

VOLUME LIX | ISSUE VI | NOV-DEC 2022

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

I love the end of the year and the opportunities it provides to visit my aunts and cousins. It's the only few days when some members of my immediate family are able to detach from the grind of their work. The creative energy of cooking Christmas goodies and making holiday DIYs takes me back to the times of my early childhood, when everything was perfect and my father was involved and sober.

While I enjoy many aspects of the holidays, I dread the share of unpleasantness that comes with them. Though I enjoy cooking, I find myself grudgingly obsessing over everything on the dinner table, while the rest of my family is just socializing and having a good time. I find it difficult to ask others to help out. I inevitably get into disagreements with one family member about how things ought to be done. We end up rubbing each other the wrong way, no matter how hard we try to maintain peace.

For some of us with addicted loved ones, these days can be more triggering than for others. We might find ourselves grieving over all that isn't. We are often reminded that our lives, our families, are not postcard perfect. We might have to explain to others why our loved ones are not around; or if they are around, our minds might overwork themselves worrying about what could go wrong. Some of our addicted loved ones may use the holidays as an excuse to abuse substances more freely and openly. Being exposed to a lot of social drinking and substance use, in an effort to be 'merry,' can be a trigger for some. I remember my mother's face when my dad would not just begin Christmas mornings with his homemade wine, but also gave us children tiny goblets of the wine to taste.



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Thanks to the program, we now know better than to take it all lying down. We can demonstrate the courage to make the year-end a time that replenishes us, not depletes us. When our boundaries are tested, we don't have to relent. We can set limits with family members about what is acceptable

and what isn't. If being part of social occasions or meeting certain people is not what we want to do, we can opt out. Holidays don't mean a resignation of our ability to choose.

Most importantly, we can stop comparing our lives to what is marketed to us as perfect holidays and faultless families. There are many different ways of winding down. We can choose a place of fun or quiet self-reflection. We can continue to practice gratitude and living one day at a time. We can, above all else, give ourselves the gift of serenity.

IN FELLOWSHIP,
ELIZABETH S.

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

For our upcoming issue the deadlines to submit announcements is January 23rd.

We gladly accept submissions of original articles, letters, poetry, or artwork at any time!

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

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Vice Chair

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Serenity Messenger

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FOCUS: GROUP

FA SECRETARIES TELL US ABOUT THEIR GROUPS

Unity in Families Anonymous

One of the most important principles of Families Anonymous is unity. Our groups promote unity by their common purpose and goals and by their use of FA's five basic readings, FA literature, and an approved format during their meetings. This allows members attending a meeting anywhere in the world to find a familiar program where they can feel at home.

And, yet, each group is different, with its own style and personality. Tradition Four says, "Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups or FA as a whole."

Here are some responses from secretaries regarding what contributes to their group's individual identity:

#2153 is virtual and Spanish only. It's a new group, having been in existence just since July 2022. Being welcoming is of the utmost importance to the group. The meeting begins with introductions and ends with members staying back to answer questions and spend time with newcomers. Within 24 hours of a meeting, new members are sent an FA welcome letter and the group's phone list.

The group is highly organized. Several members meet every two months to plan upcoming meetings. At the planning meeting, they assign each week's speaker and leader, along with a topic. They also invite special speakers* and long-term FA members to address their group. Each meeting includes six readings (the five basic readings plus The Three Cs x 2). The chat feature gives the FA website address and information about purchasing FA literature.

#2108, Nashville, TN, has been meeting for five years. Each new member receives a welcome email from "Your FA Family," explaining the format of the meeting, providing the FA website address, and giving a heads-up to look for a weekly email with the Zoom link.

The group schedules a Step meeting the first week of each month, and once a month they also include a special speaker* from outside the group. Prior to Covid19, the group met in person. Then they became early adopters of Zoom meetings. They have decided to remain with the Zoom format since they now have members from Chicago and Memphis who attend regularly.

