

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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THE MOMENT OF AWE

I was a caretaker even as a young child. I remember looking and listening to my alcoholic father and my angry mother and feeling confused a lot. I did not know from day to day what home was supposed to look like. I had 11 siblings and I was number 5 so I spent a lot of time looking out for others, and a lot was expected of me at a young age. I was fortunate to be able to attend a boarding school for high school and there I met others who were raised differently than I. Visits with friends to their homes gave me a different impression of what a family could look like. I was determined to do things differently at an early age. I had teachers who cared about me and treated me with respect.

"That moment of awe, of wonder," I believe first came to me when I was discovering the person I wanted to be. I was just 18 at the time, working full time and enjoying living alone, having my own apartment and enjoying my freedom. I began to journal at this time and I spent time along a river bank, listening to nature and enjoying having no demands on my life. I felt my HP's presence and I talked to him and asked for direction for my life. I had worked for over a year and a girl friend and I decided to celebrate by taking a trip to see friends out east. It was the first time I had ever flown and I loved it. We went to NYC and the NJ shore. We stayed with this friend's parents who treated us like royalty. A month later, I met my husband to be and we married about 18 months later. We were busy with work, school and starting a family. We then moved a couple states away and my

husband began school again. We stayed in this community for 23 years, had five children and built a house of our dreams.

Then came downsizing, unemployment, a move across country with our youngest two boys, and 20 months later another move across country, and six months later we discovered our youngest was ill with addiction. Initially, I thought he was depressed (and he may have been) as his older brother had left home for college. He spent six weeks hospitalized and then seven months in a treatment center 1000 miles away. My nest was empty way too early. I was angry, depressed and so very sad.

When I was searching for treatment centers for my son, I came upon a Co-D recovery chat room and later was linked to the FA website where the e-meeting was just beginning. I received a Red Book in the mail from a generous person in AZ and read and listened for a month or so before I could share my story. Slowly, I turned my fears over to my HP and began to take care of myself by journaling and working the 12 Steps. I found my strength returning and I soon enrolled in school at age 50. I had a new focus and began looking forward to change in my life.

Our oldest son was 28 and changing careers. He was going to school in AZ and he and I would visit and laugh about the being nontraditional students. We both had A averages. Four months before school was to end, I got a call in the middle of the night that our oldest healthy son had died in an accident. I was in the city where my school was and

100 miles from my husband. We were in ND and a blizzard had started that day and I did not see my husband for almost 15 hours. Our son/addict was with him; he had had about five good months at the time and was getting back on track. Within a month of our son's death, he fell apart, ended up being arrested and began seven months in youth detention/treatment with the state.

During that time, I was finishing school and starting a new business as a massage therapist. There were days that I did not want to get out of bed; depression tried to take me down. I was fortunate to have three wonderful friends who were in recovery themselves and to have found the e-meeting group before our son died. I spent a lot of time journaling, listing all of the gifts I had and spending time in prayer and walking. Even in those dark hours I knew I was never alone. A year later, I started an FA group in our town. I wanted to share the gifts I had been given. The friendships that have come from being a part of FA are invaluable. Being a sponsor has helped me to stay strong in my own program.

Today, I look back on the days of unemployment, fear and grief as opportunities to be close to my HP. I have learned how to let go. Faith and hope are now my constant companions and love, joy, and peace are my rewards. I have been blessed in so many ways and I am grateful for the rough times that caused me to seek change within myself in order to receive the 12 Promises of Families Anonymous.

Maggie, e-meeting

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2015 FA Convention Silent Auction

The 2015 Convention Committee is planning to have a silent auction at the annual convention in Livingston, NJ. We are hoping that all FA groups will choose to be part of the event by donating gift cards, or a gift basket to place in the auction. If possible, this item must be small enough to travel packed in baggage on a plane. The silent auction will help defray costs of the convention. If we are successful, it might also make it possible to donate proceeds to the World Service Office general fund.

