

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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NUMBER 2

A Sibling's Story: The View from the Other Side

I have one brother who is 18 months younger than me. When we were in our twenties his life started to take a turn. He had been using drugs and alcohol since high school and was then hit with a mental illness that made him paranoid and delusional, socially phobic, and angry. He dropped out of college and moved back to our hometown, my mother supporting him emotionally and financially. She told people he was an artist and he was working on his music. My brother isolated and used drugs. At one point a friend of his came to my mother and told her that something was really wrong with my brother and that he needed help; but he never got the help. My brother continued acting bizarre, wearing sunglasses all day, speaking in fragments, going out without being fully dressed. He shaved the hair off half of his body, he talked endlessly about astrology, and he smoked pot and drank alcohol. It went on like that until he got picked up by the police one very scary night and he ended up in the locked psychiatric ward at our local hospital. I visited my brother in the hospital, I saw how broken he was.

At that point something shifted in

me. It was as if I had this driving repetitive voice inside my body saying You have to save him, no one else will. When I left the hospital, I applied to clinical psychology graduate programs and within a few months I began school, focusing my studies on mental illness and addiction. I dedicated all my energy to helping my brother: I researched his illness, I wrote papers on theories about his symptomatology, I researched the most progressive treatment tactics, I read about the history of addiction and psychosis through various modalities and perspectives. I researched the newest medications. I called doctors, therapists, and nurses who I implored to help him. I visited him, I asked him questions, I told him what he should do, which therapist to see, which medications to take. I made appointments for him and drove him to those appointments. I wrote my dissertation on psychosis and I made a documentary on people broken by mental illness, drugs and alcohol. I became a clinical psychologist. I supported my parents, I listened to them and talked to them about what my brother was doing, what he needed, what was

happening to him. I defended him to my father and I encouraged my mom to truly see who he was. The majority of my conversations that I have ever had with my parents have been about my brother. I was my brother's spokesperson. I explained to cousins and aunts and friends where he was. I listened to horrible advice like, "he just needs to take a class," or "become a music teacher," or "find a girlfriend." I found him the best therapists, psychiatrists, and updated treatments. I went to workshops and conferences on mental illness and addiction, I joined networks and paid dues in associations to entrench myself in this world. I discovered vitamins and herbs, supplements that would fix his brain and make him better. And the entire time he was getting worse.

I was depressed and anxious during this time. I was enraged at the world, at my parents, at the medical system, and I became very tired. I was jaded. Something in me hardened against the world, with a shell of anger and cynicism that protected how painful it all really was. I had a good therapist with

(Continued on page 3)

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FROM THE EDITOR

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

SAVE THE DATE

June 2nd-4th, 2017

FAMILIES ANONYMOUS 2017 WORLD CONVENTION

Evansville, Indiana

BONUS: Optional guided day trip to Indiana's Amish country with lunch in an Amish home is being offered on Monday, June 5th.

You can subscribe to have The Twelve Step Rag automatically emailed to you by clicking on the WSB NEWS link found at the bottom of the home page of the FA web site. There is a spot to sign up for our bulk emails labeled "FA News."

Topic Ideas

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

Emeeting:
www.tabw.org



&

Meetings Without Walls:
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A Sibling's Story: The View from the Other Side

(Continued from page 1)

whom I endlessly argued about my brother. She told me this was his journey and that I couldn't save him and I said, "But then no one will; this is my duty." I was very anxious, and I started having panic attacks. Finally, while I was pregnant for the first time, something in me broke for my brother. I had very little energy left for him and I pulled back. He was getting sicker and my mother then started to see how sick he truly was; he was killing himself. My parents and I started having more real conversations about him and we planned an intervention. An interventionist arrived at my mother's house one cold January morning and we told my brother he needed treatment or he would lose our support. And then that interventionist turned to me and told me to go to an FA meeting.

That changed everything for me.

