

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

VOLUME XLVI

September-December 2017

NUMBER 5

DECIDING I WANTED TO HEAL

Healing started for me when I first realized I was wounded. I don't mean a physical wound, like a cut. No, what I'm talking about is a psychological wound, which can be even more painful. I carried this deep, open wound around with me for many years. My wound was anger. Not only was it my wound, it had the power to damage and destroy everyone close to me. I knew that this anger was deep within my psyche. I also knew it was affecting my life in ways that were no longer of use to me.

During this period of my life I was married to a very loving and kind woman. Together we had three children. However, my anger was such that I had even pushed her to her limits. We were now struggling to hold on to our marriage. I had a choice: my anger or my family. I had reached my bottom.

Thankfully, due to the troubling behaviors of one of my children, I was involved in Families Anonymous at this time. Families Anonymous helped me tremendously in coming to terms with my anger. This was not easy for me, because like so many of us in the early stages of recovery, I truly believed that I had no real problems, no open wounds. I could not believe that this was really happening to me, but yet, it was. In

my heart I knew that if I didn't start working on healing myself not only would I lose my marriage, I would likely live a life of misery due to my anger. Hitting bottom enabled me to accept that I was indeed wounded. In that acceptance, I became open to getting help.

I didn't have a formula and I didn't know exactly how to start. Help came to me in many forms; mostly through attending my FA group meetings. It was there that I learned about "Letting go and letting God." It was there that I learned that I could give my anger to my Higher Power. Giving it to my Higher Power provided me with tremendous relief, as though the world was lifted from my shoulders. I felt a natural high that I hadn't felt in years. Although I was unsure of exactly how to proceed, I knew that with guidance from my Higher Power, I was going to heal.

I began talking to my Higher Power and doing my version of beginner's meditation each day. I read the 12 Steps every day. I read them slowly and found deeper meaning within them that seemed to help me throughout the day. Religiously, I read the Red Book, "Today A Better Way." Because I was doing these things, miracles started to happen; I stopped nursing my resentments,

I no longer concentrated on what I considered to be "foul deeds" done to me and my family. I stopped trying to hurt my abusers. I worked on not striking back verbally with anger if I felt personally abused or attacked. I stopped taking everything personally. If I felt that I had hurt someone in anger, I practiced the 10th step and promptly admitted it and apologized. All of these things allowed me to start to feel warm and good about myself. Slowly, I learned to laugh at myself. This was a big step and helped me to relax and enjoy both myself and others.

I started to take notice of the humble people I knew. I realized that these humble friends and relatives had something that I wanted: the peacefulness and serenity that surrounded them. I started to notice that they didn't need me; an angry, anxious person, to help them. Rather, it was I who needed them! There was much I could learn from them. I learned to take myself a lot less seriously, I started to humble myself, I stopped being so hard on myself, and therefore, was able to be easier on others.

The anger was starting to leave me, the healing process was working.

(Continued on page 4)

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FROM THE EDITOR

It is hard for me to say farewell. I have enjoyed working on the Rag these past eight years and I will miss it. As I turn my attention and time to the needs of my family, I leave the Rag in the hands of Lilly C. I wish her much luck as the new Editor and look forward to reading her first issue.

I appreciate the help and support I received from board members, Rag readers and members of my FA, E-meeting group.

I am grateful to members of the Rag staff I worked with over the years: Valerie B, Ruth J, Lynn R, Maggie B, Mary D, and especially Judith H, whose dedication, attention to detail and skill made the Rag shine.

As you will notice, this issue is longer than usual. It is a combination of the last two issues of 2017. I have included two fables, which are favorites of mine. The Strawberry Fable is a reminder to reach out for moments of joy. The Fable about Personal Pain is a reminder of the importance of fellowship. My hope, for all of us, in 2018, is that we seek out moments of joy.

With Love in the Fellowship,

Lisa W.

THE TWELVE STEP RAG

Published six times a year by
Families Anonymous, Inc.
701 Lee St, Suite 670
Des Plaines, IL 60016-4508

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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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Emeeting:
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&



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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.

