

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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LOVE ALWAYS

Once upon a time, there was a young mother who gave birth to a beautiful baby boy. He was so cute and healthy with ten little fingers and ten little toes. She was completely overjoyed that God had blessed her with such a wonderful miracle and she couldn't have been happier! She took the best care of her baby boy; feeding him, clothing him, but most of all loving him with all of her heart. There was nothing she wouldn't do to protect him from harm.

He was a sweet baby, so laid back and easy going. He was such a happy, tender hearted little boy, always so loving. He loved to be cuddled and read to. His mother cherished this time with him and loved his hugs and kisses. As he grew, she did her best to teach him right from wrong. She tried to lead by example and she continued to protect him from all harm. If he was about to touch a hot stove she would run and move him away from it. If he got too close to the road she would grab his hand. If he tried to put something in his mouth that he shouldn't, she was there to take it from him. If he fell and hurt himself, she was there to pick him up, kiss him, and make it all better.

As the years rolled by, he grew

into a very talented young man. He was blessed with both musical and artistic abilities. He had a great sense of humor and attracted many friends. His laughter was contagious and he was a joy to be around. His mother was so proud of him and encouraged him to grow and learn and was his biggest fan. She loved her son so very much! She was his momma no matter how old or big he got, and it was always her job to protect him.

Fast forward just a few years, and he began making some unhealthy choices. He began experimenting with drugs. This behavior in turn created negative consequences for him. His mother was saddened by her son's choices and at first was even in a state of denial. Not wanting him to have to face the consequences of his wrongdoings, she thought it best to save him from the harsh punishments he was about to face and she jumped in to "protect" him. Little did she realize that this was not protecting him at all, it was actually enabling his addiction. That of course was never her intent. To her, she was trying to protect her baby from losing his license, spending a night in jail, having a permanent record, and so on. She thought that by "helping" and preventing him from the wrath

of these consequences her son would be grateful and learn his lesson and everything would go back to the way it was. But instead, no lesson was learned and nothing went back to the way it was. Instead, the cycle repeated itself over and over again and the enabling continued for quite some time.

The mother was confused and scared. What had happened to her bright beautiful boy? Why was he doing this? Why couldn't she protect him anymore? No matter what she did it wasn't helping, it wasn't changing his behavior. In fact, it seemed the more she "helped" the more it continued and the more manipulative he became. However she continued to allow it out of FEAR!

She was scared to death of losing her precious son! If she didn't help him he might leave. If she didn't help him he might think she didn't care. If she didn't help him he might think that she didn't love him. If she didn't help him he might do more dangerous drugs or get into more trouble. If she didn't help him he might DIE! She was paralyzed with these fears, especially the last one. So, she continued to do everything she thought she should

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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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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
Rag Editor

Last fall, groups 278 and 279 of Amityville, NY, lost a dear FA friend and 28-year longtimer who regularly attended two meetings a week. She sponsored many and was an inspiration to everyone in the groups. In dealing with her loss, the groups decided to remember her by compiling a list of her wise words. You can read "Julia's FA Wisdom Remembered," on page seven.

Host Needed for 2016 FA World Service Convention

Any questions please contact
the Convention Liaison chair,
Barbara S at:
barbaras@familiesanonymous.org

Easy Does It

Keep It Simple

One Day at a Time

Topic Ideas

*Is there a topic
you would like to see
covered in the Rag?
Send your ideas to
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&

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Mantras

"Mantras work like an emergency brake on runaway thinking." --Unknown

In the March-June 2010 issue of the Rag, we asked readers what their favorite mantras were. Here is a reprint of those responses.

Let Go and Let God

One Day at a Time

Just for Today

Progress, Not Perfection

This Too Shall Pass

A journey of a thousand miles
begins with a single step.

First Things First

It works if you work it.

We are as sick as our secrets.

Fake It 'Til You Make It

Misery is Optional

Change is a process, not an event.

