VOLUME LVIII ISSUE III | MARCH/APRIL 2021

# SERENITY MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FAMILIES ANONYMOUS FELLOWSHIP

FOR RELATIVES AND FRIENDS CONCERNED ABOUT ANOTHER'S USE OF DRUGS, ALCOHOL, OR RELATED BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS



VOLUME LVIII ISSUE III MARCH/APRIL 2021

# SERENITY MESSENGER

Newsletter of the Families Anonymous Fellowship

### **EDITOR'S NOTE**

In India, where I live, the second wave of the pandemic is raging. Images of grief, and the news of someone familiar who has succumbed, have become a numbing daily reality. Our social media is choking with cries for oxygen cylinders, ventilators and hospital beds. The promise of another day seems bleak, and the future truly uncertain.

At a time like this, I've been reminding myself of the FA slogan one day at a time. The suppressed, familiar feeling of being out of control because of my father's addiction is in the pit of my stomach once again. Even when we're extending help and volunteering, we are worried about what might happen, or that it is too little. When this is over, what will our neighbours and even our home FA groups be like?

Though we are in different parts of the world, we have all experienced, at some point, the uncertainty and fear the pandemic can bring. But over the past year we have also experienced the solace that FA brought us when we walked into our first meeting, though this time by being able to connect with each other online. In our weekly FA meetings that we begin and close with the Serenity Prayer, we are asking our higher power for serenity for times like these – times over which we are powerless, times which are beyond our control – that we may be able to accept them. And after we have done, we ask that we may have courage – courage to do whatever is in our power. To reach out to someone, to offer help where we can, to care for ourselves, to read our FA literature, and to be grateful for the one life given to us.

IN FELLOWSHIP, ELIZABETH



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### Word From The Board

#### IF NOTHING CHANGES, THEN NOTHING CHANGES

"If nothing changes, then nothing changes." A phrase that is used all the time in our FA literature and at our meetings. At no time has this been more pertinent to the Families Anonymous fellowship itself.

"The times they are a'changing" (Okay, I'm big on other people's quotes.), and we must move along with the times or become irrelevant.

Never has FA faced so many challenges. With Covid breathing down our necks, and meetings going virtual, the basket is no longer being passed around the room. This is the first of our challenges. No basket means that no (or almost no) group donations are coming in. The next challenge is no face-to-face meetings, and no literature being displayed, which is causing a sharp drop in our literature sales. Virtually the only money coming in is individual donations, which have risen but not nearly enough to offset the other declines. Covid has also eliminated our annual convention.

I hate to say this, but these are FA's only sources of income, while our expenses have remained essentially the same.

The World Service Board has been working hard on ways to raise and save money. Our Treasurer has looked at every expense and renegotiated every contract that she could.

Even if we survive the Covid crisis, we will need to do more to bring about a change. The conclusions that the WSB came to are: 1) We need to raise our numbers. The more members we have, the more income comes in. 2) We need to "get our name out there." How else do we attract more members and form more groups?

There is no way to do this without change, but how do we bring ourselves up to date? Perhaps social media can be our way into the public eye? It's not perfect, but maybe we can find a way to do this while keeping ourselves as true to our Traditions as possible.

### CHAIR Barbara S. - Cherry Hill, NJ

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#### SERENITY MESSENGER

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### Word From the Board

(Cont'd)

A new term for the World Service Board will start June 12th, at our Annual Business Meeting. **We need more WSB members to help us get it right.** Something has to change. If you want to make your opinion count and add your voice to the discussion, join the WSB to make your thoughts known. In order to survive, we must increase public awareness of Families Anonymous.

The WSB is made up of many committees, each of which has a role in this process. If you are unwilling or unable to step up and become a WSB member, but you still want to help, we urge you to think about joining a committee. There are several to choose from: Literature, Public Information, Group Outreach, Long-range Planning, to name just a few. Each committee is headed by a WSB member.

We need your help! Please contact me at <u>wsb\_chair@familiesanonymous.org</u>, and I will gladly give you the information you will need to help us light the way.

