

# 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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## SCROOGE, THE STEPS AND TRANSFORMATION

In the Charles Dickens novel, *A Christmas Carol*, the ghost of Ebenezer Scrooge's long dead business partner wakens Scrooge after he has gone to bed on Christmas Eve. Marley's ghost begs Scrooge to change his ways and become a kinder, more generous and considerate person before it is too late. He tells Scrooge that three spirits – the Ghost of Christmas Past, the Ghost of Christmas Present, and the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come, will visit him very soon.

One at a time the three spirits open Scrooge's eyes so he can see clearly what terrible choices he has made. First, the Ghost of Christmas Past uses memories to remind Scrooge of the happier times of his youth.

Next, the Ghost of Christmas Present, appearing in the middle of the night, forces Scrooge to see himself in the present. He sees a bitter and spiteful old codger obsessed with his money and mean spirited to all around him. It is a shock for Scrooge to see himself as others see him and he doesn't like what he sees. The Ghost of Christmas Present also allows Scrooge to see how, in spite of life's challenges, family members, employees and friends find joy in their lives, especially at the holidays. His family and employees are grateful for their blessings and hopeful for the future.

In the early morning hours, the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come wakes him and uses fear to get Scrooge's attention. Scrooge sees himself dying alone, mourned by no one, the servants selling off his possessions. Tiny Tim, his employee's son, dies for lack of medical care and Scrooge finds his own gravestone in the graveyard.

And then to his great surprise, Scrooge wakens on Christmas morning and discovers that he is still alive. He has a second chance to change his life and his attitudes and embraces the future with gusto. He finds great joy



in being kinder and more compassionate and generous. He also finds forgiveness and acceptance. He lives out his life as a loved and respected friend, employer and uncle.

This is a story of transformation and in so many ways Families Anonymous is a journey of transformation too. None of us change until we are able to clearly see the reality of our situation and the role we play in it. And then, using the tools of the program, we have the opportunity to find the elusive peace and serenity we crave.

The Twelve Steps are the core of Families Anonymous. The Foundation Steps – One, Two and Three remind us of our powerlessness over others and the need to place ourselves and our loved ones in the care of our Higher Power. To trust. To let go.

The Growth Steps – Four through Eight help us to take a deeper look at ourselves, identify the obstacles to our personal growth and change them in whatever way we can. We make peace with the past and with ourselves.

The Maintenance Steps – Ten through Twelve, remind us of what we need to do to hold on to the progress we have made. Reaching out to others and sharing the program with them helps us to give back by passing it on.

FA members who are sharing the journey with you are a wonderful source of love and support during the holiday season. Reach out to them if you need them. They are a special blessing.

\*Please remember that the holidays are a terribly difficult time of year for those struggling with addiction. Try to support them as best you can even if all you can do is to keep them in your prayers.

PEACE AND JOY TO ALL

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## FROM THE EDITOR

Thank you to all who responded to our call for submissions. I was so pleased to see my inbox fill up each week.

Please continue to send your submissions to the Rag by email to: RagEditor12@gmail.com, or fax them to 847-294-5837, or mail to Families Anonymous, Inc., 701 Lee St, Suite 670, Des Plaines, IL 60016-4508.

In Service,  
Lisa W  
Rag Editor

## Happy First Anniversary to Group 1970 Turnersville, NJ

Thank you for honoring this occasion by making a special group donation to Families Anonymous World Service.

### THE TWELVE STEP RAG

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### Topic Ideas

*Is there a topic  
you would like to see  
covered in the Rag?  
Send your ideas to  
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### Today A Better Way: Volume Two

Send submissions to:  
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&

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## 4 C's Reflections

I have been attending FA for about 1 ½ years. For a long time, I attended for the sole purpose of finding “answers” as to how to fix my son. He is 22 and has been having drug and behavioral issues since he was around 15 years old. I just wanted the madness to stop and I was determined that FA could give me the answers to fixing him. However, over time, I began to really comprehend the four C’s: “You Didn’t Cause It, You Can’t Control It, You Can’t Cure It. BUT, You Don’t Have to Contribute to It.” I did not cause his illness no matter how many mistakes I made as a mother. I cannot control his behavior, his choices, or his future. And I certainly can’t cure the illness of addiction and his choices in life. After I began to really comprehend these 4 C’s, I started attending FA more regularly, not to fix my son but to help me become a more healthy person in how I react, respond and live my own life. I am amazed at how simple and how complex this is. It isn’t something we learn and incorporate overnight. In fact, I believe it will be a lifetime of learning. But I am much happier and more content than I have been in years...even though the situation with my son is still unresolved.

