

# 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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## Walking My Way to Sanity

Three years ago, about the time I learned that my daughter was an alcoholic, I also learned about a walking pilgrimage in Spain called the Camino de Santiago. I became as obsessed about the Camino as I was about my daughter. I thought it was going to be the thing that saved us both. I began physical preparation for the Camino. As my daughter relapsed, my plans fell through when I suffered a stress fracture in my foot. I continued to learn more about the 500 mile pilgrimage and about the disease of addiction. After recovering, I began to plan and prepare for my trip a second time, as my daughter continued on her road to recovery, relapse, and recovery. One year later, my trip was cancelled again when I needed to have my left knee replaced. As I recovered, I planned my trip for the third time. I was afraid I would never do it and committed to doing it before I got any older. I would only walk the last 100 km of the Camino which was required to receive the certificate of completion called the Compostela and I would not carry my backpack but have it transported. A pilgrim friend called it the "Country Club Camino" but if this was the only way, then so be it.



My daughter was sober for 4 1/2 months prior to my departure. All was good.

Finally, in May 2016, my friend and I arrived in Spain to begin our walk. We were to cover approximately 85 miles in 5 days beginning in Sarria and ending at the Cathedral in Santiago de Compostela.

Even with preparation the walking was grueling. We walked ten hours the first day, nine hours the second and third days, then eight and seven miles on the last two days. The fellowship of other pilgrims from all over the world, the beauty of the Spanish countryside and its people, the glorious food, the daily Cafe con Leche, listening to cuckoos, seeing storks, feeling serene and quiet, made every step worth it. We were outdoors all those hours, sometimes sharing

the paths with sheep and cows and all their droppings. Crisscrossing the paths to avoid the deep ruts filled with mud, walking through eucalyptus forests, greeting all the pilgrims who passed us (and there were many) with the greeting, "Buen Camino," walking through villages and towns following the yellow arrows that pointed the way. Finally, we arrived at our destination and received our Compostelas written in Latin. It was amazing. Awesome.

I can compare the Camino to FA in these ways:

- Fellowship
- Support
- Education
- Revelation
- Self care
- Working hard to reach a goal

One of the familiar sayings about the pilgrimage is that "the Camino provides."

I feel that FA provides me with sanity, support, hope and fellowship. Just as I will be a pilgrim on the Camino for the rest of my life, so will I be pilgrim with Families Anonymous.

Buen Camino

Pamela F

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Families Anonymous, Inc.  
701 Lee St, Suite 670  
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847-294-5877  
800-736-9805 (USA only)  
FAX: 847-294-5837

**EMAIL:**

12steprag@FamiliesAnonymous.org

EDITOR: Lisa W

RAG STAFF: Judith H

## 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

## HEALING THROUGH NATURE WALKING

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

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  
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Emeeting:  
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<http://tabw2.fr.yuku.com>

# Out of the Rabbit Hole

Ayeee!

I'm in that dark, gloomy land of no hope...I sit in the dawn and the years slowly roll along like an old fashioned projector. When first I realized my ex-husband lied, when I first saw him steal, when I saw the first bizarre behavior. Going back to being so naive. It was always there...I married an addict. I married a liar. I married a thief. It was subtle. It was funny. It was forgivable. It was endearing.

Fast forward by a decade...It became disrespectful, inconvenient, embarrassing, and unsteady. He grew bigger to hold his issues; I grew smaller as I hid from them.

When I finally was holding his empty vessel up so it would not sink, I made the unconscious decision that his security and his survival were more important than mine. I became less so that he would not be diminished. I hid accomplishments lest he belittle them. I hid treasures, lest he demanded them. I received gifts only he could boast about, quietly, lest I have them greedily snatched away. They were the only plausible thank you I had. He charmingly took front and center, sweet to my face in private- the façade always only slightly peeling at the edges to reveal an angry stranger. And I died just a teeny bit more with each dawn like this one. As he lost friends and family because they did not do this....he failed to succeed more loudly.

