

# 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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## Marriage Survival: An E-meeting Discussion

 Can someone share their story on how your marriage did or did not survive under the devastation of having an addicted child?

My husband and I process our emotions differently. He is the typical clam up, I am the typical emote. However, I believe we both desperately need to get through this together.

We are both extremely heartbroken. I am working on my twelve step workbook and doing everything I can to take care of myself. He is doing the same, not necessarily twelve step, but finally reading a book. I find myself so angry at him for shutting me out when there is another episode with our son. It drives us further apart ... at least for me. I feel I am left out in the storm ALONE.

We have talked and talked - my head hurts from it all. Our son continues to try to manipulate my husband. It breaks his heart. He is finally going to get some counseling. I need counseling too and will seek it.

Does anyone have shares or advice? We love each other and have been married thirty years!

Lisa



*This is an E-meeting discussion that started with a member's question about how a marriage can survive the devastation of having a child struggling with addiction.*

 Our son was a master at triangulation. He had me seeing my husband as the enemy. I was the enabler extraordinaire. I knew I needed help and found this on-line meeting. With the help of my kick-butt sponsor, I developed a back bone. It was super hard at first. It took a lot of work on my part. Once those puppet strings were cut, I was able to see clearly again. I used to read an occasional FA post to my husband and letters from my sponsor that I thought would help him as well. He was receptive to that. We went once to an Alanon meeting. Once we were on the same page, we were able to work as a team again. Our relationship fell back into place and is stronger than ever now.

Kris

 I often said I had no idea why my husband stayed with me. Our house was the epitome of major dysfunction and I was the Queen of Enabling! But when our son went to his 2nd rehab, WE found FA. He attended with me for a year, so we both are on the same page. He is my son's stepdad, but we married when he was six, so he has been his father figure.

But we have survived. I am not sure we would have if we had not found FA! He is a great guy and treats me like a princess and we understand each other so much better now. FA works in all of our relationships. You cannot control whether your husband embraces a twelve step program or not, but it will help you no matter what. We had a F2F meeting we attended. If he had to do an online meeting I doubt he would have done that. We have lots of FA couple friends now, and it really has changed our lives. I hope for everyone married that they can survive loving an addict. It takes work and it's a good sign he is willing to get help. I hope it is someone very knowledgeable about addiction!

Frances

*(Continue on pages 3, 4 and 5.)*

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## Changing What I Can

December 26th  
Today A Better Way

Often, when I'm hiking and getting a pebble in my boot, it seems like too much trouble to stop, take off my boot, and remove the pebble. It may seem easier to continue walking with the pebble inside, but I enjoy the hike much less. That tiny lump gets bigger and bigger the farther I go.

Is that how I deal with persistent problems of living? Do I just put up with them until they rule my life, or do I stop, take stock, and look for a definitive solution?

Maybe I need to sit down quietly and find the cause of my discomfort. Then I can take steps to remove whatever "pebble" it is that keeps me from living life to the fullest.

TODAY I WILL claim the courage to change those things I can, in order to make life more satisfying.

## NATURE WALK YOUR WAY TO SANITY CHALLENGE

Walking, especially in nature, is a great way to relax, calm your mind and increase your focus. We challenge our readers to get out into nature. Go for a walk. Take your time. Take your camera. Pack a lunch. Lean into the wind. Peek under rocks. Listen to the birds. Breathe deep. Let go. And let us know what you saw - what you felt.

Send your reflections to: [RagEditor12@gmail.com](mailto:RagEditor12@gmail.com)

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

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## Marriage Survival

(Continue from page 1.)

 My husband and I are dealing with many of the same things because we process things so differently -- and I also sometimes feel alone in the pain.

It sounds like both you and your husband want to work on saving your marriage.

I have been doing individual therapy which helps me tremendously, and my husband and I are in couples therapy. (I picked a male for that, which I think makes my husband more comfortable). It helps so much to have a third party help with communication for the couple -- and to have a third party tell us that we both are different and it's okay to be processing it differently, as well as to help us each be able to see the other persons point of view.

That's my suggestion. It's hard work-- but is helping our marriage immensely.

Ann

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 We made a decision not to be a casualty of our son's problems. We worked hard together to put our marriage on a good track again. It wasn't easy but it was worth it! Today our marriage is stronger than ever.

Alice

---

**If you do what you  
have always done,  
you'll be were you  
have always been.  
Kathy W.**

 Yes, yes, yes. I am both a guy, and have an ALO (addicted loved one), and it costs deeply in terms of every relationship you have, especially your marriage. Your husband is having a pretty normal guy reaction. I was the same way. I have always felt like addiction carries its own kind of PTSD along with it. Guys suffer on the inside. Not engaging is a defense mechanism. We are thinking about why could we not protect our child from this and why didn't we see this coming.

