

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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FORGIVENESS

Do you want peace? Do you want happiness, a quiet mind, a certainty of purpose and a sense of worth and beauty that transcend the world? Do you want a quietness that cannot be disturbed, a gentleness that can never be hurt, a deep abiding comfort, and a rest so perfect it can never be upset? All of this forgiveness offers YOU.

Today a Better Way says, "Forgiveness is the spiritual foundation for recovery."

I had to come to terms with the loved ones that brought me to FA, to realize that they weren't doing this just to aggravate me. They didn't get up one morning and say to themselves, "I think I will become a drunk or an addict today." They wanted to be normal and have fun just like everyone else; they wanted to fit in. Unfortunately, it wasn't in the plan for them.

Forgiving starts from the inside and works its way out. I believe that is the closest to "God-like" that I will ever attain. A side benefit is patience. The FA program has allowed me to really understand and embrace patience and tolerance.

No more "God give me patience and I want it RIGHT NOW!" We have to start by forgiving ourselves so we can begin to forgive others.

One of the side effects of forgiving myself was that it lifted heavy burdens from my shoulders—burdens like guilt, anger, resentment and hate.

Once those feelings were gone



I could be open to personal growth, to nurture my potential, and claim responsibility for my own fate.

Another benefit of forgiveness is gratitude. Because I am not all wrapped up in resentment, I can be grateful for what I see and experience. I never really saw a sunset before, or a beautiful smile, heard the laughter of children, or experienced the peace of a walk in the woods.

Forgiveness has allowed me to develop a greater appreciation for what my children did for me. They helped me grow up and appreciate the little wonders of life, and see things through the eyes of another. They brought me to a program that I didn't need, or so I thought at the time. Best of all they brought great people into my life, people that care and understand what my wife and I have gone through. People who are supportive and are there for us. What better definition of "friends" can a person have?

Forgiveness is truly a precious gift.

It works if you work it!

Anonymous

(Reprint November-December 2005 Rag)

FORGIVENESS TABW - August 12

Too often, the notion of forgiveness is overlooked, as if it were merely some sort of unrealistic religious concept. In fact, forgiveness is the spiritual foundation of letting go, of self-esteem, and of serenity and recovery.

An interesting attribute of forgiveness is that it proceeds from the inside out. We get angry about those characteristics in others that we most dislike in ourselves. So we must forgive ourselves before we can forgive others.

The act of forgiving ourselves makes it possible to let go of the drug user by forgiving him or her. It allows us to regain our self-esteem by refocusing our energy away from the abuser and onto ourselves. Self-forgiveness lifts the heavy burden of guilt, anger, resentment, and hate so that we can achieve serenity.

As one of the spiritual foundations of recovery, forgiveness is a good daily ritual when it is focused properly on oneself. Then forgiveness of others can follow. This focus helps in my recovery and in the recovery of others.

TODAY I WILL forgive my own shortcomings so that I can then forgive the shortcomings of others.

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FROM THE EDITOR

Have you ever been touched by someone's personal story? Have you ever felt relief hearing a story that felt like it could have been told by you? Discovering that you were not alone.

Did you ever start to feel hope because you read a story in the Rag of someone overcoming the struggles and despair and living healthier more serene lives? Did that hope help you set your own life-changing goals? Has your life changed? All because someone told a story...

Each of us has a story to tell. The Twelve Step Rag needs to hear from you. Submissions to the newsletter have declined. Without member involvement there is no Rag.

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

THE TWELVE STEP RAG

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847-294-5877

800-736-9805 (USA only)

FAX: 847-294-5837

EMAIL:

12steprag@FamiliesAnonymous.org

EDITOR: Lisa W

RAG STAFF: Judith H



Topic Ideas

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

Moment of Truth

Each of us in recovery can likely look back and pick out a particular incident in which the moment of truth was revealed to us.

This is vital because without this moment of truth recovery is not possible.

My moment of truth happened after an elaborate kidnapping plan. Yes, a real life kidnapping.

