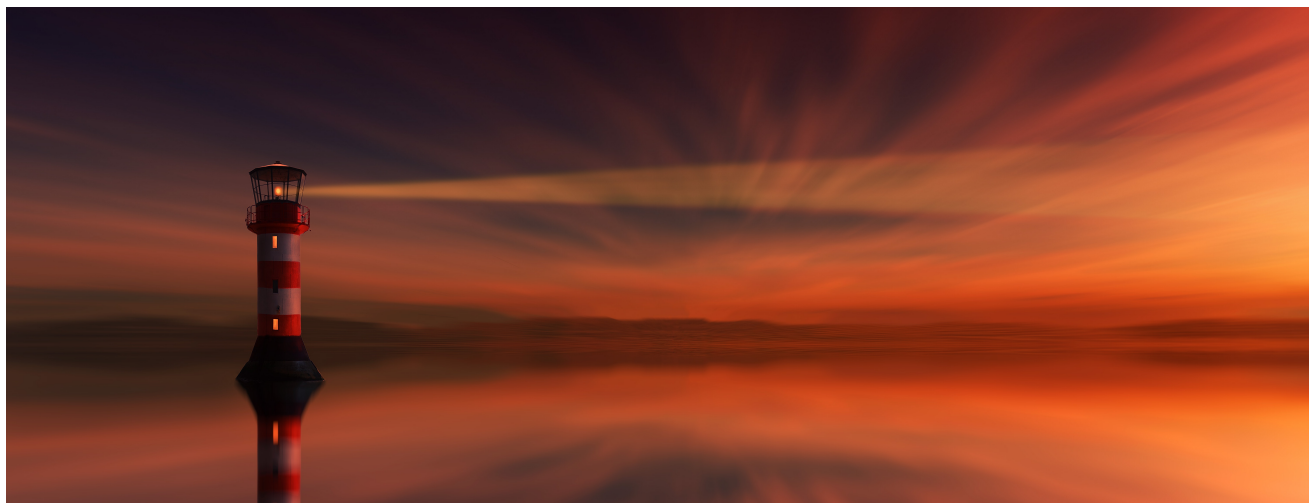


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# THE 12 STEP RAG

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**The Bimonthly Newsletter of the Families Anonymous Fellowship For Relatives and Friends  
Concerned About Another's Use of Drugs, Alcohol, or Related Behavioral Problems**



## In Whose Hands do I Place my Happiness?

*By DeAnna C.*

Before program, my thoughts were stuck in the “if only’s.” If only so-and-so would do this, then everything would be fine. If only so-and-so would stop doing that, then I could be happy. I believed that. Today I realize the fallacy of such thinking.

My efforts to change someone else led to anything but my happiness. It actually has led to sadness, frustration, anger, fear, worry—getting farther and farther away from happiness.

Why all of this concentration on changing someone else, anyway? Why is it so hard to

live and let live? Is it because I want someone to fit into a mold I have created for them? And when they don’t, I want to make them different? Or is it because I am filled with fear and won’t let go of the idea that

I can still DO something that will make a difference? Does

my need to fix and solve drive all of my actions and my very being?

Do I keep

interfering,

refusing to stop,

clinging onto the illusion of control, when deep down I know I am powerless and it is best to release them with love to their greater Power?

Maybe I am the one who needs to do some changing.

---

**Why all of this concentration on changing someone else, anyway? Why is it so hard to live and let live?**

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For the greater part of my life, my happiness has hinged on the behavior and actions of others. I did not know that I was responsible for and could claim my own happiness. I did not believe that I could be okay while there were unsolved problems in my life. I have always needed others to be okay, for me to be okay. Not easy when life throws a bunch of painful growing lessons your way.

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**Today I make the choice  
to live it one breath, one  
minute, one day, one  
Step at a time.**

---

So this is a lesson I am learning. My well-being cannot come from others. I need to take care of that on my own. The best way I have learned to do that is to practice self-care (physical, spiritual, mental, and

emotional) and to turn over the people in my life to their loving Higher Power. Believing that is what is best for us both is hard. But I know that the things I used to do, and the way that I used to live, do not work. I don't know what is best for someone else. And when I interfere, try and dictate, force

solutions, become consumed with destructive loops of thinking, or saddle them with my fearful thoughts, I am actually causing harm. To them and myself.