#1915, St. Petersburg, Russia, has become primarily a fathers' group, although mothers are welcome and occasionally visit the group as well. They have been meeting for 15 years and welcome newcomers with applause. They have Step meetings, topic meetings, and sometimes invite a speaker to share their recovery experience.

#2056, Bradenton, FL, was founded about eight years ago. Since going virtual, they have been getting new members not only from the surrounding area but also from even farther away. Just as with in-person meetings, this group has some newcomers who come and stay, some who return once or twice, and some who leave never to return. They are careful to give newcomers a copy of the group's phone list, help them get literature, and encourage them to try at least six meetings. The meetings have approximately 12 to 14 attendees.



“ Unity is fostered by our common practices; strength is added by our uniqueness. ”

Unity is fostered by our common practices; strength is added by our uniqueness. The availability today of virtual meetings and hybrid meetings, in addition to traditional in-person meetings, affords an opportunity to see first-hand the uniqueness of different groups.

What does your group do to attract and retain members? To be featured in the Focus:Group section of the Serenity Messenger, send an email to GO@familiesanonymous.org. Please be sure to include your group's name, location, and contact information (phone number and/or email address).

**Note: Special guest speakers may be professionals who work in addiction-related fields, are familiar with and believe in the strength of the Twelve Steps, and can address issues of codependency that are directly relevant to FA members. Their presentations must be informational only and may in no way contain solicitations for organizations, programs, products, or businesses in which they have an interest.*



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!

HOPE FOR THE HOLIDAYS

A FATHER REFLECTS ON MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT HIS SON'S CARE DURING CHRISTMAS

As I reflect on my nearly eight years in FA (and my seven years before FA dealing with an addicted loved one in my family), I remember plenty of holiday seasons that were a bit of a dog's breakfast. I remember trying to have happy holiday memories for the little ones while worrying about where the older ones were spending their time and how they might come home. As we began to explore how to take back our lives again, my wife and I sought help from a number of sources: professional counselors, our son's intensive outpatient program (IOP), then his rehab, and finally FA. We learned quite a bit along the way.

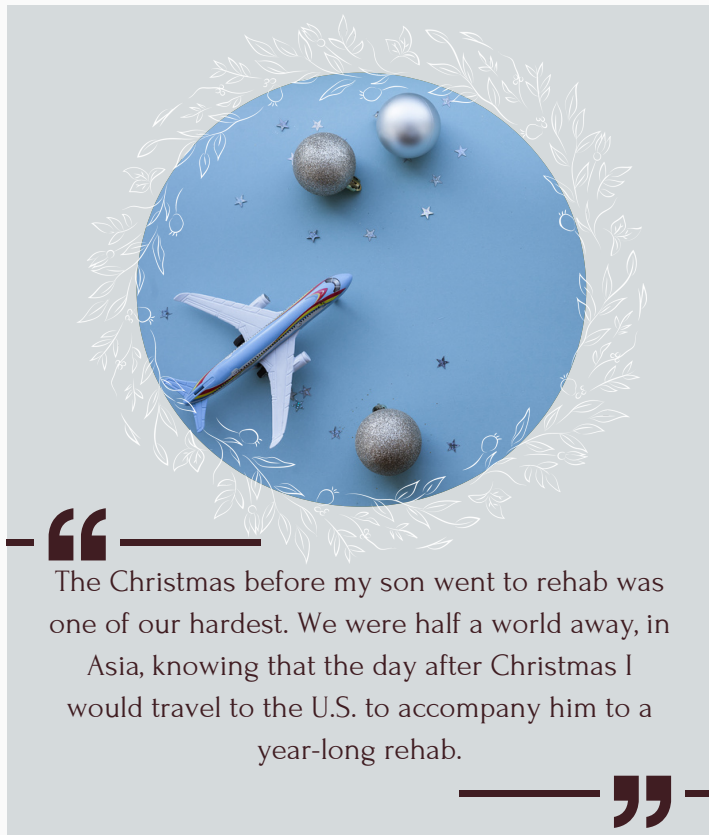
The Christmas before my son went to rehab was one of our hardest. We were half a world away, in Asia, knowing that the day after Christmas I would travel to the U.S. to accompany him to a year-long rehab.