For more information on how the silent auction works, donation ideas and the donation form, please visit the convention website at www.2015njfaconvention.weebly.com

**The 2015 Convention Committee members
thank you for your support!**

Growing Recovery in the Garden State

2015 FA World Service Convention

May 29-31, 2015

at the Westminster Hotel in Livingston, NJ.

For Registration forms and further details, log onto the NJ Convention website: 2015njfaconvention.weebly.com, or log onto familiesanonymous.org and click on the *2015 World Service Convention* link at the top of the page.

*Your story
matters -
tell it.*

**Today A Better Way:
Volume Two**

Send submissions to:
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Topic Ideas

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



Emeeting:
www.tabw.org

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My New Life

Treasure Every Moment -

Since coming to Families Anonymous I have taken up a new hobby of making jewelry. I did not do this specifically to find a means to occupy myself away from my loved one that brought me to this program, as life has been pretty quiet on the home front for some time. Having said that, I had much more time to myself, even though it was peaceful.

Three of my sisters made an annual trek to an art school for a week in the summer. They would each take something different and seemed to thoroughly enjoy themselves. I never thought I had any artistic talent and had no interest in going until one of my sisters became ill and was dying. For that reason alone, I invited myself to go with them. I had no idea which art class to take or if I would even like any of them. I was also curious what spending a week in tight quarters with sisters, who often behave as sisters do, would be like. I settled on a wire wrapping class. Not that I even knew what that was.

When the week arrived, our sister who was ill was too sick to attend, but the other three of us went as she wanted us to. I enjoyed my week there and was told I was pretty good at wire wrapping. We made jewelry. I did enjoy it but most of the beginning level work wasn't very appealing to me. The class next to us was Wire II, now that work was spectacular and I wanted to learn it! I asked the instructor what it would take to get into his class. He answered "A year's worth of practice." So in my usual compulsive way, I set out to practice. I worked and worked. Now I had tons of jewelry that I needed to do something with. Since then I have also taken a Wire III class.

I began to sell my jewelry. I have been working to find where I belong in selling jewelry, so I have been to a number of Arts & Crafts shows or just art shows. I can't begin to tell you how out of my comfort zone this was. It felt good to get out of my box. I had given up my primary career to be more available to my son that brought me to this program. Now he was grown and seemed to be doing quite well. Not wanting to go back to my career at this point, I thought this might be fun. I was really out of my box but learning new things every day and at every event. Having not ever known I had any art talent, I was quite insecure about my work. I have had numerous folks in the art world affirm to me that my work is very good! I have been invited to put my jewelry in a real art gallery! Several shops are carrying my jewelry. Now I am trying to decide just where I belong and what I want to do. I am meeting many new and different people that are adding richness to my life.

My sister died shortly after that first class. She gave me her tools and I get to have her with me in all my work. My other sisters and I continue to go to the art school at least once a year and learn new things.

It is really quite exciting to learn that I have talents I never knew about. I love it when someone literally buys my bracelet right off my arm! I am constantly looking for new ideas and this keeps me stimulated and quite busy. So busy in fact, that I am afraid I don't tend to house duties like I should, but that can wait!

Alice Q



REFLECTION – STEP 4

I thought a lot about what I'd say about working the fourth step. In truth, I decided to work this step because my sponsor thought it would further my recovery. And she was so right. In thinking about what the fourth step means to me, I am reminded about what our leader says at the opening of every FA meeting. Before we can help our addict, we must first focus on helping ourselves. And the only way we can help ourselves is to know ourselves - to really know ourselves – the positive and the not so positive. And Step Four helps us in this journey of self discovery by allowing us to take a searching and fearless moral inventory.

I often say that AA and FA are the cheapest form of therapy I've ever had. In therapy I learned that I lacked self worth – in working Step Four, I learned that a great deal of my self worth was based on circumstances and what others thought of me. After many therapy sessions, I realized as a child, I never learned how to express my anger. When working Step Four, I learned that because of this, I internalized my anger and turned it on myself. I learned that most of my resentments are that I haven't stood up for myself.