I received this powerful message recently and I felt it's simple truth. "You cannot force anyone to do anything, in particular those who are addicted; you cannot change them, but only send them love and prayer and leave them in God's hands. If you try to control them, they will take your own life away." -Swami Sachinanda



Today I choose to work all of my program, which tells me that I need to focus on myself and leave the rest to my Higher Power. I have but one precious life. Today I make the choice to live it one breath, one minute, one day, one Step at a time.

**Join the Families  
Anonymous discussion  
at [www.tabw.org](http://www.tabw.org)**

## Serenity is Mine

*By Donna K*

The grief I felt when this was new—not as heavy anymore

Someone special invited me in, they opened up a door.

The arms I found within were opened very wide,

My feelings shattered, my life laid down I cast aside my pride.

The black was there, as black as the bottom of a well that wasn't used at all,

The pain so overwhelming I felt any minute that, like many before me, I was about to fall

Into the chasm before me oh so deep

Never to find my way back my sanity to keep

I was in so deep that in order to be heard I had to shout

But there they were, a fellowship, and they helped pull me out.

Grief can really pull you down, make you feel you'll never see the light.

FA is the kind of group that helps you fight the fight,

Puts serenity within your sight.

It takes some work to keep it close, it takes some work and time,

But anything worth having does,

Serenity is mine.

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## The 12 Step Rag

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12StepRag@FamiliesAnonymous.org Editors: Lilly C.  
and Elizabeth S.

## The Need for Step 10

By Diane S.

Boy, do I need a daily inventory to keep myself honest. As I read my materials and work to apply them to my life and recovery, I sometimes find myself slipping closer and closer to some old habits, like giving unsolicited advice.

I will read something and think about how it applies to me and my circumstances and then begin thinking: This would be helpful for so-and-so. She/he needs to read this. Or, my son would do well to heed this advice. I am going to make a copy for him.

Fortunately, that is often, but not always, when the alarm bells go off. DANGER!! DANGER!! DANGER!!!! WORK STEP 10!!!

As I think about it, Step 10 is not only about the good or bad we have done in a day, but just as importantly, it is our opportunity to guard our boundaries and shore them up where they are weak so that we can cut short any movement toward violating them.

When I honor and respect my boundaries as well as those of others, and accept responsibility only for my thoughts and actions, then it is less likely that I will be inappropriate and need to make amends. My daily inventory will be more focused on commending myself

for the progress I am making in recovery and uncovering those areas where I need to make improvements or work harder.

Dealing with the possibility of a “slip” is much better than having to deal with the aftermath of a real “slip.”

I already have enough amends to make. I don’t need to keep adding to the list.

Does that mean that I will never pass on new ideas or information I have learned? Of course not! What I will do is not jump to conclusions

about someone else’s knowledge or their needs. Should an appropriate opportunity or a request for assistance present itself, I will share. What I am leaving behind is my judgmental mentality.

If I become aware that someone might benefit from a piece of information or an idea, I will first and in a respectful way ask if they would like to hear what I have to offer. If they say no, then that is that and I will not take it personally. If they say yes, I will provide information and facts only — no judgment, no criticism, no sarcasm. I will remain neutral.

Since I am in active recovery myself and it is a lifelong process, I don’t expect to be perfect at this, but with time I know I can improve. I’ve learned this through my time working all 12 of the steps, going to my meetings, and turning it all over to my Higher Power.





## Sweet Serenity

*By Jerry W.*

The key to our serenity is in God's hands  
We know The Steps, we've made our plans  
Now it's up to us to decide, my friends  
Just how much we want to win

Our actions and our thoughts of mind  
Can turn the tide and make us shine  
But if we waiver and fail to act  
We'd best prepare to face the fact  
There will be no serene place for you  
And we'll not stand with the Chosen Few

It's when we determine to give our all  
To charge ahead and never crawl  
The sun will shine, the pain will depart  
And we'll transcend the faint of heart  
And take our place as strong women and men  
Embracing sweet serenity like a long-lost friend

I leave you with these final words  
Which the uninitiated will find trite and absurd  
The key to our serenity is in our hands  
We know The Steps, we've made our plans  
Now it's up to us to decide, my friends  
Just how much we want to win...