He sabotaged himself. He heaped blame upon others. He handed me his defeat with ire in his eyes, as though somehow I had failed him

by allowing it. His drugs of choice for years were alcohol and pot. I look back now and see clearly when sleeping pills joined the mix. I recall he worked 16-17 days in a row. He was only home to sleep, shower and do it again. I buoyed the sinking ship that was our relationship. He made ridiculous amounts of money, but was always begging from me. Bills he was responsible for went unpaid while he planned parties to impress his friends....now mere hangers-on. What's the saying? Givers have to set limits, because takers never will. Beware your takers, they will pick your bones and become angry when there is nothing left but dust.

When finally the tempest hit that blew his issues out the water into plain view he embraced them with open arms and proclaimed, "Look at how ill I am. Poor me, poor me." And all the eyes of sympathy swiveled in my direction and the nodding and the tsk'ing became a cacophony of silent, "Why didn't you do something?" I remember the empty hall of desperation I walked. The mirrored walls where an old, drained woman stared back at me with pain and defeat in her eyes.

When he imploded completely and wound up in jail, I heard myself utter, "I'm done." And I began the long, agonizing climb up towards the light of day. Up and out of the rabbit hole I had followed him into. Had I fallen? Had I been dragged? Why did I go so far into the darkness? To save him? Who would save me? Was I worth saving? For God's sake, who was I if I wasn't in the business of Savior?

Lest you think for a moment that Families Anonymous is a simple program....if you throw the steps aside in a panic because they are not an Action Plan....if you step into FA to find a posse to ride with you in wild abandon to Save Your Addict. It isn't. It is a slow steady drumbeat to win your Self back from the doldrums. It will put wind back in your sails when you are no longer moving, when you are becalmed. It will loosen the ropes. You. Will. Sail. Again. Trust. It works if you work it.

Trust the steps. Trust you have to learn who YOU are again. You are a Giver that must learn limits.

The sun is peeking out. I must go find it.

Carol~BR.

"IT'S NO USE  
GOING BACK  
TO  
YESTERDAY,  
BECAUSE  
I WAS  
a  
DIFFERENT  
PERSON  
THEN."

LEWIS CARROLL



## AUTUMN SHOWS US HOW BEAUTIFUL IT IS TO LET THINGS GO.

When we let go there is an initial beautiful feeling, freedom from the stress and pressure of trying to control. Then follows the winter or quiet time. Things can look bleak, stark, and dormant. But during this quiet time growth is taking place. Roots are gaining strength, getting ready for the time of new birth. The leaves bud, flowers bloom, the sun is out and everything is warm. Life is good. But change is all around. The cycle of life continues. Just like in nature, some lead a calmer, more subtle life. While others of us lead a more drastic, roller coaster type life, (life with an addicted loved one). Although the more extreme life can seem hard and is painful, there is much beauty when we see our loved ones grow and notice our own growth too. Even during all the ups and downs, I hold onto HOPE for the beautiful days.

Robin T



Photo taken by Alice Q

## 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.

## MAGIC

*"Those who don't believe in  
magic will never find it"*  
Roald Dahl

I've been exposed to many situations and I find that if I look hard enough I can always find something positive. There is much to be grateful for.

My son brought me to this program almost a decade ago - his issues were drugs, alcohol, homelessness, mental illness and stealing from people. I've assisted, helped and eventually stepped aside and let the natural consequences play out. He has been incarcerated for a few years now and has many more to go. However, I've seen him mature and grow in ways I never expected. It's true that there is much that I do not know but when I talk with him and when I get to visit with him, I see a compassionate and loving young man. I have no idea how his life will play out but I BELIEVE that there is a plan for him and in the meantime I am enjoying the fleeting moments that we have together.

France

*Your story  
matters - tell it.*

*Easy Does It*

*Keep It Simple*

# *Letter to My Brother*

Dearest Brother

I think this is the first letter that I have ever written to you. Never ever did I imagine that I would be writing to you while you are in jail.

First, I would like to say that I love you and from my heart (sister to brother), I forgive you.

