

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

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NUMBER 1

A Dad's Take on the Four C's

My son has the brain disease of addiction and I have the brain disease of co-dependency. Families Anonymous offers me a path to manage my disease and possibly put my son in a better position to manage his disease.

The brain is the key to both diseases. In my son's case, it tricks him into believing the best thing he can do is feed the disease, regardless of the horrible side effects to himself and others. In my case, my brain seems to constantly want to worry about my son's disease, review past bad behaviors, worry about his future, and tell me there are ways I should be able to manage my son's disease.

FA has taught me to not always trust my brain, my first instinct, etc. For example, one of the shortcomings I have come to see in myself is that there were always only two ways to think about things – My way and the wrong way. Like when my wife and I go shopping. Well, the whole shopping thing shows that brains work differently, but what I am thinking about here is parking when going shopping. My wife never parks in the RIGHT spot, as far as I am concerned. Like when we come to FA meetings, my brain knows the optimal, best parking spot, but

my wife's brain decides there is a different, better spot. So, maybe my way is not always the right way.

When it comes to thinking, I've come to see that different people approach things in different ways. I tend to think mathematically. If A then B. If you take the right steps, the problem gets solved. So this story is sort of My Flowchart to Serenity, or FA 101, or how I take the slogans and teachings of FA and reach a level of serenity.

For me, the initial and most important step I took towards serenity, was hearing and learning the three (or four) C's slogan. I had to accept that my life was unmanageable. With the help of FA and the fellowship in FA meetings, I learned to believe the three C's of addiction: I didn't Cause it, I can't Cure it, and I can't Control it. And I work daily not to be guilty of the fourth C- not Contributing to it. This helped lessen my overwhelming guilt for not being able to keep my child safe.

So following my flowchart to Serenity, How do I work my brain to understand I did not cause it, I can't cure it, I can't control and cannot contribute to it:

Thinking that I may have caused it is sort of self-pitying. Since I accept that addiction is a disease, thinking that I caused it is as logical as thinking I can cause a heart attack, although the way my wife reacts to my driving can lead me to wonder. There are many "what-ifs" I can ponder as to whether I could have caused a change in history by doing things differently in the past, but A) I have to believe my Higher Power has more influence over the "master plan" than I do and B) it is a waste of my time and energy to rehash the past.

There are two or three slogans that help me when I think about whether I was THE CAUSE of the addiction:

Q-TIP = quit taking it personally

Let the anger go and peace will flow – here I make an important distinction. I separate addiction from my son. I remain angry at addiction. When the disease has control of my son, I am not really dealing with my son, but with addiction, and I hate addiction but love my son. We do the best we can.

As a final thought about the CAUSE C – We did not cause, let me share a quote from one of the members of the online FA group that I read:

(Continued on page 3)

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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

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.

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
RagEditor12@gmail.com*

Emeeting:
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&

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A Dad's Take on the Four C's

(Continued from page 1)

"I pray that you and all parents of addicted children will understand that there is absolutely nothing you need to feel bad about. Nothing! FA taught me to forgive myself. I was the very best parent my child could have considering the difficulties that addiction brings to the family. Who could possibly prepare for such a nefarious and destructive brain disease? We, as parents, are defenseless, especially in the early stages. Our program teaches us to let go of the blame and shame. We are not guilty! Also, even if we could go back and make better choices etc., addiction would simply change its plan of action. We would be defenseless once again."

So part two, the second C – I can't CURE it. This is where we all spend our energy and finances and emotional sanity early in the process; being the parent of a child with a brain disease and solving that problem. I remember when we dropped our son off for his first 30-day rehab feeling the relief of believing that in 30 days I'd have my old pal back, all fixed. The disease of addiction can be managed by the patient, but cannot be cured

But can I cure MY disease of co-dependency? No I can't. I'm not like the parent eagle that raises the baby until it can fly and then lets it go. We, as humans, cannot just push our children out the front door and say good luck. Even when they are half a country away, we feel the pain when their car breaks down and still get the momentary twinge of fear when our phone rings we and see their name on the Caller ID.

But I can learn to manage my co-dependency so that I am more serene and so that my disease does not get in the way of my son's progress.

Several slogans help me with this: "Sick and tired of being sick and tired." "Pain is inevitable, Suffering is optional." "Don't do for your child what he can and should do for himself." "The addict will stay addicted until the pain of staying the same is more than the pain of changing."

The third C is CONTROL. This one became easier to adopt after years of trying to control. It became very clear that I could not control my son when he was using, and I could not control my son when he was sober. Neither of those versions of my son wanted to be controlled, and both versions were better off making their own decisions and learning from them.