## Hope

*By The User's Parent*

Weakened by  
loss of dreams.  
Something human  
removed from me.

My denial,  
serenity denied.  
Searching always,  
for hope,  
I gave up  
and asked.

He answered;  
Yes, it was Him.  
Hope arrived  
just in time.

## An Addict Fell in a Hole...

A businessman went by and the addict called out for help. The businessman threw him some money and told him to buy himself a ladder. But the addict could not buy a ladder in this hole he was in.

A doctor walked by. The addict said, "Help! I can't get out!" The doctor gave him some drugs and said, "Take this. It will relieve the pain." The addict said thanks, but when the pills ran out, he was still in the hole.

A well-known psychiatrist rode by and heard the addict's cries for help. He stopped and asked, "How did you get there? Were you born there? Did your parents put you there? Tell me about yourself, it will alleviate your sense of loneliness." So the addict talked with him for an hour, then the psychiatrist had to leave, but he said he'd be back next week. The addict thanked him, but he  
 \_\_\_\_\_was still in the hole.

**"Calm down. It's okay.**

**I've been here before. I know how to get out."** A priest came by. The addict called for help. The priest gave him a Bible and said,

"I'll say a prayer for you." He got down on his knees and prayed for the addict, then he left. The addict was very grateful, he read the Bible, but he was still stuck in the hole.

A recovering addict happened to be passing by. The addict cried out, "Hey, help me. I'm stuck in this hole!" Right away the recovering addict jumped down in the hole with him. The addict said, "What are you doing? Now we're both stuck here!!" But the recovering addict said, "Calm down. It's okay. I've been here before. I know how to get out."



## Who is my Higher Power?

*By DeAnna C.*

*"Only the relationship we have with ourselves and God within can promise the gift of security."*

I know this in my heart now. I didn't used to. And that's why I was always in flux with whatever event/drama/crisis/chaos that was going on in my life or the lives of those I loved. There was no "going within" for me. No reaching for, or allowing my Higher Power to ground me in the ever-present peace that exists there. Instead, I was always reacting, poorly, until the crisis passed...then back to status quo once things settled down. This is impermanent, nonsustainable, and exhausting.

It's not too much to say that I handed over my life to other people. I most certainly had not handed it over to my Higher Power—other people became my Higher Power. I allowed them to dictate how I felt. If they were okay, I was okay. If they weren't, I wasn't. Simple. The merry-go-round, the roller coaster, the yo-yo, whatever analogy you like to use. I was able to live that way for a very long time. Until the roller coaster ride threw me off and I landed with a splat.

Time to learn a new way. I'm still learning. BUT...I will give myself credit for what I have learned thus far. I have learned that it is very painful to live on the roller coaster. I no longer care to. I have learned that the fastest way for me to get off of the roller coaster is to realize that I have gotten on it. Awareness is the beginning of change.

