

THE TWELVE STEP RAG



The Bi-Monthly Newsletter of the Families Anonymous Fellowship

FOR RELATIVES AND FRIENDS CONCERNED ABOUT ANOTHER'S USE OF DRUGS, ALCOHOL, OR RELATED BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS

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SURVIVAL, HOPE, AND A HIGHER POWER

(reprint from Sept-Oct 2006 Rag)

Before Families Anonymous, I thought enabling was part of my job description. We enabled our sons and daughters to have good, healthy childhoods, a loving home, straightened teeth, good education, cats and dogs, and family vacations. These were all part of the daily routine of raising our family. Just like yours. But when alcohol and drugs entered the picture, uninvited, we became the “perfect storm.” The word “enable” took on a whole different meaning. At my first FA meeting, I discovered there was a dark side to that simple word, enabling. It took a while, but I began to figure it out with some help from my FA group.

Without a Higher Power, the struggle would have been worse, if that's possible. We need Divine Intervention. Something we cannot take credit or blame for. We need to get out of the way. If we don't, we must then accept the blame or take credit ourselves, because we have made all the decisions, good or bad. That's a heavy, heavy burden.

We've all had our share of sorrows as well as moments of unhappiness. They weren't all connected to this program either. It could have been a broken relationship, job loss, poor health, betrayal, or just having to make some big changes and cutting back. We are constantly in the state of being “reshaped” every single day. Having a Higher Power reminds me there are joys in my life, too, and they are not to be ignored. I can come in out of



the dark if I want to. Going to an FA meeting is a good place to start.

The step meetings enable us to move forward, sometimes at a snail's pace. This process makes us honest and allows us to keep moving. We don't always realize how we've changed until something happens and we find we don't react like we did before FA.

Ask yourself: If things are so lousy or so lovely, why do you keep coming back? Because it really works! Even when things are going well we need to be aware of the fellowship and genuine caring that's available in that room. We can only get better when we commit ourselves to the program. I will admit I still have moments of great sadness, but I am not tortured as I might very well be without this connection.

My daughter died five years ago and my last conversation with her was on Mother's Day 2001. Neither one of us knew it at the time. It was a good, long phone call. She always checked to

make sure I met up with my “Saturday friends.” We would run through the step meeting and she would ask about some of the members by name. She knew their importance to me. Three days later she was gone.

When someone like Barbara, who had such a large presence in our lives, suddenly leaves without even saying goodbye, it's so hard to handle. It's painful and disorienting and takes time, but with good family, friends, a Higher Power and FA, I was able to keep from losing my footing or my mind. Now, I'm on a whole new level, but without FA I would still be trying to rejoin the human race. The key here is FA.

To be a “*mensch*” is to be a human being in the best sense. To qualify at the highest level, all you need be is a good and caring person. To empathize, make the world the world a little better and make a difference to others. This is exactly what FA does for us when we need it the most. We begin to realize there are others on this earth besides us and beside us. We are no longer the center of the universe. We are part of it and will share the good and the not-so-good with each other. We do become more responsible adults.

I don't give advice, but I will now: Stay with the program! Use the phone list. Arrive a little early to visit before the meeting. Stay a while afterwards, but get there! We need you. You need us. Stay connected.

Joan G, Bloomfield, CT, Group 1187

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FROM THE EDITOR

Each of us has a story to tell. I should say "stories." It could be the big story of what brought you to FA or a slice of life story about finding a brass medallion, (check out the Brass Medallion on page one of the May/June 2014 issue found on the website). Don't worry about spelling or grammar; we will do a thorough job proof reading.

