

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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A Mother, Daughter Journey

As we quickly approach another Mother's Day I am reminded of Mother's Day, 2011. My daughter was about to celebrate her fourth year being clean and sober, and most importantly, in recovery. Both she and I were asked to compose a letter to each other expressing our thoughts on our journey as mother and daughter thus far. These letters were to be the front page article in the newsletter of her recovery program.

First, there is good news and bad news. The good news is my child got her life back through this program. The bad news (or so I thought at the time) was she had to spend two years in a homeless shelter in order to achieve this. During the first 14 months in the shelter, she was enrolled in a residential women's recovery program. I am proud to say she graduated from that program shortly before her 24th birthday. The remainder of those two years she stayed on at the shelter as support staff. There, she continued to live and work among women struggling with the disease of addiction, in hopes of completing this program of recovery. I am now grateful for those two years in the shelter; and, fully appreciate that it was not bad news at all.

Here are some excerpts from our letters:

Dear Daughter of Mine,

As you celebrate your fourth year in recovery I have some recollections to share. Before you began living in recovery there was no mother/daughter relationship---there was an empty space where it should have been. Truthfully, the space was not empty, but was full of anger, fear and confusion; but even in the worst times – the love was still there. Today, I apologize for the anger and ask for your forgiveness. Today, I understand a lot more about this family illness called "addiction."

When you hit your rock bottom, you admitted yourself into a local women's recovery program for drug addiction. At the end of 14 months, which included extremely difficult work, many steps forward and more than a few steps backward, you graduated from the program and truly began the hardest work of all --- dealing with life sober. Your approach to this was head-on, no dress rehearsals and no self-medication. I believe this accomplishment is the most amazing process I have ever witnessed. I now have a treasured mother/daughter relationship with you.

I watched you peel away layer after layer of "stuff." You

realized you could not do this alone. You have done for yourself what I had tried to do for you as your mother. Under all that "stuff" was a beautiful spirit just waiting to be uncovered. You are amazing and now living the life you were meant to live --- Mom

Dear Mother of Mine,

I knew I had hit rock bottom when I could no longer even look at myself in the mirror. My addiction had consumed every fiber in my being, destroying me physically and mentally. My addiction took me down a path of darkness and despair – a path of hopelessness and sorrow.

Not only had I brought pain upon myself, but I brought an unspeakable amount of pain to you. During my darkest hour, you made a decision that would change the rest of my life. You gave me tough love and you let me go. Eventually, I found myself at the doors of our local residential recovery program asking for admission.

It was painfully clear that our relationship had become toxic near the end of my active addiction. I hated myself, the people around me, and the whole world. Through my time in the recovery program, I learned more about myself and how the disease of addiction works. Little did I know, at the same time you were doing exactly the same thing. You joined a program to learn more about yourself and how you must let go of the person that brought you to that program in order to get your life back.

Because you made the decision to give me tough love, I am alive today. Because you let me go, I am alive today. Because you loved me until I could love myself, I am alive today. I want you in my life now; I need you in my life as part of recovery. I now know that you truly love me unconditionally. To quote one of my favorite books as a child: "I'll love you forever; I'll like you for always. As long as I'm living, my mama you'll be." ---Your daughter

By the time Mother's Day, 2014 arrives, my precious daughter will celebrate her "7th" birthday in recovery. She continues to live her recovery each and every day. And, as she says, "this journey is taken one breath at a time."

From Bonnie group 1913

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From a Professional to FA

I am a professional, state-qualified drug counselor. I am also an active member of FA and have been for many years. As a professional, I am acutely aware that I must face and uphold the integrity called for in our Traditions – especially in Tradition Eight, This charge is of vital interest to me because I am in a “helping” profession. Should I forget and give advice or counsel, I could easily damage the unity and humility of the group—both of which are so important and necessary for members to grow in the program.

Unity: The importance of unity in our program could easily be compromised by member-professionals who might present themselves as authorities. We all come to the program as equals among equals. Members need to feel they have something to offer others in the way of their experiences, and that there is something greater than they that has the power to heal them—as well as, possibly, another member. In this commonality, we truly can be gifts to each other.

Humility: The importance of this feature becomes apparent when each member honestly searches for and identifies his or her own destructive behavior and is willing to share this within the fellowship where there is no blame or shame. When professionals try to share within the fellowship, they need to keep in mind that they are limited to sharing what they have found to be their own destructive behaviors and how the program is helping them to overcome these character defects. It is with humility that we all can find ways to mend the hurts we have caused to ourselves and to others. Humility allows us to search for the truth about ourselves. When that truth is acknowledged, it has the power to help heal what is broken.

