

VOLUME LVIII | ISSUE IV | MAY/JUNE 2021

SERENITY MESSENGER

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



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FAMILIES ANONYMOUS FELLOWSHIP

SERENITY MESSENGER

Newsletter of the Families Anonymous
Fellowship

EDITOR'S NOTE

We all have been in a dark place at some point. In a lost state, not knowing what's next. Though our lives are different from each other's, our struggles are similar. In FA, we share a quiet confidence that we have a common language, a basis for understanding one another. That when we're sharing how we feel, whether stuck, depressed, encouraged, we need not be worried about how we are perceived. Fellow FA members who listen and hear us out are around to walk with us. They try not to judge us, do not give us advice on how to solve all our troubles, or interrupt us. Though our groups may not be perfect, we know they are places we can just be. Something many of us have not been able to do since addiction entered our lives.

Addiction separates us: from our loved ones from whom we have to detach; from others around us as we hide from them the shame that we feel; and from ourselves, as we forget who we are without our efforts to keep our worlds from falling apart. Many of us walked into FA feeling isolated. To step into a room with other people could have felt strange; to hear our own voices tell our stories could have been awkward. But in our meetings we felt relief. It's not as if FA erases our struggles or fixes our lives. Our loved ones may still not be in recovery. But we learn that we need not suffer alone, because we are not alone. FA teaches us that there are aspects of healing that we can experience together. Coming to a meeting, listening to others, speaking our truths, laughing, building trust with each other, we begin our recovery. The feeling of complete aloneness is abated, at least for a while, when we know we have company on our journey.

Even in these uncertain times, our physical survival depends on how responsibly others act. Physical isolation has caused many people to feel anxiety during the pandemic, a reminder that we were not made to live and struggle alone. No matter where we are in our recovery, we can enjoy the growth and happiness that sharing with one another as a community brings. The journey may be a long one, but we can walk together.

IN FELLOWSHIP, ELIZABETH

Contents

- 02 EDITOR'S NOTE**
Elizabeth
- 03 WORD FROM THE BOARD**
David M.
- 05 LETTING GO MEANS HAVING NO AGENDA**
Rupa S.
- 07 FOCUS: GROUP**
Group 279, Diane G.
- 08 A COINCIDENCE IS GOD'S WAY OF WINKING AT ME**
Dan
- 10 CALL TO RE-REGISTER**
- 11 LITERATURE SPOTLIGHT**
- 12 DONATIONS**

WORD FROM THE BOARD

My story began in May 2002, when my life had become unmanageable and there was little joy or happiness in any part of my existence. My loved one, who had brought me to the program, had shown no signs of changing or being able to fight his horrible disease for the previous seven years of his life, and I had given up hope that I could find a way to “fix him.”

It was in desperation and with a sense of hopelessness that I begrudgingly agreed to go with my wife to a Families Anonymous meeting, which I was sure would be a waste of time. What I found there were people who were telling their stories that in many ways were an expression of my own unspoken horrors. Several of their stories were even more tragic than mine! I was confused as to how these people could smile, laugh and seem to have a peace about them, even as they told their sad tales.

I kept coming to the meetings to try to understand what these people had done and had learned that enabled them to smile and laugh when I could not. After many months, I began to understand what the FA readings meant. Now I read from Today A Better Way (the “Red Book”) every day.

In time, I became one of those who could talk about their loved ones: what poor choices they made, how difficult they had made the family environment. And yet I could still love him and find some peace and joy in my life. I was utterly amazed at what this FA group had been able to do for me.

I helped make coffee and set out the literature before the meetings. I volunteered to be the treasurer of our group. I helped lead meetings. I wanted to help others, and I wanted to pay something back to FA.

I joined the World Service Board (WSB) in 2014. I served as a “member at large” for three years, on various committees, including long-range planning, public information, and financial oversight. I also served as the WSB treasurer for 4½ years.

Anyone can volunteer for any of the committees in which they have an interest or some talent to share.