But I learned good things about myself too. I learned that I'm a pretty good person, respected by others, with a good set of values and someone who cares genuinely about other people and the world we live in.

As it says in the summary page after working the fourth step, we have a better understanding of who we are and why we are this way. Completing the Fourth Step inventory provides us with tools that can keep us on the road to a more manageable life. These tools help us find balance, acceptance and love for ourselves as well as for the other significant people in our lives –including our children – whether drinking or using, or not.

Step 4 helps us to change the role that we play in the family disease of addiction. It helps us to take the most helpful and most loving action that any family member can take – and that is to get help for ourselves. Step 4 allows us to serve as an example of the joy and serenity that recovery can provide and to respect the rights of our loved ones to make their own choices.

Ruth O

***You should not have to rip yourself into pieces
to keep others whole.***

New Column for 2015

Calling all members !

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

Is it photography? Yoga?
Golf? Volunteering? 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

Weathering the Storm

*A column featuring articles written
by members of FA Bangalore,
India, Group 1815 for their 5th
anniversary celebration in 2012.*

DETACHMENT

As a mother, I felt detachment was impossible. It was like everything and everybody around me was my responsibility. How can I detach myself from my kids? My umbilical cord was still strong. It refused to give way and I held on to it for dear life.

Soon enough I realized that clinging on to things or people only complicated my life. I had stopped growing! Was it really worth it?

I had to detach. Easier said than done. What I really needed to put in practice was letting go.

Detachment does not mean "I don't care, do what you want." I figured detachment meant "I do care, so you must do what YOU want." This was the only way that I could refrain from giving unnecessary advice or nagging.

I had to detach from my action, not my addict son. He had to realize that I was there for him only if he took charge of his own life.

For me, my peace of mind and serenity was important. Detachment slowly became a part of my life as I saw my son had begun his journey and was on the path to his recovery and I was on mine.

It was working!

Namrata

Let it be.

WISDOM TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

I am willing to trust the spirit of God for others.

I will not worry, fret, or be unhappy over you.

I will not be afraid for you.

I will not blame you, criticize you, or condemn you, and I will not give up on you.

I will remember first, last, and always, that you are God's child.

That you have His spirit in you, and I will trust this spirit to take care of you; to provide for your needs.

I will think of you always as being surrounded by God's loving presence, as being enfolded in His protecting arms, as being kept safe and secure in Him.

I will be patient with you. I will have confidence in you. And I will stand by in faith and bless you in my prayers, knowing that you are growing, knowing that you are finding the help you need. ---Author Unknown

This reflection was shared with me a few decades ago at a Twelve Step meeting for families as a good tool to help focus on my tendencies to lean into my worry, control and pressure to be THE SOLUTION for the addicts in my life. Somehow, I believed, like I was born with it, that it was my job to DO SOMETHING to solve the PROBLEM. NOT!!! The many healthy FA principles included in this reflection encouraged me to LET GO AND LET GOD, and to relieve me of what was and is clearly God's job. There is freedom, healing, rest, and even comfort in these words, when putting them into our minds and our actions.

Patty M

MAGICAL THINKING

"I am as addicted to the alcoholic as the alcoholic is to alcohol."

I am addicted to wanting to trust, to believe that this time, maybe, just maybe, they've got "it." Whatever "it" is. I feel a rush of hope and positivity as my son recites to me all of the lies that he knows I want to hear. I jump on the merry-go-round again, knowing at this stage in my recovery, intellectually, that I am probably not making the right choice. But my emotional mothering side takes the bait and does it anyway. Arrrrgh!

Then, shortly after, I feel the letdown of knowing it's all magical thinking.

It's an addiction to his life choices. Talk about insanity. In Step Two, insanity is allowing my happiness to depend on someone who is completely undependable. So I am pulling myself out of the imbalance, slowly but surely. I choose to put my focus back on me, where it belongs.