YOURS IN SERVICE, Barbara S. WSB Chair In order to survive, we must increase public awareness of Families Anonymous

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### I NEEDED RECOVERY AS MUCH AS MY ADDICTED LOVED ONE DID

### How an FA member found hope in the fellowship

I came to FA thinking my son was the "problem." I was not looking for recovery for myself. I was not the one with a problem! I garnered my strength out of sheer determination, and I could get through and "fix" anything.

After I settled into the program, I waited for the magic to happen. For "these people" to tell me how to fix my family and my son. They didn't. They (just) kept, simply, telling me about their own experiences, strength and – odd to me at first – their hope. They talked about "working the Steps" – but I didn't know how – and no one was stepping in to volunteer to be my sponsor. I began to become less invisible. I attended meetings, I joined the E-meeting, I went to some retreats and conventions. I "dove into the pool" and began to ask questions. One of the best questions I asked was of another member, "Will you be my sponsor?" and she said, "Yes, if you will do the work." And I did!

I am now in recovery for 12+ years – from my own obsessions, compulsions, vulnerabilities and codependency. I can best describe my recovery as a "silver lining." Not invited or comfortable, but a spiritual awakening. While addiction takes the spirit out of our loved ones (and we recognize that), we fail to see that our own spirit goes missing, too.

In the process of becoming so "right" about most things, and fueled by emotions that didn't serve me, like anger, resentment, fear and desperation, I became sick myself. And I questioned my own faith. And I lost hope. I was dead to me and of no help or support to my own family. I was dispirited.

Working this program was like water to a dying plant, food to a starving person. I awoke from the dead. Rather dramatic? Maybe. But when people began to say, "I don't know how you do it" (stay positive with my son as a backdrop), I began to understand how I did it (honesty, openness and willingness). And despite my son's chaos, I started to feel stronger. Not the "right" way, but I was practicing a "better" way and was supported in a new way. I found recovery in FA four years before my ALO (addicted loved one) found recovery in NA, and he now has 8+ years in recovery. There are now days, even months, when I feel some



fatigue in continuing to "work" it. The measure of progress today doesn't have the same momentum as when I first came into the program, but my local group and the E-meetings have become my family, and each meeting avails an opportunity: to share, to unload, to support, to reload.

None of us is alone. In all our affairs. And in today's climate, that's a very important thing to know and embrace.

JOANNE



### **GROWING IN OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE FA PROGRAM**

My husband and I look forward to Wednesday nights at 7 p.m. No matter how busy the day has been, or how many additional tasks need to be done, we stop what we are doing to be on time for the Wednesday night Hauppauge Families Anonymous virtual meeting. We have never physically been to Hauppauge, but each week we are welcomed as valued members. If we miss a meeting (which is rare), numerous people text to check on us.

Hauppauge is a healthy group for a number of reasons. There are several standout characteristics of the group's organizational structure that maintain that health. Members take turns at the start of each meeting to read The Families Anonymous Basic Pamphlet (#1001). These readings provide comfort and connect us to the core principles of the FA program. The readings speak to each of us where we are in the moment and often, when our hearts and minds are open to it, lead us to a shared recovery experience. Almost every week, the person who reads Helping smiles as they offer that reading – as it is a favorite – sometimes bringing us to tears.

Topics chosen by the leader from the "red book" – Today A Better Way (#1015) – frame our weekly sharing. Connecting to the FA literature keeps us grounded in the program and focused on hope and our recovery – not on the chaos or sorrow that at times still plagues us. After someone reads from the red book on that day's topic, everyone listens as others speak – this is our time to be completely heard, unconditionally understood. The leader provides encouragement to those who share, and we feel connected to others who have walked in our shoes and will help carry us when we stumble.

It is okay to be emotional, shed some tears, or not read or share at all – we are accepted where we are each time we enter the room.