When I was young, I had a dream of being baptized in the river by women. One woman held me while she dipped my head back into the river that we were wading in. When I came up she said in my ear, "It will be ok." My first FA meeting was a manifestation of that dream. The morning of my first FA meeting, I dropped my children at school, and then I went to the gym to sit in the steam room, in order to treat my pain so that I could function that day. My body was quite ill at that time with an unknown pain disorder; I hurt all over, like an aching deep in my muscles and bones. I had been to many different doctors with no relief. When I felt up to it, I then found my way to the

basement of a local church where I was told there was an FA meeting. I walked in late, very tentatively, and before I could ask if this was an FA meeting, someone stood up and said, "You're in the Right Place." I took a seat and I was quiet. People were already sharing, going around the table. I listened to their stories but before the 3rd or 4th person spoke I began to cry. It was an uncontrollable eruption, I was losing my breath. I sobbed and sobbed. My tears interrupted the man who was speaking and the group turned to me. The woman sitting across from me leaned in, "This is a safe place," she said to me. The woman sitting next to me moved closer to me, "Let it out," she said and she rubbed my back. "It will be OK," they said. The Kleenex box was pushed toward me and by the end of the meeting I had gone through the whole box.

I went back to that group. The group listened to me and they taught me through their stories. They unconditionally accepted me. They didn't need all the details of my story. I was relating to them, I needed them. It was like a new family. Although I am in the minority, it doesn't matter that I am the sibling of an addict, not a parent or a partner. I am someone that deeply understands codependence; I am a hurt person who is trying to heal.

As of today I've been an FA member for just over two years. What has been most powerful for me is finding a place where people understand, truly understand, the painful experience of trying to cut your arm off to save someone who

you've been trying to hold up, when you really just need to let go. These people, these anonymous family members, are different than my friends, who may have the best intentions but can't understand the swell of mixed emotions that arises while watching someone slowly kill themselves and believing you can save them.

Walking through the door was the most important moment for me. As I build time, I get to receive the group as my Higher Power. The group, a collection of its members, has become its own spiritual entity that I get to take with me and believe in. For that I am grateful.

Brooke L.



Friendship is born
at that moment
when one person
says to another:
"What! You, too?
Thought I was the
only one."
--CS Lewis

ATTENTION: New Literature Piece

The FA Literature Committee is working on a new literature piece on the subject of bereavement. We believe that there is a need for support and guidance in this area and are looking for member input.

If you or someone in your group has experienced the death of their loved one due to substance abuse or related problems, please consider sharing your experience with us and how FA has helped you cope and heal. We would like to learn of the FA tools that were/are most helpful to you, and how you are doing now. All submissions are welcome and may be included in our new publication if they are received by August 31, 2017.

Please send to Sylvia S. at sylvias@familiesanonymous.org or 7388 A Chapman Pl., Goleta CA 93117 along with contact information such as first name and last initial, phone number, email address or mailing address. All experiences selected for publication will be listed with first name and last initial of the author, or can be listed as 'anonymous' if the writer wishes.

Thank you!

SPOTLIGHT EXTRA - PRACTICING TOUGH LOVE

Practicing tough love is tough on us! We may think that tough love is for the substance abuser, but it is necessary and useful in helping us protect ourselves as well!

Driven by strong familial love, we unknowingly make unwise decisions that enable our substance abusers to continue in their illness, rather than truly help them recover.

These kinds of decisions are described on this new bookmark. Also featured are the twelve points taken from Alternative to Enabling that can be a daily reminder about how to keep practicing tough love consistently.

This bookmark is priceless, but the cost to you is only \$0.25

Order this handy reminder today from the WSO:

Practicing Tough Love (#2017).

SPOTLIGHT SPOILER ALERT

An updated version of Alternative to Enabling (#1005) with new information that includes all family members is soon to appear on the catalog.

Watch for it!

The Power of Friendship

You, sitting across the room, you may not know this, but I call you my friend.

You, sitting in the back or beside me, you may not realize this, but I call you my friend.

You, who answers my calls in the middle of the night, you who has the patience to hear my story over and over again, I call you my friend.

When I was in a place of hopelessness and desperation, feeling shamed and disappointed, embarrassed and depressed, I found the power of friendship. First by one, then by many.

I came looking for an answer and found much more. Wisdom, compassion and friendship.

We may not meet for coffee, make plans for a movie, or chat about the weather, but I call you my friend.

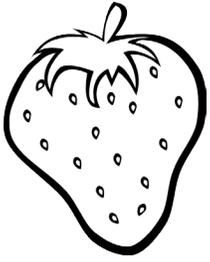
You share my world that others do not understand. I share yours in more ways that you know. I think of you, cry for you, hope for you, and cheer for you. Why? Because I call you my friend.

Today I will...cherish the gift of friendship that I have found in Families Anonymous.