CHAIR

Maria S. - Bradenton, FL

VICE CHAIR

Marcia C. - Glenview, IL

TREASURER

Cindy C. - Alpharetta, GA

RECORDING SECRETARY

Eileen S. - Roswell, GA

BOARD MEMBERS AT LARGE

Ann P. - Cazenovia, NY

Barbara S. - Cherry Hill, NJ

Chris Y. - Bradenton, FL

Chris Z. - Metuchen, NJ

Greg C. - Parrish, FL

Helen L. - Corinth, Greece

Jeff S. - Roswell, GA

Marc B. - Mayfield Heights, OH

Michael B. - Lafayette Hill, PA

Bob S. - Bradenton, FL

Sara L. - Madrid, Spain

SERENITY MESSENGER

Families Anonymous Inc.
701 Lee Street, Suite 670
Des Plaines, IL 60016 USA

newsletter@FamiliesAnonymous.org

EDITORIAL TEAM

*Elizabeth S., Bob S., Nicole G.,
Pamela M., Chris Y., Marcia C.*

Copyright 2021 by Families Anonymous, Inc. ("FAI").

All rights reserved. Except as permitted in connection with regular FA meetings as provided in PPG-06, this publication may not be copied or quoted, in whole or in part, without the express prior written permission of FAI. FAMILIES ANONYMOUS, FA, the Stylized FA Logo, and SERENITY MESSENGER are all trademarks owned exclusively by FAI.



WORD FROM THE BOARD

(CONT'D)

Greg C. will succeed me as chairperson for the Financial Oversight Committee. This committee has three members, two from the WSB and one from the general fellowship. It is responsible for the quarterly review of FA's monthly financial statements and issues an annual report on the fiscal-year finances.

During my time on the WSB, I have been overwhelmed by the dedication and commitment of my fellow board members. They are not only from all parts of the USA, but several are from countries around the world. While on the board, I have learned that for FA to survive and continue to grow and prosper, our local groups need to support the WSB not only with their contributions, but with individuals who donate their time and talents. No board member receives any pay, but the reward of working with great people for a great cause cannot be quantified or measured.

I strongly encourage anyone who is considering wanting to do something for FA, and for yourself, to join the WSB and be part of a wonderful and fulfilling experience. You will not regret it!

YOURS IN SERVICE,
DAVID M.

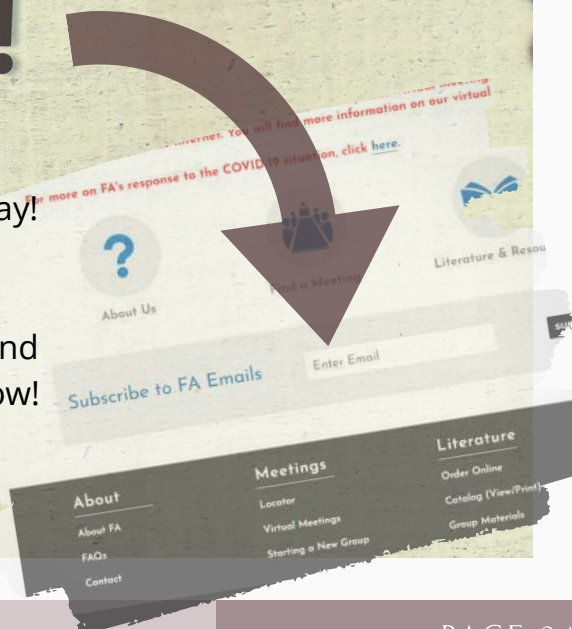
After many months, I began to understand what the FA readings meant. Now I read from Today A Better Way (the "Red Book") every day

SIGN UP TODAY!

If you don't want to miss an issue of the SERENITY MESSENGER and other FA announcements, subscribe to FA Emails today!

Visit familiesanonymous.org, scroll to the bottom of the homepage, fill in your email and hit Subscribe. It only takes a minute - do it now!

NEW
SLETTER



LETTING GO MEANS HAVING NO AGENDA

Rupa S Shares How Caring for Her Recuperating Father Helped Her Heal

It has been a long journey of 15 years in Families Anonymous, with many learnings and unlearnings.

