

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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MY SON

My son has been on methadone for many years after an 11-year addiction to heroin. He has decided it is time to get off the methadone. He went through college and now works as a research scientist. He and his longtime girlfriend, also a recovering heroin addict, had a commitment ceremony recently. They are renting their first apartment, and now have a car. They spent most of those 11 years sleeping under bridges and in doorways, then when on methadone, they lived in rented rooms in slums. Some of those places were really sleazy. But with bad credit, no rental history to use as a reference, no bank account and no job, they were unable to get into a decent apartment. They lived on her disability check which is very little. He managed to go to college for six years while they lived in these awful places. He had financial aid, grants, and some student loans. Quite an accomplishment. He is now paying off all debts he had accumulated. The apartment they are in now is a normal place in a nice complex. They were willing to rent to him even with his history, because his credentials look good now. He recently opened a bank account for the first time in his life. He is 41. He had been without a driver's license since he was about

21, so he got that. All of this is him having to face the consequences of his addiction; consequences that still bite him all these years into his recovery work. Climbing out of that hole has taken a huge amount of work and commitment.

He texted me last night to tell me he is ready to not be on methadone anymore. He says he feels stable and ready to be free of all substances. He has been on a very tiny dose for several years. Only time will tell. The methadone clinic uses a video of his success story for all new patients to view.

I mention all this because I am so glad that I had a lot of years of 12 step work in me to be able to NOT rescue along the way. Before he graduated from college and got a job this past summer we could have paid for them to live in a better apartment but we let them live in the sleazy places. We could have cosigned on an apartment but we had been burned on that before and said never again. We did not buy them a car. They both took the bus everywhere, including to college and the methadone clinic in snow and freezing rain.

They bought most all of their clothes at a second hand store. We did give them warm coats that we no longer needed when we moved to a

tropical climate. We gave them gift cards for stores for Christmas and birthdays. Not money. We bought him dental work as a graduation present. Heroin addicts have terrible teeth. He wanted to look good for job interviews. We paid the dentist directly.

So, I wondered how I would feel when he decided to go off methadone. I feel neutral. Not because I believe he will stay clean, but because I believe in my strength to deal with whatever happens. If he slides back down the addiction hole I will be sad, I will have some tears, I will have some grief, but MY life will not slide down there with him, and the joy in my life will still be there. He could remain clean his entire life, or not. He could go back to using tomorrow and lose all that he has worked for. I feel neutral about it. My life, my serenity, my happiness does not depend on what he does or doesn't do. I am impressed with what he has accomplished and he has a lot of self-esteem now because he did it himself, AND I know he is an addict and always will have that battle. I will love him and I will not rescue him under any circumstances. He knows that. I feel it is important that

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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

HEALING THROUGH NATURE WALKING

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

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
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&

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RECOVERY BEGINS WITH ME

I'm a very grateful member of Families Anonymous - so grateful, that when I was in the depths of despair, my Higher Power took pity on my lost soul and led me to the Rooms of Families Anonymous.

The minute I found myself in a meeting, I knew I was in the right place. The friendly faces and gentle voices put me at ease and the stories I heard were similar to mine. At last I could speak about the unspeakable, shameful things that were happening in my home. Nobody criticized or blamed me. We were all suffering the same pain and could freely share it. The only difference was that I was there to find the recipe to "fix" the person who had brought me to the meeting. At that time, I had no idea that I needed to "be fixed" myself.

Little by little, I became aware of the fact that I needed to change my way of thinking when dealing with addiction and began to adopt suggestions taken from shares. Meanwhile, it was obvious that I was missing the finer points in these shares because I lacked fluency in Greek. The number of English-speaking members was growing, so we braved opening a new group. Though small, after 17 years, the English-speaking group is still very much alive and of some importance. It is the only one in Greece and facilitates overseas visitors from time to time.