Do not do for your children
what they could and should
do for themselves.

*Old behaviors aren't old behaviors
if you're still using them.*

Growth will not happen until
I value facing the truth more than
I avoid experiencing the pain.

Start where you are.

Keep it Simple

Live life on life's terms.

Nothing Changes
If Nothing Changes

Cultivate an attitude of gratitude.

Take what you can use
and leave the rest.

Keep Coming Back

TAKING MY LIFE BACK

I have given my children enough of my time, thoughts and sorrow. I have cried enough tears; I have lost enough sleep. I will no longer sacrifice my health, my peace of mind or my vitality, at the altar of their insanity. I have squandered enough of my heart and soul.

I am bowing out gracefully.

I am ready to reclaim my life. It is no longer up for grabs. This is a matter of life or death, and I choose life.

I commit myself to peace: peace in my mind, in my speech and in my actions.

I am ready for freedom: freedom from the melodrama and emotional abuse; freedom to choose happiness that is not dependent on how my son and daughter behave.

I am willing to forgive them, for they know not what they do.

I now distance myself from harmful, obsessive thoughts, and I replace them with thoughts that uplift, heal and love.

I now practice gratitude and I transform my life into one of humble thankfulness.

I accept that, presently, I am but a shadow in my children's life.

I understand that that might change with time. No matter what happens, I know that I am safe and loved, and I can accept whatever unfolds.

I am taking my life back

Anonymous From F.A./
Downers Grove

FA LITERATURE SPOTLIGHT

A New Door Opens

Have you come to Families Anonymous because:

You are feeling like the walls around you are closing in due to substance abuse by a family member?

You feel that your life is too stressful?

You are seeking a place that can physically and mentally bring you some peace of mind?

If these questions are rolling around in your head, you may have found a solution "right around the corner," Families Anonymous (FA)! This fellowship has assisted thousands of people experiencing the same or similar situations you are suffering through. FA has many wonderful and helpful publications which can help you, such as A New Door Opens.

This brief and concise publication serves as a written welcome to FA. It explains our meetings and encourages you to begin your journey of recovery by gaining a better understanding of what you are experiencing; by learning how to avoid codependent actions, and to experience some physical and mental relief from the agony you have been enduring.

So why not "keep coming back" and give Families Anonymous a try. Pick up a copy of A New Door Opens to get a quick snapshot of what FA can provide you and other members of your family. There is nothing to lose, but oh, so much, to possibly gain!

Order #6005

A New Door Opens

Love Always -

Continued from page 1

do to keep her fears from coming true. Through the years, the mother went to all lengths to “protect” and “save” her son...or so she thought. She spent thousands of dollars on bond money, court costs and fees, gas and food money, rent money; she even paid off one of his drug dealers to ensure his safety. She spent countless hours; years of her life, worrying and juggling her schedule trying to figure out how to “fix” things for her son; trying to manipulate life so it was better for him so he wouldn’t be stressed and wouldn’t want to use. Her life had become unmanageable because it was so wrapped up in his addiction that she had no time or energy for anything or anyone else. Her job suffered, her relationships with her other family members and friends suffered, her physical and mental health suffered. She had become as sick as him, in a sense, and she wasn’t the one abusing drugs.

It was so heartbreaking for the mother to watch the precious life that she had given birth to, the healthy beautiful boy that was so full of life and hope, stand before her now withering before her eyes. While she was still trying to “protect” him, bending over backwards to “save” him, doing everything imaginable in her power...it still wasn’t enough. She was unable to keep him from all of his consequences. He went from misdemeanors to felonies, jail time to prison time, death of friends due to overdoses, and loss of trust from friends and family. How could this be? What more could she do?