Out of respect for the significance of unity and humility and to honor our Traditions, I have asked my group to confront me if they ever feel I am crossing the line.

The professional side of me recognizes that the deep healing that occurs in our program is greatly dependent upon the telling of our stories. The honest sharing of our lives is the healing grace that allows each of us to be a gift to one another in our recovery. It connects us in a bond of unconditional love where the connectedness we all need, intimacy, can unfold making possible the acts of forgiveness that are necessary to maintain relationships. We are all equal and simply just good people trying to be better.

In our FA program we find a new way listening, a way of hearing from the heart and not the mind. This opens us up to the gifts of compassion and empathy. We find it is possible to love an addict we can't trust and to be able to forgive the unforgiveable. We can find a true identity—one where false faces are put aside, and we become free to be who we were created to be. All my training as a professional did not give me the gifts that the Twelve Steps and Traditions have given me. They are the way to love ourselves, our families, our friends and our Higher Power—who loves everyone unconditionally.

Anonymous

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



GREETINGS and HOPE

It was Jan 2, 2008, when I delivered my heroin-addicted son to a one-year rehab and was told I needed to find a 12-step group for myself. Since I lived in Asia and the only English-language AlAnon meeting I could find in Taipei was really struggling to get going, I was thrilled to find the FA E-meeting group online.

With them I've worked the steps more than once. I've been remarkably blessed by their strength, experience and hope, by their struggles, and their humility in the face of incredible obstacles.

My son has been clean of heroin since he entered rehab just over six years ago. But his life has been complicated by mental illness and other challenges, some perhaps a result of his drug use and some not. In any case, my happiness is no longer dependent upon his. Another son in the meantime has acknowledged his own alcoholism and has decided he does not need help (and for now he seems to be functioning well, so he's finding something that is working for him). My happiness does not depend on him, either.

To those of you who are new and scared, I say welcome! To those of you who are "old" and tired, I say I know how you feel! To those of you who are on a peaceful plateau, I say rest while you can. To myself I say, work the steps every day. There is no graduation. Recovery is a journey, not a destination, and that is at least as true for me as it is for the addicts in my life.

I have been fortunate to know the promises of FA, and it is because I have worked the steps -- all of the steps. There is a temptation sometimes to stop when we learn to manage the pain in the early steps. But I hope you will not stop. For me, the real learning came in those "gold mine" steps, four through nine,

Paul B

GRATITUDE PRAYER

WE END AS WE BEGAN
WITH HOPE FOR COURAGE
ONE DAY AT A TIME. MAY
WE EQUALLY ACCEPT THE
SERENITY WE ARE GRANTED
AND THE SHORTCOMINGS
THAT PERSIST. OUR LIVES,
OUR LOVE, OUR HAPPINESS
IS OURS TO BEHOLD.

MAY OUR LOVED ONES
FIND PEACE IN THEIR
CHOICES AS WE TRY TO
PROVIDE UNCONDITIONAL
ENCOURAGEMENT, FAITH,
AND ACCEPTANCE.

WE ARE GRAINS OF
SAND ON A VAST SHORE.
ALONE WE START OUT AS
TINY, IMPERFECT SPECKS.
TOGETHER WE FORM A
SAFE AND SERENE BEACH
ON WHICH TO REST. WE
ARE GRATEFUL FOR A
HIGHER POWER THAT
BROUGHT US TOGETHER
SO THAT WE MAY HELP
OURSELVES AND EACH
OTHER.

VINNIE C
BALDWINVILLE NY

Today A Better Way: Volume Two

Send submissions to:
newtabw@gmail.com

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

FA LITERATURE SPOTLIGHT

Dealing with Denial *From Denial to Acceptance*

"Some forms of denial are healthy and legal and are needed to help us deal with incidents that we encounter in our everyday lives."

The denial we hear about in our meetings or in conversation with FA members is different. It resides in our thoughts, is illusive, causes prolonged pain and is difficult to recognize in ourselves. Denial is a padlock on the door to our serenity.

The quicker we open the lock and face the reality of "what is," the more rapid is our recovery.

This new four-page pamphlet is a helpful, personal guide for rescuing oneself from denial. It also works well for use as a meeting topic.

Read about:

- Defining denial (the good & the bad)
- Recognizing denial (nine types!)
- Resolving denial
- Reaching acceptance

Questions for thought and discussion as well as a list of related readings from FA literature are provided.

Be the first in your group to read and share this new piece of FA literature!

Purchase *Dealing with Denial* (#1030) from the WSO for \$1.50 or order from:

Familiesanonymous.org

Life is Like A Plot of Ground

Imagine that each person's life is a plot of ground. Everyone is in charge of what they do with their own plot.