My recovery became more productive after receiving a copy of TABW and when I also began reading self-help books. They were both exciting and inspirational, but after learning so much from them, I began to feel uncomfortable with

my behaviour. I was suspicious, unforgiving, wanted the last word, endlessly played the blame game, and wanted what I wanted when I wanted. I was then in need of a sponsor, to whom I am very grateful, as she gently took me through the steps and showed me the way to self-discovery.

Whenever possible, I go to 12 Step workshops in search of serenity, and to gain a better relationship with myself. On one of these workshops, the exercise was to lie on the floor and think about members of our family. As I lay there, thinking of my family members, I had a shocking revelation. I realized that I had neglected my drug-free child, as all the focus had been placed on the addicted member of the family. It was such a terrible moment, that I began to roll around on the floor and writhe in agony. It took a good ten minutes to recover my composure, but I spent the rest of the day in bed, living with my guilt and planning on how to make amends. My decision was to develop a rapport, have a laugh, and take an interest in this child's life. Today, Saturday mornings are "our" days when we go shopping or just watch the world go by in the coffee shop, thus forming a special bond.

The most rewarding service I have taken on in the fellowship has been on the Greek Intergroup Board. For seven years, I served as a liaison between the WSO and Greece. The greatest learning experience was finding an amicable solution to any issues that came up. Having to accept other people's opinions, although I didn't agree with them, was a humbling experience.

Many members ask why it is necessary to have an Intergroup, considering each group is autonomous. My answer is: How can you have a ship without a captain? Then I explain the importance of:

- A. Having the invaluable FA Literature translated into Greek
- B. Contact with the WSO
- C. Helping groups solve complicated issues, especially where unacceptable behaviour is concerned.
- D. Hold conventions

In spite of the turmoil, chaos, and heartbreak that we all suffer in a family with addiction, my marriage of 42 years has survived. By using the tools to cope with unsolved problems, every day living becomes easier, and by avoiding projecting into tomorrow, we can keep on an even keel. In short, the Families Anonymous' powerful message of HOPE has saved my marriage.

An overseas gentleman visitor recently came to a meeting. The subject for the day was meditation. Not being a keen fan of meditation, I sat quietly, expecting a boring share. Just the opposite happened. This interesting man explained how he placed a mask over his eyes, went to his "Meditation Room" for 20 minutes every day and was not to be disturbed during this time. He is refreshed, clear-headed, and set to face the rest of the day after his 20 minutes of "time out." Meditation is now on my "To Do" list to help me in my recovery.

(Continued on page 6)

Letter to the Editor -

Good Afternoon!

I am the secretary of our local F.A. group in Voorhees, New Jersey and love, love the newsletter! I send it to our members immediately after receiving it and keep every publication for future reference as a tool to gain support in those trying times that we all face on this bumpy journey.

I have found after several years with F.A. that my journey has become less bumpy but am reminded of the times in previous years, when I was not so filled with self-trust. I journal every day and refer to those journals to see how far I've come and also to remind myself that relapse is just a "page away." In one of my daily journals from February 2014, I found a poem, *God's Gift*, that I had written to my son and thought that I would share it with you.

If you deem it worthy of including it in the next newsletter, I would be most grateful.

Thank you for this wonderful piece of encouragement and hope that we will continue to contribute our ideas to help others.

Loretta S

H O P E =

Hear Other People's Experiences

*Your story
matters - tell it.*

God's Gift

by Loretta S

God sent me a gift in 1991,
I was blessed with the birth of
a beautiful son.
I knew that I loved his
unusual quirks,
But had no idea how He
works!
Everyday a mother to instill a
belief
That self-love would always
be the relief
Of the pain of feeling alone,
misunderstood;
But beneath it all, soul so
good -
That deserves God's love
with which he was born,
Will someday come to
someone who is still so torn.
You may never despair for in
God's care
My gift of gold, that first you
must be sold
to embrace the freedom from
bonds of addiction
that keep you from making
the conviction
to take the journey to the
reach your destination.
To whip the pain of this
addictive disease
To live a life of one who sees -
that sobriety and
Self-love is the only way to
succeed

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 of 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 - Order a copy today.