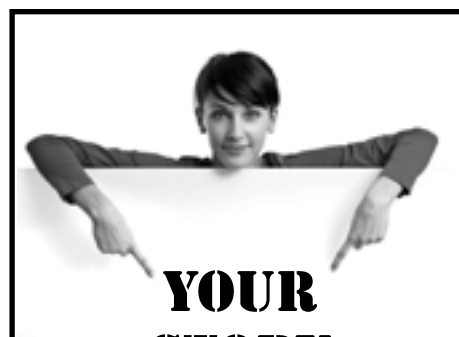
Please consider supporting the Rag and each other by sharing your experiences and hope. The Twelve Step Rag needs to hear from you. Submissions to the newsletter have declined. In this issue alone there appears five reprints from past Rags. I cannot stress enough how important member involvement is. Without it there is no Rag.

Please send in your stories.

Submissions can be emailed to RagEditor12@gmail.com, faxed to 847-294-5837, or mail to Families Anonymous, Inc., 701 Lee St, Suite 670, Des Plaines, IL 60016-4508.

The Twelve Step Rag is a recovery tool publication about you and for you. So, let's hear from you.

In Service,
Lisa W
Rag Editor



YOUR STORY HERE

Without YOU we don't have a newsletter. We need to hear from you. Please send us your poems, art, musings, questions, stories, bios or group history.

rageditor12@gmail.com

Topic Ideas

*Is there a topic
you would like to see
covered in the Rag?
Send your ideas to
RagEditor12@gmail.com*

HELPING THOSE WHO GRIEVE

“Grief is an equal opportunity condition. Its effects are felt by the affluent and the poverty stricken, by the wise and the foolish, by children and the elderly, by all races and nationalities. No one is immune to the deep and poignant feelings of sorrow.

“Grief’s causes can be numerous. They include the loss of hopes, jobs, dreams, relationships, and that most final of losses: death.” [From #1027 *Through Grief to Growth...The FA Way*]

As we bear witness to other people’s losses and grief, we can find ourselves experiencing a sense of discomfort and being unsure of how to respond.

Through Grief to Growth offers guidance on what to do, what not to do, and what comments are appropriate. (Find more-detailed explanations and clarifying statements on page 24 and 25 of that booklet.)

DO’S:

- DO acknowledge the obvious.
- DO show that you care.
- DO listen! Listen! Listen!

DON’TS:

- DON’T give advice.
- DON’T say you know how the other person feels.
- DON’T spout “at least” scenarios.

APPROPRIATE COMMENTS to fellow FA members who are grieving:

- You have shown great courage in coming here.
- Keep coming back; you will hear ways to help yourself and your situation.
- You are not alone.
- Tears are respected here.

“Today I will stay alert to the pain of others by listening; then I will pray for the words that will bring hope and encouragement to them.” [from #1015 *Today A Better Way*, December 17, “Listening”]

Order #1027- *Through Grief to Growth...The FA Way*
from the WSO or the website: famanon@familiesanonymous.org

FA LITERATURE SPOTLIGHT

Back by popular demand!

FAB PAKs

(“FA Bargain Packs”)

FAB PAK 2013 – English

FAB PAK 2013S – Spanish

AVAILABLE FOR 4 MONTHS ONLY:

NOW THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2014!

Again, your group can take advantage of a quick, easy, and inexpensive way to purchase FA’s newest, high-quality literature pieces.

WHAT ARE FAB PAKs? – A FAB PAK contains one copy of each literature piece that was newly created or substantially revised during a particular calendar year and in a particular language.

WHY? – Your Literature Committee and World Service Board hope to acquaint every FA group with all the latest literature produced in 2013. Many of our literature pieces were translated into Spanish during 2013, so this year, for the first time, we are offering a FAB PAK in Spanish as well as one in English.

WHO CAN BUY THESE FAB PAKs? – FAB PAKs are sold only to registered FA groups. Each group may purchase only one (1) of each FAB PAK.

HOW MUCH DO THESE FAB PAKs COST? – Each FAB PAK’s selling price is deeply discounted off the combined retail price of all the literature pieces it contains.