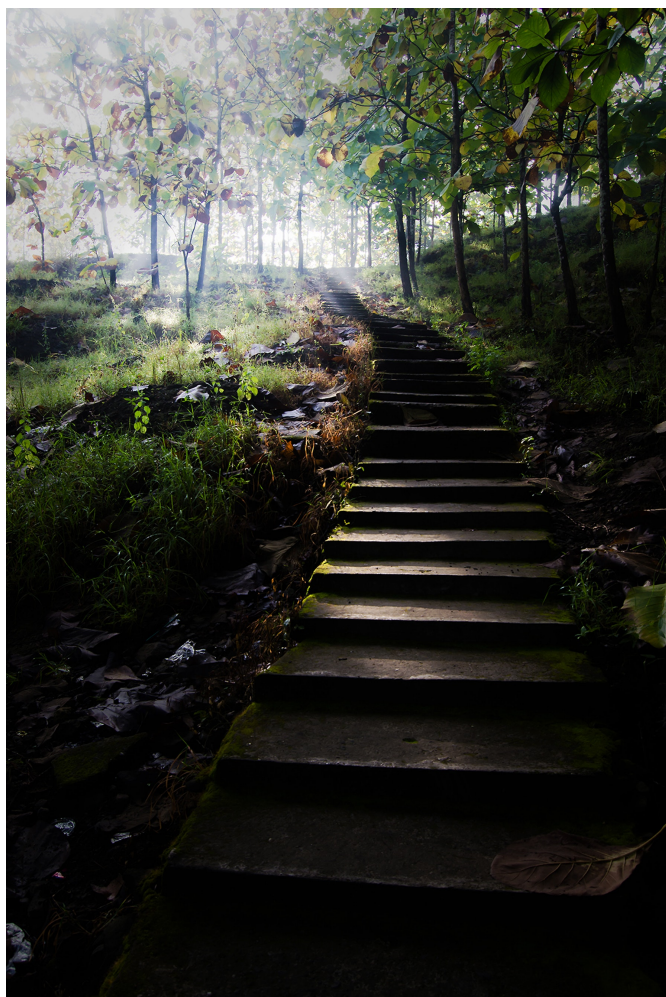
More often than not these days, my program leads me to decline the ride altogether. Nope, not doing that. That works well for my day-to-day stuff. It's easy for me to recognize what has my name on it and what doesn't anymore. But sometimes the roller coaster takes me by surprise, hits me from behind, and forces me to get on. Now what? I have options. I don't have to panic. I don't have to rush in and fix. I don't have to get pulled down into fear. I put the brakes on and give myself a moment to slow down and to think. What's the next right thing?

I close my eyes, and I breathe myself into that quiet, calm, sacred space. I get still, connect, and wait. That divine space first tells me that I am okay. I am safe. Then it often tells me to wait. Or if action is required, a thought will surface and I will follow that guidance. The thought may be to call someone. Or I will feel the absolute truth that doing nothing is best.

I have learned that I can trust myself. Because my Higher Power exists within me every bit as much as it exists outside of me. My HP wants the best for me. Wants me to ask for guidance. Wants me to follow it. Tries to get my attention

in so many ways. Am I looking? Am I listening? Do I do what it has been teaching me? Sometimes. Not all of the time. But the difference for me now is that I ask for, and then trust that, the guidance will come.

I know today that other people cannot be my Higher Power. I cannot place my happiness or my stability on what, or how, someone else is doing. That will always lead to upheaval. So I do the work of the Steps. I uncover who I am. And through that work I will learn to trust myself —my true self, which is where I will also find God. "Only the relationship we have with ourselves and God within can promise the gift of security."





## Collateral Bitterness

*By Mark McP.*

I wanted to share one of my long-running struggles that surfaced again. I've often spoken in face-to-face meetings about how conflicted I was over my family of origin and their continued heavy social drinking. There is a practical aspect to this, as I find it very difficult to attend and participate in events with so much good nature drinking going on. But after this latest slip my unresolved bitterness towards my own family came back to me with real intensity.



Years ago when we first encountered alcoholism in my family in my household I was naive enough and ignorant enough to assume that everyone in our family and in my wider family of origin would give up alcohol in solidarity and support. I was soon enough disabused of this foolish notion but over time the continued uninterrupted drinking of those around me wore on me and troubled me.

I had to bring this aspect of addiction directly into my own program because unexamined, it was leading me to counterproductive resentments and anger towards people around me who cared about me and who were trying to be supportive and sympathetic in the best way they knew how. In the aftermath of this

latest slip it all came right back up to the surface to the extent that I had to specifically turn this over to my higher power. What came back to me this morning was the idea that in the very same way that I have learned to have compassion for my qualifiers, I need to have compassion for those around me, friends and family, who continue to drink notwithstanding the negative

consequences that I have encountered. If I hold those others to a harsher standard then I would my own qualifiers it will only undermine my compassion towards them as well. And the other thing that occurred to me

was that I have no idea whether or how often or how seriously people around me have suffered their own consequences or maybe under their own degrees of compulsion. I suppose it is always been an obvious, but not to me, aspect of the whole powerlessness thing. But it's taking me a very long time to have this perspective and I'm grateful for it.