The first week of the month is a Step meeting where we read, reflect and study one of the Traditions and one of the Steps. Unpacking the Traditions and Steps in an intentional manner fosters a shared experience and helps each of us grow more deeply in our understanding of the FA program. Taking turns reading aloud these and other pieces of FA literature is often transformational. When we read aloud we are confronted with the meaning of the text in a more personal way than when reading silently to ourselves. Many times each of us experiences an aha moment that supports our recovery. It is okay to be emotional, shed some tears, or not read or share at all – we are accepted where we are each time we enter the room.

Finally, the guidance offered by some of the group's long-time members helps sustain a closeness, camaraderie and feeling of acceptance at a time in our lives where we often feel vulnerable and alone. We hope to someday travel to New York, to meet some of the members in person, but until that day we look forward to Wednesdays and are grateful for the opportunity to grow and recover by following the FA program.

SARA B.

### **NEW! VIRTUAL GROUPS ORGANIZED BY DAY**

Incorporating FA Tips for Staying Calm During the Pandemic

Have you ever had one of those days where you wish you could attend an FA meeting ASAP? Our home groups are like family, and are the backbone of our recovery journey. But sometimes, we need extra support from a meeting on days when our home group isn't meeting.

It's also reassuring to know that you can find a meeting on those occasions when your schedule conflicts with that of your home group.

Click below to access the area of the FA website that contains a list of groups meeting virtually, organized by day:

#### Directory of Face-to-Face Groups Meeting Online - Organized by Day

The World Service Board (WSB) would like to thank Aviva B. from the Mahwah, NJ FA group (#1735) for suggesting this.

Remember...if you have any suggestions on how the WSB could better provide support to the fellowship, we are grateful for your input.

### **A JUMBLE OF THREADS**

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Recently I purchased a sweater in a striking pattern of grey, pink and aqua. When I turned the sweater inside out, it somehow reminded me of the way my life was before Families Anonymous – just a confusion of thoughts, a jumble of threads. You wonder how all those threads could turn out so beautiful. It made me think that practicing my program is much like my sweater – a maze of threads that will eventually flow into something beautiful.

Each week, as we seek to change, another coloured thread is added. At first, there are days of great confusion and pain – our grey days. But as we persevere, the motif starts to show, and the muddle of threads (our life before FA) starts to emerge into a beautiful piece of work.



We have to work hard, follow the program, practice the Steps, slogans, and the Serenity Prayer. Take it "one day at a time" for this to work into a definite pattern (way of living). If we rely on the program and our Higher Power, we can get control of our lives and be part of a pattern uniquely suited to our individual taste.

When all the colours blend each day, a beautiful design emerges. We call this design serenity. This is what we strive for! It takes devotion and faith and one day at a time, week by week, for the pattern to show. Even though it sometimes seems difficult or monotonous, we finally have a showpiece – a new life.

So, if you slip or have a bad day, think of your personal sweater and its jumble of threads on one side and a personal masterpiece on the other (right) side. Only you can decide. And with your Higher Power's guidance and help, and by practicing the program, you can knit (make) your own pattern that will be uniquely yours and truly beautiful.

PATRICIA #1770 FREEDOM GROUP, WINNIPEG, MANITOBA (REPUBLISHED FROM THE TWELVE STEP RAG, MAY-JUNE 2014)



Want to learn more about how your FA group can thrive and grow? Go to <u>familiesanonymous.org</u>, click on "Members" and go to "Group Materials," where you'll find an array of helpful, informative publications concerning group dynamics and management.

Still have questions? Send an email to GO@familiesanonymous.org.

Have a great meeting!

### **THE POWER OF FRIENDSHIP**

You, sitting across the room, you may not know this, but I call you my friend.

You, sitting in the back or beside me, you may not realize this, but I call you my friend.

You, who answers my calls in the middle of the night, you who has the patience to hear my story over and over again, I call you my friend.

When I was in a place of hopelessness and desperation, feeling shamed and disappointed, embarrassed and depressed, I found the power of friendship.

First by one, then by many.

I came looking for an answer and found much more.

