

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

VOLUME XLII

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NUMBER 5

Silver Linings

This is a story about silver linings. Why discovering, facing and recovering from our daughter's addictions proved to be a good thing; a blessing in disguise.

When my kids were young, I was blissfully naïve. As I delighted in their innocence, affection, adorable antics and adoration, I naturally assumed I was the solution to all of their problems. Not only did I believe that it was my job to create their perfect world, but I assumed that somehow I was capable of fixing whatever was wrong. My son even dubbed me "Magic Mommy" for a time, clearly confirming that I had the superhuman ability to make things right.

When in adolescence, our formerly happy, well-adjusted little girl began to show signs of trouble, I was at a loss. Our exceptional daughter had seemingly been taken over by someone we didn't recognize. The sunny disposition, the humor, the engaging personality, were suddenly replaced by unpredictable mood swings, alternating between manic energy and debilitating depression.

High school quickly became an emotional roller coaster of passivity and rebellion, grandiosity and self-loathing, fearfulness and risky behavior. I had never felt so helpless. We sought professional help, initially with talk therapy, followed by academic and psychological testing and medications, and culminating in an accurate but devastating diagnosis at the age of 21 of bipolar disorder

After college, her life appeared to stabilize as she established a career, but the mood swings were still apparent and we were vigilant and uneasy. I was

so very busy trying to manage her life, researching her illness, finding the right doctors and therapists, trying to monitor her medication compliance, actually believing I could control and fix her, that I failed to notice a secondary concurring problem developing...a potentially more lethal one.

We were aware that she drank in college and were especially concerned after her psychiatric diagnosis and its accompanied medications. What we didn't foresee, however, was the degree to which this could escalate and the potential for other substance use that could follow. She now tells us that her "self-medication" was her desperate attempt to escape the chaos in her brain, but, in fact, only served to interfere with her medications and worsen her condition. Alcohol, her original drug of choice, led to experimentation with more potent drugs and we were shocked when we eventually discovered the truth. We just couldn't fathom that serious substance abuse could touch a member of our family.

We came to our first FA meeting on the eve of her admittance to a residential treatment center. Little did we know at that moment of crisis and despair, that all three of us were on the brink of a major life change. Here we are, almost three years later, and I am grateful to say that she is sober, stable on her meds, and has recovered most of those qualities which once defined her. She has been sober for two years and seven months. She has recently begun a new satisfying full-time job...an unexpected silver lining for her, as she is working for the father of a girl she met at her outpatient rehab program.

We have begun to exhale.

The silver linings I'd like to talk about, however, pertain to me and how I've evolved as a human being after discovering this program. If it weren't for FA, my husband and I would never have found the strength, the support, and the guidance to survive the crisis that brought us here. But the big bonus is that we now have new wisdom and real tools that have enhanced our lives.

Once I got the message that there was no one I could control or change but myself, I felt both relieved and empowered. It was an emotional breakthrough. I began to understand that endlessly worrying about another person not only proves futile, but damages everyone involved. When I consciously moved that unhealthy focus off my daughter and began to exert control over my own life, I breathed easier and felt lighter. I spend more time these days engaged in activities that are meaningful and satisfying to me and, in doing so, have found my own version of "serenity." I also find myself sharing much of the wisdom I've absorbed in this room. Often, when I try to offer a helpful comment to someone, I hear "that was great advice," to which I respond - "You can thank Families Anonymous."

FA has woken me up! I now pay more attention. I'm more "present," more observant and have clarified my priorities. I don't remember previously being so grateful for a "really great day." Now, when those fearful and negative thoughts creep in, I make a conscious

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OUTLOOK FROM THE CHAIR



In my last article, I spoke about how “giving back” through service provides a powerful tool in our recovery “tool box.” An ideal way to perform service to the fellowship is to volunteer to become a member of a World Service Board (WSB) Committee.