As I have read in FA literature: 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.

The fourth and final C is CONTRIBUTE. I have learned not to contribute to my son's disease. This was not an easy step on my Flowchart to Serenity because the addict can be cunning and persuasive when they need something. I've made many mistakes contributing to my son's disease. The classic one

was when I believed he needed \$70 dollars to retrieve his tennis racket from a pawn shop so he could play tennis with his brothers if they ever visited him in recovery. I think I knew I was making a mistake as I drove to the pharmacy to transfer the money with a promise from my son that he would text me a picture of the retrieved racket. I am still waiting. But he tugged on my heartstrings just enough to get one more contribution to his disease.

The problem and danger with Contributing was drummed into my brain when one of the FA online parents said it was hard to not give their son money fearing he would end up on the street. Another parent responded saying: "Anything you do to make it easier for your son to keep using drugs is contributing to his demise."

The last slogan for this writing would be: You help the most when you help the least.

That was my attempt to show how a left brained computer geek steps through the FA readings and slogans to approach serenity. If you are a right brained thinker like my wife, I lost you 20 minutes ago. So as we say in the readings, the author, me, is speaking for himself and sharing his ideas. Take what you like and what works for you, and ignore any ramblings that don't work for you. Thanks for listening.

Bud
Harrison, NY
Ft. Myers, FL
E-meeting Group



Nature and My Recovery

Gradually, NO thanks to addiction, our son disconnected from a family who adored him. Addiction also diverted his natural and incredible talents (physical & academic). Years later, I can gratefully say that addiction did not remove his kind and charming spirit; although, in the worst of times when that was inviting to other addicts – I found myself wishing he was more miserable. I was miserable 100% of the time – shouldn't he be "too"?

In those worst of times, I tried to stay connected as best I could. It was difficult to do that, because he'd go "off radar" for months at a time. Once a year, I paid him a visit – which meant a 3,000 mile plane ride and a four-hour rental car ride over a mountain butte. One year, I made my plans despite no response from him; I wasn't sure we'd even connect. At that time, I was also sole guardian of my aged mom. Just after I arrived, I got word of an emergency with her, and thought I'd have to return immediately. Emergency diverted, I stayed. I was granted five hours with my son, who was not in great shape (physically or spiritually). And from there? — What to do with the next three days I had carved into my plan? I felt so alone. I took my tattered soul on a vacation in that beautiful state on the Pacific Ocean.

Nature was definitely my balm, beginning at a field of lavender, and then at a beautiful deep blue mountain lake formed by a now-collapsed volcano. That serenity was disturbed by the roar of motorcycles with burly drivers, but I was too serene to be afraid that I was alone. Instead, I asked them to take my picture. I ventured back to the coastal road, and marveled at the diversity of terrain in the miles from dunes to cliffs. I will never forget sitting high above the sound of ocean waves, watching the birds at work in the thermal drafts thinking how "free" they appeared. And then the best entertainment that I might not have thought to pray for: I sat for hours, watching otters at play in the ocean. And laughed. That sound had become foreign to my own ears. There is no explaining an otter's chaotic/OCD shenanigans, juxtaposed by their loving cuddles! So much like my addicted loved one!!

A feeling came over me on that trip – where I was one small speck in a huge universe of creation: that I'd be ok. No matter what.

JoAnne M

On particularly rough days when I'm sure I can't possibly endure, I like to remind myself that my track record for getting through rough days so far is 100%.....and that's darn good!!

Judy

FA LITERATURE SPOTLIGHT

Tough Love - For Whom? A Message About Change

TOUGH LOVE - Just what is this concept and what does it mean?

To whom should this tough love be directed?

These are just a couple of questions that surround a concept that may be new to you. If you are not sure what it really means, that is not a problem. This valuable booklet will help you understand the idea of tough love and to whom it should be directed.

The basic lesson underlying tough love is a message about change; tough love is for YOU, for your benefit! It means that you are able to love enough to say "No" during the situations listed below that involve our substance abusers.

- * Making decisions for them
- * Rescuing them from scrapes
- * Helping out financially

Can this be a painful experience for us? Absolutely! It can create anxiety for us, since the outcome is unknown. Listening to other members at meetings, you will hear stories about practicing tough love and their victories. However, there aren't any guarantees this process will bring about the desired recovery of your substance abuser. But at the same time, consider whether your current approach is netting the results that you desire. If not, think about taking this tough love approach and refrain from doing the "same-old, same-old" --- expecting different results. Many FA members have reported using the principles of the program explained in this booklet, and it has made a positive difference in their lives. Learning about tough love, can allow you to decide for yourselves how this path can work for you.