With the help of others, the mother eventually came to realize that she was “powerless” over her son’s addiction. NOTHING she could

do was ever going to “save” or “protect” or “fix” him. Her son had reached some pretty low lows and had the opportunity for a new start more than once, but it was he that chose to go down that same path over and over again. And it was up to him and only him to choose a different path. That was a very hard lesson for the mother to learn as it was always her job to keep her son safe and protect him from pain and suffering. So all of this effort she was putting forth was not helping anyone! It was actually causing harm to everyone! She had become so enmeshed in her son’s addiction, trying to help him, that she had become like a zombie; lifeless, joyless. The insanity had to end! It was hard for her at first because it was so deeply engrained within her that it was her job to protect her son, but when she began learning that she was not truly helping her son, and in fact she was just enabling his addiction, she started taking steps to get healthy.

She began setting boundaries and actually enforcing them. She flexed her “no” muscle and stood her ground. It was very difficult and many times even heart wrenchingly painful, but she knew she was doing the right thing. It wasn’t that she didn’t want to “help” her son anymore; it was just that she learned that all the effort that she was putting forth was just enabling him. What she was doing now was helping him more than anything she had done before. She learned that if he was uncomfortable and didn’t like the way things were in his life then it should be up to him to make the changes and put forth the effort to change the path he was on; to choose recovery, because no one can choose it for him but himself. No one can save him from himself.

Addiction is full of pain and suffering. Watching her son struggle with addiction has been heartbreaking and overwhelming, but the sooner she was able to understand that it is his journey and that he is in the driver’s seat, the better, because no matter how many times she knocked him off that destructive path with her good intentions, he just kept driving right back on to it and he will continue to do so until he is ready to stay off that road for good.

The mother will never give up hope for her son. She believes in him and she knows that he can choose recovery and live a happy healthy life, but she has learned and has accepted that it is HIS choice not hers. She continues to love him with all of her heart and nothing will ever change that! She will love him always.

Gwen W
Jefferson City, MO

*Your story
matters -
tell it.*



Yoga and the Twelve Steps

The FA World Service Convention 2015 in New Jersey offered a variety of educational programs. Included was a session on Yoga and the Twelve Steps. As a meditation and relaxation technique, Yoga has proved helpful to many FA members. These descriptions offer a guide for working the Twelve Steps through Yoga.

An Exploration of the Twelve Steps Through Gentle Yoga Poses

A principle or element of each of the twelve steps will be embodied in a yoga pose, making this an exploration of our individual relationship with the steps.

Step One - Honesty. Slowing down and observing objectively, insight. Symbolized by the centering at the beginning of the class. The focus on the breath, directing attention, observing bodily sensations - all this symbolic of opening one's mind to accept what is.

Step Two - Hope. Having seen the problem in Step One we now slowly open to the belief that there may be a solution. Sun Breath. Starting with hands in Anjali Mudra (palms together at the center of the chest). Anjali means "divine gift" in Sanskrit - the Grace of recovery. Lift fingertips toward the sky, lifting the gaze (hopeful, uplifting). Arms float down to the sides with palms down (letting go, not doing it ourselves). Continue with the breath.

Step Three - Faith, a willingness to surrender to the process. Floating Lotus Mudra. Once again hands start in Anjali Mudra. Hands open into the lotus, a symbol of our ability to rise out of the mud to bask in the sunlight. Hands float to the third eye chakra, symbolizing intuition, open wide, which we bring back to the heart. We are opening ourselves here to guidance.

Step Four - Courage. The first few steps are largely internal. At Step Four we begin the more rigorous, tangible work of recovery. We get out of the chair, stand up, and begin a more physical practice (pick up the pen as it were). Warrior One.

Step Five - Trust and Connection. Warrior Three, partner variation. Together we deal with something that may otherwise unbalance us to the point of knocking us down. Together we have the strength to lift what otherwise may not be possible.

Step Six - Staying in the moment. Warrior Two. One hand in the past, one hand in the future, the palms are open, willing to touch without grasping, willing to let go. The head, the heart, right here in this very moment. Dynamic moment on the verge of being someone new. A spiritual warrior. Again courage, again willingness.

