

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 XLIV

July-August 2015

NUMBER 4

THE USEFULNESS OF MY DEPRESSION

I began a treatment of antidepressants three months ago. I have faced hard situations in my life with strength, including my son's drug addition, until finally, in the spring, the depression that had been dormant for a long time exploded. All of a sudden I was conscience that this was an important experience and that it had arrived at this moment in my life because, without doubt, my Higher Power has his reasons.

Before the antidepressant medication started to suppress my most severe symptoms, in the worst moments, I experienced anxiety in all of my body, self-inflicted isolation, internal paralysis, negativity, and insecurity. My soul was broken with pain at the most minimal frustration or rudeness, thus provoking an aggressive reaction against the closest person at hand. I thought that dying and resting was my only consolation.

Each time I was living one of these emotions I would have a spontaneous memory with a concrete and sharp image (like a photograph or a frozen screen in a movie) of when my addicted son lived at home, relative to some situation in which he had shown this same attitude and negative behavior that until now, I

had considered exclusively typical in the personality of an addict.

I very quickly became aware that what was happening to me was that I was receiving information, lots of information, about my son.

When I saw these images I "knew," and was certain, that what I was feeling at that moment was the same thing I had been feeling in the past. About a month after this happened, I was completely convinced that underneath his drug addiction there was a very serious depression.

And thinking about the Fourth Step, I recognized that some of my attitudes and behaviors were just as negative as his.

When I started to get better, confirming that the treatment was good and was working, I felt that I had to communicate to my son what was happening and what I had discovered.

He lives on the peninsula and I on an island in the Mediterranean and now we only have a superficial relationship, lukewarm and intermittent, depending on whether or not he is relapsing, so I wrote him a short letter.

I wrote a loving letter in which I informed him about my depressive

crisis and what I had discovered about him, and how, in what can be considered a parallel situation, each of us had adopted a very different situation.

I told him that, as I see it, he went to a "dealer" to buy illegal drugs and took the dose that he felt like taking, knowing that this made him sicker and sicker.

I, on the other hand, went to a doctor, bought legal drugs at the pharmacy; I take the dose that is indicated, all with the intention of getting better and healing.

A few weeks later, in a brief cell phone message, he told me that after some sessions at the Attention Center for Drug Addicts (where he went for a monitoring analysis for his probation) he started a treatment for depression.

I think this is the first time that he has listened to my words, maybe because it is the first time that following the Fifth Step, I have spoken to him with profound humility, love and respect, recognizing my errors.

Alicia M, Spain group

(Translated by Rose Marie)

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FROM THE EDITOR

For the first time, we added a splash of color to the The Twelve Step Rag. Black and white images of the beautiful photos members shared in the "My New Life" column just didn't do them justice. Remember, if you are printing copies of the digital newsletter, you can select print in black and white to save on ink.

Please continue to send your submissions to the Rag by email to: RagEditor12@gmail.com, or fax them to 847-294-5837, or mail to Families Anonymous, Inc., 701 Lee St, Suite 670, Des Plaines, IL 60016-4508.

You can subscribe to the email list 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."

In Service,
Lisa W

Calling all members!



Please share what you do for yourselves to cope with and enjoy life.

Is it photography? Yoga?
Jewelry design? How about
animal refuge? Pottery?
Needle point? Writing?

Share what you do. How it has helped you. And be sure to send in photos of your work.

Submissions or questions

can be sent to:

RagEditor12@gmail.com

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

847-294-5877
800-736-9805 (USA only)
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*Your story
matters -
tell it.*

Topic Ideas

*Is there a topic
you would like to see
covered in the Rag?
Send your ideas to
RagEditor12@gmail.com*

"Families Anonymous is
for our success as we
let them go on with
their own journey"
~ Teresa W, Group 1681

Emeeting:
www.tabw.org



&

Meetings Without Walls:
<http://tabw2.fr.yuku.com>

Breathing Techniques That Help Reduce Stress

Recently my niece wrote to me sharing a statement from her young son. He said, "I can always get to sleep now since my great aunt told me how to think about good things and how to breathe the right way." Then he asked, "What was her name again?"

The main purpose of breathing is to maintain the ideal balance of carbon dioxide and oxygen in the body. Carbon dioxide is considered the body's "natural" tranquilizer.

When we breathe rapidly or deeply we can deplete the amount of carbon dioxide which will lead to imbalances in your system.

When we learn new breathing techniques it is good to gently ease into them. For the most part, it is important to learn how to exhale slowly. This conserves essential carbon dioxide stores. Prolonging the exhalation calms and sedates.