It was a lonely trip for me as I helped him pack up his apartment, move his belongings into a storage unit, and then get on a plane with him and travel to the rehab. Lonely trip home again after leaving him there, angry, confused, yet resigned. To his enormous credit, when he accepted my offer of help, he was ready to change. And he worked his program in a place he did not like. He came out sober on the other end.

“

A promise of FA is that we would instinctively know how to handle things we could not previously handle. And this was one of those times.

”



Once sober, however, he began slowly at first to demonstrate his underlying mental illness. He moved to California to work and live near his brother. The following Christmas, a series of incidents made clear that he had to get more help than we knew how to give him. A promise of FA is that we would instinctively know how to handle things we could not previously handle. And this was one of those times. We found local resources to consult regarding mental illness. After some effort (and force), we got him into treatment for his mental illness. After a months-long process, the doctors finally found a medicine that helped his mental illness, and our son continued to maintain his sobriety.

HOPE FOR THE HOLIDAYS

(CONT'D)

It's now several years later. We enjoy having him in our home for dinner a few times a week (especially when he cooks!). He mentioned early in December that he had finished his Christmas shopping, something he could never have conceived of when he was using. The holidays are always stressful for me because I'm not comfortable with the commotion and the upset in my routine (my own anxiety); and yet, I know that for today, I can be grateful for my son's choices. And I can be grateful for the peace I found long before he was settled—the peace that came to me from working the Steps. Peace to all.

PAUL B.

REPUBLISHED FROM THE 12 STEP RAG, VOL. XLIV, NOV-DEC 2015

“ The holidays are always stressful for me because I'm not comfortable with the commotion and the upset in my routine (my own anxiety); and yet, I know that for today, I can be grateful for my son's choices. ”

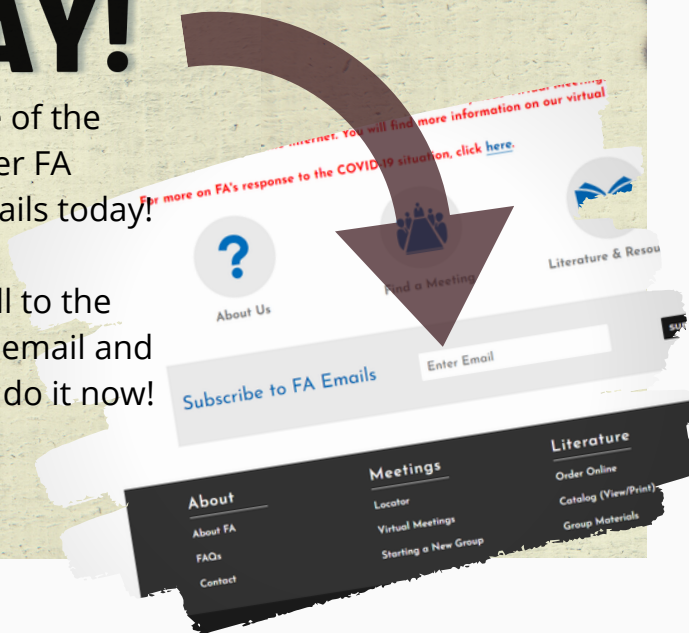


SIGN UP TODAY!