Lisa B

Helping vs. Enabling

When you help, you GIVE

- * time
- * listening
- * empathy
- * compassion

When you enable, you TAKE AWAY

- * a chance to feel one's own feelings (including self-assurance and pride) or to think for themselves
- * an opportunity to grow, or to fail
- * experience to learn -- how to earn and budget their own money, how to be responsible

Joanne M

Let's talk...

Have you ever thought about the ways our pets also experience losses with a loved one in addiction? Send your reflections to:
RagEditor12@gmail.com

FA LITERATURE SPOTLIGHT

DISPLAY and PRESENTATIONS

Does your group "spotlight" FA literature at your meetings? Could your group use some ideas about how to call attention to literature? Maybe these plans that other groups have found successful will be of help.

- Use a closet, shoe-pocket hanger, and place a different piece of literature in each pocket; five pockets across and six pockets down. After the meeting, the shoe hanger is not unloaded but carefully folded up and stored.

- Set out neat stacks of literature on a table at every meeting. During the scheduled break in the Suggested Meeting Format, members have time to look at and buy literature if they wish. The literature chair is there to answer questions and make suggestions.

- Set out all the literature and place a bright 8½ x 11" card with the words NEW! or SPOTLIGHT! next to a piece of literature. Make an announcement about that particular piece just before the break (or some convenient time).

- Take about 1½ minutes of the meeting every two weeks to showcase one piece of literature by explaining its value: the personal message, the use as a topic for the meeting, and the questions for thought at the end, or read a paragraph or two to catch the interest of members.

- Select a piece of literature to use as a meeting topic, then search for a related cartoon, magazine picture, or old saying to pique the interest of the group before reading and discussing the piece.

Is there some way your group spotlights literature at your meetings? Please share your ideas with other groups by sending an email to the Spotlight column at:
12steprag@FamiliesAnonymous.org

THE 11TH-20TH COMMANDMENTS

11th. Thou shalt not worry, for worry is the most unproductive of all human activities.

12th. Thou shalt not be fearful, for most of the things we fear never come to pass.

13th. Thou shalt not cross bridges before you come to them, for no one has yet succeeded in accomplishing this.

14th. Thou shalt handle only one problem at a time, and leave the others to the Lord until their turn comes up.

15th. Thou shalt not take troubles to bed with you, for they make very poor bedfellows.

16th. Thou shalt not try to carry the problems of the world on your shoulders, for nobody (except for One) has a back that is broad enough.

17th. Thou shalt be a good listener, for God often speaks to us through the mouths of others.

18th. Thou shall not try to relive yesterday; for good or ill, it is forever gone. Live in the now and rejoice in it.

19th. Thou shalt firmly dismiss feelings of frustration, for 90% of it is rooted in self-pity and will interfere with positive action.

20th. Thou shalt count thy blessings, never overlooking the smallest, for our biggest blessings are composed of many small ones.



~ Anonymous

Families Anonymous Group 162, in Des Plaines, recently lost one of their long time members, Bob V. Bob had been a member of the group for 30 years, perhaps since the group's inception. Members of Group 162 have put together a collection of words they felt best described a man who made a big difference in so many people's lives. In addition, about 15 group members attended his recent memorial service. One member read, "The 11th - 20th Commandments" at the service, which Bob had once shared during a meeting.


BOB V.


twinkling eyes caring
 helpful
smiling thoughtful
 friendly loving
 welcoming KIND
 quiet and mighty


Memorial Donations


In Memory of 
 Chris
 son of Nona and Chuck S
 by
 GR 1187
 Bloomfield, CT


Memorial Donations


In Memory of
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 son of Judy K
 by
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 by
 Thomas and Maureen W
 Wethersfield, CT

GET TO KNOW THE FA CONVENTION SPEAKERS

The Convention Planning Committee has lined up a dynamic and exciting roster of speakers for the upcoming 2015 FA World Service Convention to be held in New Jersey this May 29 – 31. Here's a sampling of who you can expect to see there:

Keynote Speaker and Workshop Presenter: Carole Bennett, MA

For over twenty years, Carole Bennett, MA, has been personally enmeshed in the world of addiction and recovery with her own family's alcohol and drug dependency issues. Professionally, her Master's in Clinical Psychology has afforded her work as a treatment counselor for the Salvation Army and the Council of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse.