When teaching breathing techniques, I like to place one hand on the lower abdomen and one on the diaphragm. The lower abdomen should rise more than the chest during an inhalation.

Breathe in through your nose slowly and evenly. Pause for a second and let the air out slowly through your nose. L-e-n-g-t-h-e-n your exhalation as this helps to retain carbon dioxide. As you let the air out, let go! Relax your muscles especially the muscles of the face, jaw, shoulders, and abdomen.

Notice the natural pause at the end of an exhalation. Enjoy this moment of stillness. Your body will know when to inhale.

Repeat this about 5-10 breaths or anytime you feel anxious, stressed, or worried.

As you exhale become aware of tensions leaving the body; honor your breath as a gift from God. I like to think of in with the good and out with anything that is not necessary.

Pay attention to the movement of your breathing. Pay attention to the inhale, slight pause and the natural exhale. Your breathing will become shallower and slower. Stay with this breathing for 3-10 minutes, thinking of nothing else other than your breath.

You can use this breathing to develop a clear mind and a calm body. Once you become comfortable with these techniques you will be able to use them while listening to someone, in an elevator, during commercials, waiting on the phone, or even when stopped in traffic.

Proper breathing techniques can diffuse the effects of stress. It can provide you with a physical and mental break by focusing only on your breath and builds up a depleted supply of your "natural" tranquilizer.

Maggie B ~ E-meeting and Group 1683

Reprint from March-June 2010

Memorial Donations

In Loving Memory of
Ed H
active member
of Group 515
Lexington, KY



In Memory of
Lauren
daughter of Sue M
by
Group 746
Evans ville, IN



In Memory of
Charles R
son of Randy and Anne Moss R
by
Group 1096
Midlothian, VA



In Memory of
Pat D and Mary B
both long time members of
Group #177 and Group #848
by
Groups 177 and 848
Waukegan, IL

NEEDS

December 1st Reading
Today A Better Way

Today I need:

- * *God*, for strength.
- * *Others*, for guidance.
- * *Myself*, to do the work.

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

On Courage and Change

I slipped on a sweater before entering the attorney room. Whether it was January or July, the jail was always as cold as a meat locker. Cold kills germs, my daughter once told me. I remember wishing it could kill her addiction. A guard accompanied my daughter into the attorney room.

“No touching,” he warned us before leaving.

My daughter looked painfully pale in her green. I noticed track marks on her arms. She caught me looking and quickly pulled down her sleeves.

“How are you?” I asked.

“O.K. mom.”

“Did you make a decision yet?”

She nodded. My daughter had been offered Drug Court. If she rejected it, her case would remain under the jurisdiction of the criminal court and she’d likely be sentenced to a term of between three and five years for possession.

Her decision, to reject Drug Court, didn’t surprise me. Most addicts in New Jersey failed Drug Court and wound up back in jail or prison. In New Jersey, Drug Court is a five-year program but addicts can ask to be discharged sooner for good behavior. After a mandatory four to six month period of residential treatment, addicts progress through Drug Court in phases. Participants spend at least three months in phase one, six months in phase two, nine months in phase three, and so on, until they complete or graduate from Drug Court. Drug Court was still

voluntary when my daughter pled guilty. Addicts could choose to enroll in the program and receive treatment, or they could opt to keep their cases in criminal court. Most chose the latter.

Despite the fact that Drug Court is mandatory in almost all of New Jersey, given a choice, most addicts would reject it and not necessarily because they want to keep using. Drug Courts take a carrot and stick approach to addiction. Do the right thing, they say and we’ll give you treatment (the carrot), slip up or make a mistake, and we’ll sanction you (the stick). A sanction means jail time. Judges say that sanctions are necessary to ensure compliance with the program, but in reality, they’re overly punitive.

Drug Courts are an all or nothing affair. If a participant is terminated from Drug Court, they are not credited with any of the time that they earned in the program. Instead, they’re returned to criminal court for resentencing on their original charges, and they always wind up serving a prison sentence. In my daughter’s case, the criminal judge couldn’t convince her to enroll in Drug Court. Instead of sentencing her to prison, he adjourned the case again and again. By adjourning cases, addicts sat in jail while the mandatory Drug Court deadlines inched closer, county-by-county. It was a common tactic that criminal judges used with recalcitrant addicts. Judges reasoned that the longer addicts sat in jail, the

more inclined they’d be to take Drug Court, if for no other reason than to just get out of jail. This strategy often worked. After five more months of sharing a cell with someone even wackier than she was, my daughter caved and took Drug Court.