Wisdom, compassion and friendship.

We may not meet for coffee, make plans for a movie, or chat about the weather, but I call you my friend.

You share my world that others do not understand.

I share yours in more ways than you know.

I think of you, cry for you, hope for you, and cheer for you.

Why? Because I call you my friend.

Today I will cherish the gift of friendship that I have found in Families Anonymous.

FA = Friendship Abundance

MARCI G. #1318 (REPUBLISHED FROM THE TWELVE STEP RAG, MAY-JUNE 2014)









## LITERATURE SPOTLIGHT

#2003-3 Contempt to Respect

### Contempt (For What They Do) to Respect (For the Potential within Them)

While contempt is a very human emotion, it can also be quite destructive. Thus, the greater your efforts in striving to go beyond "contempt" and converting this emotion into a feeling of "respect," the more peace you can bring upon yourself.

This valuable new FA publication walks you through the journey of realizing the dangers of holding onto a generally pessimistic outlook on life, which is associated with feeling contempt. A pessimistic outlook will affect your life, even beyond the specific addiction issue of a loved one that drove you to this feeling of contempt. Removing this pessimistic outlook can steer you onto the healthier path of respect.

Contempt to Respect will take you through ...

- Recognizing Contempt
- Letting Go of Contempt
- Defining Respect
- Bridging the Gap Between Contempt and Respect
- Building Respect for Our Addicted Loved Ones
- The Positive Effects of Respect

... as well as other aspects of this challenging, but quite rewarding journey.



If this new publication sounds as though it would be beneficial to you, please consider purchasing a copy of **Contempt to Respect** (#2003-3) from the Families Anonymous website at \$2.75 per copy. This is a small price to pay for hopefully bringing additional peace into your life.

<u>Click Here</u> to purchase your copy today!



### Grandparenting in Families with Addiction: A Mindful Act of Hope and Love

Many of us are experiencing the joys and love of being grandparents. While our grandchildren can and do bring us much joy, as with many other things in life, there can be another and darker side to this equation. The joy of being a grandparent can be seriously hampered when a grandchild is battling the family disease of addiction – be it drugs, alcohol or any other addiction. While you certainly feel for your grandchild, at the same time, you must look out for your own well-being.

This 40-page booklet is chock full of information, wisdom, hope and personal experiences. The booklet won't tell you what to do, but instead it will give you tools to guide you through the process of making decisions that are best for you.

While this specific publication is aimed at grandparents, it is also helpful for parents, counselors, legal advocates, social workers, educators, health providers, the clergy, and others.

Bottom line, those dealing with a loved one, client, patient or flock member will find this publication valuable for finding a path to serenity, and useful for "being things" to a child (of any age) who is dealing with substance-abuse issues.

Grandparenting in Families with Addiction: A Mindful Act of Hope and Love (#1031). For your own serenity, or that of someone you know, please consider ordering one or more copies of this valuable publication. They are available on FA's website, under Literature, at \$4.25 a copy. You won't be disappointed!

Grandparenting in Families with Addiction: A Mindful Act of Hope and Love (#1031). For your own serenity, or that of someone you know, please consider ordering one or more copies of this valuable publication. They are available on FA's website, under Literature, at \$4.25 a copy. You won't be disappointed!

<u>Click Here to purchase your copy today!</u>



### FORGIVING OTHERS AND OURSELVES

Do you want peace? Do you want happiness, a quiet mind, a certainty of purpose, and a sense of worth and beauty that transcend the world? Do you want a quietness that cannot be disturbed, a gentleness that can never be hurt, a deep abiding comfort, and a rest so perfect it can never be upset? Forgiveness offers you all of this.

Today a Better Way says, "Forgiveness is the spiritual foundation for recovery." I had to come to terms with the loved ones that brought me to FA, to realize that they weren't doing this just to aggravate me. They didn't get up one morning and say to themselves, "I think I will become a drunk or an addict today." They wanted to be normal and have fun just like everyone else; they wanted to fit in. Unfortunately, it wasn't in the plan for them.