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



SURVIVING THE HOLIDAYS

FA MEMBERS SHARE HOW THEY COPE WITH THE HOLIDAY SEASON



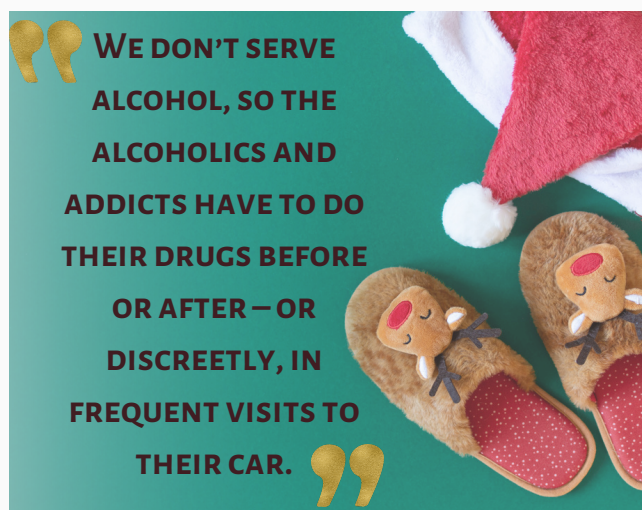
I've found when I get into planning too far in advance, the anticipation can set me up for unrealistic expectations, causing me anxiety. I was a great planner back in the day – drama; excitement; perfect, perfect, perfect planning that just never happened the way I planned it. A bummer, but the planning had its own high of anticipation, leading often to a crash. The joy really is in the journey! So, these days, I've scaled it down a lot. I still celebrate but in different ways; less glitz, more spiritual substance. And I don't put my faith in people because those expectations frequently lead to me being stressed out. I try living one day at a time, one event at a time, sometimes one moment at a time, and keeping it simple.

-JOAN

Through a miracle from my Higher Power, I had a revelation a few years back that I loved my family – the whole mess of them. I wasn't put on this earth to please them, but I sure had a commandment to love them. My husband and I took things into our own hands. On Christmas we extend an open invite to everybody to come to our Open House. Stay a minute, stay all day. Starts at 1pm, which gives everybody time to do their own thing in the morning. If anybody doesn't want to come, we accept it. I try to have a theme for gifts. Last year, everybody who came through the door got slippers; some funny slippers, some serious slippers. The young people got slipper socks with a \$5 gift card tucked into them. Some got themed slippers. Our elders got nice slipper gifts. I make chicken tortilla soup, chips, guacamole, and we buy a huge batch of tamales. It all stays warm.

We don't serve alcohol, so the alcoholics and addicts have to do their drugs before or after – or discreetly, in frequent visits to their car. But we have found that the environment is not threatening for them, because they can stay or leave. We have found that there isn't much tension because there are no expectations. We have addiction all across the board – from the eldest to the younger generation. I find that when I give them a Christmas hug, I have an opportunity to hang on tight, just a little bit longer – and pray that they know they are loved.

-SHARON



REPUBLISHED FROM THE 12 STEP RAG, VOL. XXXX NOV-DEC 2011

MEET VIRTUALLY IN SPANISH!

LA JUNTA DE SERVICIO MUNDIAL DE FAMILIAS ANÓNIMAS SE
COMPLACE EN ANUNCIAR LA FORMACIÓN DE UN GRUPO VIRTUAL EN
ESPAÑOL.

NOMBRE: UN DIA A LA VEZ
FECHA DE INICIO: JULY 5TH, 2022
VIRTUAL ÚNICAMENTE, USANDO LA PLATAFORMA DE ZOOM
DÍA/HORA: TUESDAYS AT 6:00 PM EST

PARA DETALLES DE CÓMO CONECTARSE A LA REUNIÓN, FAVOR
CONTACTAR A LA SECRETARIA DEL GRUPO AL:
FAGRUPOUNDIAALAVEZ@GMAIL.COM



THE FAMILIES ANONYMOUS WORLD SERVICE BOARD IS PLEASED TO
ANNOUNCE THE FORMATION OF A SPANISH-SPEAKING VIRTUAL
MEETING GROUP.

NAME: UN DIA A LA VEZ (ONE DAY AT A TIME).
STARTING DATE: JULY 5TH, 2022,
VIRTUAL ONLY, USING THE ZOOM PLATFORM.
DAY/TIME: TUESDAYS AT 6:00 PM EST

FOR DETAILS ON HOW TO LOG INTO THE MEETING, PLEASE CONTACT
THE GROUP SECRETARY AT FAGRUPOUNDIAALAVEZ@GMAIL.COM

2022 has been an exciting year for the fellowship, and a busy one for the World Service Board (WSB) and its committees. Here are some highlights.