### **SEND US YOUR SUBMISSIONS!**

**Each of us has a story to tell. The Twelve Step Rag needs to hear from you. Without member involvement there is no Rag. Submissions can be emailed to [12steprag@familiesanonymous.org](mailto:12steprag@familiesanonymous.org) or mailed 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!**

# WORKING THE PROGRAM

*Taken from September 19th reading of Today a Better Way, Provided by Lisa C.*

Through Families Anonymous, I've received an unexpected education about myself. What have I learned, and what is the result?

| I have learned...                                     | Practicing (P)<br>Not Practicing (N) | Results                             | Desire to Change (Y/N) |
|---|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
| That there is nothing I can do to change my ALO.      |                                      | I have given up worrying.           |                        |
| To let my ALO be responsible for his/her own actions. |                                      | I have laid aside a burden.         |                        |
| That I am important and deserve a happy life.         |                                      | I have let go of anger.             |                        |
| To stop lecturing, plotting, rescuing, and nagging.   |                                      | I have lessened my frustration.     |                        |
| That my ALO's illness is not my fault.                |                                      | I have abandoned my guilt.          |                        |
| To detach from my ALO's problem                       |                                      | I have gained a sense of freedom.   |                        |
| To look at my faults and my good qualities            |                                      | I have started to grow.             |                        |
| To set limits   |                                      | I have gained structure in my life. |                        |
| To love my ALO unconditionally                        |                                      | I have stopped hating.              |                        |
| To laugh again  |                                      | I have rediscovered life's joys.    |                        |
| <i>(Additional thing learned)</i>                     |                                      | <i>(the result of that)</i>         |                        |

*From Lisa C.: FA has been so beneficial to me. Besides teaching me how to love and communicate in a healthy way with my ALO, it has helped me heal emotionally from the wounds of warring with addiction in my family. Recently, I led the meeting for our group and while trying to decide on a topic I came across "Unexpected Education". I took the examples listed and created a self-assessment worksheet for our group so we could make a personal evaluation of ourselves. It also gave us the opportunity to share our experiences and victories. It was a very insightful meeting.*



## What If?

*Sue D. shared her "What If" exercise she did a year ago with the FA e-meeting as a way to help her focus on positive actions in her recovery, instead of negative reactions.*

What if:

I had faith that everything would be okay in its own time?

I trusted God?

I am right where I am supposed to be, right now, regardless of what is happening?

I loved each member of my family today?

I trusted my Higher Power to provide all the resources and guidance I need to handle whatever comes my way today, or ever?

I believed my ALO has her own Higher Power who is orchestrating her life?

I gave love, and not advice?

I let others solve their own problems?

I said "I love you, and I know you can figure this out?"

I allowed my ALO the same dignity to make her own decisions—even bad ones—in the same way that my Higher Power allows me to make mine?

I focus on my own recovery instead of someone else's?

I offered a hug instead of hurtful words?

I let go of the past?

I treated others the way I want to be treated?



## Consider Sponsorship

*By Sylvia S.*

Sponsorship is an honor, and in my view, a fluid relationship of mutual support. I became a sponsor after many years in FA, and I believe that I receive as much as I give. My sponsee and I have busy schedules that make it difficult to meet at specific times. However, we meet up when we can, and we trust that we are always there for each other.

I believe that there is no one way to sponsor. The idea of sponsorship is that the sponsor, being in the program longer, can share with the sponsee some of the concepts, wisdom and encouragement he or she has learned along the path to recovery. The pairing of two people who appreciate and respect each other can be a powerful tool as we navigate life's challenges.

In my experience, meeting with another, one on one, creates a more relaxed atmosphere for sharing. These interactions are not structured, as a meeting is, and so the results are different. I believe that both are healthy ways to a robust recovery.

I encourage all FA members to consider sponsorship as a wonderful way to deepen our relationships and further our growth in the program.