Step Seven - Humility. Child's Pose or Child's Pose, chair variation, or Child's Pose, two chair variation.

Step Eight - Reflection. Seated Twist, bravely looking back or reaching back to the past with an open palm, ready to release but willing to look.

Step Nine - Forgiveness. Mountain Pose. Standing on your own two feet. Grounded. Reaching up toward the sunlight of the spirit. Vulnerable and open.

Step Ten - Perseverance. Sun Salutation (flowing through several poses with the breath), warrior one variation, or repeat Sun Breath. Here we make the work routine. Steps 4-9 are repeated as naturally as our breath, having become a part of us.

Step Eleven - Meditation. Savasana. Progressive relaxation. Taking time to slow down and listen to the still, quiet voice of God.

Step Twelve - The three components of this step are spiritual awakening, carrying the message and living the principles. The pose is Tree Pose, group circle variation. It incorporates community, balance, focus and commitment.

Special Thanks to Diane D. for providing permission to use this helpful guide.

A Lesson In Letting Go



One of the most important things we learn to do in Families Anonymous is to “let go.” We let go of the people and things that we have no control over, and learn to be happy and live our own, best, lives.

In January, the Downers Grove group of Families Anonymous had to say good-bye to our dear friend and long-time member of our group, Sue R. Sue, like all of us at the beginning of our addiction journey, struggled with “letting go” when she found that more than one of her sons suffered from addiction. As parents, we want to jump in and manage the situation and fix our kids! Sue didn’t want to come to her first FA meeting, but it was a requirement of the rehab where her sons went, so she, begrudgingly, arrived at her first meeting over ten years ago. Once she started learning about the Twelve Steps and was able to get feedback and support from her group, Sue became more comfortable with the program. She eventually applied her knowledge of the Twelve Steps to all aspects of her life, and became a great support for all who came into our group.

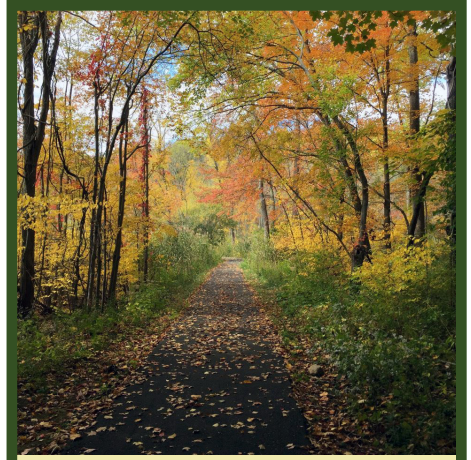
Sue was not a religious person, but was still able to find a “higher power,” perhaps in just the awesomeness of nature. She and

her husband, Tom, raised Monarch and Black Swallowtail butterflies. They have a beautiful butterfly garden, which was designated a Monarch way station in 2014. This is where they released the thousands of butterflies that they nurtured and raised. They gently set them in their garden to spread their wings and fly away. It is so very symbolic of how we practice loving and letting go of our loved ones with the disease of addiction.

Sue was the mother of five sons, a loved and respected preschool teacher, and a cherished family member and friend to many. She was very helpful and always had a smile and a kind word. You always felt at ease around her, and she often led our newcomer groups. When she was diagnosed with cancer ten months ago, Sue was able to use the tools of FA to come to peace with her challenge, understanding that there are some things that we have no control over. Accepting and embracing this knowledge over the past ten or so years, Sue was able to deal with the cancer on her terms, with dignity, grace, and even laughter. She said her good-byes to family and friends, planned her own memorial service (full of life and butterflies), and “let go,” peacefully in the comfort of her own home, as she wished.

Sue was a great wife, mother, and friend, and she will be greatly missed by many. But, in typical Sue fashion, she made her passing easier for all of those she left behind, and taught us all another lesson in “letting go.”

Cathy A. – Downers Grove Group



**In every
walk
with nature
one receives
far more
than he seeks.
John Muir**

photo by Connie D / CT

My New Life

Calling all members !