VIRTUAL AND HYBRID MEETINGS

Many FA groups that began meeting online due to Covid restrictions are now continuing to use FA's virtual meeting format. Even though they no longer view the virus as posing as grave a threat as before, they enjoy the virtual meeting's greater flexibility and broader geographic coverage. Members don't have to drive anywhere and can attend meetings in their coziest old sweatpants. Plus, many groups are attracting new members who attend their meetings from far-off states or even different countries.



On the other hand, there's an element of camaraderie to in-person meetings. So, to regain that human component, many groups are also exploring a return to in-person meetings, at least some of the time. And many are opting for the best of both worlds, holding hybrid meetings—with both online and in-person participants—all of the time. In September, the Education Committee hosted an informative online workshop entitled "Help for Hybrid Meetings" to identify and discuss best practices for a successful hybrid FA meeting.

You can find a recording of that entire workshop at <https://familiesanonymous.org/hybrid-meetings/>, with the accompanying slide presentation at <https://familiesanonymous.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Hybrid-Meetings-v6.pdf>.

VIRTUAL WORLD SERVICE CONVENTION

The fellowship held its first-ever virtual World Service Convention in 2022. The theme was *You Are Not Alone*, and we certainly weren't: 241 members registered to attend, substantially more than our average in-person convention attendance. Chairpersons Cindy C. and Greg C., from Group 1906 in Roswell, Georgia, put together a great day that included two main speakers, interactive breakout sessions, and a raffle featuring prizes generously donated by FA members. And it was all free; there was no registration fee whatsoever. Recordings of the opening remarks and keynote speakers are on the FA website at <https://familiesanonymous.org/recordings/>.

Going forward, the WSB is considering holding both in-person and virtual conventions, perhaps in alternating years or on some other periodic schedule. If you have any thoughts on this, we'd love to hear from you! Please send your comments to the WSB's convention liaison, Barbara S., at barbaras@familiesanonymous.org.



LEGAL MATTERS

This year, FA finalized the federal registration of its trademarks: FAMILIES ANONYMOUS and the acronym FA. This will make it easier for the fellowship to protect its right to the continued exclusive use of these marks for publications, meetings, online-store services, and elsewhere.



As approved by the fellowship at this year's Annual Business Meeting, we amended FA's mission statement in our Articles of Incorporation to read, "The specific and primary purpose of this corporation is to provide assistance to its member groups whose objective is to help their individual members lead wholesome lives despite a relative's or friend's substance use disorder and related behavioral problems and disorders." This better reflects the fellowship's openness to helping relatives and friends of people suffering from any category of substance use disorder (SUD) and from the behavioral problems and other disorders related to SUD.

REVAMPED WEBSITE

Improvements made to our website this year include:

- A more user-friendly donation system (see <https://familiesanonymous.org/donate/>)
- Updated plug-ins to improve the website's speed and efficiency
- A Virtual Meetings Directory organized by date and time (<https://familiesanonymous.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/virtual-meetings-US-Canada.pdf>); this is in addition to our regular US Meetings Directory that is now arranged by day and time as well as by location



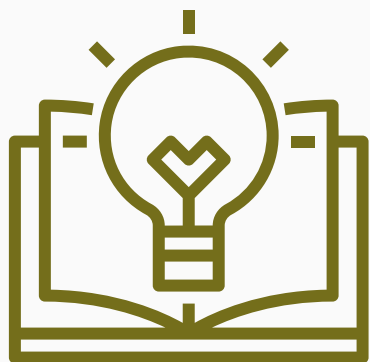
BOARD OUTREACH TO GROUPS



In June, WSB members phoned the secretaries of US-based groups to learn more about their groups' needs and to share with them the WSB's areas of focus. We appreciate those secretaries who took our calls and shared their insights. We're now making those calls again, and hope to do so twice a year going forward.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE (EC)

The EC offered many online sessions this year, in addition to the “Help for Hybrid Meetings” workshop described above. You can access recordings of these sessions at <https://familiesanonymous.org/recordings/>.