Lisa/NJ

God grant me the
Serenity
to accept the things
I cannot
change;
Courage
to change the things
I can;
and **w**isdom
to know the
difference.

*Keeping busy and
living our lives
doesn't remove
the sadness.
Still, the sadness
shouldn't stop us
from living
our lives.*

--Lisa/NJ

Let It Go

This disease is cunning and confusing. It allows a healthy mind to become one that has no boundaries. It leads to harsh words, damaged homes, and still the addict is not moved. Most certainly not by you.

The pleading and hysteria all creates more of the same having you both stuck in a physical or mental hold. You can free yourself. As hard as you may think it is, staying in a war zone is harder. I recall the words often cited in the E-meeting, "How's that working for you?"

Take care of you and look for a quiet place to breathe. Free your mind of all the insanity. Leave the arena. Find a safe place. Call the police. I don't care if it only gives you 24 hours. It's a start. Get an order of protection. Press charges. Don't bail. Let them see you're done. And be done.

I can hear you all now...but, but, but. One day you will know enough is enough. You cannot save them or fix them. Let them feel the consequences.

Yes, the mental component rears its ugly head and surely some are very ill. I know for sure drugs and alcohol exacerbate the situation. Until the drugs go away, it will be a catch-22, nothing will change.

I've seen miracles. Give it a chance and move aside.

Cookie



DECIDING I WANTED TO HEAL

(Continued from page 1)

My marriage was becoming more enjoyable, the tension was dissipating. We were enjoying the spirit of life once again. We talked about nothing, yet we talked about everything. We were no longer arguing. We were enjoying ourselves. We were beginning to heal.

My relationship with others was improving as well. I found that a large part of my healing was forgiving; to forgive MYSELF as well as others. I chose not to hold on to the anger any longer, the anger that was once such a negative force in my life.

I am no longer the "Old Bill" who held fast to the anger until he no longer could. I like to think of myself as the "New Bill," the one that has faced his demons and let them go.

The FA 12-Step program and meetings have changed my life. Goodness is all around me. As I continue to heal, I can feel the power in that goodness. Boy, it sure feels great.

Bill C, Group 262

reprint March-April 2012



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

Fable About Personal Pain and Fellowship

There is a fable about a sad young man who went to a village wise man for a solution to the pain in his life? The wise man told the young man to put a fistful of salt in a glass of water and drink it. The young man did and immediately spat out the bitter tasting salt water.

Next, the wise man told him to put another fistful of salt into a freshwater lake and take a drink. This time the water tasted fresh because he couldn't taste the salt.

The wise man offered this wisdom to the young man:

"The pain of life is pure salt; no more, no less. The amount of pain in life remains exactly the same. However, the amount of bitterness we taste depends on the container we put the pain in. So when you are in pain, the only thing you can do is to enlarge your sense of things a bit."

If you keep your pain to yourself it is like drinking salted water from a glass. Remember, fellowship is our freshwater lake.

H O P E =

Hear Other People's Experiences

The place which may seem like the end may also be only the beginning.

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

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

Practicing These Principles in All of Our Affairs

Dedicated to Park Ridge 173 Group

It was a sunny July day on vacation in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan when my husband set our son in recovery for one year, then 18, his brother and a friend, both 16, on a canoe trip down the river for some hopefully good fishing. On their phones, he showed them on satellite where they were at the put in spot, and then, where we would be waiting to pick them up in two hours.

Two hours turned into two and one-half hours, as we sat at our designated spot on the river, looking to see them coming around the bend. Another hour went by, and by 2 and ½ hours after they were supposed to arrive, we were in full panic mode. We decided to have me stay at the meeting spot, and my husband would go back to where he put them in to see if they returned there.

911 and the Department of Natural Resources were called in to go up the river looking for them.