There are a variety of WSB committees, each focused on a different aspect of keeping our fellowship growing and thriving. This results in a continual need for volunteers with various skills, experience, and backgrounds.

Do you have a background in marketing, sales, or advertising? Perhaps our Public Information (PI) Committee would be of interest. The primary goal of the PI Committee is to foster general awareness of our program and its benefits. They also are responsible for ensuring that important information about the fellowship is rapidly and effectively communicated to the membership.

Do you like to write? Do you have a background as an editor? Our Literature Committee is responsible for all of our powerful FA recovery materials. They create, develop, and revise our FA literature including bookmarks, pamphlets, and books about the Families Anonymous program.

Have you been an FA sponsor or benefited from having an FA sponsor? The Sponsorship Committee communicates to the fellowship the importance of this tool in one’s personal recovery. They assist the Literature Committee in the development of sponsorship source materials which assist individual members in accomplishing the Families Anonymous program goals of personal recovery. They also provide guidance for individual groups to establish sponsorship programs.

Would you like to personally contribute to the growth of FA? Our Group Outreach Committee encourages and supports the healthy growth of the FA fellowship through establishment of new FA groups and providing guidance to new groups as they get “going and growing.” They also provide guidance to groups that may be struggling with low membership, traditions issues, or other group problems.

Are you experienced in office management or customer service? Our World Service Office committee is responsible for ensuring that the WSO provides a high level of customer service to our members and the public at large. They oversee all aspects of WSO operations and supervise the office staff.

Do you want to help our members and friends share stories of recovery? The Newsletter Committee oversees the creation, publication, and distribution of our bi-monthly newsletter, The Twelve Step Rag.

Interested in technology? The Internet / Email / Website Committee explores technologies which can provide and improve communication with the public and members of the fellowship using the internet and internet-based strategies.

Volunteering to join one of our WSB committees is an ideal way to “give back” to the fellowship. You can have a significant impact even if you only have a few hours a week to give. Most committee work is done via email, internet collaboration, or teleconference.

Working our program means living our program. Want to live the twelfth step? Step up and work with one of our committees. If you don’t, who will?

If you would like to discuss joining a committee or have questions about WSB committee work, please contact me at wsb_chair@familiesanonymous.org.

In service,
George R

Dear FA:

I am savoring a big, bright, glorious bowl of gratitude today.

Gratitude for the peace and presence that steadily grows to fill my mind and disposition, after so many, many lost days of fear, anxiety and despair.

Gratitude for my loving husband who has stayed beside me, especially because my son is not his son, when addiction came into our lives like a tsunami.

Gratitude for my son, who has navigated his way out of homelessness and unemployment, with a new job today and a safe place to live. All of which he accomplished on his own, because he had to, and because he wants to live.

Gratitude for my health, now eighteen years cancer free. I am grateful for each day that I awake feeling well, strong and free to live without fear of dying.

Gratitude for the simple eloquence of the Serenity Prayer, whose words have comforted me in the darkest of nights and pulled me back up when I have fallen off my path to recovery.

Gratitude for the unquantifiable power to affirm, support, and care that is alive in this FA fellowship.

To the new members tormented, crushed and weary, to the practiced members reaching down from the 12th step to extend a hand of compassion, "follow me, there is a better way," I extend my heartfelt gratitude for making this a place of experience, hope, and strength.

Serenity Seeker

*"Start where you are.
 Use what you have.
 Do what you can."
 - Arthur Ashe*



**FA
 LITERATURE
 SPOTLIGHT**

**NEW!
 FA BARGAIN PACK
 (FAB PAK)**

WHAT IS IT?

One copy of each literature piece that was newly created or substantially revised during a particular calendar year.

WHAT DOES IT COST?

Each FAB PAK has its own, unique selling price, which is half the combined retail price of all the literature pieces it contains.

