

Hello, Higher Power Speaking.



District 14 Al-Anon Newsletter #9

Nov, 2008

Here are your stories. Here is our experience, strength and hope.

No Matter What

I drove to the grocery store yesterday afternoon. I had been there for less than two minutes when I started to cry. I have never cried in a public place in my life, but I tried not to stop. I've been hoping I could somehow reach that place inside ever since I started Al-Anon 15 months ago. You can't think your way there; it just has to happen.

The trigger was one sentence that I remembered someone having said in a meeting several months ago. She was talking about parenting. At one point, years ago, she realized that she was not being a good mother because she had been focusing too much on herself and not enough on her children. She was afraid that they were starting to feel they were being abandoned. So on this one day, she sat her young daughter down and talked with her. What she said included eight words: "I will never leave you no matter what."

And now I was crying in the store because it suddenly hit me like a hammer that, if my mother had said "I will never leave you no matter what," and then acted out the meaning of these words – if she had done that for ten-year-old me, my life would have been completely different. I probably wouldn't be in Al-Anon today because I wouldn't need to be here. She never said those words, and I am in Al-Anon because, sixty years later, that frightened ten-year-old is still inside, still waiting to hear "I will never leave you no matter what."

Eight words – I counted them. And it's never going to happen the way he wants it. But the seventy-year-old me can take care of him and will take care of him. I'm at the market right now buying groceries for both of us. But I need to get that message across to him, and I don't know how to do that so he'll hear it. And that's why I'm in this program.

There's a reason why this issue is having such an impact on me now. I left my marriage nearly two years ago. I want to find a new serious relationship, but I have to watch myself carefully because the ten-year-old inside wants to grab onto a new friend with both hands and make her say, "I will never leave you no matter what", which is exactly the kind of behavior that will make her leave me no matter what. I'd do the same thing if she said

that to me. I don't want her to take care of me, but the ten-year-old does, and he will take over if I give him the chance.

I know this from experience. I have ruined relationships in the past because of this character defect. I'm a textbook ACA example: I start to feel close to someone and the child inside pushes me aside and tries to own her, but I have never understood until today why he wants to do this. Now I can do something about it because I know who to talk to.

I'm sure it's not just me who has this problem. I've got lots of company. There are probably millions of ten-year-olds out there, living inside seventy-year-old bodies, trying to get their women to take care of them no matter what.

~ Michael L.

An Arithmetic of Recovery

I have found there is an arithmetic of recovery. It is in the statistics of the doctor explaining that the third day of detox is the most dangerous. It's in the words of the counselor telling your family the hard facts of boundaries and detachment. It's in the formula of the psychologist asking, "How will you take care of yourself if there is a relapse?"

When I came to recovery, I had spent so long stacking up the facts, without examination, like so many unpaid bills. Wishful thinking was my abacus: "When my loved-one finally gets it together, we can get our life back to normal". You could see on my face the calculations in my head when I was confronted with the professional figures. Like my elementary school teachers, they had heard all of the stories and excuses. I came to see there was no escaping this education, and I was not happy about it.

When I first came to Al-Anon, I expected to be examined and challenged by another room full of experts. One thing I did not know was the format of the meetings: sharing of each person's experience, strength, and hope – without crosstalk, gossip or criticism. Along with other peculiarities of this "peer-group therapy", I did not expect to hear your first-person tragedies and successes, comedies and cliff-hangers. Juxtaposed with the professional advice, a puzzle presented itself to me in these families

and friends of alcoholics. Like those math class “word problems”, I could not yet see the tracks of recovery that others had taken, but I came to believe if I worked my program, I could reckon “How many hours it would take to get to Philadelphia”!

Over these years, I have found great support in common experiences and emotions that we have shared through our journeys of recovery. I have continued to be analyzed, confronted and guided by health care professionals, and I now see professional health care and Al-Anon Family Groups as complementary in effect. I appreciate and respect the experience and facts that professional care offers, but it is always through the heart and spirit of others in recovery that I have found the greatest answers. Through you, I have come to see that there is also a poetry of recovery.

May we find happiness and the root of happiness.

~ **Kent S.**

Forgiveness

Sometimes I hear another person share their story and I receive the gift of clarity. Recently, as a member talked about a painful upbringing and how, for her, the safest place in her alcoholic family was under the bed pressed against the wall, I noticed what her story and mine had in common.

I've often wondered why I stayed married to an alcoholic for so many years. Year after year, why did I accept unacceptable behavior? What was wrong with me that I couldn't take care of myself in fundamental ways? Why

did my actions show so little self-care and self-love? Why was my self-esteem so low? Why did I always look to others to make me okay? Wasn't this just more evidence of how screwed up I was?