- In “Bereavement, Healing and Hope,” members shared their heartfelt stories of how they coped with the tragic loss of their addicted loved ones. (Their stories, and others’, are also published in a book of the same name [#1035].) They described how working the FA program, along with the ongoing support and love they received from members of their group and the fellowship as a whole, gave them the strength and serenity to survive their journey.
- “Raising Awareness” provided tips on how to grow your group and the fellowship. Go to <https://familiesanonymous.org/growing-the-fellowship-and-your-group/>.
- Tradition and Step meetings, utilizing #1019 The Twelve Step Workbook, were held on the first Saturday of each month. If you are interested in working the Steps but missed any of the sessions, you can access the recordings by contacting Donna D at donnad@familiesanonymous.org.

PUBLIC AWARENESS AND GROUP EXPANSION EFFORTS

WSB committees—ranging from Public Information (PI) to Long-Range Planning (LRP) to Literature Access Initiative (LAI)—are tackling a range of issues:

- How to increase public awareness of FA, with the goal of attracting, retaining and servicing members
- How to optimize the fellowship’s financial health
- How to respond to a changing societal culture
- How to increase the visibility of and access to FA literature through e-commerce and e-technology
- How to use social media to spread the word about FA within the parameters allowed by our Twelve Traditions (An example is our new Facebook page [<https://www.facebook.com/familiesanonymousofficial/>] that was created, and is regularly monitored, by our PI Committee and now has over 500 followers.)



And on July 5th, members of FA’s Miami, Florida, group launched the fellowship’s first US-based Spanish-speaking group, “Un día a la vez” (“One Day at a Time”). The group meets virtually every Tuesday at 6:00 pm ET using Zoom. Details on how to join can be found in our Virtual Meeting Directory (see above).

Are you excited by what you’ve read here? Do you have more ideas for how to keep moving the fellowship forward? Do you have special skills or talents to bring to the table? Please consider joining the World Service Board or a WSB committee. Remember: Families Anonymous is *for* all of us, *by* all of us.

HOW TO SUBMIT ARTICLES TO THE SERENITY MESSENGER

Original articles, poems, photographs or artwork can be emailed to the Serenity Messenger at newsletter@familiesanonymous.org.

Even if you don't think so, your story and experiences are unique and important and can help someone else in ways you can't imagine. Write down your thoughts in whatever way you can, and send them to us. Our editor will work with you to help you tell your story!

Below are some of the formats that we usually publish. You can also read older issues of the Serenity Messenger on our **website** to know what kinds of stories we publish.

Cover stories: Personal essays between 700 and 800 words. If you have a story idea in mind and want to work with our editor while you write it, feel free to send a few lines explaining what your essay will be about.

Articles: Shorter articles between 300 and 450 words. These can be on any subject of interest to FA members. Some of the themes we often include are –

- Reflections on the 12 Steps
- How you came to FA
- How FA has impacted your life
- Your relationship with your addicted loved one
- Reflections on self-awareness
- Gratitude



Think of something you may have shared at a meeting that you felt seemed particularly enlightening or interesting, and explain that in a few simple paragraphs. If you need ideas to awaken your creativity, open and browse through some past issues of our Newsletter under the archived section of that page.

Focus:Group: This section gives a different FA group in each issue the opportunity to tell the fellowship what's special about its approach to meetings and/or the 12 Steps. If you'd like to volunteer your group, or if you know of a group you think would like to write a Focus:Group article, please let us know.

We welcome your poems, too.

SUBMISSION SPECIFICATIONS

- Articles must be typed in Word.doc (preferably in the font Times New Roman, size 12 pt, single-line spacing) and attached to your email.
- Mention your group if you're comfortable.
- Scanned artwork and photographs (originals only!) must be attached to your email. They should be in .jpg or .png format and no greater than 5 mb in size.
- Include a line or two in your email explaining the context of your submission, and mention your group if you're comfortable.