Forgiving starts from the inside and works its way out. I believe that is the closest to "God-like" that I will ever attain. A side benefit of forgiveness is patience. The FA program has allowed me to really understand and embrace patience and tolerance. No more "God give me patience and I want it RIGHT NOW!" We have to start by forgiving ourselves so we can begin to forgive others.

One of the side effects of forgiving myself was that it lifted heavy burdens from my shoulders – burdens like guilt, anger, resentment and hate. Once those feelings were gone I could be open to personal growth, to nurture my potential, and claim responsibility for my own fate. We have to start by forgiving ourselves so we can begin to forgive others.

Another benefit of forgiveness is gratitude. Because I am not all wrapped up in resentment, I can be grateful for what I see and experience. I never really saw a sunset before, or a beautiful smile, heard the laughter of children, or experienced the peace of a walk in the woods. Forgiveness has allowed me to develop a greater appreciation for what my children did for me. They helped me grow up and appreciate the little wonders of life, and see things through the eyes of another. They brought me to a program that I didn't need, or so I thought at the time. Best of all they brought great people into my life, people that care and understand what my wife and I have gone through. People who are supportive and are there for us. What better definition of friends can a person have?

Forgiveness is truly a precious gift.

It works if you work it!

ANONYMOUS (REPUBLISHED FROM THE TWELVE STEP RAG, NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2005

THINKING OF SUBMITTING AN ARTICLE OR ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE SERENITY MESSENGER?
For our upcoming issue the deadlines to submit articles and announcements are June 15th and June 23rd respectively.

Email us at <u>newsletter@familiesanonymous.org</u>. We'd love to hear from you!

# DONATIONS

### **Commemorative Donations**

- In memory of Michael Patrick M., by his mother, Patricia M.
- In memory of Michael W., son of Karen W., by Group 469: Hicksville, NY
- In memory of Bill C., by Joseph and JoAnne M.
- In memory of Ryan S., by Dr. and Mrs. Franklin
   F.
- In memory of Ryan S., son of Pat and Brian S., by Roger and Mary Ellen S.
- In memory of Ryan S., with thanks to the S. family for all the work and comfort they provide., by Suzanne and Jim N.
- In memory of Ryan S., by Patrice and Rick B.
- In memory of Ryan S., by Mary B.
- In memory of Ryan S., son of Pat S. member of Group 173., by Group 173: Park Ridge, IL with their deepest sympathy.
- In memory of Kenneth H., beloved FA Friend., by Group 1097: Merriam KS
- In memory of Ken H., by Gloria B.
- In memory of our beloved Bill C. "Your ego is not your amigo". He was a treasured member of our group and we will miss him dearly. Bill always reminded us to tell our quantifiers that we loved them., by Group 494: Winnetka, IL
- In memory of my FA Leader's son Mark Joseph. They provided comfort and unwavering support to me and so many others in our group. May they find the support they need at this difficult time., by Diane E.S.
- In memory of Eric D., by Group 1615: Birmingham, MI

### **Group Donations**

- GR0121 CA, Torrence
- GR0134 FL, So Miami
- GR0171 IL, Arlington Heights
- GR0173 IL, Park Ridge
- GR0177 IL, Gurnee
- GR0252 NJ, Summit
- GR0279 NY, Amityville

- GR0469 NY, Hicksville
- GR0478 IL, Glenview
- GR0494 IL, Winnetka
- GR0641 CA, Redlands
- GR1097 KS, Shawnee Mission
- GR1301 NY, Syracuse
- GR1531 AZ, Scottsdale

- GR1651 E-Meeting
- GR1773 WI, Madison
- GR1833 Canada, Winnipeg
- GR1836 FL, Delray Beach
- GR1974 NY, Syosset
- GR2136 CO, Fort Collins
- Literature Committee

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 and click DONATE NOW!

Thank you for supporting the many activities of FA World Service.

Your contribution is tax-deductible.