My addicted child had relapsed and disappeared. I knew he was back in a crack house somewhere in the seedy part of town.

His life was once again in imminent danger and I was the only one who could save him. After all, I had done it many times before.

I took off work and became my own private investigator running down every single lead. Eventually, I made contact with an individual who knew where my son was but in order for him to be released I would need to pay a \$300 debt he owed. I agreed. The informant said he would call me the following day with instructions.

The call did come. Yes, I was surprised. I was told to be at a specific gas station on a specific day at noon and to wait.

My mechanic fixed the rear doors of my van to lock so my son could not open them once inside.

I secured another friend who accompanied me to the location. We were both armed and ready for a potential betrayal and subsequent robbery.

There he was, walking slowly toward the gas station. He was so thin. His whole appearance was such that I knew my plan was his only hope.

We greeted each other and I asked him to step inside the van as we needed to talk. The doors shut, the trap was set.

I drove down the street headed for access to the interstate and back to the safety of his parents' home.

I heard a violent pounding on the side of the van, his voice screaming in a fit of rage, "Pull over, pull over. I am not going home!" I yelled back, "Ok, ok."

I pulled to the side of the road and I knew I would have to let him go or there would be violence. I drove him to a location he had chosen and let him out. He stood there looking at me. He then stepped forward and put his arms around me and hugged me. He told me he loved me. I hugged him back and, in tears, told him I loved him also. He turned and walked toward an apartment complex. I stood there watching him and then he was gone.

That was my moment of truth. I knew then that the child of my dreams was gone and "that" child was not ever returning. My counselor told me I would one day need to grieve the loss of the son of my dreams and this moment began that process. That moment of truth opened my door to recovery.

Now, with my recovery door opened, new information was allowed to enter. It would take me another three years before I was "willing" to commit to working the twelve steps.

The Twelve Promises of Families anonymous are all true.

I pray your moment of truth arrives soon.

Your new FAmily will be here for you when you are ready.

The User's Parent

Today A Better Way: Volume Two

Send submissions to:
newtabw@gmail.com

FA LITERATURE SPOTLIGHT

Setting Boundaries... A Very Loving Thing to Do

One of the most popular literature items at Families Anonymous is the Setting Boundaries Booklet (Item #1028).

This very important publication provides an excellent definition of "detach with love" and then provides guidance on how and why to set your boundaries.

So often we try and control the behavior of our loved ones. Instead, we may need to set boundaries for ourselves! The addicted family member can make life exhausting for the parent, spouse or child. Setting Boundaries evokes reasons to have the courage to change, learning lessons, overcoming fears, regaining control of life and self-revelation.

The format includes the sharing of personal stories and an understanding of boundaries.

Setting Boundaries – A Very Loving Thing to Do #1028 \$3.75

Order your copy today from FamiliesAnonymous.org.

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LYING: An E-meeting Discussion



To follow, on pages 4 & 5, is an E-meeting discussion that started with a member's E-mail about the three stages of lying.

Three stages of lying

- (1) The addicted child lies repeatedly and we are clueless.
- (2) We suspect the addicted child is lying and when confronted they admit it was a lie.
- (3) Before the conversation even begins you know it will be a lie.

The User's Parent

What about when someone tells the truth and we assume it is a lie?

What about when we want to hear the lie because we aren't strong enough for the truth?

What about when we lie to cover up the truth to others?

I used to leave post-it notes with "recovery tips" on my brothers pillow. Then I would ask him if he read the notes. He would say, "yes." Then after a while he would say, matter-of-factly, "You know, I will always tell you what you want to hear." Confused, I would ask again, "so wait, did you read the notes I left you?" And he would say, "yes."

Ugh.

How much effort and time and mind space should be spent on trying to decipher if someone is telling the truth? How much does it matter if we don't have "proof?"

Lisa/NJ

So true Lisa. My son/addict always "told me what I wanted to hear." And this statement also rings true with me, "What about when we want to hear the lie because we aren't strong enough for the truth?" I would rather hear the lie than the truth because the truth was too painful or it would send me off on a rage.