Many thoughts went through my mind as my husband repeatedly called their names as loud as possible. One of them could have tripped while pulling the canoe through a low spot, cracking his head open and was dead. We hiked up the river a little and could see the water was very low and the rocks slippery. Utter, raw fear gripped me as I sat waiting, or alternately I was running up and down the landing to stay warm, looking out for black bears, reciting the Rosary, and the wise FA, “God can, I can’t, I’ll let him,” summing up the first three steps.

My higher power appeared to me in several forms during this

time, which had now stretched into nightfall. I sat hugging my knees to my chest, thinking the worst thing would be if they got off the river and then were wandering in the wilderness, being lost for a long time, perhaps never to be found. Why wasn’t there a helicopter flying over with a huge search light to find them? Ironically or not, it was the night of the “Blue Moon” which occurs every 46 months, where there are two full moons in one month. In the moonlight, a large crane, perched on top of a tree near me, peered across the river. I felt a strange calm come over me. The forced stillness caused me to appreciate the beauty of the scenery, watching storm clouds come in and out to the south, then the sun setting inch by inch. Local people came from their camps to comfort me, offering bug spray, driving up and down dirt roads looking for them, and one lady whose home is right on the river offered to turn on all the lights in and on her property. Like Mr. Rogers says, when something bad happens,” look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.”

Nine hours later, a 911 dispatcher called and said the kids were found. They had come out of the river, drawn to the home of the lady who turned every light in her house on, inside and out.

Waves of relief washed over my husband and I, to find out they were all found and not injured. It turns out the river was especially dry that year, making the trip longer than we thought. Meeting up with them again, they told us that they did

shore the canoe and walked several miles to widely spaced apart empty cabins, looking for a phone; their phones destroyed when the canoe tipped over in falls. When we looked at the map together of where they got out, I discovered they were directly across the river from me when the crane appeared, although hidden by thick forest, making it so we couldn’t see each other. Thus the explanation for the crane. I believe that crane was God telling me “I got this” in answer to my prayer.

To sum up, steps 1, 2, and 3 are critical mantras and truly it is humbling to be reduced to total powerlessness. Step 11, which is my favorite, states we should “improve our conscious contact with God.” My forced meditation on the river for eight hours certainly was a saving grace there, sending me animals and people to give me a sign of assurance. Said another way, from the workbook for step 11: “meditation is reflecting on what matters most.” You really gain perspective when something like this happens.

“Nothing, absolutely nothing, happens in God’s world by mistake” as per a laminated quote on “Acceptance” from my son’s literature states. Was this a chance for my sons to improve their relationship battered by years of addiction? Were the boys being prepared from something later in life?

My husband says he planning on dropping them in a jungle to see if they can find their way out for the next “vacation!”

Julie K

The Bag

People who are not in Program often ask me why I continue to go to meetings if my qualifier has stopped using. I try to explain to them that for me, FA is not as much about the addict in my life as it is about my own personal journey with my Higher Power. I explain to them that I never leave a table not having learned something new. Similarly, each time I re-read FA literature, I am constantly struck by passages that are meaningful in a totally different way, depending on what is going on in my life. I know this is my Higher Power at work, giving me the tools and knowledge I need when I am personally ready to receive and comprehend them.

Last week served as a perfect example. I was sitting at a table when I was struck by the words, “we intervene where it is inappropriate . . . and our misplaced concern for others becomes intrusive, meddling, resented, and doomed to failure.” “We confuse controlling with caring because we don’t know how to allow others the dignity to be themselves.” It was as though I was hearing those words for the first time! They immediately brought to mind an incident with my daughter, who is my qualifier.

Fresh from a 30 day stint in rehab, my daughter decided it would be best for her sobriety if she moved out of our house and into a sober living facility. Sadly, prior to this, I had been enabling her without realizing it, so I was proud of her for making this very healthy and adult decision. In an effort to help her pack, a very co-dependent move, I admit, I scanned the room

and found the perfect bag to serve as a suitcase. Of course, instead of letting my adult daughter make her own decisions about what to take and what to leave behind, I began to assemble a small pile of things I thought she would need. I think that I let the years of packing her things for summer camp convince me that I knew best when it came to the practicality of deciding what should stay and what should go. I also think I wanted to “save” my child from being embarrassed because she forgot deodorant or some other equally important personal hygiene product. I was so used to saving my daughter from the consequences of her own actions, including addiction, that it never occurred to me that this kind of behavior on my part probably contributed to her substance abuse issues.