For several years, a daughter has set off bombs on her land, creating holes and chasms. Each time she lies or is deceptive, each time she steals money to buy a pill to crush and snort, another hole appears in her landscape.

At first, she was secretive and hid in out-of-the-way places to do this, but eventually her father and mother noticed what was happening with increasing alarm. They each abandoned their own plots so they could go behind her, with the idea of preventing her from falling into the holes she was creating. Sometimes they would lie across the hole so she could tread on them instead of falling in. Sometimes they filled the holes with various things: money, lawyers, counselors, words and more words, anger, resentment, sadness. Eventually the parents took turns jumping into the nearest hole so they could shove her back up to the surface when she fell in.

All of this was very tiring and confusing for the parents, and nothing seemed to be helping the situation, in fact it only worsened. In the meantime, the parents' plots of land were suffering from neglect. They were becoming overgrown with weeds in the guise of money troubles, emotional issues, anger, disappointment, confusion, and helplessness.

One parent, the mother, sought help through a 12-step group. She was encouraged to tend her own plot and leave her daughter to see to her own.

Now the daughter has so many craters on her land that she barely has room to maneuver around them without falling in. Her father scurries around behind her trying to prevent further bombs or falls. She does not respect him for this; in fact she resents him being on her land at all. It is, after all, hers to do with as she wants; her very own life to live.

Presently, the mother is cultivating her own plot of land, which is near her daughter's. Sometimes the mom looks over and shouts words of love or encouragement or recommendations. Sometimes she shakes her head in disbelief when she hears yet another plaintive call from the bottom of a pit. Mostly, though, the mother takes joy in watching the colorful plants take hold on her own land, and cultivates a deep abiding hope that someday the daughter will plant flowers and trees in her craters.

Doris T
Lexington

Topic Ideas

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



“Acceptance doesn’t mean resignation; it means understanding that something is what it is and that there’s got to be a way through it.” -- Michael J. Fox



**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

Convention Reflections Wanted

Don't forget to share your convention experiences with the Rag readers. Send your reflections to: RagEditor12@gmail.com.



FA World Convention, A NEW WAY...A NEW LIFE, May 30-June 1, 2014 in Chicago

The FA World Convention 2014, **A New Way...A New Life**, will be held in Chicago, IL May 30-June 1, 2014. The Chicagoland FA group has planned an exceptional experience just for you.

You will hear notable and knowledgeable, keynote speakers and presenters. Featuring: Dr. Rami Shapiro, author of *The Sacred Art of Loving Kindness*, Jeffrey Mangram from the Hazelden Foundation and workshops from your fellow FA members.

There will also be fellowship and fun with a Friday night Meet and Greet and Saturday night entertainment.

Visit the FA website and click on "*Latest News*" for convention updates, information and forms.

Chicago – O’Hare/Rosemont Embassy Suites

5500 N. River Rd., Rosemont, IL 60018
847-292-3531 or 800-362-2779
www.embassyohare.com

- > Free Shuttle To/From Chicago O’Hare Airport
- > Easy Access To Downtown Chicago Attractions
- > Discounted Convention Room Rates Available (if reserved by May 5) for the nights of 5/27 through 6/3:
King Suite \$105 + tax, Suite w/2 Double beds \$120 + tax.

For Hotel Reservations please call Embassy Suites 800-362-2779 by May 5. Please be sure to mention Families Anonymous World Convention when making reservations (so FA receives credit toward convention rooms) Hotel room rate includes daily, cooked-to-order breakfast in Atrium Breakfast available Sat. & Sun. for those not staying in hotel @ \$12 per day.

Registration fee is now \$150

Registration includes Friday night “Meet and Greet,” Saturday lunch and dinner, and all workshops and speakers on Saturday and Sunday.

For convention details as well as a downloadable flyer and registration form, visit the Families Anonymous website and click on “Latest News” and “WSB News” for convention updates and forms.

SUPPORT THE 2014 CONVENTION

RAFFLE TICKETS

Tickets help pay for the convention itself. You can attend and/or be a part of the convention by purchasing raffle tickets. Be a prize winner at home, if you can’t come. Win a prize of \$150, \$100, or \$50. Your group secretary has raffle tickets—also available online.

SILENT AUCTION

These items also help pay for your convention. This is a fun contest. Members bid against each other by silently signing a list attached to an item and raising the price before the auction closes. Want to donate an item for this auction? Ask your group secretary for a donation sheet with directions. Or download one from the FA website.