(#1029) Tough Love - For Whom? A Message of Change - \$1.50

Grief: The Little Known Benefit to Recovery

TABW Reading
Reflection

January 18, 2017

An unknown number is displayed on my cell phone. My son has been missing for several weeks. I must answer it! "Dad, I missed my court date in Cleveland County, they have issued a warrant, but if you will help me with the fines I believe the judge will release me....." I immediately sense grief's return. For over a decade I fought grief. I kept it as a distant thought but it always found its way back to me. I was told by my counselor that grief is one of our most common experiences in life. Why did my grief keep returning? What is it that it needed to tell me? I was scared; I did not want to face grief. I feared grief was sent to tell me I had lost my son forever. I am not ready to grieve his loss. I turned away from grief time and time again. Eventually, the FA program and my sponsor allowed me to feel safe in opening the door slightly to grief's message. I peeked through the small opening and allowed grief's light to slowly penetrate my darkness. I responded to grief in the only way I knew. I said, "I am not ready now to face you fully."

The years went by and as my recovery grew I allowed more time with grief. Surprisingly, grief became my friend and we began to work my recovery together. Grief took my loss of dreams and gave me back hope which created the life of new dreams built on the truth of recovery and not on my denial. In fully grieving the loss of the child of my dreams, I became a new person; one who was now playing a positive and appropriate role in my own recovery as well as my son's recovery journey. As stated in the FA pamphlet, Through Grief to Growth...The FA way (#1027), "Sorrow that is 'stuffed' or ignored becomes grief that is termed unresolved grief, and it will take an emotional and physical toll on the one who grieves."

FA has given me new dreams, beautiful recovery dreams. Dreams that are molded to my new recovery journey.

The User's Parent / Group 1806

I used to wait all the time for the other shoe to drop. So much so that I even wrote a story about it. It was about a princess who was cursed with shoes falling on her out of the blue, at inopportune times, creating havoc.

She tried everything to protect herself from the shoes but nothing worked. Finally, she built a concrete bunker and holed herself up. And while she could hear the shoes hitting the door, none of them could get in to her.

However, she had cut herself off from everything she loved, just to avoid the shoes. In the end, she decided she would rather live her life among the falling shoes than exist without living at all, so she came out and lived, embracing the falling shoes as part of her life. Accepting them broke the curse, and she was free of her fear. Most of the story is in my head - not on paper. But I would like to finish it someday. Maybe the end would be that she met her FAiry Godsponsor. Sue

TO BELIEVE OR NOT TO BELIEVE? Today A Better Way - January 18th

Do I constantly watch and wait to catch my addicted loved one using drugs, or do I turn a blind eye to those things I'd rather not see? Do I pry into her personal effects, hunting for proof, or do I ignore the obvious? Do I believe everything she tells me, or do I refuse to believe a word she says? Which attitude leaves me with greater self-respect?

Whether using or abstaining, the addict needs my trust, compassion, and understanding. Above all, she needs the dignity to make choices and to experience the consequences of her decisions. When her choices are damaging, she will grow by learning from her mistakes. When they are wise, she will experience many rewards.

If I must face up to something unpleasant, I will try to do so honestly, then let it go. Until then, my own life will be more serene if I have faith and detach instead of searching for the lie.

TODAY I WILL choose to believe the best of others, in so far as circumstances will allow.

A Recovery Journey

Hiking in the mountains---looks are so deceiving---such that when you think you've hit the top---no, there is still more--and more switchbacks and then you think you've reached the peak and yet you are only half way there! That is so frustrating to me, especially when I am tired and want to quit the hike. But by pushing on I see even greater beauty and perseverance feels good. Yet, it is very disappointing and discouraging to work so hard. Many mountain ranges have many peaks and valleys. Once we hit the peak of one mountain, we see there are so many more. What I am learning is to stop getting so mad when I can't see where I am going.

To TRUST that there is a path and I'm on the right one. I continue and persevere. I rest, drink some water, look around at all the beauty and then trudge on. Maybe I need to stop thinking that there is a certain special place that my journey ends and all is happily ever after. Rather, my path is going to be up, down, reversed and forward, hilly and rocky, and sometimes nice and smooth. It's not so important to see the peak; I must stop trying so hard. Instead, I can follow someone who has traveled this path before me and TRUST that I will be able to make it too. They are traveling the path of another, and so on. If I am focused on my HP's map/sponsor/group/FA map---I know I can't go wrong. I may go astray and HP will always guide me back to my path. And maybe the beauty of this journey is not the top or the peaks; maybe it is all the roads and paths between. Maybe I am not to reach a certain peak; rather I am to enjoy the many paths and to TRUST and ACCEPT that I can't always SEE the END of the journey; nor am I supposed to. Maybe ACCEPTANCE is the lesson---to let it go--and just keep hiking---kind of like letting go of expectations and control.