FAB PAK 2013 – English contains 9 literature pieces and sells for \$7.40

FAB PAK 2013S – Spanish contains 10 literature pieces and sells for \$3.25

HOW LONG WILL THESE FAB PAKs BE AVAILABLE? – Each FAB PAK is being sold for a limited time only—September 1 through December 31, 2014—after which both will be discontinued.

HOW CAN MY GROUP GET THESE FAB PAKs? – Order from the WSO or on the FA website:

FAB PAK 2013 – English (#5018) \$7.40 (+ shipping & handling)

FAB PAK 2013 – Spanish (#5018S) \$3.25 (+ shipping & handling)

CAN MY GROUP ORDER BOTH FAB PAKs? – Absolutely! By buying both FAB PAK 2013 – English and FAB PAK 2013 – Spanish, your group will receive 19 first-rate, up-to-date literature pieces for just \$10.65 (+ shipping & handling)!

DON’T DELAY!!! ORDER NOW!!!

Grief and Expectations

When my son died, I felt so abnormal in this world of people not having the courage to mourn. I discovered that this trauma kept me frozen in what I was doing the moment the trauma happened. And the way out of the cage was to mourn. Mourning is grief in action. Tears. Journaling. Yoga. Talking to a couple of people that had the patience and courage to listen for three years helped me see more clearly. Then I read a story about a mom whose child died. And she asked a spiritual teacher to help her. And he said of course. But first bring me three mustard seeds from people that have never lost someone. And she couldn't find even one, much less three. And she saw that loss is part of the life experience for all and so did I. So I learned to live with the hole in my heart and learned to live again.

I don't expect life to make me happy now and I don't expect a brass ring. There is only now and that's enough.

TODAY, I will allow my grief to give me courage to change and no longer have expectations that people outside this experience will understand. Today, I will respect the process so that I may live again. And respect the fact that there are gifts of the spirit yet to arrive as I study the steps of FA.

Deb C

TODAY I WILL call upon my courage to admit how painful and overwhelming this family disease really is.

Acceptance is not easy. It means that I must look at a situation with honesty and the realization that sometimes I cannot change it, cure it, or control it. It just is as it is.
-- Acceptance - January 10

Remember: Acceptance does not indicate approval.



A Grief Out of Season

Before my HP lead me to FA, I experienced Grief out of Season. My adopted son had been doing well it seemed. He was excited about a new job and experienced a fatal overdose the night before.

Grief is a natural and unlearned response to loss. Sudden death brings additional helplessness and fear. And feelings of being out of control and unbalanced. And perhaps anger, and doubt in all I believed in. Grief out of season brought me shock and numbness. Too much sleep and then not enough. Strained relationships and low productivity at work and loss of interest in things I loved. It also triggered a previous loss of Grief out of Season.

FA helped me by saying it is time to talk and take a step. It also helped me to talk to myself and write to myself and see what I was doing to myself.

*And all subsided in the hush
that followed, in the calm
of great wings folding
and shadowy forms lying down.*

*I rose and left that room,
the house of my grief
and my bondage, my book
never again to be opened.*

*To see as once I saw,
steadied by the darkness
in which I walked
and would make my way.*

TODAY, I will talk, think and contemplate; experience a bit of balance and take another step. Today I will try this new way and trust the process to a Better Way.

Deb C

Thoughtful Snippets

“... I, too, am always changing, and I can make that change a constructive one if I am willing. I can change myself.” -- *Helping*

“Guard well your spare moments. They are like uncut diamonds. Discard them and their value will never be known. Improve them and they will become the brightest gems in a useful life.”

-- Ralph Waldo Emerson

“This is the path we take in cultivating joy: learning not to armor our basic goodness, learning to appreciate what we have. Most of the time we don't do this. Rather than appreciate where we are, we continually struggle to nurture our dissatisfaction. It's like trying to get flowers to grow by pouring cement on the garden.” -- Pema Chodron

“We all have a personal pool of quicksand inside us where we begin to sink and need friends and family to find us and remind us of all the good that has been and will be.” -- Regina Brett

Serenity

January 4 - Today A Better Way

When I find myself in mental and emotional turmoil because of my anxieties and fears, I have the ability to put those thoughts “on hold” and shift from negative to positive thinking.

