

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

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My Convention Experience

I am a member of the e-group and have been a member of Families Anonymous approximately 10 years. One of the most enjoyable and reinforcing activities of my program, is to attend the annual convention. Over the years, I've attended FA conventions in Atlanta, Huntsville AL., Boston and last year's, in New Jersey.

The decision to attend the convention in Miami wasn't a simple one for me. You see, my son has been a homeless person in that city for quite a while. Although we talk occasionally on the phone, I haven't seen him in person for a number of years. I know drugs and living as he does has decimated him and it would be difficult for me to see this. In the end, I decided I wanted this convention experience to be a happy, uplifting one as it always is. The convention is for me!

I left SC a day early, and spent a relaxing time with my roommate and fellow South Jersey-ite friend. The hotel was in the airport complex and we enjoyed sitting by the pool in the evening watching some of the low-flying planes take off against a pink-purple sky and waving palms.

The next day, Friday, we traveled by shuttle to a "gi-normous" Miami mall. While we were waiting for



our ride, Tom J. strolled in the door. He had driven in from Indiana, and for those who don't know, Tom is founder of the e-group. He is a regular attendee at the conventions and it was great to see him again.

The convention officially began with a Friday evening "meet and greet" and we were entertained by a troupe of young people who put on a skit about how family members are affected by addiction. It was so refreshing to see these enthusiastic and positive young people. The audience was very appreciative.

After breakfast Saturday, we had an excellent keynote speaker. He was an experienced judge who has received the Award for Judicial Excellence from the U.S. Supreme Court. He presided in Family Court and Drug Court and led reform efforts in Miami to have the mentally ill and those with addictions

treated more humanely instead of warehousing them in jail, which is what had been happening. One of his first cases was a Harvard-trained doctor who was experiencing psychotic breaks and his family was trying to prevent him being placed in jail. Through the years, he and others worked to have a special CIT (Crisis Intervention Team) within the police department to handle situations with the mentally ill. They recently acquired a large office building near the courthouse in Miami, which will be set up for services for the mentally ill and addicted. It was very inspiring to see what one man can do to affect change.

The workshops were next on the schedule. There were two sessions in the morning and two in the afternoon. Each session had a choice of four different topics. It was really hard to narrow it down because so many seemed interesting and helpful. The four I selected were: The Key to Survival – An Experience with Detachment, An Attitude of Gratitude - Finding the Silver Lining, Serenity through Spirituality, and Letting Go by Accepting God's Will -- and Not Just For Me. These were just four of sixteen possible workshops.

(Continue on page 4.)

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Living Today

January 22nd
Today A Better Way

Why do I let my thoughts go racing off into the future? Why do I persist in imagining so many dreaded things that may or may not occur? Panic and worry have never helped me solve next week's or next year's problems today.

When I waste time imagining all these "maybes" and "what-ifs," I become so overwrought that I am incapable of dealing with today. On the other hand, if I focus on this day or this hour and use it to the best of my ability, I will have no time left over for projecting a future that may never come. A wise man once said, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

Finally, it helps me to remember that every day need not be a struggle or a duty. There are gifts in each new day: kindness, patience, generosity, beauty, love. When I let go of the future and the past, I am ready to live most fully this one precious day, with all its gifts.

TODAY I WILL refuse to spoil today with worry about tomorrow.

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

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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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My Convention Experience

(Continue from page 1.)

Interestingly, each of the four presenters were recovering addicts themselves, although much of their talk was about the family/spouses of the addict. It would take too long to summarize each, but a few take-aways for me were one lady presenter saying after her husband had relapsed several times, she sadly had to conclude that he was choosing this life for himself. This observation was important to me. So much so, at questions after, I briefly summarized my personal situation of having a homeless son in Miami -- thinking no one in the room knows me anyway ... but there was Tom sitting behind me. Well, I know he understands! Another speaker told of being widowed twice at a young age. But she spoke of gratitude of having these two men in her life for whatever time they had together.

In between sessions, we had an excellent lunch provided by "A Taste of Miami" with Caribbean type dishes, most of which I had never tasted before. Delicious! Afterwards, we had a wonderful speaker, an older man who is Director of Riverside House in Miami, a facility that began as an alcohol treatment center and evolved into a

faith-based rehabilitation center for ex-offenders. The speaker was once jailed and a criminal himself. He had a humorous, easy-going style of speaking.

Next, as delegate for the e-group, I attended the annual WSB business meeting. We were given copies of the budget and voted on officers for the coming year. There was some discussion of the difficulties of wanting to make Families Anonymous more well-known as a resource, without violating our traditions of anonymity. Whether or not to have an informative Facebook page, for instance.