In FA, I've learnt that I need to be easy on myself if I want to experience the fullness of life. However, it's taking me a lifetime. Long before being exposed to an addict at home, the spontaneity of expressions had died down in me. In FA, I learnt that this was the natural effect of being a daughter of a once-alcoholic father. I liken the seemingly liberal yet controlling manner that shows in his raised voice, even today, as a sign of his being a dry drunk.

It has been a love-and-angst relationship with my dad for more than five decades. When I was as little as seven, I was separated from my parents and younger siblings for want of good education, and I was admitted to a convent school 3,000 kms away. The effects that showed up in me were akin to separation anxiety, manifesting as runny nose, sinusitis, fits, frequent bedwetting, all bundled up for the thorough introvert that I was. I was clouded with low self-esteem and poor verbal communication skills.

During the recent pandemic when my dad, 87 now, contracted COVID-19 pneumonia, he was admitted to a hospital. I had the opportunity to stay with him all through his nine-day hospitalization. Then I continued to nurse him once he was back home and recouping. The term letting go had been on my mind for a while. I realized that letting go in a relationship would only be possible after finding fullness in that relationship. The separation anxiety had likely created an insidious neediness and clinginess in me, typical characteristics of my codependent personality. It took me years of using the tools in FA, which became like a mirror, that led to awareness and increased frequency of auto-correction.

When I think back on my Dad's dentures, which I held in my palm to clean after his return home from the hospital, they felt so human. In all these years I had never seen the dentures so close. I imagined the dents and curvatures on them to be fitting well on to his palate, helping him savour his food. I started brushing them with some toothpaste and ended up with a smile, noticing the tar marks left behind between the artificial teeth. The tar was the tobacco he chewed more than two decades ago; he had not replaced the dentures since then. The fullness of my feeling was something intangible, so complete. In my completeness there was no room for angst. There was a letting go of all old, unwanted feelings, as if a long-hanging umbilical cord had at last dried and was ready to fall.

— “ —

I realized that letting go in a relationship would only be possible after finding fullness in that relationship.

— ” —

Not wanting to enable my dad, aiming for him to become independent and do things for himself except for the initial stage of around six days at the hospital, I donned the role of a very patient but strict daughter attending to him, until one day his infantile speech returned to his normally authoritative one.

LETTING GO MEANS HAVING NO AGENDA

(cont'd)

Letting go implies not having an agenda in a relationship. Slowly I'm practising this with others, one by one. As I do so, envy surges its head frequently as my ego begins its game of comparison. I then reflect on my limitations and decide to accept them, while at the same time looking for my assets so as to feel good about myself.

I ended up thanking my Higher Power for the gift of the invaluable time with Dad at a time when he needed being attended to with utmost care so as to keep his spirits afloat. This giving of my undivided time was the catalyst to my healing.

RUPA S., INDIA

— “ —
In my completeness there was no room for angst. There was a letting go of all old, unwanted feelings, as if a long-hanging umbilical cord had at last dried and was ready to fall.
— ” —

THINKING OF SUBMITTING AN ARTICLE OR ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE SERENITY MESSENGER?

For our upcoming issue the deadlines to submit articles and announcements are August 15th and August 23rd respectively.

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



Want to learn more about how your FA group can thrive and grow? Go to familiesanonymous.org, 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!



FOCUS: GROUP

GROUP 279
Amityville, New York

BASIC STEPS FOR HEALTHY FA GROUPS

FA Amityville started about 40 years ago. At that time, Al-Anon literature was used. Today we all agree the “Red Book” (Today A Better Way) and other FA literature have been important to our recovery.

Our meetings start promptly, and the sign-up book is passed for members to indicate that they will lead a meeting. At the first meeting of each month, our topic is the Step and Tradition for that month (Step One and Tradition One in January, Step Two and Tradition Two in February, and so on), with different members leading, reading and sharing.

Our warm and welcoming greeting to newcomers includes handing out a Welcome! packet and a telephone list of our members. We encourage newcomers to try at least six meetings to see if the program is for them. We also encourage them to ask any questions they may have concerning the program or to talk with someone after the meeting. We invite them to share what brought them to the program and to phone another member between meetings if their shares resonate or their challenges sound similar.