Not surprisingly, my daughter was sanctioned and eventually terminated from Drug Court. She was then resentenced to violating Drug Court (called special probation), and sentenced to four years in prison for possession. I’ve told her that despite all this, I’m grateful. I’m grateful that she’s still alive. I work the steps, attend my meetings and every week someone in the program says something which gives me hope. That keeps me grounded and grateful.

A year has passed. She’s still in prison but I’m stronger in my program now, strong enough to take on service work. Not surprisingly, the form it has taken is advocacy. Advocacy isn’t for the fainthearted, especially since it’s my daughter who’s at the crossroads of how we treat addiction in the criminal justice system. I wish my daughter’s case wasn’t the lightning rod for change. Sometimes it’s too hard to advocate for justice when I’m so clearly invested in the outcome. In these moments of doubt I remember something I learned very early in FA: “Don’t ask why me. Instead ask, who better than me to begin this journey of change?”

Elisa H

TO SLEEP, PERCHANCE...?

August 3rd Reading
Today A Better Way

When I am troubled at night, and my mind is in turmoil because of some unsolved problem, I often lie awake, searching the darkness for some light or solution. Sleep escapes me; I feel that I must find the answer before I can rest.

Now I've learned to have a chat with my Higher Power at such times. I often explain my dilemma, and together we come up with a solution. The most common solution is for me to go to sleep and hand over the problem to my Higher Power, knowing that it's in good hands.

And then I sleep in the knowledge that if it's right for me to have the answer, that answer will surface in the morning. If I don't get the answer, I will at least have the strength, after a good night's sleep, to cope with any and all eventualities that day may bring.

TODAY I WILL turn over to my Higher Power any problem that's too big for me to solve alone.

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

Jon Kabat-Zinn, PHD

Reflection: TO SLEEP, PERCHANCE...?

I have read, in the e-meeting, that people "sleep like babies" at night. What a foreign concept for those of us who are codependent and have an addicted loved one. Nighttime was never my friend. Worries would spin in my head and become even darker; leaving me exhausted and no closer to any solution.

By working the Twelve Steps (I'm on Step Nine), and being dedicated to my recovery program, I have trained myself to give my worries to my Higher Power at night. I have seen my Higher Power work in my life and know that my best interests are being looked after much better than I could ever accomplish. My Higher Power directed me to FA and has placed people, authors, songs, and Twelve Steps in my life to help me heal. I was pretty broken when I got here.

I have had to work this program EVERY day to the best of my ability. By doing that, I have created a relationship with my Higher Power that I had never had before. I have learned that I have a very limited view of how things actually are and my Higher Power gets to see EVERYTHING, and therefore knows much better what needs to happen in my life as well as my loved ones.

So at night, with the knowledge that I have a Higher Power whom I trust, I hand my worries over. Either in prayer or in journal, because I truly believe this is what my Higher Power wants for me. There is a great love between us. We want what's best for those we love, that's why my Higher Power brought me to Families Anonymous.

DeAnna, E-meeting

FA LITERATURE SPOTLIGHT

Do You Remember?

Family life not what you expected or hoped to experience?

Someone you love, causing havoc in your family?

Seeking a source which will help you understand and possibly cope better with the situation?

Where to get help?

These are thoughts and questions that confronted many of us, days before we knew about FA. Fortunately, we found a source that could assist us with these thoughts and many others which were going through our minds. The organization which we found is Families Anonymous (FA). At our meetings we were guided to a specific publication which helped us in answering our questions: A Guide for the Family of the Drug Abuser (#1002).

Certainly "all the answers" cannot be provided to us in this one publication, but it is an excellent guide to understanding and coping with the situations we may be experiencing. It's the equivalent of traveling a prolonged road trip, with some directions in front of us, versus attempting the trip without any guidance.

The information in this booklet can assist us in our journey. Why not give it a try, and obtain a copy of this helpful and quite useful publication?

Order #1002 - A Guide for the Family of the Drug Abuser, from the WSO website;

famanon@familiesanonymous.org

HOW ADDICTS FEEL

FORGIVE ME MOMMA and JUST TO HURT, are lyrics from a rap song my son wrote. He wrote hundreds of them and they were his lyrical journal. It has offered a lot of insight into the mind of someone struggling with both depression and addiction. He died from both those diseases June 5, 2015. He died by suicide. At least I have his lyrics.

Anne M.R.