I am hoping one day I can trust him again and trust my gut instinct as well.

Kat

My son/addict would continue to lie even though the gig was up. He would never admit defeat. He would come back with something placating like, "Look we've gone over this before." Or other times when confronted, the story took on a life of its own. My addition to the stages of lying:

* The addicted child is lying and when confronted refuses to admit it was a lie. In fact, the lie becomes more outlandish.

My mantra is: 'If you fear the answer, don't ask the question.'

Kris

For my first few years in FA (after years of denial) I assumed everything my son said was a lie. After all, his lips were moving.

Now that he is several years into his recovery and I am several years into mine, I believe him more. But I still avoid seeking answers to questions where it might be easier to lie or, more importantly, questions to which I don't really need answers. I never ask if he uses. I would simply see it in his behavior, or not; in the end, it's a question I don't need an answer to.

Paul

Good thread. As far as my son/addict, I'm right with Paul. At what I thought was his bottom, he was so scary. Mostly, scaring himself. You could visibly see it; as the words came out of his mouth, he himself, would look like he'd just breathed fire. He admitted some of his lies because even HE found them so outrageous. Years later, and with him working his own recovery, we have a lot of don't ask/don't tell. Mostly, because what I might ask him is really none of my business. If I'm uncomfortable and asking questions - then he's too close.

As for me, I was often lying when people would ask how things were and I'd say "fine." I was no more fine than my son. In some ways, I was sicker with my own addiction to him.

Joanne M

I don't assume someone is lying. I just can't operate that way.

However, I also don't like being fooled or having someone put something over on me. So I keep my eyes open for contradictions and depending on the person and situation, I will talk to them about it.

Judith

I understand Judith. I always assume that my daughter/addict was telling me the truth. And, in fact, most of the time she was - except when she needed to borrow money. How can I have been so stupid? It was hard when she told me at rehab about the lies. But in the last seven months, my trust is coming back because it is the way I want to live. We travel our own paths and have to find our way while our loved ones find theirs. My sons think I'm naive. But I'm happier this way.

Ruth

There must be more stages! I insist! There's lying and then there's what my father always describes as "intellectual dishonesty," that is, some obfuscation or shading that while not quite a flat or absolute contradiction of the truth, is certainly designed to lead the listener away from the truth. A significant number of us (the population of friends and family of addicts) likely want to be lead away from unpleasant truth and reality anyway. So, for a while, the liar and the liee can work very well together and get quickly very far afield from reality. As a non-confrontationist, I was myself often guilty of intellectual dishonesty. My truth was whatever it needed to be to avoid conflict, so it's not surprising that I continue to be hyper-sensitive on this topic.

User's Parent's no. 3, "Before the conversation even begins you know it will be a lie," pushed my button and it stuck in the "on" position. That state of mind is not where I ever want to be, so I work for legitimate ways to avoid conversations that are likely to be held in that large gray area wherein my daughter/addict might feel pressure to fabricate. I've never had much of a BS-detector, I guess, so I learned to be always on guard -- "we'll see what happens" was my steady state. It is a short step from this arguably justifiable guardedness to outright, sour negativity. There have, of course, been lies, selective disclosures and material omissions over the years. But the fact is, my batting average was terribly poor when I had decided in my own mind that my daughter/addict was lying. I have been surprised to find truth where I had been skeptical more often than I had been duped into believing a falsehood. It helps for me to stay in the moment and to mind my own business. A lot of the dodginess is about promises; promises -- to do something or not to do some other, today, tomorrow or next week. We'll see, rather than speculate.

I still don't laugh at the punch-line for, "How can you tell when an addict's lying?" I cannot reconcile it with my effort to grant the addict the dignity of their own life and recovery. It is painful to not be able to treat someone you care about with respect and dignity. Masters of the 12 Steps may be able to walk the line wherein they can impart a true sense of dignity in the declaration that another is incapable of speaking the truth, but I can't by a long shot. So I hedge and verify where there is a track record supporting cause for doing so. I do try and think that way and even frame my speech and actions in that context -- as arising out of a specific condition. We must interact this way because we've had these problems with the truth in the past, so we will go slow and little-by-little. I want to choose, when I can manage it, to NOT make the pre-decision that my daughter/addict will lie every time her lips move and instead think of my guarded attitude and precautions as tied to conditions and experiences in the recent past, rather than make a definitive judgment about the core nature of my daughter/addict's character.