I placed the bag on the bed so I could fill it later and went about my self-assigned task. I noticed that every time I turned away, the bag managed to make its way to the pile I had designated as trash. After more than a few such instances, I finally confronted my daughter about her odd behavior. After all, not only was the bag stylish and perfect in every way, I recalled that it had been a Christmas gift from her now deceased Grandmother. I could not imagine a world in which one would willingly discard such a lovely, expensive, and valuable gift from a dearly departed favorite relative! Evidently rehab had done nothing to teach my daughter how to appreciate the important things in life!

(Continued on page 7)

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.



Find
Joy
in the
Journey



The Bag

(Continued from page 6)

Thankfully, while rehab apparently did not hold classes in luggage appreciation, it did teach my daughter the best way to manage her own sobriety. For what could have been the first time in her adult life, my daughter had the courage to stand up to me and put her own recovery before the meddling and nagging that had defined our relationship of late. With surprising calm, my daughter informed me that, while she agreed that the bag was indeed beautiful, it also served as a trigger for her addictive behavior. It seems that the bag and its contents was the only thing that my daughter had taken with her when she chose to live on the streets to pursue her addictions. She knew that she didn't need any such triggers as she tried to stay clean and put her life back together. In effect, she was figuratively and literally making a conscious decision to leave the destructive "baggage" of her old existence behind in pursuit of a new, healthy, addiction-free life.

Armed with this new information about what the bag represented, I quickly agreed with my daughter that it should NOT accompany her to the sober living house. However, it wasn't until months later, when I was struck by those aforementioned words, that I went home and retrieved the bag from the back of my closet where I had surreptitiously hidden it. (It really was quite stylish and chic!) I realized that all those months back I knew enough to agree to let my daughter leave the bag behind, but I hadn't yet fully embraced the entire message of FA. The part about allowing others to make their own decisions was finally sinking in. I think that I hid the bag because

I secretly entertained the idea that someday, when my daughter was stronger in her program, she would come around to my way of thinking and be able to see the bag for what it was----a perfectly lovely, useful, expensive, and stylish suitcase!

Equipped with new understanding, I now knew that the bag really had to go, no matter how nice it was. I opened the offensive satchel to clear it of its contents and realized that, scattered among the random lotions and mismatched socks, there was also the "rig" that my daughter had used to shoot heroin. It suddenly hit me that my child might have lost not only her sobriety but her life had she listened to me instead of her own Higher Power that day. I said a silent prayer of thanks to my Higher Power and vowed to truly embrace FA and its teachings.

A good friend of mine once told me, "Your daughter has a Higher Power but you are NOT it." FA has taught me that it is enough to take care of my own side of the street and that trying to control others is harmful and unnecessary. I see now that those previous years I spent trying to control my daughter were both intrusive and dangerous. My "I know what is best for you" attitude put my daughter at risk for relapse or worse.

Through much prayer, reflection, and self-examination, I now understand that this is not the only situation in which I had tried to control the people, places, things, and events in my life. Today, I see the futility in this and I am thankful for FA for giving me the ability to see that the only thing I have control over is myself and my own attitudes and for that I am forever grateful.

Madilyn G/Michigan



YOUR STORY HERE

Without YOU we don't have a newsletter. We need to hear from you. Please send your poems, art, musings, questions, stories, bios or group history.

12steprag@FamiliesAnonymous.org

*Your story
matters -
tell it.*



Welcome to the
FA Fellowship,
Group 2082,
Louisville, KY
and
Group 2083,
Washington, PA

Despite all the
things that happen
outside our control,
our responses
still mean that we
can author
our own lives.

Jon Kabat-Zinn, PHD



FA Friends and Family!