What do you do for yourselves to cope with and enjoy life.

Is it photography? Yoga?
Painting? Pottery?
Writing?

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

Julia's FA Wisdom Remembered

1. Everything is temporary.
2. Everybody has something important to say.
3. Don't ask questions that you don't want the answers to.
4. Learn to listen without having answers.
5. You don't have to do it alone. In FA you can share your story and find others like you.
6. Don't downplay your issues even if you feel others are going through worse. Your stuff is important to you.
7. We may not relate to others' exact situations, but can relate to the feelings.
8. Don't get in the arena with others. Say what needs to be said and calmly walk away.
9. Don't take what others say about you to heart. If someone told you that you were an orange would you believe that to be true?
10. Don't take others' comments personally. Most times it has little to do with you and more to do with what they are struggling with.
11. They heard it the first time; no need to repeat the same words.
12. When making changes to life that are difficult, keep going forward through it and endure the "divine uncomfortability." It will be worth it.
13. As long as someone is alive, there is hope.
14. I have a choice to either think the best or worst about where my son is and what he is doing. I could choose to visualize him at the beach or lying in a gutter somewhere. Which image is more serene? I choose the beach.
15. Tears are healing.
16. I should try to be the best me I can be despite what others around me are doing.
17. "What did you do for yourself this week?" Reminded me that FA is for Me!! Also, what have you done for yourself today?
18. Just say NO. No is a complete sentence.
19. You don't have to give an answer when someone asks a question. You can say I will think about it and get back to you.
20. It's ok to have a pity party but you can't live there. Feel the pain and sadness and move forward.
21. No news is good news. Don't lie awake worrying. Bad news travels fast. At least if something bad happens, you'll be well rested and able to handle it.
22. I don't do jail.
23. Visually put your loved ones into God's hands. I would visualize God's hands cupped in front of me and me placing my loved one there.
24. Let them have the dignity of their own lives.
25. Just because the phone is ringing you don't always have to answer it. You have a choice.
26. Become like Teflon; let others' comments bounce off or slide off you.
27. Remember, your darkness is just as important as your light. In a picture, the dark images are just as important as the light ones. Both our darkness and our light make us who we are.
28. Make a Gratitude List. Re-read it and add to it often.
29. The only way many of our children learn is by the consequences of their actions. Let them experience those consequences.
30. I remind myself that at times, I visit "that place" (of negativity) but I no longer live there. On program: You cannot keep what you have if you don't give it away.
31. Working the program: Julia's favorite reading (313 of TABW) and topic to lead on.
32. After having "failed" to work my program in a situation, I remember that there will always be another chance to do better.
33. Remember, it's a program of progress, not perfection. Sometimes we take two steps forward and one step back, but it's still progress.
34. It works if you work it; use the phone!!
35. When I meditate, I light small candles for my loved ones and a larger one for me. I blow out the candles and watch the smoke rise, putting them and myself in God's hands.
36. Be kind to yourself. Be your own best friend.

Julia G.

April 26, 1941 – September 3, 2014

Always in our hearts.

SILENCE

November 6th

Today A Better Way

One day I was having a particularly hard time trying not to react to someone's attacks on me. I recalled something that someone said at a Families Anonymous meeting: "I don't have to have the last word."

Remembering this really helped me defuse a situation when an attacker yelled insults at me. I chose not to react in the ways I had before. This time, I silently prayed to get through the incident with dignity. Things calmed down because I had not added fuel to the fire.

Sometimes silence really is golden. So that my silence won't appear to another as sulking or rejection, I busy my mind in thinking about some helpful part of the FA program: a step, a slogan, or the Serenity Prayer.

TODAY I WILL speak only when my words are an improvement on silence.

Trying to get things back to the way they were, or trying to keep them exactly the way they are, prevents them from becoming the way they're meant to be.

--Doe Zantamata



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