What I suggest first and foremost, is to get on the same page when times are settled. Create a list of different scenarios, and determine what each one wants to do in that scenario. You might want to have a list like:

1. Call from jail
2. Call saying I have no place to stay.
3. Call from the emergency room
4. Asking for money
5. Can I live at home for a while....etc.

You get the idea.

Figure out what you will say and do while it is peaceful. Refuse to EVER respond to your ALO immediately. Always tell them that you will wait 24 hours and speak to your spouse before doing one thing. If it is an emergency, call 911. If they need a ride, call a taxi. FA has a great little resource called "What Do I Say?" It will help. Marriage counseling is great.

For families, this is a disease of silence. Everybody holds a little baby and never thinks of this. Later on, when we hear about others, we judge them. We think that will never happen to us. Then when it does, CRASH. I sat in a chair and stared at the TV. I was over-analyzing myself (like what did I do wrong?) and the situation (what can I do? How can I stop this?). This went on a long time. I was remarried after losing my late-wife to cancer, and my wife was thinking "This is not my kid, why am I going through all this anguish? Why am I here?"

When a helicopter parent encounters an ALO we pour all our thoughts and energy and resources into trying to fix it. So we are running around the track, and the family is standing there, and ever so often, we pass by. They try to engage us but we are too busy fixing, so off we run for another lap.

When we are lying on the track, exhausted, and ready for Step 1, we realize how much we have neglected healthy non-addicts who have been waiting for us to come to our senses.

I remember a story in ancient writings about the nation of Israel, and after being captive for years and years, were allowed to go back. They rebuilt a wall around a major city. Not like the wall between the kitchen and dining room. This was stone 10 or more feet thick and very high. How did they do it? One stone at a time. Patience, exertion, and a willingness to bend over and just pick up the next stone. If your marriage is that important, then we get on the same side of the wall as our spouse, and we start building. It may take days, months or years, but in time, you will build something if you keep at it. One stone at a time.

Blessings,

Allen

 I can definitely relate to how difficult it is on a marriage when also dealing with an ALO (addicted loved one). My husband and I have been through the ringer. There have been many arguments, misunderstandings, miscommunications and just dealing and coping in different ways to the point that I didn't think we would make it many times.

I once had a counselor tell me that my husband is who he is, and I couldn't change him (hmmmm, sounds familiar!), and that no matter how much I wanted it to be different, my husband may not have the relationship with our daughter that I wanted him to have. It has taken me a long, long time to accept that, but we have finally found our way to manage our life together.

My husband is very calm, black & white, understanding, and deals with our daughter in his own way. I am the more emotional one and have had to work at letting things just BE. I have found that it makes for more peace in our home if I just cope with things on my own. I have found meditation, yoga, counselors, groups (like FA), books, etc., to guide me along the way. The less I try to involve my husband in my way of thinking, the more willing he is to take action on his own. Just like with our ALO's. Less is more. We are able to have calm, rational conversations about our daughter, now which I attribute to letting her go, working on myself, letting go of expectations, less frequent talks about her, and respecting each other's way of working through things.

This is quite the journey we are on. Not easy, but worth it.

Robin

 My family is a blended family with three daughters and seven grands. And it can be oil and water when we all get together. My hubby and I have learned to respect one another's coping styles. And somehow we learned to not allow daughters lives to be the center of our life and decisions after they were adults.

The center is a Higher Power and then respect for each other's personalities. A turning point for me was turning forty, and somehow I learned about yes and no and taking care of my needs and the needs of my spouse came second. But what that caused was a more mature way of being myself, which gave a balance to it all. And FA helped with that. I'm sixty now, and married life is grand. But when I went to my first meeting long ago, I was determined to get divorced. Study and application of FA was a perfect fit, as well as taking responsibility for my own mind, body, spirit. I had no faith. Then it became the size of a mustard seed. Then it grew from there.

Deb C

 Do you have a sponsor? My husband and I went to counseling. It was very helpful. I, however, am an extrovert and need to talk, talk, talk. He wants to TALK ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE for once! My sponsor was there for me to talk as much as I wanted to so that I did not have to constantly flood our lives with the chaos and crisis of addiction. We have to discuss it, and it's so important to be on the same page (counseling helps with this), but our husbands need their serenity as well. Both my husband and daughter think we should not allow this to be the non-stop topic of conversation. Is this not what our program also teaches?