Instead of feeding my anxieties, I can foster a sense of wonder and gratitude. I can notice a beautiful sunset, watch children as they laugh and play, marvel at a bird's flight, or smell the fresh countryside after a summer rain. What beauty and serenity can be found just by observing!

When I am quiet and still, I can be in touch with my Higher Power. Knowing my God is there, I allow my fear to be replaced by faith.

TODAY I WILL work to replace anxiety and fear with gratitude and serenity.

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change;

Courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.

NEW JERSEY APPROVED AS 2015 CONVENTION SITE!

After careful consideration, the Summit, Cherry Hill, and Colts Neck FA groups voted to jointly ask that we be permitted to co-host the 2015 World Service Convention in New Jersey. On Monday, August 11, the CPC submitted a written request to that effect to the World Service Board (WSB), and we are pleased to announce that the WSB has now accepted our bid. Game on!

This is our chance to give back to the Fellowship in a big way, and to demonstrate that recovery, and the FA principles and traditions, are alive and thriving in the Garden State. Make no mistake - we've got lots to do to make this happen. But we've also got you, the New Jersey members of this remarkable FA fellowship, and the amazing talents and energies you all bring to the table. If we work together, we can make this the most amazing convention ever!

SAVE THE DATE!

The CPC has selected MAY 29 - 31, 2015 as the dates for the World Service Convention. Mark your calendars and tell your FA friends and anyone who you think might benefit from participating in the workshops and weekend events.

Be there or be square.

The people in program have taught me that it is not fear to faith, but rather, fear to being overwhelmed by love that has brought me to faith. The principle here is unconditional love as given to each person in program. Where else can we go to be loved unconditionally in spite of all the wounded parts of ourselves that we share week after week? The principles of FA keep us on track and open up our hearts to see, hear, and respond as ones who are lead by a Power greater than ourselves---exemplified by love.

Anonymous

Fable About Personal Pain

There is a fable about a sad young man who went to a village wise man for a solution to the pain in his life? The wise man told the young man to put a fistful of salt in a glass of water and drink it. The young man did and immediately spat out the bitter tasting salt water.

Next, the wise man told him to put another fistful of salt into a freshwater lake and take a drink. This time the water tasted fresh because he couldn't taste the salt.

The wise man offered this wisdom to the young man:

“The pain of life is pure salt; no more, no less. The amount of pain in life remains exactly the same. However, the amount of bitterness we taste depends on the container we put the pain in. So when you are in pain, the only thing you can do is to enlarge your sense of things a bit.”

If you keep your pain to yourself it is like drinking salted water from a glass. Remember, fellowship is our freshwater lake.

The Sponsorship Mail Bag



WOULD YOU LIKE A SPONSOR?

THIS IS WHAT A SPONSOR IS:

- > A person who has been in the FA program for some time and who is committed to working the program.
- > An FA member who attends meetings regularly.
- > An FA member with whom you can exchange phone numbers.
- > A person who can answer many of your questions about the FA program.
- > A listener.
- > An FA member who might become a special friend.

THIS IS WHAT A SPONSOR WILL DO FOR YOU:

- > Listen.
- > Let you talk.
- > Share ideas and feelings.
- > Tell you how the FA program helped him/her.
- > Lovingly guide you into the FA program and help you understand and apply the Twelve Steps to your life.


THIS IS WHAT A SPONSOR DOES NOT DO:


- > Give advice about personal or family problems.
- > Let you become dependent upon him/her.
- > Get involved with your problems.
- > Lend money, furnish housing, or take responsibility for your personal affairs.
- > Permit you to continually review your miseries.


Terry D
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
(reprint from the July-August 2005 Rag)


We want to hear from you. Please send your questions or experiences regarding sponsorship or step work to the Sponsorship Committee at sp@familiesanonymous.org.