The Saturday evening meal was preceded by a performance of a group of FA members who had changed the words to some well-known songs to reflect, in a humorous way, the difficulties of dealing with addiction and being co-dependent. After dinner entertainment was a DJ (who seemed to know our musical tastes!) and many enthusiastic dancers. No partners needed, kind of a "group dance." I enjoyed that a lot, especially since I hadn't danced since last year's convention in New Jersey. The weekend-long silent auction was concluded at this time.

After breakfast on Sunday, we had another speaker, a young Rabbi. He works with young people and had

taken a troubled younger brother into his home and ultimately had to ask him to leave, so he understood our circumstances well. He had a relaxed, humorous style. There was a closing ceremony with current and former board members lighting candles and doing readings.

After the convention, one of our e-group friends, who lives in Miami and had worked on the convention committee, was generous (she must have been tired!) and took three of us on a tour of South Beach, a very picturesque and trendy part of Miami. This was so enjoyable.

I began by writing about my apprehension about going to Miami and if it would be a problem living with my decision to not see my son after so many years. It really was fine. A few times I looked out the window of the hotel room at the vastness of Miami thinking he's out there somewhere and I did see a group of homeless men one time. But honestly we were so busy I seldom thought of it, and when I did I "changed the subject" in my mind. I have felt very serene since my return.

I hope someday, some way, you all can get to experience an FA convention.

Judith H, SC

NATURE WALK YOUR WAY TO SANITY CHALLENGE

Walking, especially in nature, is a great way to relax, calm your mind and increase your focus. We challenge our readers to get out into nature. Go for a walk. Take your time. Take your camera. Pack a lunch. Lean into the wind. Peek under rocks. Listen to the birds. Breathe deep. Let go. And let us know what you saw - what you felt.

Send your reflections to: RagEditor12@gmail.com

Let's talk...

Do you think there is such a thing as spending too much time and focus on self-improvement?

Send your reflections to:

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Love the Addict. Hate the Addiction.

The saying goes, “Love the Addict. Hate the Addiction.”

I get it. Makes sense to a mom of an addict, of course. “Hate the addiction.” Of course you’re going to hate the addiction – the addiction that stole him from you and everything you had hoped for him for his life. The addiction that turned this smiling, vibrant, energetic kid into a sullen, despondent, selfish waste who breaks your heart every time you look at him. Hating the addiction has never been an issue.

“Love the addict” is the tough part. Tougher than I ever thought. Tougher than it used to be. I mean, I love my son. He’s my SON. I love him inherently as only a mother can love – that blind, unconditional, deep-rooted, heartbreaking, eternal love that knows no boundaries

But day to day love – that’s tough. That’s really, really tough. My mom told me the story once of my older brother as a toddler, who had been playing outside in the mud. My mom walked into the room and discovered that he had come inside and tracked mud all through the house – all over the carpet, in each and every room. She started yelling at him – furious – walking through the house looking for him.

When she found him, he had tears in his eyes and held out a bouquet of dandelions and said, “I was looking for you, Mommy. I picked you flowers.”

That’s the love a mom is used to. That kid who may drive you crazy but you realize he has the best of intentions – he’s just still learning and growing – and no matter how much he makes you want to tear your hair out, there are just enough moments of sweetness and goodness and heart-bursting love that it all evens out.

Loving an addict isn’t like that for me. It’s been a long time since I’ve had any moments of sweetness or goodness. And my heart aches to burst with love and pride like it used to. My heart hurts to love him like that. I want to love him like that.

But I just don’t feel like I’ve had a chance to. When he comes home smelling awful and walks right in and goes to his room and shuts the door, I don’t feel love. When I have to close his door and Lysol the house because he hasn’t showered in a week or done laundry in months and I ask him to clean his room and he ignores me, I don’t feel love. When I look at his bank account and see the cash withdrawals and the

purchases at the head shop and God knows where else, I don’t feel love. When I ask him where he is and he responds and I know he’s lying to me again, I don’t feel love. When I ask him what he wants to do with his life and he says he’s doing it, I don’t feel love. When I try to talk to him and he responds with a sharp, aggravated retort, I don’t feel love.

Every once in a while, I might get a hint of it. When he’s in a particularly good mood, for whatever reason, and might joke with me for a minute, I feel a twinge of love. But I find I try to bury it – I try to push it away. It hurts to feel that love now –because it’s fleeting. In the next moment, he’s going to be out the door, doing everything I hate. And that love will just turn to hurt.

My son is – and always will be – one of two of my greatest accomplishments in life. This will never change. I will always love him with a mother’s love. But I want to learn to love the addict. I need to learn to love the addict. They say to love an addict is to run out of tears. I don’t think I’m quite there yet.