FAB PAK 2011 -
 20 literature pieces: \$18.00

FAB PAK 2012 -
 17 literature pieces: \$7.50

**Order from the WSO or
 on the FA website:**

#5015 - FAB PAK 2011 \$18.00
 (+shipping & handling)

#5016 - FAB PAK 2012 \$7.50
 (+shipping & handling)

Order both

FAB PAK 2011 and FAB PAK 2012, your group will receive 37 first-rate, up-to-date literature pieces for just \$25.50 (+ shipping & handling).

ORDER NOW!

Available until the end of 2013.

35th Annual Chicagoland Families Anonymous Convention

Theme: **Progress Not Perfection**

Place: Alexian Brothers Women & Children's Hospital, 1555 Barrington Rd., Hoffman Estates, IL 60169
(Located behind St. Alexius Medical Center). Park in Emergency Department Parking Garage (Lot K),
walk across street and enter at Maternal & Infant Entrance.

Date: Sunday, November 3, 2013, 8 AM - 3:30 PM
Includes speakers, workshops, continental breakfast, and luncheon buffet.

Please make checks payable to: Families Anonymous Chicagoland
Mail checks to: Families Anonymous Chicagoland Convention, 701 Lee St., Suite 670, Des Plaines, IL 60016

Registration is \$45 if received by Saturday, Oct. 19th. After October 19, registration is \$50

For further information, call the Chicagoland FA Office at 847-795-8320 or email: fachicagoland@aol.com

Families Anonymous, Inc.	
Balance Sheet	
April 30, 2013	
Assets:	
Current assets:	
Cash in banks	\$ 157,603.62
Inventory	20,736.70
Prepaid expenses	<u>2,627.32</u>
Total current assets	180,967.64
Property & equipment	
Furniture, fixtures, & equipment	33,691.20
Less accumulated depreciation	<u>(30,312.23)</u>
Total property & equipment	<u>3,378.97</u>
Total assets	\$ 184,346.61
Liabilities:	
Current liabilities:	
Accounts payable	\$ 166.63
Payroll taxes payable	1,293.32
Sales tax payable	90.64
Convention deposits	<u>10,840.00</u>
Total current liabilities	12,390.59
Net Assets:	
Total unrestricted net assets	<u>171,956.02</u>
Total liabilities & net assets	\$ 184,346.61

Families Anonymous, Inc.	
Income Statement	
For the 12 Months Ended April 30, 2013	
Revenues:	
Literature Sales	\$ 75,704.68
Shipping & handling income	11,770.53
Contributions	33,259.54
Rental income	2,400.00
Interest Income	<u>141.85</u>
Total revenues	123,276.60
Cost of Sales	<u>25,486.94</u>
Gross Profit	<u>97,789.66</u>
Expenses:	
Payroll expenses	\$ 31,687.19
Rent & utilities	21,721.72
Postage & delivery	11,427.78
Professional fees	1,678.00
Insurance	3,257.44
Supplies	1,687.86
Bank charges & e-store fees	3,193.97
Public information & literature	131.27
Internet expense	1,339.89
Depreciation	1,147.44
Other expenses	<u>306.90</u>
Total expenses	<u>77,579.46</u>
Net Income	\$ 20,210.20

(Continued from page 1)

effort to replace them with my many blessings. I have also discovered an authentic and welcoming community of healing. I just researched the term “community” and learned its origin; a Latin word, “communis,” which means “common.” The words communication, communal, communion, and hence, community, imply sharing, finding common ground, and experiencing relationships with others. The sense of community that lives and breathes in this room is something I carry with me now all the time, in every aspect of my life, and is truly an unexpected gift. I could continue, but I’ll end by saying that if I had to choose one lesson that has had the most profound impact, it would have to be Step One. In understanding that I am powerless over others, I have gained a greater power over myself, and have learned that I now have a choice as to how I want to live.

So...here I am, decades after those naïve early parenting years. I finally “get it.” There is, and never has been, a “Magic Mommy” who can fix everyone’s problems. But while we may not be the solution, we are far from powerless. We possess not only power over ourselves, but the power to strengthen others with our acceptance and our love.