This thread is really helpful. I know others deal forthrightly with the essential nature of addiction without passing judgment on the person. I continue to struggle with doubt in my own ability to do this. I have learned to push past the twinges of guilt I sometimes feel when I subject my daughter/addict to some heightened level of verification. I don't like it and neither does she, but we move on and look for safer, better ground.

Mark Mc

For me, it was the many years of twisting and turning to make a lie seem viable. I lost a lot of trust in an addict hell-bent on keeping me in a confused state. I allowed the subterfuge because I felt guilty about his life. And so, he and I danced around "stories." The truth seemed a far away goal...one day we would trust each other.....my hope. Time takes time.

We are in a very different place today. No one needs to be dishonest...for today. We are "normal" for lack of another word. I had no idea we would make it to here.

Cookie

Lying - what a hot button topic for family members of addicts. I, too, always assumed my son/addict was telling the truth, until it was clear he was not. By that time, we were in the weeds and he was on the rehab trail.

I always say I am fine, whether I am ill or sad or devastated or anxiety stricken, or happy and ecstatic. It can be a cosmic description, such as "I am standing here and talking to you, so therefore I am fine." I have never felt that my son's illness is anyone's business, and that includes me. It is between him and his doctor, and whoever he might bring into confidence.

That moment when we discover our loved one is an addict is a terrible moment. I found out through an email from my niece, who found out by social media or some such thing. Addiction admitted through a text message. Who knows? It was crazy and very uncomfortable to underestimate the situation.

However, time passes. FA is a strong and healing river to help us navigate very treacherous territory. I am always grateful that a casual remark brought me to this group.

Be well.

Ellen

In a sober stint my son said to me that when he lies he is saying what he wishes was true.

Addiction is out of control living. How can that not be fertile fields for avoidance of the truth?

In the depths of my co-dependency with my son, I felt an almost euphoria in response to his lies. He reassured me that what I was seeing was not really real. A grand collusion.

Now I try to avoid direct questions that invite truth distortion. This is made easier because I have relinquished my role as my son's higher power!

Addicts lie. Don't take it personally, because it is not about you. At all.

Susan/WA

The Sponsorship Mail Bag



Sponsorship has been a key element of 12 step programs from their beginning. It is generally a one-on-one relationship between a more "seasoned" member (sponsor) and a new member (sponsee.) The essence of the relationship is one of caring, friendship, and guidance as the sponsee works the 12 steps of the program.

In 2013, the World Service Board asked our Literature Committee in its reworking of the booklet, "The FA Tools of Recovery, A Handbook for Members," to put more emphasis on the benefits of sponsorship. This was requested to facilitate and encourage our FA groups' use of this important recovery tool. As a result, sponsorship was elevated to the Tenth Tool in the current edition. If your group has not yet done so, please consider ordering a revised booklet for the group to use for meeting topics on sponsorship.

The Sponsorship Committee welcomes your stories, comments, and questions on sponsorship and/or the 12 Steps. They may be sent to our email address sp@familiesanonymous.org.

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.

Easy Does It

Keep It Simple

One Day at a Time

**Host Needed for
2016 FA
World Service
Convention**

Any questions please contact
the Convention Liaison chair,
Barbara S at:
barbaras@familiesanonymous.org

God grant me the
serenity
to accept the things
I cannot
change;
Courage
to change the things
I can;
and **wto know the
difference.**

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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do
one
thing
every
day
that
makes
you



OUTLOOK FROM THE CHAIR

My wife, Carol Ann, and I have just returned from the Chicago area where we and approximately 145 others attended the 2014 Families Anonymous World Convention held May 30 through June 1. This year's convention was hosted by our Chicagoland Intergroup #3001.