Amy K, Peoria, IL



*The movement,
the meditation,
the health
of the blood pumping,
and the rhythm of footsteps...
this is a primal way
to connect with one's
deeper self.
~ Paula Cole*

SPECIAL THANKS

FA would like to give a special thanks to the Miami groups and the 2016 Convention Committee for all their hard work.

We are truly grateful.

What Families Anonymous has done for me ---

When I found out about my child's addiction, I felt like my world suddenly shattered. I felt like someone had knocked the wind out of me. I was in shock and dismay, bewildered and saddened, fearful for his life and possibly my own. How was I to go on? How could I survive that? A parent's worst nightmare would be to lose a child; was that a possibility? How could I survive that? I stumbled through my days in a clouded haze, trying to function. I had to. I had a job to maintain, other family members that depended on me, and my own life and sanity to consider. I must have failed my child. I must not have been a good parent. I must not have been paying attention. These thoughts consumed my every waking moment as well as my dreams. I kept myself together as best as I could through the day and then went home and sobbed all night.

I can't remember how I found out about Families Anonymous but am very thankful I did. I was extremely anxious that first Tuesday night I arrived for my first meeting at 7:00 p.m. I can't remember if I spoke. I do remember sobbing through most of that first meeting. And the second, and the third. The group was so welcoming. FINALLY, I had met a group of people that understood what I was going through; they had been through it too. I met wonderful, caring parents. I was given phone numbers and email addresses of other group members to call in case I needed to talk between meetings. I did; it helped. I texted one member on a Tuesday when I didn't think I had the strength to hold myself together

until seven that evening to get to the meeting. I was depressed. She graciously met me at a local diner before the meeting and bought me a bowl of soup and we talked before the meeting. I learned about the "three C's". That being: I didn't cause it, I can't control it, and I can't cure it. I learned about "destructive forces." Initially, as this illness progressed, upon reflection I now realize that I myself reacted destructively. I didn't know that there was a "constructive" way to react. I'm happy to report that there is and I am thankful for that realization.

I no longer feel alone. I feel understood for the first time in a long time. I learned that these things just happen sometimes. Blame does not have to be placed on anyone. I feel like a heavy weight has been lifted off my shoulders. I find myself reading FA literature and actually finding comfort. I am slowing growing and changing as a person with the help of FA. I am even finding myself laughing and enjoying my days. Four months ago, I would have said this would never be possible again. I am finally finding some balance in my life. I am working on myself and praying for my child. I know whatever comes my way now, that I can depend on the support of FA to help me through. I am hopeful that one day I may be able to say that my child has been in recovery for a number of years and be able to pay it forward and show a newcomer that there can be light in the midst of their darkness.

Spread the good news of Families Anonymous!

Submitted by, Ed S.

Recently, at one of our meetings, fellow member, Stuart K. gave his lead and recited his clever and witty creation of "The Opposite of HELPING" which he entitled "ENABLING".

Submitted by Julie G., Winnetka Group 494

ENABLING

My role as enabler is to do most things for the person I pretend to be helping; to control and change his actions and make myself feel better. I won't change my feelings of negativity and I will worry about everything. I will perform all of the functions that my addict could and should be able to handle himself.

I will have no personal growth as I am completely wrapped up in my addict's problems. I will continue to tell him what he should do and I will protect him from all consequences of his actions.

I will hire lawyers, give money, replace items that were supposedly broken or stolen, and will call teachers and professors on behalf of my addict. I will wake my addict to make sure he gets up for school or work. I will buy new cars when he wrecks the one he has. I will make excuses for him.

More importantly, I will deny he has a problem and/or I will believe everything he tells me. After all, he is my child.

I will worry about what my neighbors and family think. I will ignore the rest of my family in my attempts to save him.

I won't change my ways at all. If I don't do everything for my child I don't love him.

By Stuart K.
Winnetka Group 494

LIFE IS A JOURNEY

“Our lives in all aspects are a journey toward a destination, one fitting to our purpose, our special gifts, and our particular needs. Each day contributes to our journey, carrying us closer to our destination. However, we often take a circuitous route.”

When my son was 20, I said “enough!” And he agreed to go to rehab-- a 28-day program. As the time was ending, we asked him his plan-- he said he thought he’d take a road trip, maybe to California. I handed him a roadmap and nothing else; that never happened. I didn’t think 28 days was “enough”; I volunteered long term treatment. He did well enough; it was a good program/environment, and expensive. I did not employ our insurance well-- afraid of “pre-existing” if I ever found out his addiction was long term mental illness. I’ve learned a lot about addiction since, and can’t (won’t) think backwards as to what I “should have” done. And now he’s aged off our coverage; HIS insurance (or not) is his business.