This letter will hold no blame; it will hold no anger or resentment. To make things clear to you (and I hope you see it in the light of unconditional love), our family has decided that we will no longer stand in your way of recovery. We have come to realize that we partook in your drug addiction by paying your debts, by believing your promises, by underestimating the truth. This stops now. It stops here.

We are sincerely sorry for our actions in scrabbling around looking for you when you go missing, rearranging our lives to make you happy, sacrificing our responsibilities to help you meet yours, either financial or personal, and not allowing you to do for yourself and get better – recover from the demon called drug addiction.

At this time, you are in a situation that only you can resolve. Your addiction has become unmanageable and thus lead to self-destruction in various ways. My advice my dearest brother, is to utilize the services that you are entitled to in jail, whether it be a public defender, drug program, counselling, medication for any illness that is uncovered, and finding yourself in your spiritual ora, educate yourself through books and learn to live sober. Spend your time uncovering who you were, who you are, and who you will rebirth yourself to be.

We have hope for you. Consequences may be great (who knows), but God is greater and will stand by you, and our love for you will never die. You are our brother/son/father to a beautiful daughter who needs you to see her graduate through her life. You are a drug addict. Please get the help you need. We are praying for you and have high hopes that our Higher Power will put you on the right path. Please keep in touch and I hope to see soon.

Love, your sister

## **FA LITERATURE SPOTLIGHT**

### **SPONSORSHIP**

Do you feel you would like to provide more comfort to your fellow FA members?

Are you looking for more guidance and insight about a one-on-one perspective?

For either role of sponsor or sponsee, do you know where to obtain more information on the "ins & outs" of sponsorship?

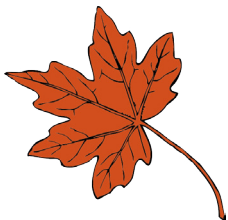
If you are asking yourself any of these questions, FA has the literature that can provide the answers you are seeking; the completely revised edition of Families Anonymous and Sponsorship.

This newly revised twelve page booklet will assist you in answering such questions as:

- *What's involved in being a sponsor?*
- *What are the expectations for such a role?*
- *What makes either the role of sponsor or sponsee so valuable?*
- *Can I give back by being a sponsor to someone?*

This pamphlet will provide you answers to these four questions as well as other questions which you may have with regard to either being a sponsor or sponsee.

Order #1020  
Families Anonymous and  
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*Photo taken by Pamela F*

MAY EACH STEP  
ON YOUR PATH  
GRANT YOU WISDOM.  
MAY EACH STUMBLE  
GIFT YOU GRACE.  
a.a. Malee

## advice FROM a PUMPKIN

BE WELL-ROUNDED  
GET PLENTY OF SUNSHINE  
GIVE THANKS FOR LIFE'S BOUNTY  
HAVE A THICK SKIN  
KEEP GROWING  
BE OUTSTANDING IN YOUR FIELD  
THINK BIG!

## STEP ELEVEN

Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

### FA 12 Traditions

#11 - Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, and TV. We need guard with special care the anonymity of our members as well as those of other recovery programs.

### FA 12 Promises

#11 - We will intuitively know how to handle situations that used to baffle us.



## Memorial Donations



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daughter of David E  
by  
Group 780  
Harrison, NY

In Memory of  
Jennifer M  
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In Memory of  
Chuck H  
Group 1614  
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# Step Nine Reflection: *Made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*

If I could author a book, it would be an autobiography—the title: I Want to Mend My Broken Family. When I was a little girl, life was so simple. I had a wonderful mom and dad, two sisters, a nice home, great school (and I walked to school), great teachers who cared about my future, and all of life's trinkets. Back then, there were no worries because life wasn't complicated. There were rules and values, joy, fun and happy days. We took baby steps through life. We lived in a world of love, respect, trust and honesty. There were family holidays, family celebrations and neighborhood parties and picnics. I went to church with my family and we prayed as a family at the dinner table, giving thanks to God for our blessings. These would be the kind of things that would be in the first chapters of my book.

I always compared my life to "Little House on the Prairie." Why? Because family meant everything. Family was the nucleus of life. Family was special. When people stay away from each other, their strengths get divided. When a family remains a unit, they stay strong and undivided, possessing a collective power to withstand all kinds of trials and tribulations. This is why having a family and keeping it bonded is extremely important and vital to life.