You Are Invited to The 2018 FA Convention!!

The Families Anonymous Groups in South Jersey and Philadelphia take great pleasure in inviting you to experience the upcoming 2018 Families Anonymous Convention this June in Mt. Laurel, New Jersey!

Where to Find the Convention!

- The Westin Mount Laurel located at 555 Fellowship Road, Mount Laurel, NJ 08054

Save the dates!

- **June 8th to June 10th for the 2018 FA Convention in Mt. Laurel, New Jersey**
- **June 6th to June 11th for additional Convention Room Rate** nights allowing you to explore the many historical sites in the Philadelphia area where the Constitution, American Flag, Liberty Bell and other historical locations rooted our freedoms. Experience newer Philly tradition favorites like Philly Cheese steaks and recovery empowerment with a run up the Art Museum steps aka Rocky Balboa. The Ben Franklin and Betsy Ross Bridges to Philadelphia are only 15 minutes away.

Book your rooms in advance at <https://www.starwoodmeeting.com/Book/FamiliesAnonymous>

Our committees are working very diligently to make your weekend be one of recovery and fellowship. We are lucky to have two published authors, Diana Clark and Krissy Pozatek, who work in the field of family recovery. We are excited and grateful to be able to listen, learn and meet them! There will also be uplifting moments of music and humor at the Saturday evening banquet.

Watch for additional information and specific details for reservations and registration on the 2018 Convention Web Site which is under construction and coming soon!

Memorial Donations

In loving memory of
our beloved son,
Michael Alexander
by
Kathleen F 
Group 279
West Babylon, NY



Remembering Dick G Rag Editor 2000-2010

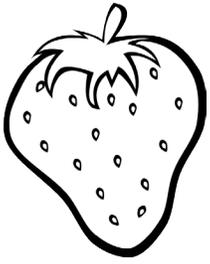
Richard "Dick" G., a long-time member of Families Anonymous and editor of, The Twelve Step Rag, from July 2000 to February 2010, passed away on December 1st at the age of 83.

Dick was going through chemotherapy in a second occurrence of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. His wife Vesta Joyce (also a long-time FA member) passed away 10 years earlier from pancreatic cancer.

He will always be remembered for his fellowship and his service to the Families Anonymous community.

Rest in Peace.

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.

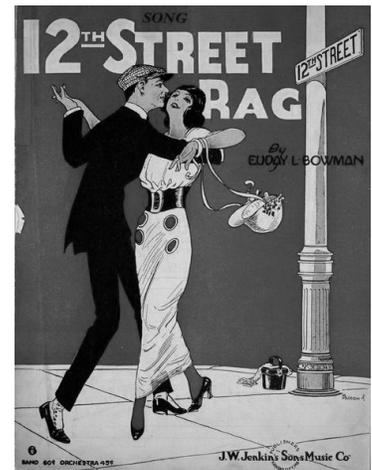
The tigers behind and below represent the past and the future, and the mouse is time. If our focus is on these things we will never be at peace. Stop spending time thinking about what your life used to be or what your life could be - it will keep you stuck. Reach out and seize the moment.

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.

Twelfth Street Rag

Created / Published
Euday L. Bowman, 1915.

Did you know the inspiration for the name of the Families Anonymous newsletter, The Twelve Step Rag, came from a popular ragtime song called, Twelfth Street Rag? It's a wonderful piece of music you are probably already familiar with. Look for a sample online. It will put a smile on your face and have you tapping your toes.



Today A Better Way
January 4th

Serenity

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.

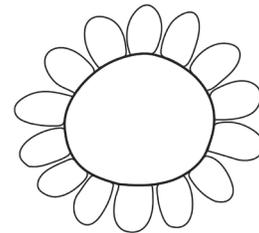
TODAY I WILL work to replace anxiety and fear with gratitude and serenity.

Easy Does It

Keep It Simple

One Day at a Time

Let Go, Let God



happiness
counts



FAMILIES ANONYMOUS WORLD SERVICE

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