Jennie W

**The 4 C's**  
**You Didn't Cause It**  
**You Can't Control It**  
**You Can't Cure It.**  
**BUT, You Don't**  
**Have to**  
**Contribute to It.**

## Weathering the Storm

*New column featuring articles written by members of FA Bangalore, India, Group 1815 for their 5th anniversary celebration in 2012.*

### ACCEPTANCE

I reflect on the one aspect that has been the foundation of my recovery in FA. It is acceptance. It is acceptance of my powerlessness, my dependence on my Higher Power, and most of all the acceptance of my son and his disease. Did this come easy? Not at all!!! It took me a long time as I was repeatedly defeated by the substance, until acceptance came into my life. Coming from an orthodox family where drinking was taboo, my son’s addiction came as a rude shock. Unaware that he was suffering from a disease, I tried my best to push him into that “NORMAL” mould that I had made for him; and then I found FA. I slowly started finding myself again, and ironic though it may be, I am grateful to my son for bringing me into this beautiful programme. My acceptance of my son unconditionally, has made way for healing my relationship with him. Most of my resentments have melted away. Sometimes a deep sadness descends on me when I do what the programme tells me not to – imagine the future. Thanks to the literature and sharing of members, I learn to live one day at a time. As I journey along this path, I don’t find it dreary anymore because I walk along with friends. I have time to stand and stare, to admire the flowers that bloom along the way. The acceptance of God’s will in my life, now that’s a difficult one! Well.... I’m working hard at this one.

**SOMETIMES THE SMALLEST STEP  
IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION ENDS  
UP BEING THE BIGGEST STEP OF  
YOUR LIFE. TIP TOE IF YOU MUST.  
BUT TAKE THE STEP.**

## FA LITERATURE SPOTLIGHT

### No More Expectations!

Expectations are one of the hardest things to deal with. When we struggle to make our lives “normal” by doing things that others should do for themselves or expecting that what we plan or dream will come true we set ourselves up for failure. As parents or loved ones we continue to place our expectations above the reality of what is happening around us. *No More Expectations!* is a profile of a mother’s expectations of herself, her family and her Higher Power. The hope of Families Anonymous is that we can learn to adjust our expectations and seek peace and serenity.

No More Expectations  
#1012 \$ .50 each  
Order a copy today.



### Rag Submissions

Do you have a story to tell? We want to hear from you. Send us your poems, art, musings, questions, stories, bios or group history.  
12steprag@familiesanonymous.org



## New Column for 2015



### Calling all members !

Please share what you do for yourselves to cope with and enjoy life.

Is it photography? Yoga?  
Jewelry design? How about  
animal refuge? Pottery?  
Needle point? Writing?

Share what you do. How it  
has helped you. And be sure to  
send in photos of your work.

Submissions or questions  
can be sent to:  
RagEditor12@gmail.com

**G**od grant me the  
**S**erenity  
to accept the things  
I cannot  
**c**hange;  
**C**ourage  
to change the things  
I can;  
and **w**isdom  
to know the  
**d**ifference.

### Let's talk...

Send in your reflections on the  
idea that *miser* is optional to  
RagEditor12@gmail.com

## VICTIMHOOD AND THE RIGHT NOT TO RECOVER

I remember the feeling of my life being put on hold because of my ALO's stuff. I remember feeling disappointed in his choices to drop out of school, blow all his money, waste his talents. Even after I was able to let go of trying to fix him I continued to shake my head in judgement at his decisions.

Many slogans and ideas I have learned in recovery circles have helped me. The Serenity Prayer, The Three C's, Let Go Let God, have all brought me some level of peace and started me on the way to living my own life. But there was one statement that stopped me in my tracks, "People have the right not to recover."

Over the years I have come up with reasons why my brother used; anxiety, low self esteem, the wrong friends. But the real reason why he used was he liked it. And why not since the road to not recovering was paved so smoothly for him. He lived at home with food, phone, cable, and shower all at the low low price of sitting through a couple of nag sessions.

The rest of us in the house played the victim; choosing to disempower ourselves by insisting we had no control over our own lives. We too, chose not to recover.

