

## **WEEKLY MEETINGS WITHOUT WALLS**

Welcome to Families Anonymous Meetings Without Walls. We welcome any visitors or newcomers. We are glad you've joined us. We also welcome those who have been with us a while. Now let's have a moment of silence.

### **Prayer To A Higher Power**

*Thank you for this family of friends, and for the spirit in which their help is given and received. Teach us to see things as they are, not as we would like them to be. And through that truth to help ourselves and those we love achieve the peace and serenity we seek.*

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Are there any announcements this week?

Families Anonymous is primarily for those who have known a feeling of desperation concerning the destructive behavior of someone very near to them, whether caused by drugs, alcohol, or related behavioral problems. When you come to this meeting you are no longer alone, but among friends who have experienced similar problems. We will respect your confidence and anonymity, as we know you will respect ours.

***WHAT YOU SEE HERE -- WHAT YOU HEAR HERE,  
WHEN YOU LEAVE HERE -- LET IT STAY HERE.***

Usually the longer we continue to struggle alone the more our thinking becomes confused. We have found that working our Twelve Steps enables us to live comfortably -- in spite of unsolved problems -- and often removes obstacles to the recovery of those who brought us to this program.

Here we begin to understand that to be of real help to others, we must first be willing to be helped ourselves. We only ask for the wisdom to see ourselves as we really are; for the courage to do something about our own lives, with the help of a Power greater than ourselves as we understand this concept; and for the grace to release with love those we are concerned about and cease trying to change them.

We believe we are dealing with a family illness that can be treated by a change of attitudes. We try to study our literature with an open mind, attend as many meetings as possible and exchange phone numbers with other members for help between meetings.

Families Anonymous has basic readings that form the foundation of our Twelve-Step program. They are read by different members at every meeting to remind us of the message they carry. Will someone please volunteer to read .....

## **READING 1.                      ABOUT DRUG ABUSE**

Not everyone who comes into this program is concerned about the use of drugs. However, in today's world, all of us need to confront this issue. Also, those with an emotional problem often turn to drugs in search of a solution to their problems.

We have learned that drug abuse, drug dependence, or addiction, is a matter of illness, not a moral issue. For the purposes of this program the label is not important.

Dependence on drugs can be psychological, or physical -- or both. The compulsive use of drugs or alcohol does not indicate a lack of affection for the family. Even when they KNOW what will happen when they take that first pill, drink, or fix, drug dependent persons may still do so. This is the "insanity" we speak of in regard to this illness.

Using drugs as a means of escaping reality is a symptom of emotional problems. However, little emotional growth is likely to take place until the individual stops using chemicals to try to solve his or her problems of living. Switching from one mind-altering substance to any other, including alcohol, is only likely to prolong the illness, not arrest the problem.

There is nothing that we as individuals can do to prevent another person's abuse of drugs, but we have learned there is much we can do to avoid **STANDING IN THE WAY** of his or her recovery. We have found that the most constructive approach is to deal with our own reactions and to learn new ways of coping with our problems. *When we accept drug dependence as an illness and understand there is something we can do to help both ourselves and the situation, we become ready to learn a better way to live.*

## READING 2.

## FOUR DESTRUCTIVE FORCES

To enable our meetings to be truly constructive, it is necessary to recognize and repress four destructive forces that can cause dissension and eventually destroy the group.

**The first destructive force** is the discussion of any religion. Our program is open to all, regardless of our various beliefs, or lack of belief. Each member's understanding of a Higher Power is strictly a personal, private choice.

**The second destructive force is gossip.** We are here to share OUR feelings, attitudes, and reactions to our situation -- to help us in applying the principles of Families Anonymous to our own lives. Careless discussion of other people's personal difficulties is contrary to the principles of our program. What we say here -- stays here!

**The third destructive force is dominance.** FA is based on suggestion, interchange of experience, and rotation of leaders. No member should direct, assume authority, or give advice. Our leaders are chosen, not to govern, but to serve.

**The fourth destructive force is dwelling on the past.** Harboring painful thoughts and speaking endlessly about hurtful times with our loved ones block our recovery. Besides being detrimental to our personal progress, continuous behavior of this type within the meeting, week after week, is destructive to the group's progress and unity. Such behavior can lead us back to the Third Destructive Force, which is dominance.

Instead, we let go of the past by listening to other members, reading our FA literature, and learning new ways to change our actions and attitudes, thereby improving our lives.

## READING 3.

## THE TWELVE STEPS

We have found that our success in this program is determined by how well we accept and apply the following suggested Steps:

1. We admitted we were powerless over drugs and other people's lives - - that OUR lives had become unmanageable.

2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, AS WE UNDERSTOOD HIM.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to others and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

#### **READING 4. THE TWELVE TRADITIONS**

We keep what we have only with vigilance. Our group experience suggests that the unity of Families Anonymous depends upon our adherence to these Traditions:

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal progress for the greatest number depends on unity.