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



My FA Experience

Good-bye / Hello

It is often said “Big things come in little packages”...here is my experience.

I approached the door to my first FA meeting expecting to be turned away for lack of a “qualifier.” At the time, I had no active drug abusers in my family, but my life had become unmanageable by means of an emotionally abusive marriage. So, I had sought out the nearest 12 Step group in my relatively rural area. To my surprise, I was warmly welcomed when I came into the room, and I was encouraged to stay for the meeting. When I shared why I had come, the women sitting around the table listened intently to me. No one judged me and many people affirmed me. I will never forget the peace and understanding that I felt that night. I had finally turned a corner. I was encouraged to keep coming back.

So, I did keep coming back. Each week, as I listened to other members stories, I was impressed by how similar their situations were to mine emotionally. Although I had attended a 12 Step group many years before, I had allowed important concepts to slip by the wayside. I again needed to learn how to take care of myself and set boundaries in a constantly changing relationship wherein I was dismissed, ignored, and had my words twisted. The time had come where I needed to speak up for myself. In addition, I needed to learn that I could not change anyone or fix someone. I could only change myself. I am grateful for the wisdom in the principles and steps read at each meeting.

It has been two years now since I first stumbled into my local meeting with few expectations, but those expectations have been met exceedingly. My FA group is a unique fellowship. I found a place where I am comfortable and belong; a family and a fellowship that I had lost to a certain degree when I remarried. I have found new friends and have learned a new approach to life. My prayer life, once very stagnant, has increased. I receive a lot of insight and support by listening to the others in the group, some with heart-breaking problems much more serious than my own. I believe that although sometimes our circumstances are very different, we can all relate to other members struggles and victories. The principles and steps apply to us all.

I thank God for my FA friends especially at this season of the year. As another member of my meeting said; “we are like family.” So, to anyone that might feel hesitant to try a meeting, I encourage you to try...as you just don’t know what might be in store for you.

Kathy H

Easy Does It

One Day at a Time

Keep It Simple

Good-bye fear.

Good-bye anger.

Good-bye guilt.

Good-bye worry.

Good-bye hate.

Good-bye violence.

Good-bye profanity.

Good-bye sarcasm.

Good-bye suspicion.

Good-bye directing.

And Good-bye expecting.

Hello faith.

Hello forgiveness.

Hello acceptance.

Hello love.

Hello patience.

Hello my HP.

And Hello to the goodness of other people.

I feel better already!

Mark McP

MY SON

(Continued from page 1)

he knows that and he knows because we have not wavered from it. We did waver from that in the early years, before we had been burned so many times, and we were ready to say NO always. It took time and pain to get to that point. I understand those who are not ready yet. I've been there. I'm not there anymore. I'm free of the enabling addiction I once had. My Higher Power and Families Anonymous and a lot of personal work got me there. If I can do it with two addicted sons and a workaholic husband, it is possible for anyone.

Jennifer S

In Recognition of
the Loyal Members of
FA Group 109,
Shawnee Mission, KS
who
Keep Coming Back!



RECOVERY BEGINS WITH ME

(Continued from page 3)

To keep balanced, there are four important words I carry in my head every day. They are:

1. No
2. Detachment
3. Acceptance
4. Boundaries

I once worked with a hip young fellow who would come into the office every Monday morning, with a wide grin on his face and say,

"I had a wonderful weekend, Carole. How was yours?"

"Miserable," I'd answer.

He'd point a finger and say,

"You're always miserable, Carole! Get a life!"

These words often ring in my ears and encourage me to make an extra effort to keep buoyant. My recovery is, in essence, all about striving to LIVE and LET LIVE.

CAROLE S.