Being a victim is not about what happens to you - it's about what you do with what happens to you. When we give our power away - we get to experience what we give our power too. If I give my power away to the chaos of co-dependency then I get to experience the chaos of co-dependency.

The day came - at different times for each of us - that we did choose recovery. Even my brother, who lived on the street for many years holding on to his right to live his life on his terms, came to a place of recovering in his own time.

Each of us in our own time.

In Fellowship,  
Lisa/NJ

## Letter to the editor -

To: The Twelve Step Rag

We are writing to show our appreciation to the FA World Service Office for their help in starting our new group #1989 in Louisville, KY. We meet at 6:00 PM on Monday evenings at Christ Church United Methodist, 4614 Brownsboro Road, Louisville, KY, 40207. Contact us by phone at 502-386-1648, or by email at [faccum@twc.com](mailto:faccum@twc.com).

Founding members Gary K., Ann K., Jennie W. & Steve K. would like to also extend our thanks to Christ Church United Methodist for so graciously providing a wonderful venue for our meetings. We have all been attending the St. Michaels group on Thursday nights and have watched it grow in number over the past year. Unfortunately, the need for help here in the Louisville area is huge. Given the number of people and the space available, it became evident that a second Louisville group would be beneficial. Sharon H. from the St. Michaels group was wonderful in providing advice and help with procuring literature for our first meeting.

Those of us who initiated the group happen to all be parents of addicts. We represent various situations and are at different places in our journey, which appears to be typical for an FA group.

We are happy to announce that we had our inaugural meeting on Monday, November 10th. Several people from the St. Michaels group joined us, in addition to a newcomer. All totaled, there were 15 people in attendance and our discussion centered on the "3 C's." The meeting was a good beginning for our newly formed group, and it is our hope that we will be able to continue to extend the extraordinary support, comfort and fellowship to others that we ourselves are experiencing through Families Anonymous.

## Maintaining My Program

I first came to the tables of FA in 2008, when my son entered rehab. I participated through the online e-meeting because I lived in a foreign country where there was no support group I could find. And I participated with the other families in our “group” at my son’s rehab.

In that first year, while I my son worked his recovery in rehab, I worked mine on my own. I checked in daily with the e-meeting, I chronicled my progress with the steps and read everything I could, especially the words of more seasoned members of the group who had what I wanted: Peace.

My first round through the steps was not without fits and starts, but in time, I worked through each of the steps and I did arrive at a level of peace by the end of my first anniversary. The middle steps – 4 through 9 – were the goldmine for me, opening my heart and mind to a far greater understanding than I imagined. I understood more about myself, my relationship with my lovely wife, my addicted son and my non-addicted children.

I could tell something was working when, during one of our family workshops, my wife and my son each tried to tell me – my son very publicly – about my flaws and how I had hurt him. The old me would have denied his allegations and defended whatever my actions had been. The new me listened, acknowledged what he had said, and accepted his feedback calmly. After the discussion, a fellow parent pulled me aside. He had seen how I had been in prior family weeks, and he declared, “You really have been working a program!” It was true: I was working the program and it was working on me.

At the end of that first year I felt I had achieved a level of peace. I was pleased with the result. But I knew from my interactions in the e-meeting that we don’t graduate from the steps and from recovery. As we marked my son’s transition from his rehab program, I also had to think about my transition from my first round through the steps.

I determined I was not done. In time, I determined to work the steps again, this time with a sponsor. My sponsor helped me to learn new things about myself as I reworked the steps. He helped me look deeper than I had before, and his experience, strength and hope helped me to find new jewels along the 12-step path.

I made myself available as a sponsor to other members of my group. I attended an FA convention. And I found a face-to-face meeting where I could offer service.

Through continued engagement with my “home” group at the e-meeting, I am regularly refreshed by new-comers. And I continue to work the steps in my own program. I’ve found the promises of FA are realized in the working of the steps. The program works when we work it.

In my case, it continues to help me to cope with circumstances that I cannot control. My son who brought me to FA is no longer using, which is a huge blessing to him and to our family. But his life is far from simple as there are other complicating factors in his life. And another son revealed his own battle with alcoholism. My FA tools have served me well, however. Keeping them polished and at the ready by regularly working my program has helped me to deal with what I can control, namely my own reactions to events around me.