FA = Friendship Abundance
Marci / Gr1318



Strawberry Fable



There is a fable about a woman running through the jungle away from tigers. She runs and runs and runs and at some point she comes to the edge of a cliff. She looks over the edge and she sees some vines, so she starts to climb down. Half way down, she sees that there are also tigers on the ground below her. Not wanting to go up or down she holds on tight but then sees that a small mouse is chewing through the vine she is clinging to. In the midst of all this, she notices a beautiful cluster of strawberries growing out of a clump of grass in the cliff near where she is hanging. She looks up, she looks down, she looks at the mouse, then she reaches and plucks a strawberry, puts it in her mouth, and enjoys it.

The tigers behind and below represent the past and the future, and the mouse is time. If our focus is on these things we will never be at peace. Stop spending time thinking about what your life used to be or what your life could be - it will keep you stuck. Reach out and seize the moment.

No one can give you happiness. No one can make you happy. Others can add to your happiness but only you can find it for yourself. Start working the Steps - they will lead you to a cluster of strawberries.

Reprint January-February 2011

“There is no happiness. Only moments of happiness.”

This thought keeps me from wanting perfect happiness which is unattainable. There are times when I focus on a troubled relationship to the exclusion of all other thoughts. But after a time I see the futility of that mindset and I realize I am ignoring the good things life has to offer.

Judith

Reprint January-February 2011

a NEW TWIST ON AN OLD IDEA

“Let bygones be bygones,” as the old saying goes. That’s good advice. Carrying around grudges and regrets can add unnecessary stress to our lives. Why not let go and turn your bygones into begonias?



For every grudge and regret you release, plant a begonia. You’ll give your health a shot in the arm and your garden a face-lift.

Comparisons

Today A Better Way
March 18th

My neighbor’s daughter is a doctor; another friend’s son is in law school. But I’m not bragging about my own two children, for at this time they appear to me to be choosing to waste their lives.

Many of us in Families Anonymous foolishly cloak ourselves in shame because our family members do not excel. We allow ourselves to feel like parental failures because our children are not fulfilling the images we projected when they were infants. How silly we are to think this way! How self-important to believe everything depends on us!

Our children make their own choices. Most of us did the best parenting we could with all the knowledge and skill we possessed. All we can do now is stand back, love our children, and give them room to grow, then live our own lives fully.

TODAY I WILL be happy for anyone’s success, refusing to assume blame or make comparisons.

Everything
will be alright
does not mean
everything
will stay the
SAME.

FA LITERATURE SPOTLIGHT

An Open Letter to My Family

Although hurting and worrying, are you aware that there is a way to gain understanding about what your addicted loved one is thinking and could tell you – but won't? This knowledge could provide some clues to help you deal more successfully with your loved one.

If you decide that this letter —written from the addict's viewpoint— might give you some answers to this question and others you might have, then this little piece of literature is for you! Here is an opportunity to explore building a better and healthier relationship with your addicted loved one

This one page "letter" will provide you with the special "Don'ts" as seen by your substance abuser, who most likely knows, but more likely is not expressing, to you! Below are a few samples of things to avoid:

- * Don't lecture...
- * Don't accept my promises...
- * Don't believe anything I tell you...
- * Don't lose your temper...

So, here is your chance to grasp what your sick loved one really needs from you. And even more importantly, this information can provide you with a clearer understanding on what is and what is not your role in your loved one's life. If nothing else, this publication can open your eyes to a different and more hopeful perspective on this heart-breaking aspect of your life.

So please, seriously consider ordering a copy of An Open Letter to My Family [(#2007) \$0.20], and begin your journey of change —for your own sake and in the addict's behalf.

Memorial Donations



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husband of Viola N
by
Group 0121
Torrance, CA



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Samuel B
son of Donald & Rosemarie B
by
Group 1735
Mahwah/Ramsey, NJ



In Memory of
Leo C
member of Gr 0976
by
Group 0976
Colts Neck, NJ



Sometimes
we expect more
from others
because we would
be willing
to do that much
for them.

*Inner peace begins
the moment you choose
not to allow
another person or event
to control your emotions.*

-Pema Chodron

Crossroads to Recovery

2017 World Service Convention

June 2- 4, 2017
Doubletree by Hilton
Evansville, IN

Make plans to join us at the brand new DoubleTree by Hilton Convention Hotel, opening early 2017 in Evansville, Indiana, for RECOVERY, SERENITY, FUN and FELLOWSHIP!