Carole is a staff blogger on addiction and recovery for the Huffington Post's Living Section and has written numerous articles for recovery newspapers. Carole's first book *Reclaim Your Life: You and the Alcoholic/Addict*, has become an invaluable guide for family members and friends, clinicians, and recovery centers, as well as the alcoholic/addicts themselves.

Workshop Presenter: Sandy Swenson

Sandy is a mother of two sons – one of whom, Joey, is an alcoholic and drug addict not yet in recovery. Sandy wrote her book "The Joey Song" to chronicle her journey through the place where love and addiction meet, in the hope of helping others find comfort and strength for their own struggles with addiction in the family. Her workshop, entitled "I Did Not Cause My Child to Become an Addict," promises to be a lively and enlightening discussion of guilt, responsibility, and releasing with love.

Luncheon Speakers: Rogan and Brendan O'Donnell, New Foundation Recovery House

Brothers Rogan and Brendan O'Donnell are no strangers to addiction, having struggled with their own substance abuse issues. In 2011, they founded the New Foundation Recovery House in Freehold, NJ to provide a structured sober living environment to individuals in recovery from alcohol and/or drug addiction. Their positive approach encourages each resident to develop and practice a sober way of life with the support of the 12 Step program.

Hear how the O'Donnell brothers' unique blend of brutal honesty, generously laced with humor and compassion, helps them help others find their way in recovery.

Dinner Speaker: Gary Mendell, Shatterproof

Gary Mendell is the founder and CEO of Shatterproof, the first national organization committed to protecting children from addiction to alcohol or other drugs, and ending the stigma and suffering of those affected by this disease. In 2012, Mr. Mendell founded Shatterproof to honor his son, Brian, who in 2011 lost his battle with addiction at the age of 25.

In its first year, Shatterproof was influential in the passage of legislation in two states that will significantly reduce the number of deaths related to overdose, and has provided funding to expand the use of an intervention program that has proven to reduce the number of teens that will become addicted. Shatterproof has also launched a series of innovative events in thirty cities across the United States to reduce the stigma associated with this disease, and to raise funding for its mission.

Sunday Morning Speaker: Reverend Jack Abel

Rev. Jack Abel, M.Div., M.B.A., was ordained to interfaith ministry by The New Seminary in 2010. As Director of Spiritual Care for Caron Treatment Centers in Wernersville, PA, he provides leadership in the integration of spiritual care with other disciplines across the continuum of treatment, from intake to outpatient and alumni services. Rev. Jack has a long history of involvement in ministry for and with the 12-Step community, including the development of 12-Step worship services and counseling, as well as lecture and retreat ministries for those in recovery.

This great assortment of speakers is just a sampling of what can be found at this year's convention. The 2015 Convention promises to be an uplifting, engaging, and dynamic event. Don't miss out on this year's World Service Convention. Join us on May 29-31 in Livingston, New Jersey by registering today. Information can be found on the Convention website – 2015njfaconvention.weebly.com.

TABW Car Magnets are Here!

You see them everywhere - oval black and white "Euro" car magnets with acronyms for popular names. Now the Fellowship has its very own: a high-quality, full-size (5 3/4 x 3 7/8 in.) oval car magnet with the bold letters TABW, and below that, TODAY A BETTER WAY - for only \$5!* (*Plus \$1.00 postage and handling for each magnet ordered).

Display one on your car to show solidarity with the Fellowship, and your belief in the wisdom of TABW - only you, and other FA members, will appreciate its significance. All proceeds go to support the 2015 World Service Convention. Simply fill out the attached order form and send it to the address listed below.



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Number of magnets: _____ X \$5.00 = _____

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FAMILIES ANONYMOUS WORLD SERVICE

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