Paul B, e-meeting

My sadness is a coat  
I wear it every day  
I cannot take it off,  
Or ever put it away

My daughter is an addict  
My sunny girl is gone  
Heroin is her life  
And all I do is wrong

She screams and yells and breaks things  
She steals anything she can  
She hates me for trying to help her  
She will sleep with any man

She’s only 19, my baby....  
she came to us late in life  
A miracle, a joy, a wonder!  
Now every day is filled with strife

I felt first hope at the meeting  
I will go back every week  
I see others hearts like mine  
Broken, but they speak.

Thank you for being there FA

Ann  
Summit, NJ

### **Note of Gratitude -**

I was referred to FA from a friend of a friend who attended this particular meeting and thought I might benefit from it. I was struggling with how to cope with uncertainties because my son was being released from jail. The people I met at FA were warm and caring. I was welcomed immediately and felt very much at ease. We have all been affected by our loved ones addiction. I have been able to share my struggles and also my experiences. I am able to take away information that will help me make it through. I pray often for my son to become strong enough to overcome his struggles as I pray for my extended FA family as well. I look forward to attending the weekly meetings. Thank you FA for changing my outlook.

Maureen  
Bethpage, NY

# The Sponsorship

## Mail Bag



My husband and I attended our first FA meeting 12 years ago. Our then 16-year-old daughter brought us to the fellowship. Like most newbies we came to FA looking for instant answers how to “fix” our child and end our nightmare experiences. After several meetings, it finally sunk in that the program was here to “fix” me. One member of our group frequently spoke about sponsorship and the role of a sponsor in helping another member work the 12 Steps of Families Anonymous. I was desperate to make changes, to end the craziness we had been living the past year. I decided to ask another member to be my sponsor, to make a commitment to work the 12 Steps of FA and begin my recovery in earnest.

Steps 1, 2 & 3 were not that difficult for me. I had already made the determination I was powerless to change our daughter’s behavior and needed a power greater than myself to restore me to sanity. The 4th Step (“made a searching and fearless moral inventory of myself”) was quite different. During my preschool years, my oldest sister died. That experience changed our family dynamics forever and, coupled with my parents’ high esteem for education and always doing one’s best, combined to make me feel inadequate. I strove not to disappoint my parents and to be the “perfect child.” As I grew older, those attitudes transferred to all aspects of my life. For example, I believed I had to be the “perfect mother.” My sponsor’s encouragement, support, guidance, and probing inquiries helped me to work through the 4th Step. I eventually, after several attempts, confronted my weaknesses, acknowledged my strengths, and was able to arrive at a realistic understanding of myself. My sponsor has helped me learn how to work and use all 12 Steps of FA to improve my life and relationships with others, especially the child who brought me to the FA fellowship.

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](mailto:sp@familiesanonymous.org).*

### In Memory of Justin K by



Vincent V, Gr 469  
Plainview, NY

Maxine & William L, Gr 469  
Westbury, NY

Julie S, Gr 469  
NYC, NY



June S Gr 469  
NYC, NY

Debra K, Gr 469  
Westport, CT



Theodore, Arielle & Debbi L,  
Gr 469  
Plainview, NY



# Memorial Donations

In Memory of  
Joan S  
member of the E-meeting group.  
You will be missed, dear friend.



by  
Frances N  
Lexington, SC

In Memory of  
Ken R  
by  
Group 135  
Naples, FL



In Memory of  
Dan L  
by  
fellow members of  
Group 579



In Memory of  
long time member  
Kathryn D  
by  
Group 0173  
Skokie, IL



In Memory of  
Joan S  
by  
Alice & Nicholas Q  
Thomasville, GA



**In Honor & Thanks**  
to longtime members  
for their contributions  
and support.  
Keep up the good work.  
by  
KS Shawnee Mission  
Gr 1097  
Overland Pk, KS



# NEW TO THE FA CONVENTION?

Many FA members have never attended an FA World Service Convention. They may not have the time (or the time off from work), the money, or, frankly, the energy to devote to a weekend away from home for this kind of event. It's a commitment of time and money.

If you've only recently discovered FA, or like many of us, you attend weekly meetings simply to gain the wisdom and strength to carry on despite a loved one's continued self-destructive behavior, you might believe the Convention isn't for you - that instead, it's only for those with a deeper commitment to the Fellowship as a whole.

That's a misconception: the World Service Convention is a uniquely energizing gathering of FA members from across the country that provides both old-timers and first-timers with networking opportunities, insights, and knowledge that you just can't get at your weekly FA meeting. It's informative, thought-provoking, and surprisingly fun. If you have the resources and the time to attend, you owe it to yourself and to your continuing growth in recovery to give it a try.