As those months+ of long-term treatment was ending, his again lack of a plan became the plan - he stayed in that faraway city. Not ready/willing to manage his own life; attracted to “help” of the wrong kind. I was conflicted constantly for three more years-- what kind of help from me might make the difference? I came up with no answer; he survived, he did not thrive. When he was at an all-time low, he hooked up with a man who was going to an NA meeting and gave him a ride.

When he came back to our hometown, he “wanted a program.” Hot potato, onto mom. I didn’t catch it. I gave him a new copy of his insurance card and told him to do the investigation. Maybe he did, or maybe it was just easier -- to go to NA meetings, get a sponsor, do what he never finished in rehab (The Steps). Today, he is a sponsor.

A long way around the barn, as they say. TIME. Not on my schedule, not without pain and tears, all in HP time. Grateful for his (and my) today.

Joanne M



STEP SEVEN

Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

FA 12 Promises

#7 - We will lose interest in trying to change others, and we will gain an appreciation for those special people in our lives.

FA 12 Traditions

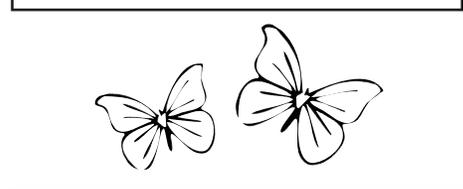
#7 - Every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

Memorial Donations

In Memory of her late husband, Steve E. An active and dedicated member of Group 1844, Cedarburg, WI for six years
by  Cindy E Group 1844

 In Memory of Christopher B son of Bill and Dianne B
by Group 1739 Laurel, MD

In Memory of  Carleen A a longtime member
by Group 337 Chattanooga, TN



My New Life

Calling all members !
What do you do for yourselves to cope with and enjoy life.
Share what you do and 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

**THE FA LITERATURE COMMITTEE IS
PROUD TO ANNOUNCE
NEW PIECES OF
LITERATURE AND NEW REVISIONS!**

The Broken Vase # 2016 - a brand new offering which is available now! An allegorical tale comparing the repair of a valued, broken vase to the “cracks & imperfections” which we as individuals may experience. Printed as a bookmark with English on one side and Spanish on the other, and listed in our catalog at \$.75.

FA & Sponsorship - a complete revision of this valuable piece of FA literature. Though revised, the document will remain priced at \$2.50 each and is available through our FA Literature catalog (#1020). This informative 28 page document has sections that cover the key roles of sponsors and sponsees, as well as “just what is sponsorship?”— an explanation of the process itself. Quite beneficial!

TABW (both EK & EP) - #1015 - New conversions of each. Two major upgrades associated with these revisions – an interactive Table of Contents (title of each reading appears next to the date of the reading) AND an upgrade of the index, though the same index as the print version, it’s even better, since it is interactive! This valued publication can be ordered from the direct sources for your Nook, Kindle and iTunes versions, with the price remaining at only \$7.99!

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Each Tradition has been thoroughly rewritten and contains greater definition of thought, better clarification of FA principles, and more poignant action episodes to provide a clearer idea of how our Traditions can be actively used in our groups and in our fellowship.

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ORDER NOW!

Be the first in your group to have your own copy of #5010 The Twelve Traditions in Action - \$8.00

One Day At a Time

April 10th
Today A Better Way

One day at a time. "Oh, there's another one of those slogan. They sound all right at meetings, but putting them into practice is another thing." That's how I felt the first time I attended a Families Anonymous group. But little by little I came to see that this particular slogan teaches me to be good to myself today, let go of the unhappy times of the past, and avoid worrying about tomorrow. It invites me to fill today with as many pleasant experiences as I can and to help others do the same. Living one day at a time is especially necessary for those of us who know the pain and confusion of the family disease called chemical dependency. It's all too easy for us to project problems into the future that may never materialize. Fortunately, we have our friends in FA to help us remember to live one day at a time.

TODAY I WILL make this one day a celebration of life.

STEP EIGHT

Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

FA 12 Promises

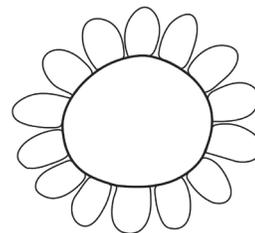
#8 - Self-righteousness will slip away.

FA 12 Traditions

#8 - Families Anonymous Twelfth Step work should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

Easy Does It

Keep It Simple



happiness
counts



FAMILIES ANONYMOUS WORLD SERVICE

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