## WSB Announces Update to Tradition 11

At the 2018 FA Annual Business Meeting, the delegates approved a minor change to the wording of FA's Tradition 11. The wording in **BOLD TEXT** below was added to Tradition 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, **TV, and any other public or private media.** We guard with special care the anonymity of our members as well as those of other recovery programs"

The FA World Service Board recommended this change in recognition of the significant impact of the internet and electronic social media.

Over time, the FA literature committee will update any FA materials containing the wording of Tradition 11 as each piece is due for update. In the meantime, this change to Tradition 11 should be considered as the "official" version.

If you have any questions or concerns, please let us know by calling the World Service Office at 847-294-5877, or via email at [famanon@familiesanonymous.org](mailto:famanon@familiesanonymous.org).



**JUNE 7-9, 2019**

## **FA WORLD SERVICE CONVENTION** **JOIN US IN ATLANTA THIS SUMMER!**

The conference opens with a Friday evening welcome event. Saturday will include guest speakers, a choice of 3 workshops, evening festivities and breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Sunday concludes the conference with breakfast and morning worship options. We hope you will find this year's conference an opportunity to remember we are not alone, we are among friends, and together we can share ourselves and our experiences so that we may find strength, hope, serenity, and even joy in our story.

This year's conference will take place at the newly-renovated Atlanta Marriott Perimeter Center located in metro-Atlanta. The hotel is easily accessed via MARTA, Atlanta's mass transit system, from Hartsfield Jackson International Airport, or via Uber, Lyft, or taxi. A MARTA station is located adjacent to baggage claim in the airport, and the hotel is a 7-minute walk (0.4 miles) from the Dunwoody Station.

### Register Today!

Registration Forms and Information at  
**[www.faconvention.com](http://www.faconvention.com)**

REGISTER EARLY for a chance to WIN a FREE  
CONVENTION REGISTRATION FEE

**Raffle Rules to Win a Convention Registration Fee Refund:** The one raffle winner will be refunded their full \$185 Registration Fee. Each attendee's form with payment will make them eligible for raffle tickets as outlined below. The drawing will be held on Friday, June 7, 2019, during the Friday Meet & Greet. You do not have to be present to win. You just need to Register Early!

The postmark will determine the cut-off date for raffle tickets. Raffle tickets will be awarded as follows:

Registration postmarked by February 15, 2019, will earn 3 Raffle Tickets  
Registration postmarked by March 15, 2019, will earn 2 Raffle Tickets  
Registration postmarked by April 15, 2019, will earn 1 Raffle Ticket

The hotel is offering reduced conference rates for two days before and after the conference. Consider spending some extra time in Atlanta while you're here! The following attractions are located among the MARTA system (all within a 10-minute walk): Centennial Olympic Park, CNN Center & Tour, College Football Hall of Fame, Downtown Decatur, Georgia Aquarium, High Museum of Art, Margaret Mitchell House and World of Coca-Cola. Other local attractions include the Atlanta Botanical garden and the Atlanta History Center (both 25-minute walks from MARTA) and the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum.

## GROUP DONATIONS

June to October 2018

*As per the Seventh Tradition, each group should be self-supporting. Your donations help support the activities of the World Service Office. For more information on how to donate, please visit [www.familiesanonymous.org](http://www.familiesanonymous.org) and click Donate Now. If your group is missing from the list, please email [12StepRag@familiesanonymous.org](mailto:12StepRag@familiesanonymous.org) to be included in a future issue.*



Make a Donation

- |                              |                       |                           |                      |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
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| • Chicagoland Intergroup, IL | • Essexville, MI      |                           | • Madison, WI        |

## Memorial Donations

In Memory of Marta,  
daughter of Angela and Giovanni  
From Group 1533  
Tenafly, NJ

In Memory of Keith P.  
From Group 1806,  
Edmond, OK

In Memory of Alexa W.  
From Group 1961  
Chicago (Gold Coast), IL

In memory of Jonathan H.  
son of David and Sherri (group 2030)  
From Linda and Howard S.

In Memory of Ray C., who was  
a devoted member of Group 1739 (Laurel MD) for several  
years until his recent passing.  
From Group 1739, Laurel, MD