FORGIVE ME MOMMA

I just want apologize for all my lies
and all the times you stayed up at
night traumatized

from when I said I wanna die,
When we argued, screamed and
cried

I used to wonder if it was possible
for a soul to bleed inside

I was trapped in the dark, But I see
the light

Your love would never budge, even
when I would scream and cuss,
puke and get drunk.

I wasn't raised that way, I know it
cut like razor blades. But you never
ever fade away, But Ima graduate,
I'm get this paper made, every
dreamer needs a believer and I'm
paving the way

Forgive me momma,

I tried the fast life and got addicted
momma

Forgive me momma

I wish I was different momma

Forgive me momma

—by Charles Aubrey R,
Reezin the Revolutionary,
April 27, 1995-June 5, 2015

JUST TO HURT

Why we put on here on this earth just to hurt, just to hurt, just to hurt
So much pain in the universe

They said it's gonna get worse before it gets better
But all I see is hurt and its' been getting worse forever
It always seems to rain the most when I'm promised perfect weather
And if you're hurt too, then we can hurt together

I put these words together, pain stain in every letter
Cause me and Cal used to hangout, before he decided to hang down,
Heroin took a home from me
He found a place in the ground
I scream for God to answer but he ain't make a sound

My demons up against me and I'm facin' them now
I wear the face of a clown
I feel so unloved, because of the monster that was created from drugs

(chorus)

Why we put on here on this earth just to hurt, just to hurt, just to hurt
So much pain in the universe

I hope this last verse sticks in ya mind momma
I promise Imma fix it this time
I'm putting it behind cause I can't forgive myself
And you can't give me back time

My emotions drip through these lines
But even in darkness sunshine sometimes shines through the blinds

You were paying for hope and I was lookin' for dope
Cause I just couldn't cope
And I'm just so afraid that I'll end up alone

I'll always miss my own home
I always seem to f--- things up
I guess rock bottom wasn't deep enough
Even breathing's tough

It's like I'm surrounded by walls with no escape at all
I'm over 6 feet tall, But I've never felt so small

—by Charles Aubrey R,
Reezin the Revolutionary,
April 27, 1995-June 5, 2015

My New Life

A Note and Stitch at a Time

by Rose Marie

I joined my church choir and it has been so good to get back to singing again. I had learned to play guitar since age 6 and then got more into singing during my school years. The last time I had really done anything was more than 20 years ago, heading a very small choir at our chapel (not a lot of experience there, but there was no one else to do so). So I am relearning how to read music and sing harmony. While I do, the world just melts away. It is especially therapeutic that it is a church choir, because my religion and sense of being part of a community come into play as well.

Besides that I knit and crochet (and other needlework as well) and have just started a small on-line venue for sales of some items. This is also a learning experience for me, since I have never owned a small business. So much to learn! I feel like I am doing my life backwards. First got married young, and had my kids young, and now at 50 something, wanting to work!



This Green Bay Packer outfit is for my new grandson.

Keep Calm and Garden On

by Sandy H, VA

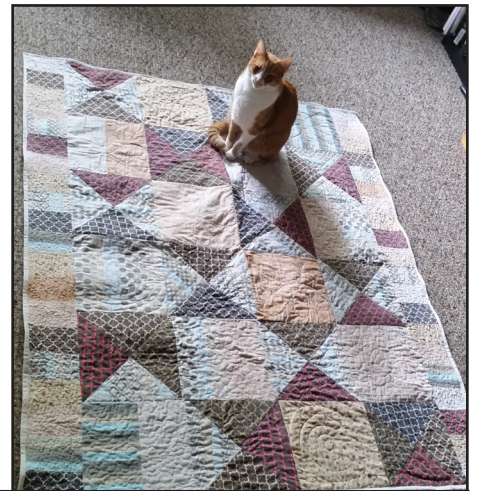
When I'm worried and stressed, I really enjoy working in my flower garden. Just listening to the birds and watching the butterflies gives me a sense of calm.



Sewing mends the soul

by Carol O

I took up quilting a few years back and I found that everything about it soothed my soul. From picking out the fabric and color scheme - to ripping out mistakes - it kept my mind occupied with a creative and practical project.



FA Chicagoland Convention

Theme: *And You're Worth It*

Sunday, November 1, 2015, 8 AM - 3 PM

Presence Resurrection Medical Center - Conference Center
7435 W. Talcott Avenue
Chicago, IL 60631

Cost: \$45 for entire day if registration is received by Friday, October 16. After 10/16, cost is \$50. Continental breakfast, lunch, and literature packet are included.

Questions about the convention? Call the Chicagoland FA Office
847-795-8320 or email: fachicagoland@aol.com



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