It is hard and offensive at first...but they are right. This online meeting and a f2f meeting along with my sponsor, have helped me feel not alone. My husband deals with it differently. Sometimes I tell him "let me vent, then I will let it go." We have to live our lives, our husbands have to work it on their own. We cannot control them any more than we can control our ALO.

Carol O

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## Three Things I Have Learned

1. If a healthy friend asks me to help her think through a problem she's having, we can brainstorm and share and wonder over tea. I leave feeling more connected and not the least bit hog-tied to The Situation. This is ok. This is good, real connection.
2. If my addict or the non-recovering codependents around me ask them to help think through a problem, I somehow end up being a part of The Situation in ways that are NEVER healthy for me. The world contains plenty of people who can be a lighthouse for them. I'm giving up that job.
3. It doesn't matter how good my plan is, how astonishingly wise my counsel is, how predictable the outcome is. IT DOESNT MATTER. People are going to do what they are going to do, regardless of whether or not I have chosen to include myself in their decision-making process (or lack thereof).

I'm learning to say, with love, "ohhhh, that sounds really hard," and then aim all that helpful energy at myself. Cuz, I'm as screwed up as the rest of them, and I seem to be the only one that I can fix.

Laura in KY

 However we felt about each other during those low, trying moments, the fact was we suffered together, even as we did so apart. We shared grief and anguish over our child, and were wracked by frustration over our inability to fix things, and likely some part of me resented my wife's inability to make things better. When I couldn't face or accept my own powerlessness, my mind sought reasons to place blame on my wife. Arguments boiled hotter and took days to cool off when hours used to bring us calm and back together in our former lives. I suppose my wife got used to my speed in getting over things during the first 15 years of our marriage and may have expected a similar turnaround when we fought over our ALO's.

But this has been different. After the immediate crisis would pass, I would remain in a simmering, confused stew. I wasn't able to process my thoughts and feelings normally while things were at their hottest, and additional bits of bile would bubble up to the surface as my anger was smoldering down.

I wasn't replaying the argument in my head so much as I was privately adding to it, ticking through additional offenses that I had been too rattled to get to. In this state of mind, I was able to sustain a sense of outraged grievance far longer than ever before. Days sometimes passed before I came to, and shamefacedly recognized, how wrong and self-indulgent and silly I was being. Without processing all of that, there was no way I could even fake a reconciliation. So things remained grim and silent and threatened to sink even lower. It never occurred to me to simply tell my wife how I was feeling then, and I presumed that even neutral discussion would inevitably have set things afire again. I'm not sure what would have happened. So we retreated each to our wounded corners. I hadn't decided to cut my wife off and keep it that way; it was just beyond my ability to do something else.

It took me years in the Program before I thought to throw up my hands and admit I was in the midst of loss. Sometimes now, when we are having a rough patch, we can each acknowledge that we are upset and hurting and angry but we can at least allow we are both doing the best we can. These trials are revealing of deeper things than we'd shared before. It's possible that they've already taken a toll. But it's also possible to emerge stronger and more grateful. I don't know, and many days it seems like everything's suddenly in play and at risk, not by either of our designs, but as blowback from addiction. That's part of what keeps me coming back.

Mark

## **38th Annual Chicagoland Families Anonymous Convention**

Theme: Steps Toward Gratitude

Sunday, November 6, 2016, 8 AM - 3 PM

Presence Resurrection Medical Center - Conference Center

7435 W. Talcott Avenue

Chicago, IL 60631

Cost: \$50 for day if registration is received by Friday, October 21.

After 10/21, cost is \$55. Continental breakfast & box lunch are included.

 Mark, I really liked your post. It really points out how to two people living together "go at" an issue. There are so many times when my husband is on the phone with anyone, actually, and it's like I'm pulling teeth to get any details of the conversation. On the other hand, when I try to give him all the details of a conversation, he often tunes me out. We laugh about it because it's just the way it is. We learn to accept and cope.

I am like an "open book." Everyone knows what I'm thinking, when I'm thinking it, and sometimes I wish I could change that, but it is part of me and I have learned to accept it. It does give a lot of people a door into my head even when I don't want them there. My husband can have a more non-emotional look that can "appear" calm and non-judging. I have been accused many times of being "judgy" (by the way I hate that word) and I have to work very hard at my body language; my husband, not so much. He had a very successful career as a salesman, need I say more? So many times he gets "sent in" from the bench when a calm, non-"judgy" attitude is essential.

We are a tag team and we try to make it work for us. We do enjoy many activities together: golfing, hiking and biking. All of this brings us a sense of serenity and peace. I think one of the most important aspects of marriage is honesty. But playing together is essential. My husband has always taught me to play even when the tough really gets going. For that I am eternally grateful.