2. For our group purpose there is but one authority -- a loving God, as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. Individuals concerned with another's abuse of drugs or related problems of living, when gathered together for mutual aid, may call themselves a Families Anonymous group provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation. The only requirement for membership is a concern about the use of mind-altering substances or related behavioral problems of a relative or friend.
4. Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups of FA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose: to help those concerned with someone who may have a problem of drug abuse or dependence. We do this by practicing the Twelve Steps of this program, by encouraging and understanding those affected by this illness, and by welcoming and giving comfort to the families and friends of individuals with a current, suspected, or former drug problem.
6. Our family groups ought never endorse, finance, or lend our name to any outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Families Anonymous Twelfth Step work should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. Our groups, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Families Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence our name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, TV, and any other public or private media. We need

guard with special care the anonymity of our members, as well as those of other recovery programs.

12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles above personalities.

## **READING 5.                    HELPING**

*My role as helper is not to DO things for the person I am trying to help, but to BE things; not to try to control and change their actions, but through understanding and awareness, to change my reactions. **I will change my negatives to positives; fear to faith; contempt for what they do to respect for the potential within them; hostility to understanding; and manipulation or over-protectiveness to release with love, not trying to make them fit a standard or image, but giving them an opportunity to pursue their own destiny, regardless of what that choice may be.***

*I will change my dominance to encouragement; panic to serenity; the inertia of despair to the energy of my own personal growth; and self-justification to self-understanding.*

**Self-pity blocks effective action.** The more I indulge in it, the more I feel that the answer to my problems is a change in others and in society, not in myself. Thus, I become a hopeless case.

*Exhaustion is the result when I use my energy in mulling over the past with regret, or in trying to figure ways to escape a future that has yet to arrive. Projecting an image of the future -- and anxiously hovering over it for fear that it will or it won't come true -- uses all of my energy and leaves me unable to live today. Yet living today is the only way to have a life.*

I will have no thought for the future actions of others, neither expecting them to be better or worse as time goes on, for in such expectations I am really trying to create or control. I will love and let be.

*All people are always changing. IF I try to judge them I do so only on what I THINK I know of them, failing to realize that there is much I do not know. I will give others credit for attempts at progress and for having had many victories which are unknown to me.*

I, too, am always changing, and I can make that change a constructive one, if I am willing. **I CAN CHANGE MYSELF. Others I can only love.**

## **PRACTICING THE PROGRAM**

It is helpful to call someone during a crisis, or when you just need to hear the friendly voice of someone who cares and understands you. We provide our meeting phone list for this purpose.

Any piece of FA literature, such as a bookmark, Step, Tradition or a reading from **Today A Better Way/TABW**, make excellent topics for discussion. Different members lead our meetings; we encourage everyone to take a turn. It is empowering to lead a meeting no matter how long you have been attending FA.

We encourage everyone to feel free to enter into the discussions, share their Experience, Strength and Hope, and ask questions about the program. For this meeting, if you are using **Ventrilo computer software**, **please use your mouse and click on the Comment button, right side of the Ventrilo screen. Type an exclamation point and hit return to raise your hand. Now the leader will know you would like to speak. When finished speaking, open up the Comment window and delete the exclamation point.** If you are using the **Ventastic app**, toggle your microphone on and off a couple of times to be recognized to speak.

We also understand that there are times when our members prefer not to read.

Anything you hear in our meeting is strictly the speaker's own opinion. If a member says something that you cannot accept, remember that he or she is merely speaking from his or her own experience -- and not for Families Anonymous.

Now the leader will qualify by sharing:

**What Was I Like before FA?  
What happened?  
What am I like now?**

**Read and discuss topic. Each member limits the amount of time for sharing to 2-3 minutes, so each member may speak.**

We have reserved the last few minutes for newcomer sharing. Do you have any questions or wish to share?

Is there anyone else who would like to share? Any pressing problems?

**To our newcomers:** You have shown courage by joining this meeting. In addition to our Meetings Without Walls, there are great benefits to attending face-to-face (f2f) meetings. We encourage you to find and attend FA meetings in person. You can find a list of meetings on our website at [www.familiesanonymous.org](http://www.familiesanonymous.org).

## **PASSING THE BASKET**

The principles of Families Anonymous are found in our Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. Our Seventh Tradition states that each group should be fully self-supporting. While no dues or fees are required for membership, our voluntary contributions are used to pay for the online hosting of our meetings, as well as allowing us to carry the message of our program to others through the continued support of the FA World Service Office.

### **Making a donation:**

It is optional to identify the group. Our group numbers are 1789 (Sunday) and 1813 (Tuesday and Thursday).

### **Checks by mail, or you can set this up in your online bill pay:**

Payable to Families Anonymous and sent to

Families Anonymous, 701 Lee Street, Suite 670, Des Plaines, IL 60016-4508  
US Phone # 800-736-9805 / International Phone # 847-294-5877

**FA Website:** Click on DONATE and follow the instructions.

## **CLOSING**

The very essence of our program is that everything is merely suggested. Our progress can be made in our own time and in our own way. As this is an anonymous program we ask all members and visitors to respect our anonymity. The stories you hear are told in confidence and should not be repeated outside. They are told so that we might better understand this program and ourselves, and to give encouragement to new members. Thank you all for participating. It is our sharing that makes this program meaningful and helpful.

Take with you those thoughts that will be most helpful to you and forget those you cannot accept. And now for those who care to, please join me in saying the **Serenity Prayer**

*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.*

Keep coming back, it works if you work it, it won't if you don't,  
so work it -- YOU'RE WORTH IT!