— “

We practice rotation of leaders to avoid dominance, and we conduct a group conscience when necessary. We read “The Four Destructive Forces” at every meeting and emphasize no crosstalk or giving advice.

— ” —

Some basic steps keep our group healthy. We hold business meetings approximately every three months. We practice rotation of leaders to avoid dominance, and we conduct a group conscience when necessary. We read “The Four Destructive Forces” at every meeting and emphasize no crosstalk or giving advice. Our treasurer handles the finances to purchase literature and sends donations to the World Service Office.

Our Public Information Committee does regular outreach to the community. One way they do this is by reserving and working an FA literature table at public meetings. They also make sure our group contact information is included in local newspapers, along with how to contact FA’s World Service Office.

Amityville currently meets online using GoToMeeting, but we are looking forward to returning to face-to-face meetings so we can greet each other in person again.

DIANE G.

A COINCIDENCE IS GOD'S WAY OF WINKING AT ME

Incorporating FA Tips for Staying Calm During the Pandemic

My name is Dan, and I am a grateful 34-year member of FA living in Madrid, Spain. I have been coming to the program long enough to know that I want to continue seeking prolonged recovery from the effects of the family illnesses of addiction and alcoholism.

During my journey in recovery, I have had plenty of opportunities to work on resentments with both my sponsors.

I came into the program burdened with many resentments towards my mother. I blamed her for all my trials and tribulations with romantic relationships and challenges regarding my sexuality, and I pointed the finger at her for passing down character defects to me.

Talking to one of my sponsors, it was becoming apparent to me that I needed to do fresh work in this area. Resentments kept resurfacing, sometimes subconsciously, but regardless they were affecting my present-day interactions.

“

To gently reflect on the past without staring; to recognize that she was doing the best she could at the time, with the tools she had; and to then move on.

”

He suggested that I list my grudges towards my mother from childhood and that we discuss them together. Namely, to acknowledge what had happened in the past, but to then move on and not keep being dragged down by my past grievances. To gently reflect on the past without staring; to recognize that she was doing the best she could at the time, with the tools she had; and to then move on.

It was late one Tuesday night, and I was due to talk with my sponsor the following day, just before our Madrid home group meeting. I finished up writing my email, containing the grudges towards my mother, and then hit Send. I went to bed and got some good rest.

I phoned my sponsor the next day, and he asked if I had had the chance to send over my list of resentments. We have experienced some technical hiccups in the past, so we thought my email could have gotten lost in cyberspace. My sponsor double-checked his inboxes, and the email was nowhere to be found.

At that moment, I reviewed my Sent folder. To my shock and horror, I saw that I had sent my list of resentments to my mother! I was in a state of panic and did not know how to react. We had about ten minutes to go before our Zoom meeting. The timing could not have been better, since the person I was speaking with was a loving, supportive, fellow FA member. And little did I know that I was about to jump online to a Zoom meeting where I would be overwhelmed with messages of support, both during the meeting and after it ended.



INVITING ALL TO OUR CHICAGO INTERGROUP SPEAKER SERIES VIA ZOOM. EVERY 6-7 WEEKS WE PRESENT PERTINENT INFORMATION AND TOOLS FOR HEALING.

JUST GO TO [FACHICAGO.ORG](https://fachicago.org), CLICK ON THE NEWS HEADING AND FOLLOW US THROUGH THE YEAR.

A COINCIDENCE IS GOD'S WAY OF WINKING AT ME (CONT'D)

Afterwards, I spoke to my father (who is in recovery), my sponsor, and another program friend I have been grateful to get to know, thanks to the pandemic.

My sponsor helped me see this as an opportunity. He couldn't have been more right. I decided to phone my mother the next day, explaining that it was an honest mistake and she was never destined to see that email. I said lots of prayers before calling her. I apologized sincerely for what had happened, made it clear that these were old feelings, and expressed how much I love her.