Sheila





## Marriage Survival

June 3rd

Today A Better Way

When a family suffers from the disease of chemical dependency, heartbreak and tragedy are frequently the result. Often one of the greatest sorrows is a rift between parents.

If parents allow themselves to be pitted one against the other and lose sight of the fact that they are partners as well as parents, the marriage may suffer severely. Touching base and communicating with each other becomes so difficult that a couple can fall into a pattern of seeming not to need each other. As conflicts and sufferings escalate because of the drug use within the family, marriages and homes become battlegrounds.

But at some point, the children will grow up and leave home, recovering or not, and then there will be only the two of them. This may be a moment of great opportunity.

*Today I will do my part to make the rest of our family life as loving as I can.*

### STEP NINE

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

### FA 12 Traditions

#9 - Our groups, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to the groups they serve.

### FA 12 Promises

#9 - Our attitudes and our outlook on life will change.

## Memorial Donations



In Memory of  
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 Group 1318  
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# FA Snippets

“

A member of my group once asked the question, "Am I numb or is it serenity?" This member questioned whether she had become numb to her son's drug addiction or if she had found a place of peace in letting go. For a long time, I feel like I have occupied a place somewhere in the middle of being numb and at peace.

To move from that middle, I try to remember there will be moments when my loved one will call on me and I am faced with his condition and tales; or stays away, and my knee-jerk reaction to worry fights to kick in. When that moment comes, it includes all of what I've brought to it. All of my past hopes, disappointments, and expectations, as well as all of what I have learned in my recovery. In that moment, I get to choose what to carry forward and what to leave behind. That choice will move me one step away from that middle spot of numbness and serenity. In which direction I step is up to me.

Everyday there are opportunities to practice some of the things we have learned in our recovery.

Lisa/NJ

“

Boundaries are flexible; they have "gates" that permit us to share our feelings and beliefs when we deem it appropriate. We do this, not with the intent to control another; but to share who we are and to take care of ourselves.

Anonymous FA Member

“

After years of chaos, helping, and searching for help in exhaustion, letting go was like a sacrifice of the one for the good of family, marriage and self. But instead of seeing a sacrifice, a new pattern began to form. Whenever yes was given to any form of help, even rehabs and sober houses, there always was a new crisis. In giving up, saying no to helping, good things began to happen.

Counterintuitive for a positive word like yes to yield a negative outcome and a negative word, no, see a more positive outcome.

June/NJ

“

Education is the key. Knowledge is power. Learn all you can about addiction and then make decisions that are healthy for you. You are entitled to a life of your own. Stay here with FA. Stay teachable. All in my experience, Joan S

“

**HOPE =**  
Hear Other People's Experiences



## FA LITERATURE SPOTLIGHT

### THE BROKEN VASE

#### *Do you*

- > *feel you are less than you could be and wish to feel better about yourself?*
- > *see imperfections in yourself that you want to address?*
- > *feel alone and hurting?*
- > *want to view yourself from a different perspective?*

FA has a brand new literature piece that could prove valuable to you and provide you with a different perspective about both yourself and life in general. It is a bookmark titled The Broken Vase and was introduced at the 2016 Convention in Miami, last June. It is now available to you! Though it is short, it presents a very useful write-up that suggests a meaningful way to look at yourself and your life – from a different and more positive perspective. In addition, the reverse side is the Spanish version. This bookmark makes a thoughtful gift to yourself or someone else who needs a "lift".

If this purchase seems like good sense to you, do yourself a favor, and order a copy of (2016 / 2016S) of The Broken Vase. Hopefully you will begin to regard yourself and your life in a new, more confident manner.

Order #2016/2016S  
The Broken Vase  
\$.75

## Perspective

July 17th  
Today A Better Way

When I first came to Families Anonymous, I thought all I wanted from life was for my son to stop using drugs. Once he accepted help for his addiction and entered a treatment center, things got better. He became drug-free, and our whole family began recovery. We all participated faithfully in support groups—our life lines.

But we still focused our hopes and dreams on the chemically dependent family member. Just as we had focused on his using, we now focused on his recovery. He stopped being our family scapegoat and became the family hero!

Recovery means much more than just getting the addict clean and sober. It means getting all our relationships back into the proper perspective. My husband and I need to work on our marriage, bruised and battered from years of neglect. Our non-addicted children need to feel cared about and loved. All of us have to claim our own needs and feelings and move the former problem person out of the spotlight.

TODAY I WILL focus on my own recovery and allow others the same privilege.

## STEP TEN

Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

### FA 12 Promises

#10- Our insecurities and our fear of other people's opinions will leave us.

### FA 12 Traditions

#10 - Families Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence our name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

*One Day at a Time*

*Let Go, Let God*



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