English-speaking Group, 1578
Athens, Greece

Memorial Donations

In Loving Memory of
our beloved son,
Michael Alexander
6-10-89 -- 10-9-16

by
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Group 279
Huntington, NY



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long time member,
Betty D
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husband of member Kym
by
Group 0788
Trumbull, CT



In Memory of
Joel P
by
Nancy W
Hank and Mary H
Group 1844
Mequon, WI



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.

Co-dependant Thinking Journal -

Taking Care of other people makes me feel...

This journal prompt caused me to pause because I have been a practicing RN for 44 years. Straight out of school at the ripe age of 23, I was a Home Health Nurse. I learned very quickly that due to government constraints, our care needed to be well planned out. The first visit was usually met by overwhelmed family member and/or neighbors thinking I was there to do it all. Oh no, I am here to teach you so that our patient can return to independence. Any of this sound familiar? We were only allowed so many visits and the majority of the time everyone was very motivated and we accomplished our goal. Still, at this age of 23, I remember sitting in my supervisors office lamenting the fact that some of my patients didn't do what I recommended, and if they just did what I recommended, they would get better! Hmm, again, sound familiar? I learned that everyone has choices and I can't make them do what is good for them, I can just recommend. Fast forward to today, where I work in a fast paced operating room and I walk away at the end of every shift content I did the best I could. So, was I able to transfer what I was learning in my career to my family.? No. I felt if I didn't try to control, I was giving up. Now, I have come to learn it is not. It makes me feel very good to offer my skills to allow people to lead an independent life style. Great prompt. Thank you for having me think about this.

Shelia D

Journal prompt...

I try to control other people and situations by _____ and this leads to _____. Instead I will _____.

Send your reflections to: RagEditor12@gmail.com

I really had to think about this. I have helped a lot of people for a variety of reasons. Sometimes, helping people makes me feel like I am doing what God asked me to do (taking care of those less fortunate - sharing my blessings). Or because, I get a warm fuzzy and know I am helping fill a basic need for survival - like when I give to a local pantry or contribute to Christmas boxes or serve a meal at our local shelter. Other times, I help people out because of a feeling of obligation - like when I help someone move because they helped us move. Or when I know someone really has no one else to help them and I know I am capable. This then leads me to other feelings - like resentment or feeling used by someone who is taking advantage of my good will. Other times, I help out of guilt - if I feel like it's my fault they are in the position of needing help, or because I feel guilty for having so much when others have so little. Helping also helps make me feel like I have some sort of control - sometimes in the life of the person I am helping. Helping my ALO made me feel like I had some control over the chaos in her life. And sometimes in my own life, as well, when the news of this world feels overwhelming, I feel some small control by helping those I can. It's like the story of the girl wandering up the beach and throwing starfish back into the ocean. When a stranger asked her why she was doing it when there were so many starfish, how could throwing a few back possibly make any difference. She answered back, as she tossed another one back to the sea, "I made a difference to that one, now didn't I?" When my own life is unmanageable, helping also gives me the illusion of control by taking the focus off of me and putting it on someone or something else. Thanks for the subject prompt!

Sue D.

Serenity

Today A Better Way
January 4th

When I find myself in mental and emotional turmoil because of my anxieties and fears, I have the ability to put those thoughts “on hold” and shift from negative to positive thinking.

Instead of feeding my anxieties, I can foster a sense of wonder and gratitude. I can notice a beautiful sunset, watch children as they laugh and play, marvel at a bird’s flight, or smell the fresh countryside after a summer rain. What beauty and serenity can be found by just observing!

When I am quiet and still, I can be in touch with my Higher Power. Knowing my God is there, I allow my fear to be replaced by faith.

TODAY I WILL work to replace anxiety and fear with gratitude and serenity.

Be **good** to yourself.
Keep coming back,
and little by little,
one day at a time,
you will become
stronger,
wiser,
and more
serene.

(TABW, December 3)



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