She was very hurt but heard me out. I can't begin to imagine attempting to work through such a challenging crisis without the wonderful help of the program. This was not a mistake in my eyes, but a Higher Power-gifted opportunity.

A coincidence is God's way of winking at me. A friend from across the pond used a boxing euphemism to remind me that they *'will always be in my corner.'*

DAN, MADRID, SPAIN

Every year Families Anonymous asks that groups re-register at the beginning of the year. This can be accomplished (a) by filling in an online form at familiesanonymous.org or (b) by downloading and completing the physical form and returning it via text or email.

Annual re-registration is important for providing the FA office with up-to-date information on existing groups and meetings. It is also the only way to ensure that our website includes complete and accurate meeting information that FA members and the public can access.

If you have knowledge of any of the following groups, please re-register the group(s) as noted above, or let us know the status by sending an email to dmc@familiesanonymous.org or calling 800-736-9805.

Thank you!

#354 – Brookfield, WI; #816 – Verona, NJ; #1719 – Montpelier, VT; #1856 – Flemington, NJ; #1990 – Wintersville, OH; #2014 – Ann Arbor, MI; #2047 – Lawrenceville, GA; #2069 – Macedonia, OH; #2083 – Washington, PA; #2084 – Poolesville, MD; #2096 – Lambertville, NJ; #2124 – Chicago, IL; #2128 – Norcross, VA; #2130 – Brownstown, IN





LITERATURE SPOTLIGHT

#2003 HC The Helping Collection of Three

The Helping Collection Of Three For A Lesser Fee #2003 HC

Here is your opportunity to buy a collection of the first **three** booklets of The Helping Series and pay just **\$5.60**. Also included with the collection is a **free copy of "Helping!"**

This \$7.75 value can be yours for only \$5.60 – a saving of \$2.15 over the cost of buying each piece separately.



ALL THREE BOOKLETS + THE LAMINATED BOOKMARK = \$5.60 (a saving of \$2.15)

- #2003-1; Negatives to Positives - alone \$1.75
- #2003-2; Fear to Faith - alone \$2.50
- #2003-3; Contempt to Respect - alone \$2.75 (New!)
- #2003; Helping bookmark - alone \$.75

[Click Here to purchase #2003HC today!](#)

The three little booklets in this collection add dimension to the first three "I will change..." phrases in the first paragraph of "Helping." They clarify a vital part of our FA recovery program which we call "a change of attitudes."

Consider buying this collection for yourself - and for other family members and friends who might be in need of some FA help.

Owning these three pieces of FA literature will provide you with three mini resources on hand to review.

It will still be possible to buy these booklets and the bookmark separately at their regular prices. **THIS COLLECTION IS A GREAT BUY! DON'T MISS OUT ON THIS OPPORTUNITY!** Call the Families Anonymous WSO (at 847-294-5877) and order **The Helping Collection #2003HC for \$5.60**

or [Click Here](#) to purchase through the FA Website

DONATIONS

Commemorative Donations

- In memory of Steve E., a faithful and longtime member of Group 1844, by Group 1844
- In memory of a fine young man, Ryan S., by Thomas and Michele P.
- In memory of David T., son of Celine R., by Group 2070



Group Donations

- GR0134 FL, So Miami
- GR0171 IL, Arlington Heights
- GR0173 IL, Park Ridge
- GR0270 NY, Massapequa
- GR0278 NY, Amityville
- GR0279 NY, Amityville
- GR0288 OH, Pepper Pike
- GR0478 IL, Glenview
- GR0641 CA, Redlands
- GR0746 IN, Evansville
- GR1301 NY, Syracuse
- GR1345 NJ, Cherry Hill
- GR1522 IL, Chicago
- GR1561 VA, Charlottesville
- GR1615 MI, Birmingham
- GR1844 WI, Mequon
- GR1974 NY, Syosset
- GR1978 VA, Richmond Lakeside
- GR3001 IL, Chicagoland
- GR4002 OH, N Ohio Intergroup
- GR5001 UK National Service Board
- GR5005 Italy National Service Board

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.