I'd like to first share some items of interest from our Annual Business Meeting (ABM), which was held in conjunction with the convention on May 31, and then offer some personal thoughts and impressions of the convention as a whole.

At the ABM, the delegates approved the minutes of the previous year's (2013) ABM as well as the final fiscal year 2013 Financial Report. This approval is required by our bylaws. An election was also held for members of the FA World Service Board of Directors (WSB). Alice Q, Ann P, Art L, and Donna D were all re-elected to new two-year terms. Bev B of London, UK, who was appointed to the board in December 2013, was elected to his first full term. We were also fortunate to have new board member, Theresa C, of Bangalore, India, elected to the WSB. Theresa joins Namarata N as the second representative from India, which has a thriving FA presence as well as an active intergroup in West Bengal.

The convention began on Friday evening with a "Meet and Greet" social hour. This was an opportunity to reconnect with friends from the fellowship and make new ones! This was followed by an open FA Step Meeting.

Saturday's program began at 8:45 AM with a brief welcome session, immediately followed by a presentation by Rabbi Rami Shapiro titled "The Addiction of Playing God (Control) and How a 12 Step Program Can Get Rid of It." Despite the seriousness of the topic, Rabbi Shapiro was able to deliver a powerful message in a warm and humorous way. At times, the room was roaring with laughter!

The balance of Saturday was filled with a variety of workshops and presentations covering a range of topics of interest to the members. Among the workshop topics were "Intervention and Relapse," "Addiction, A Family Disease in Action," and "The Power of Empathy, Love, and Compassion in Repairing Relationships." My wife and I especially enjoyed a talk by Bill P, a recovering addict, who spoke of "An Addict in Recovery, His Story." There was also a panel discussion about the unique problems faced by grandparents whose grandchildren are negatively impacted by addiction.

Following the workshops was a fascinating presentation by Jeff Mangram titled "The Hero's Journey: The Power of Storytelling in Recovery for Both the Addict and the Loved One." Never again will we watch movies in the same way!

The afternoon program ended with another open FA meeting, the topic of which was "Sharing Your Favorite FA '-isms', Quotes, and Slogans."

Saturday evening featured an elegant (and tasty!) dinner, with remarks by the new chair of the Chicagoland Intergroup. Afterwards, we were treated to a humorous skit based on the "Wizard of Oz," by members of our Arlington Heights, IL, Group #171. The evening ended with dancing to a DJ. To say that FA members can really "cut a rug" is an understatement. A truly enjoyable end to the day!

Sunday morning's activities began with a powerful presentation titled "Growth: The Blessing of Being Imperfect," by Lee J, a member of the Park Ridge, IL, Group #172. During the subsequent closing comments, I was asked to say a few words about my "take away" impressions from the convention. Without hesitation, I described my feeling that a great deal of FA recovery took place in that two-day time span. (I know it did for my wife and me.) And, after all, that's what FA is all about!

On behalf of the World Service Board of Directors and the World Service Office staff, I would like to thank the Chicagoland Intergroup and its Convention Planning Committee for their hospitality and for presenting a convention to remember.

I am also happy to announce that a team of three New Jersey FA groups have recently stepped up and offered to host our 2015 World Convention. It is tentatively set for May 30 through June 1. The exact venue has not yet been selected, but it will be in reasonable proximity to either the Newark/New York or Philadelphia airports, so air travel should not be a problem.

At this time there have been no bids submitted from a host group (or groups) for the 2016 FA World Convention. While this may seem far in the future, it is not too early to begin planning. Please discuss this with your group, and seriously consider hosting a convention. Admittedly, hosting a convention requires significant work and planning by a dedicated host group. However, the WSB is ready to assist you in this worthwhile endeavor. And the rewards for both the host group and the attendees are substantial. Just ask anyone who attended the 2014 convention!

For more information on hosting a convention, please contact Barbara S, our Convention Committee chair, at barbaras@familiesanonymous.org.

In Service,

George R