In the spirit of taking ownership of ourselves, I have created a version of the “The Cherokee Tale” for everyone. The tale reads:

“A Native American grandfather was speaking to his grandson about violence and cruelty in the world and how it came about. He said it was as if two wolves were fighting in his heart. One wolf was vengeful and angry and the other was understanding and kind. The young man asked his grandfather which wolf would win the fight in his heart. And the grandfather answered, the one that wins will be the one I choose to feed.”

Marcia S
Winnetka #494

Today A Better Way E- Books Now Available

The cherished Families Anonymous “Red Book” has comforted, consoled and fed us in our toughest times. This daily thought book is now available in E-Book versions in Apple and Kindle formats.

You can now have this helpful member-written guide with you wherever you go on your smartphone, iPad, iPod touch, iPhone or Kindle device. When you need a lift at work, comfort on the road or a discreet way to read your daily message, this is for you. Having the 12 steps, 12 Traditions and Promises at your fingertips is very valuable. Each day holds guidance for introspection, healing, coping and living out the 12 steps of FA.

It’s easy and quick to download from iTunes (or the iBooks app) and Kindle Store. Search the E-Book store for Today A Better Way in each format. The download costs just \$7.99

Share this with members of your group or those who could benefit from Today A Better Way at their finger tips!

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.

12steprag@familiesanonymous.org

Today A Better Way: Volume Two

Send submissions to:
newtabw@familiesanonymous.

Topic Ideas

*Is there a topic
you would like to see
covered in the Rag?*

*Send your ideas to
RagEditor12@gmail.com*

ATTENTION

The Secretary Sheet (#5004) is available for free download on the website. It will no longer be offered for sale in the literature catalog.

CORRECTION

In the last issue of the Rag the fiscal year in the donations spreadsheet was listed as 2012. It should have been 2013.

**The Financial Reports
and the Annual Report
will be printed in the
September - October
issue of the Rag.**

The Sponsorship

Mail Bag



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.

SAVE THE DATE

FAMILIES ANONYMOUS

2014 WORLD CONVENTION

A New Way...A New LIFE
May 30 – June 1, 2014
Chicago, IL

Chicago - Embassy Suites (Rosemont, IL)
Free Shuttle To / From Chicago O'Hare Airport
Easy Access to Downtown Chicago Attractions
Convention Room Rates Available May 27 – June 4, 2014

FEATURING :

INSIGHT and INSPIRATION

...from nationally recognized authorities...
* including Dr. Rami Shapiro, author of The Sacred Art of Lovingkindness
...from experts in addiction recovery..
...from your Fellow FA Members...

FELLOWSHIP (and yes, even some FUN)
Saturday Night DJ Entertainment

SEEKING: TENTATIVE RSVP's
Please let us know if you're thinking of joining us.
Kindly send an email to: 2014.fa.convention@gmail.com

Please note that effective immediately,
the Meeting Without Walls Forum site
is now being hosted at the following address:

<http://tabw2.fr.yuku.com/>

Emeeting: www.tabw.org



Memorial Donations

In Memory of
long time member
Barbara R
by
Group 354
Brookfield, WI



In Memory of
Brad H
son of Diane & Eric H
by
Barbara S



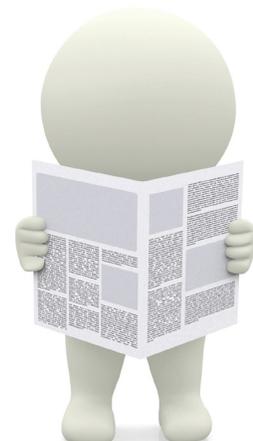
In Memory of
Brad H
son of Diane & Eric H
by
Margaret Ann K



In Memory of
Nick
son of Jim
by
Group 1639



In Memory of
Bob C
by
Group 788
Milford, CT



Step Reflection:

Step Nine: Made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

If I could author a book, it would be an autobiography—the title: *I Want to Mend My Broken Family*. When I was a little girl, life was so simple. I had a wonderful mom and dad, two sisters, a nice home, great school (and I walked to school), great teachers who cared about my future, and all of life's trinkets. Back then, there were no worries because life wasn't complicated. There were rules and values, joy, fun and happy days. We took baby steps through life. We lived in a world of love, respect, trust and honesty. There were family holidays, family celebrations and neighborhood parties and picnics. I went to church with my family and we prayed as a family at the dinner table, giving thanks to God for our blessings. These would be the kind of things that would be in the first chapters of my book.

I always compared my life to "Little House on the Prairie." Why? Because family meant everything. Family was the nucleus of life. Family was special. When people stay away from each other, their strengths get divided. When a family remains a unit, they stay strong and undivided, possessing a collective power to withstand all kinds of trials and tribulations. This is why having a family and keeping it bonded is extremely important and vital to life.

So what would I write about in the next chapters? I guess it would be about the true reality... how my Little House on the Prairie life changed. Change doesn't happen overnight; it happens gradually. The key factor is the separation of family -- deaths, marriages, divorces, second marriages, blended families and new players trying to become part of the nucleus that once worked.

Technology came soaring in, and instead of family discussions and *Father Knows Best*, the new norm became CNN, sitcoms (inappropriate for most to watch), cell phones, the internet, Facebook, blogs, Twitter, TV series with shootings and violence, YouTube and those appalling video games that held our children captive for hours. Drugs tempted our youth and once they took the first pill, drink or fix, their lives would become a nightmare and the only chance for survival would be a commitment to recovery. This would be the final straw that tore the family apart.

The next chapters would be about mending the family. Darts of doubt started flying at me but I took comfort in knowing that I had done something very right in my life by becoming an active member of Families Anonymous.

Now I segue into Step Nine. Making amends always felt like a bitter pill for me to swallow, but I knew if I was serious about my family, it would be good medicine for both my spirit and my soul. I pondered this step experiencing an epiphany about the

definition of amends which once again circles back to change. Normally simple, but how easily forgotten.

And the book of life goes on. I got straight with myself. I had to move on to make things right with others in my life. I began by writing a poem to my youngest son and sent it to him the first time he was incarcerated. I can't tell you it didn't hurt because it did. I followed my program because it was about detaching with love and letting go. I felt that action was somewhat successful, for the time being anyway.

I then moved on to my husband. We had a very long talk and I openly admitted my wrongdoings. Again this was a change for me. Change is not easy; it's very humbling, but it is part of the healing process. So that worked. Who was next?

It was my oldest son, Scott. He was, and still is, a tough nut to crack. A telephone call didn't work so I sent a letter. Wrong move--because his wife opens all his mail and is instrumental in predisposing my intents. I bit my lip and bared the pain. My last hope was an email. I sent an apology in an email to my son. He never acknowledged it. End result—it hasn't worked, so I've turned him and his family over to my higher power—God. The caveat to this action is patience.

Then came my daughter. What happened between us, I don't really know; I can only surmise. I tried reaching out, but to this day have not been successful. I know that I can only control me.

My three stepchildren did not become part of the blended family untainted. Drugs were a chapter in each of their lives, bearing the bitter consequences of pain and suffering for the entire family.

I still suffer, but now I understand that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.

I can't write the final chapters yet, but what I can work on is becoming a catalyst for my family. I know I have no control over the outcome or the change in others. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't work. I can't control those who won't accept my amends or recognize the change in me.

What I can do is become a better role model; wish, hope, think and pray that there will be unity in my family again. I can believe; I can hope and I can put all my faith in God. When this does happen, I can write the final chapters, close the book and begin a new season in my life.

I can control me, others I can only love. Today, I will continue to thank my higher power, be grateful for the many blessings He has given me and I continue to pray for the restoration of my family.

Bev C.