The 2017 Families Anonymous Convention begins on Friday evening and concludes by noon on Sunday.

As we travel on the road to recovery, we encounter many roadblocks and rest stops along the way. Our convention roadmap offers an educational, fun, insightful journey, with programs designed to challenge and foster personal growth, along with a connection to FA friends new and old.

For more information, or to download a registration form, please visit the convention website at www.faconvention.com or gmail the committee at 17faconvention@gmail.com.

When You Are Ready To Work It...

You have already taken an important step in healing yourself by attending an FA meeting. Here, you will begin to understand that you are not alone. Soon you will be ready to work your program to make your goal of serenity a reality. The fellowship and the program of FA provides many tools that can aid you in your recovery. Here are some ways to come closer to your goal of serenity.

Attend your FA meetings. Read and listen to the foundation readings. Learn from the topics and the experiences of your first-name friends. Share your thoughts and feel the compassion and empathy of the fellowship. Between meetings, call other members for help and support.

Read "Today A Better Way" daily, as part of your personal investment in your emotional health. In addition, during times of stress, many of us will "dive for the red book" as a way

of calming ourselves. Reading one or many entries has a way of restoring a healthier perspective as we deal with our addicted loved one.

Choose a sponsor. Soon you will be able to identify someone at your meeting whom you feel you can relate to; someone who projects a feeling of serenity. The booklet "Families Anonymous and Sponsorship" can offer you suggestions about how to choose and interact with a sponsor in a way that is most comfortable for both of you.

Work the steps. With the guidance of your sponsor you can begin the real work of healing yourself. The "Families Anonymous Twelve Step Workbook" can help you find your answers and offer suggestions for ways to approach your step work.

The program works if you work it.
SO WORK IT. YOU'RE WORTH IT.

SUPPORT THE 2017 CONVENTION

SILENT AUCTION

Attendees will have the opportunity to bid on items donated to the Silent Auction. Themed gift baskets, collectibles, jewelry, and gift cards are popular auction items. Please send your donated items to

Carla B.

5621 Lincoln Pointe Blvd.
Evansville, IN 47715

You can wait to bring your items if you are planning to attend the convention.

PURCHASE AD SPACE IN THE CONVENTION PROGRAM BOOKLET

Add a note of gratitude, thanks, dedication, or a remembrance to be shared with all attendees. Special FA slogans or a poem may also be submitted. A minimum donation of \$25 is requested for program space. These submissions must be received no later than April 1, 2017, and should be mailed to the address listed below.

Make checks payable to:

Families Anonymous
Address: PO Box 331
Evansville, IN 47702

Visit us at:

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Having A Destination

Today A Better Way
December 31st

Have you ever had the disturbing experience of being lost on a back road? Each chuckhole seems like an abyss. Every bend in the road seems to harbor unimaginable dangers. One mile seems like five, and ten minutes seem like hours.

Yet when you retrace your tracks on this very same road, everything looks different. The big rocks are only pebbles, the shadows contain no dangers, you get back in half the time it took to get there, and it feels like downhill all the way.

My experience in recovery has been like this. When I was following my son down the unknown road of addictive living, I did not know the outcome and was unable to find my way to a safe destination. Under those circumstances, life was scary and fraught with danger.

When I made my way to Families Anonymous, I found a tried and true map, the Twelve Steps, and many reliable guides in the group who have been through the territory before me. No longer trying to make my way alone down frightening back roads, I could relax and trust my Higher Power to prepare a way that would take me just where I needed to go.

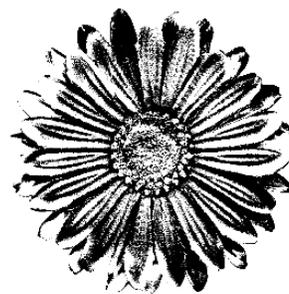
Once we have committed ourselves to the process of recovery, regardless of our addict's choices, our road will lead to serenity and sanity.

TODAY I WILL keep to the high road of recovery, relying on my Higher Power, the Twelve Steps, and my FA group to guide me safely home.

Easy Does It

Keep It Simple

One Day at a Time



*Things Don't Change,
We Do*



FAMILIES ANONYMOUS WORLD SERVICE

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