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URGENT NEED

Rag Submissions

Do you have a story to tell? We want to hear from you. Send us your poems, art, musings, questions, stories, bios or group history.
rageditor12@gmail.com



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&

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Today A Better Way: Volume Two

Send submissions to:
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HOLIDAYS, PROGRAMS, AND THE SHOULD AND THE OUGHTS

Here we go again -- that time of year which brings up the past with all of its memories, good ones as well as not-so-good ones. Along with fears of the future - fear of what will happen to them and to us if something happens to them! Memories and fears. Fears that "they'll never get clean," "they'll never be better," "my life will be empty without them," with words and thoughts to that effect.

One of the emotions raised is anger. Anger at them for not being clean, not being there for us, not being there for their own families/children; anger at them for not being the child/husband/lover we expected, wanted, or hoped they would be. Another is fear. It causes anxiety -- we worry and fret. We become self absorbed in self-destructive ways, such as depression. Our co-dependent thoughts focus on them and what they've done to us by their behavior, and we get into self-pity. Self-pity leads to depression. And in the meantime, we've screwed up our day (holiday or not) and they continue to go on with whatever it is they are going to do regardless of what day it is.

Drugs know no holidays. Drug addicts do not care about holidays. It's not something personal against you; it's just the way the disease is - they need their drugs, period. They are dependent on them. They've lost the power of choice so don't expect much on the holidays if your addict is not working a program of recovery.

My daughter would come home on the holidays - I'll give her that much. But she was doped out on the sofa sleeping it off much of the day. She's eat and run out the door to flop at the dope hole right after dinner. I'd be left sobbing, depressed, angry, and into self-pity. I'd cook for hours just to keep alive the memory of how it used to be or how it was supposed to be. And for as long as my head brought up the memories and the "shoulds" and the "oughts," the longer I stayed sick, caught up in her addiction. I wasn't working a program of recovery for me.

Once I started my own program, I no longer got into the "should" and the "oughts." I got into the reality of the disease of addiction, which has no boundaries; rich/poor/sad/glad/holiday/anyday. They're going to use. We must get into a program so we can live with the reality of what is and not what we want it or except it to be.

Stop asking why? Work on you. Find out what your Higher Power wants for your life. For me it is more than the anxiety of worrying and fretting about what my addicts are going to be doing or where they are going to be going. The Steps will lead you to freedom from self-bondage. Start to take care of you. The Higher Power has a plan for your life What is it? How can we know, if we don't focus on our Higher Power and ourselves?

Joan S.

(Excerpt from the November-December 2006 Rag)

DEPRESSION - OR MAYBE NOT - AT CHRISTMAS

It's very easy for some of us to become depressed during the holidays. I'm finding that using my FA program can be an excellent way to avoid sadness.

Before FA, I allowed people to control my moods. If I was happy it was because they were doing well. If they weren't doing well, then I was ill.

Three years ago, I was standing over my stove crying in my turkey gravy wondering if the addict was going to show up for Thanksgiving dinner. I was so focused on the addict who wasn't there that I totally ignored the guests who were there. When the addict finally walked in I was so relieved and happy.

After that weekend was over I looked back on that time and said never again will I allow someone else to control my sadness or happiness. As a matter of fact, the next year we left for a week over Thanksgiving.

Well, this year -- same people, different problems, but I decided how I was going to feel. I chose to invite my golfing buddy over and her family. My own family left right after dinner and we played cards all afternoon.

So during the Christmas holiday, when the skies are gray and I might start feeling a little SAD -- which can stand for "Seasonal Affective Disorder" or "Seasonal Addict Disorder," I can pick up my FA literature, phone a friend or go for a walk. FA has given me tools, a good spine and the desire to change my life for the better.

Terry from Richland, WA - Gr 1227

(Reprint from the November-December 2006 Rag)