So what would I write about in the next chapters? I guess it would be about the true reality... how my Little House on the Prairie life changed. Change doesn't happen overnight; it happens gradually. The key factor is the separation of family -- deaths, marriages, divorces, second marriages, blended families and new players trying to become part of the nucleus that once worked.

Technology came soaring in, and instead of family discussions and Father Knows Best, the new norm became CNN, sit-coms (inappropriate for most to watch), cell phones, the internet, Facebook, blogs, Twitter, TV series with shootings and violence, YouTube and those appalling video games that held our children captive for hours. Drugs tempted our youth and once they took the first pill, drink or fix, their lives would become a nightmare and the only chance for survival would be a commitment to recovery. This would be the final straw that tore the family apart.

The next chapters would be about mending the family. Darts of doubt started flying at me but I took comfort in knowing that I had done something very right in my life by becoming an active member of Families Anonymous.

Now I segue into Step Nine. Making amends always felt like a bitter pill for me to swallow, but I knew if I was serious about my family, it would be good medicine for both my spirit and my soul. I pondered this step experiencing an epiphany about the definition of amends which once again

circles back to change. Normally simple, but how easily forgotten.

And the book of life goes on. I got straight with myself. I had to move on to make things right with others in my life. I began by writing a poem to my youngest son and sent it to him the first time he was incarcerated. I can't tell you it didn't hurt because it did. I followed my program because it was about detaching with love and letting go. I felt that action was somewhat successful, for the time being anyway.

I then moved on to my husband. We had a very long talk and I openly admitted my wrongdoings. Again this was a change for me. Change is not easy; it's very humbling, but it is part of the healing process. Who was next?

It was my oldest son, Scott. He was, and still is, a tough nut to crack. A telephone call didn't work so I sent a letter. Wrong move--because his wife opens all his mail and is instrumental in predisposing my intents. I bit my lip and bared the pain. My last hope was an email. I sent an apology in an email to my son. He never acknowledged it. End result—it hasn't worked, so I've turned him and his family over to my higher power—God. The caveat to this action is patience.

Then came my daughter. What happened between us, I don't really know; I can only surmise. I tried reaching out, but to this day have not been successful. I know that I can only control me.

My three stepchildren did not become part of the blended family untainted. Drugs were a chapter in each of their lives, bearing the bitter consequences of pain and suffering for the entire family.

I still suffer, but now I understand that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.

I can't write the final chapters yet, but what I can work on is becoming a catalyst for my family. I know I have no control over the outcome or the change in others. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't work. I can't control those who won't accept my amends or recognize the change in me.

What I can do is become a better role model; wish, hope, think and pray that there will be unity in my family again. I can believe; I can hope and I can put all my faith in God. When this does happen, I can write the final chapters, close the book and begin a new season in my life.

I can control me, others I can only love. Today, I will continue to thank my higher power, be grateful for the many blessings He has given me and I continue to pray for the restoration of my family.

Bev C.

## RITUALS

October 26th  
Today A Better Way

Use whatever works! A member of Families Anonymous tells what helps her to let go. "I have a small ritual I perform to help me get off the merry-go-round of worry. Imagining that the on/off switch for worry is an arm's length away, I simply reach out my hand and turn it off. Then I actually take a step forward, as if to get off the whirling carousel of endless fretting."

Another member writes about his problem in the form of a letter to his Higher Power. He then puts the paper in a special container he calls a "God Box." He laughs and says, "It sounds spooky, but it works! Sometimes I realize, weeks later, that the problem has worked itself out!"

"I go for a walk," says a young woman whose husband is an addict, "repeating over and over, 'Let go and let God.' I always return feeling better."

*TODAY I WILL* do whatever it takes to feel sane and serene.

## STEP TWELVE

Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to others and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

### FA 12 Traditions

#12- Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles above personalities.

### FA 12 Promises

#12 - We will come to realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.



# FAMILIES ANONYMOUS WORLD SERVICE

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