The speaker reminded me that I, too, came out of my childhood not having had enough nurturing. Just as the alcoholic doesn't choose alcoholism, I didn't choose my childhood. I am powerless over the home I grew up in. In my twenties, I was looking for a partner to be a substitute parent. My childhood set me up perfectly for a co-dependent relationship with an alcoholic. When I did marry, my husband was quite a bit older and he felt more like a Dad than an equal partner. What a burden for him. I now know our marriage was doomed from the start.

The speaker ended with this question: What have you learned in Al-Anon? She said her life restarted in a healthy direction when she became a 12-Stepper. Reflecting on the common threads of our stories, I realized why I preferred a co-dependent relationship with an alcoholic. With this clarity, I can forgive myself and show myself compassion, even begin to appreciate my “screwed-up-ness” because it shows me where I need to focus my recovery.

Like the speaker, I restarted my life as a strong happy adult woman when I embraced the spiritual path of recovering from the effects of alcoholism four years ago in Al-Anon. Forgiving is not forgetting; forgiving is remembering where I came from and, with the help of my Higher Power, letting go.

~ **Kim S.**

Ongoing Calendar Events for 2008

District 14 Speaker Meeting. 4th Saturday, 6:30–9PM., Al-Anon, Alateen and AA Speakers. Refreshments, Birthday Chips & Literature Sales. Walnut Creek Kaiser, Medical Office Building, 1515 Newell, 3rd Floor Oak Conference Room. Contact: Maureen 925–212–4621.

District 6 Birthday-Speaker Meeting. Last Friday, 7:00 – 8:15 PM Kaiser Hospital (3rd floor Rooms C & D) Vaca Valley Parkway, Vacaville. Contact: Carl S. 707–631–9171 or carlsillva@comcast.net

District 12 Speaker Meeting. 2nd Sunday, 7:00 PM. Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church. Diamond Heights @ Addison, San Francisco. Contact: Tom K. 415–759–7404.

District 15 Fellowship Event. Last Saturday, 6:30 to 9:30 PM. Pot Luck and Speaker Meeting. AA, Alateen and Al-Anon Speakers. Broadmoor Community Church, 301 Dowling Blvd., San Leandro. Contact: Terry vE. 510-276–2302.

District 16 Speaker Meeting. 2nd Saturday, 8:00 PM St. Clare's Episcopal Church, 3350 Hopyard Rd, Pleasanton. Contact Suzzane: suelovinglife@yahoo.com

District 17 Birthday Speaker Meeting. 3rd Saturday, 5:30 PM Cedar Blvd Neighborhood Church 38325 Cedar Blvd, Fellowship Hall downstairs, Newark. Contact: Jenn H. jennhutchin@comcast.net

One-Time Calendar Events for 2008

Check web site for a complete listing: http://www.ncwsa.org/cal-2007_Events.html

District 16 Alateen Masquerade Ball with Pre-Teen participation. A joint fundraiser to benefit district's outreach activities supporting Alateen events/scholarships. November 1, 2008, 3:30–9:30 PM Trinity Lutheran Church, 1225 Hopyard Road, Pleasanton. Please join us for some ghoulish games, freaky fun, and frightening food! Costume parade, cakewalk, potluck dinner, raffle drawing, silent auction, dancing and more! Contact: Vicki M. 925/786–5166. Jeff G. 925/846–8979. Jen A. 925/525–8900 http://www.ncwsa.org/Flyers/Event_20081101_GTW_Masque.pdf

NoCAC 2008 Alateen Convention. November 14–16. Concord Hilton Hotel, 1970 Diamond Blvd, Concord. Alateens 12 and over. This weekend is a time for Alateens to meet new people and enjoy the program outside their own group. It is a weekend of love, new friendships, and growth. No Alateen should miss this

experience! Scholarships are available. See page 7 of the registration packet: http://www.ncwsa.org/Flyers/Event_20081114_NoCAC_Pkg.pdf NoCAC abides by the NCWSA Requirements for Alateen Member Safety

Yosemite Summit Conference

AA with Al-Anon participation. November 21–23, 2008. Curry Village, Yosemite National Park Contact: 209/966–8300 or ysc@sti.net <http://www.serenityyosemite.com>

NCWSC Committee Meeting

Feb 6–7, 2009. Courtyard Marriott, 175 Railroad Street, Santa Rosa. 800/321–2211 or 707/573–9000. Use code “NCWNCWA” for double doubles or “NCWNCWB” for king beds. \$99 per room plus 11% room tax thru 1/6/2009

Please tell us your stories. When we get enough, we'll put out another newsletter. So get crackin'.

Direct any comments, questions, requests for the submission guidelines or excess serenity to: district14newsletter@yahoo.com

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