This article briefly recounts the impressions of a number of FA members from New Jersey who attended a recent Convention for the first (but certainly not the last) time.

## Jan B (first time Chicago)

I have been a faithful member of the Summit, NJ FA group since August, 2010 when my then 16 year old daughter was whisked away to a therapeutic boarding school. In FA I learned to breathe again, started to sleep again and found a way to live a serene life. I worked the Steps with 2 other FA members and together we discussed attending 1st the convention in Santa Ana, then the Dallas Roundup, but always something got in the way and we never went.

The Chicago FA convention last year worked perfectly for my husband and I. We had lived 13 years in and around Chicago, and so it was a perfect opportunity to combine the convention with a visiting vacation, and we were so glad we did! The keynote speaker was inspirational, the workshops informative and the Sunday speaker enhanced our spirituality and connection to the program. But what I most enjoyed was meeting and speaking with FA members from around the country, learning about the different ways groups run their meetings, how the program has benefitted others and sharing growth and experience.

I'd like to encourage any of you who have never been to a convention, to give the 2015 convention a chance. You don't have to be an old timer or a newcomer to get something out of it. Everyone benefits!

Hope to see you here in New Jersey next May.

## Shlomo H (Chicago)

One of the most interesting feelings I had during my first FA Convention was very similar to the feeling I had when I first stepped into an FA meeting - that I am not alone, not at all alone, and that there is hope for better days ahead. The only difference was that this time, the feelings were of amazement mixed with a strong sense of serenity, rather than the huge relief I felt during my first FA meeting.

I also realized that I truly detached from the day to day stresses, without "doing" anything explicitly to achieve that peace of mind. It was the setting, the program, and the new FA folks we met that made it happen.

And then of course was the keynote speaker, who, among other things, offered me a new way of looking at my qualifier daughter, a way which gave me hope that I will be able, some day, to detach with love, rather than just detach.

## Susan S (Chicago)

I have been attending F A meetings since June of 2012 after a friend of mine who was new to F A thought this would be something that I would understand and benefit from. Unfortunately, I am not a stranger to the disease of addiction; my family suffered a tragic loss over 6 years ago when I lost my 26 year old nephew and godson to an overdose. Shortly after that it became clear to me that my son was also using drugs and I was unable to control him. My life was in a constant frenzy and getting through each and every day peacefully was a challenge. My involvement with FA was fast and furious from the very first meeting and I have fostered some incredible relationships with new friends that I would never have dreamed possible.

When I first learned about the Convention in Dallas in 2013, I was very interested in attending however a family graduation made it impossible to do so. I was committed to attend the Chicago convention in 2014 and I am so glad that I did! The fact that a large group of people would be together for a weekend all with similar problems, from all walks of life was just perfect.

The keynote speakers, workshops, and the warmth of the weekend was priceless. While attending the convention my home group learned that FA was truly in need for a convention location for 2015, and after some exploring we are proudly one of the Convention hosts for next year. I have such enthusiasm for next year's convention as I am privileged to work with some incredible people in order to make the next convention a weekend to remember! Looking forward to seeing you in the spring.

## Growing Recovery in the Garden State

**2015 FA World Service Convention**

**May 29-31, 2015**

**at the Westminster Hotel in Livingston, NJ.**

For Registration forms and further details, log onto the NJ Convention website: [2015njfaconvention.weebly.com](http://2015njfaconvention.weebly.com), or log onto [familiesanonymous.org](http://familiesanonymous.org) and click on the *2015 World Service Convention* link at the top of the page. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at [fa2015convention@gmail.com](mailto:fa2015convention@gmail.com).



## TABW Car Magnets are Here!

You see them everywhere - oval black and white "Euro" car magnets with acronyms for popular place names. Now the Fellowship has its very own: a high-quality, full-size (5 3/4 x 3 7/8 in.) oval car magnet with the bold letters TABW, and below that, TODAY A BETTER WAY - for only \$5!\* (\*Plus \$1.00 postage and handling for each magnet ordered).

Display one on your car to show solidarity with the Fellowship, and your belief in the wisdom of TABW - only you, and other FA members, will appreciate its significance. All proceeds go to support the 2015 World Service Convention. Simply fill out the attached order form and send it to the address listed below.



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