Any questions can be sent to:
2014.fa.convention@gmail.com

DONATIONS

Please make donations by check to:
Families Anonymous Chicagoland
Attn: 2014 World Convention
701 Lee St. Suite 670
Des Plaines, IL 60016

2014 FA CONVENTION REGISTRATION FORMS

Ask your group secretary for a copy or download one from the FA website by clicking on “*Latest News*” then “*WSB News*” Spend time with people who care and learn more about recovery from the speakers and presenters

**LET’S ALL DISCOVER
A NEW WAY... A NEW LIFE!**



THE RED GERANIUM OF HOPE

I heard a story about an Australian lady, who set out to see the poverty of a particular place she had been told about while visiting another country. Among the unbelievable living conditions she noticed an old cracked pot with a red geranium. It seemed out of place. The flower was so bright and cheerful. Like a symbol of hope, it stood



out from the squalidness and despair that hung in the air. The lady prayed silently for the people living there.

Arriving back in Australia, she purchased geranium plants; red ones. She planted them near the front and back doors of her home. Each time she entered or left her house she would see the flower and be reminded of the people she saw on her trip and say a little prayer for them. The lady decided to give red geranium plants to her friends. As she shared the experience of her trip, she asked that they also pray for the people.

As I listened to this story I realized how easily Families Anonymous members could do something similar; a bit like FA Flowers of Hope. Any flower could be given, not just red geraniums. I am fond of sweet peas, violets and lavender; everyone has their favorites. We could easily take a flower from our garden and give to

FA friends as a symbol of hope and say a silent prayer.

As we go about our daily activities we would see these Flowers of Hope everywhere; neighborhood gardens, restaurants, hospitals, cemeteries, shopping centers, offices, churches, weddings, funerals...everywhere around us. Seeing them could remind us of our FA family and their struggles. And as we pause, for a moment, we could hold them in our thoughts and say a silent prayer.

(Taken from Jan M, of Ringwood East, Australia's story printed in the January-February 2001 Rag)

The Sponsorship

Mail Bag



How Do You Choose A Sponsor?

There are no magical rules for choosing a sponsor. It is however strongly recommended that the sponsor and sponsee be the same gender. This helps FA members stay focused on the program.

It is generally suggested that the newcomer seek out someone who has been in the fellowship at least one year and seems to be using the FA program successfully.

By attending meetings regularly and listening to what the other members have to say you will be able to identify someone who would be a good match for you. Don't be shy about asking that member to be your sponsor. Most experienced members of the fellowship would be gratified to be your sponsor. Sponsorship is one way of practicing the Twelfth Step and it benefits not only you but also your sponsor.

Ellen H., Sponsorship Committee

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.

Memorial Donations



In Memory of
Marc C
son of
Vinnie and Bev C
by
Monica C
E. Hartland, CT



In Memory of
Marvin P
a longtime, valued member
by
Group 746
Evansville, IN



In Memory of
Gary and Vincent
sons of Walter K and Mary T
by
Group 976
Colts Neck, NJ



In Memory of
Isabel A
daughter of
longtime member
and friend, Alla B
by
Julia G



In Memory of
Isabel A
daughter of Alla B
by
Dorothy F
Group 278



In Memory of
Isabel A
daughter of Alla B
by
Donna D
Group 278

The Bottom

*I watch and I wonder, where did you go
The little boy and handsome young man
That I used to know*

*For 14 years I watched you grow
Unaware of the demons
That would soon start to show*

*The doctors and counselors I took you
to meet
To address moods and addiction
But they could not compete*

*Medication is prescribed, and
ultimately abused
Facts and fiction collide and often
confused*

*Are you still in there?
Won't you please come back.
I promise I'll make up
For all that I lack*

*Why can't you hear me?
Can't you see my tears?
This nightmare has continued for too
many years*

Hopelessly waiting for you to hit bottom

*Friends have no faces
They are pushed away
Interests change rapidly
There is only today*

*Insomnia rules the evening
The day is slept away
Sports and instruments are no longer
played*

*Blackouts are common
Items are "lost"
Destruction continues
Emotional cost*

*Are you still in there?
Won't you please come back.
I promise I'll make up
For all that I lack*

*Why can't you hear me?
Can't you see my tears?
This nightmare has continued for too
many years*

Helplessly waiting for you to hit bottom

*I throw you the ball.
You won't throw it back.
Respect and boundaries are under attack*

*I lead you to water,
I beg you to drink
I threaten, I reason, I ask you to think*

*Try as I may and as hard as I pray
I can't fix you my love
I can't make your pain go away*

*I know you're still in there
God can bring you back
It's your life to alter
Not mine to attack*

*Someday you will hear me
I'm drying my tears
The nightmare no longer will rob me
of years*

Patiently waiting for you to hit bottom

*by Kim G
Rochester, MI*