Peace, Cheryl

Honor Donation

In Honor of
past, present, and
future members
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Group 1735 has been in existence for 12 years. In keeping with the 7th tradition and 12th step they asked their members to make a dedicated donation to Families Anonymous.

The group started running an annual donation drive to raise funds for World Service Office in 2011.



Memorial Donations



In Memory of
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father of member Bill
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Group 0788
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In Memory of
Jean
mother of long time member
Judy
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Milford, CT



Crossroads to Recovery

2017 World Service Convention

June 2- 4, 2017
Doubletree by Hilton
Evansville, IN

Make plans to join us at the brand new DoubleTree by Hilton Convention Hotel, opening early 2017 in Evansville, Indiana, for RECOVERY, SERENITY, FUN and FELLOWSHIP!

The 2017 Families Anonymous Convention begins on Friday evening and concludes by noon on Sunday.

As we travel on the road to recovery, we encounter many road blocks and rest stops along the way. Our convention roadmap offers an educational, fun, insightful journey, with programs designed to challenge and foster personal growth, along with a connection to FA friends new and old.

For more information, or to download a registration form, please visit the convention website at www.faconvention.com or gmail the committee at 17faconvention@gmail.com.

When You Are Ready To Work It...

You have already taken an important step in healing yourself by attending an FA meeting. Here, you will begin to understand that you are not alone. Soon you will be ready to work your program to make your goal of serenity a reality. The fellowship and the program of FA provides many tools that can aid you in your recovery. Here are some ways to come closer to your goal of serenity.

Attend your FA meetings. Read and listen to the foundation readings. Learn from the topics and the experiences of your first-name friends. Share your thoughts and feel the compassion and empathy of the fellowship. Between meetings, call other members for help and support.

Read "Today A Better Way" daily, as part of your personal investment in your emotional health. In addition, during times of stress, many of us will "dive for the red book" as a way

of calming ourselves. Reading one or many entries has a way of restoring a healthier perspective as we deal with our addicted loved one.

Choose a sponsor. Soon you will be able to identify someone at your meeting whom you feel you can relate to; someone who projects a feeling of serenity. The booklet "Families Anonymous and Sponsorship" can offer you suggestions about how to choose and interact with a sponsor in a way that is most comfortable for both of you.

Work the steps. With the guidance of your sponsor you can begin the real work of healing yourself. The "Families Anonymous 12 Step Workbook" can help you find your answers and offer suggestions for ways to approach your step work.

The program works if you work it.
SO WORK IT. YOU'RE WORTH IT.

SUPPORT THE 2017 CONVENTION

SILENT AUCTION

Attendees will have the opportunity to bid on items donated to the Silent Auction. Themed gift baskets, collectibles, jewelry, and gift cards are popular auction items. Please send your donated items to

Carla B.

5621 Lincoln Pointe Blvd.

Evansville, IN 47715

You can wait to bring your items if you are planning to attend the convention.

PURCHASE AD SPACE IN THE CONVENTION PROGRAM BOOKLET

Add a note of gratitude, thanks, dedication, or a remembrance to be shared with all attendees. Special FA slogans or a poem may also be submitted. A minimum donation of \$25 is requested for program space. These submissions must be received no later than April 1, 2017, and should be mailed to the address listed below.

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Serenity

Today A Better Way
January 19th

Families Anonymous taught me there are two ways of looking at Step One. It is true that I am powerless over someone else's life. On the other hand, it is equally true that everyone else is powerless over mine.

For a time, the drug user in my life had complete control of our home and happiness. His actions left me feeling nervous, sleepless, angry, and afraid. I was reacting to unpleasant situations in ways I didn't like, and he capitalized on my weakness.

Families Anonymous helped me understand that others have such power over me only if I give it to them.

I keep coming to meetings to learn, Step by Step, how to regain control of my own life and stop giving away that control to others, no matter how much I love them.

TODAY I WILL claim my power to bring about my own serenity.

Serenity Reading Reflection

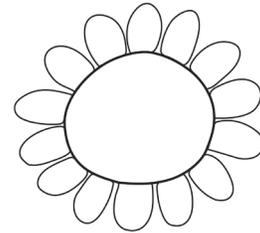
*I had given away
a part of myself.*

*It caused me to
no longer be whole.*

*It was a burden to
the one I gave it to.*

*I have reclaimed that
piece of my soul.*

D'Anna



happiness
counts



FAMILIES ANONYMOUS WORLD SERVICE

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