANONYMOUS A RELIGIOUS PROGRAM? No! Although FA has a spiritual basis formed on the principles of the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions, this does not make us a religious program. Each member's belief (or lack of belief) in a Higher Power is personal and private.

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of our program. First names only are used. We avoid rendering opinions on outside issues; we do not participate in public action groups; and we do not lend our name to any outside enterprise. These parameters allow us to stay focused on our recovery and keep principles above personalities.

ARE THERE REQUIREMENTS FOR MEMBERSHIP IN FA? FA welcomes anyone concerned about a loved one who is, was, or is suspected of being involved with drugs or alcohol. There are no dues, fees, or other obligations for membership.

Each FA group is self-supporting through voluntary contributions received at each meeting. FA groups pay their own rent, buy FA literature, and provide their own refreshments. Groups also make donations to the World Service Office to support the FA fellowship.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT AT MEETINGS? FA groups hold regularly scheduled meetings, and leadership is rotated among the members. Some meetings focus primarily on the Twelve Steps, with the group studying a single Step each week, each month, or for several weeks in succession. Other meetings explore FA's Twelve Traditions, a framework of guidelines that define our groups and help keep them strong and healthy. Still others focus on a topic selected by the meeting's leader: a key word or slogan (such as *expectations, enabling, control, or one day at a time*); or a page from FA's book of daily readings, *Today A Better Way*; or excerpts from other FA literature pieces that contain the wisdom of longtime members.

Using the meeting's focal point, and always being guided by the principles of the FA program, we take turns discussing our experiences, strength,

and hope in support of each other. Newcomers are welcome to just sit and listen; or they may speak, if they wish, asking questions about the program or sharing their concerns and struggles that have brought them to FA.

HOW CAN I FIND A MEETING? You can find meeting information on the FA website (under FA Meetings) or by calling or emailing FA's World Service Office (WSO) using the contacts printed on the back panel of this pamphlet.

Choose one or more meetings that are best for you:

Attend a **TRADITIONAL MEETING**. Face-to-face meetings are the original (and still the most common) type of FA meeting. More than 500 face-to-face meetings are held weekly in the United States and a dozen other countries. (Interested in starting a new group in your area? Find information on the FA website or by contacting the WSO.)

Attend the **MEETING WITHOUT WALLS**. This real-time, online voice meeting follows the format of our traditional, face-to-face meetings. To participate in the meeting, you will need an Internet connection, a microphone, and speakers. Simply download the free software from the FA website, install it, and you'll be ready to go.

Attend the **E-MEETING**. This e-mail-based discussion group is the largest and most active in the fellowship. It has more than 500 members from all over the world and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

HOW DOES FA HELP A MEMBER? At our meetings, we share our successes and struggles. By telling our stories and listening to those of others, we gain strength, hope, and courage to try

new ideas and new ways of coping with our own situations. Each person “recovers” at his or her own pace and, in turn, encourages others to persevere in their own situations.

Our focus in FA is on changing ourselves, not others; on changing our words, feelings, attitudes, actions, and reactions. When we change ourselves, serenity can enter our lives in spite of unsolved problems. Often the changes we make in ourselves provide opportunities for our addicted loved ones to also choose recovery for themselves.

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**DO YOU NEED FAMILIES ANONYMOUS???**

**A Questionnaire for Concerned Family Members and Friends**

To answer the question above, ask yourself the following questions, and answer them as honestly as you can. Fill in each blank with the name of the person who is causing you concern.

**YES NO**

- 1. Do you lie awake worrying about \_\_\_\_?
- 2. Do you feel frustrated in your attempts to control \_\_\_\_?
- 3. Do you disapprove of \_\_\_\_’s lifestyle?
- 4. Do you argue with \_\_\_\_ about his or her friends?
- 5. Do you find it increasingly difficult to communicate with \_\_\_\_?
- 6. Does \_\_\_\_’s behavior have you “climbing the walls”?
- 7. Do you often ask, “Where have I failed?”
- 8. Do you feel it is necessary to protect \_\_\_\_ because he or she is unusually sensitive?
- 9. Are you trying to compensate for some family misfortune, divorce, death, illness?
- 10. Are you embarrassed to discuss your situation with a friend or relative?

- 11. Do you find yourself lying or covering up for \_\_\_\_?
- 12. Do you feel resentful or hostile toward \_\_\_\_?
- 13. Do you find it increasingly difficult to trust \_\_\_\_?
- 14. Do you worry about \_\_\_\_’s behavior affecting other members of the family?
- 15. Do you blame others for \_\_\_\_’s problems?
- 16. Do you blame yourself?
- 17. Are \_\_\_\_’s problems starting to undermine your marriage?
- 18. Do you find yourself playing detective, fearful of what you will find?
- 19. Do you go from place to place seeking help for \_\_\_\_?
- 20. Is concern for \_\_\_\_ giving you headaches, stomachaches, or heartache?

- If you answered **YES** to any **three** of these questions, this is an early-warning sign.
- If you answered **YES** to **four or more**, chances are that you could use some help.

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To order additional copies of this or other FA literature, to find a local group or an online meeting, or to obtain information about starting a new group in your community, please contact

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 TORN
 APART
 TRYING TO COPE
 WITH A
 SUBSTANCE
 ABUSER?**



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