We encourage you to think about answering this call TODAY!

LITERATURE SPOTLIGHT

Full Literature Pack (#8001) Paquete completo de literatura (#8001S)



Did you know that what was once only attainable as a bundle to new FA groups (hence, its previous name: New Group Pack) is now available for purchase by any group or any individual at any time? It's true!

The **Full Literature Pack**, in either English (#8001) or Spanish (#8001S), is a jam-packed collection of all our FA literature in that language, including many updated and revised editions.

Share in FA's insights, wisdom, and even humor—from **The Gift of Awareness**, through **The Twelve Steps of FA** and **The Twelve Step Workbook**, to **A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Recovery**.

There are awesome bookmarks, such as **Let Go and Let God**, and **The Broken Vase**, and **Letting Go**, **Letting Grow**, and **Helping**.

Almost everyone has benefitted from the flipbook **What Do I Say?** that guides us through those difficult phone conversations with our addicted loved ones.

Many have taken hope from **The Twelve Promises of FA**, and **Gifts of the Spirit**, and **Bereavement**, **Healing and Hope**.

There is literature—like **FA Tools of Recovery**, and **The Twelve Traditions in Action**, and **Group Inventory**—designed to help form groups, to help grow groups, and to help groups get through rough patches.

And, of course, there's FA's signature publication, **Today A Better Way**, consisting of member-written reflections for each day of the year.

These are just a drop in the bucket when you consider all the FA literature as a whole. There's undoubtedly at least one publication on an issue with which you and your fellow FA members are dealing!

All this for the low price of:

- \$69 for the Full Literature Pack (#8001), and
- \$35 for the Paquete completo de literatura (#8001S) (with more pieces being translated and added to the Spanish pack all the time).

Our FA literature is known in the "Anonymous" world as the best, highest quality literature around. So, take this new opportunity to buy the literature pack of your choice now, and immerse yourself in the wisdom, experience and hope of the FA community.

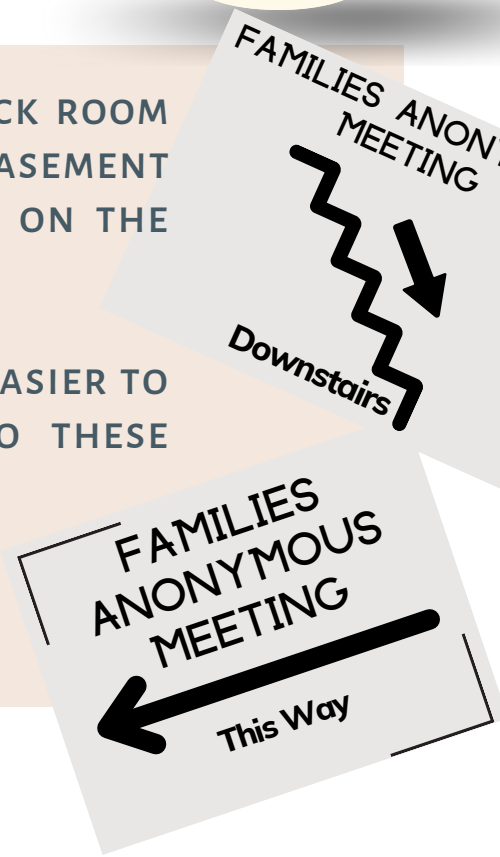
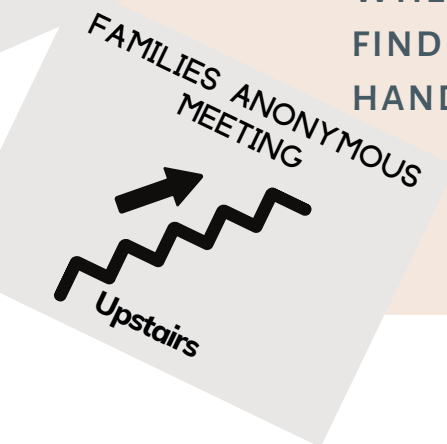
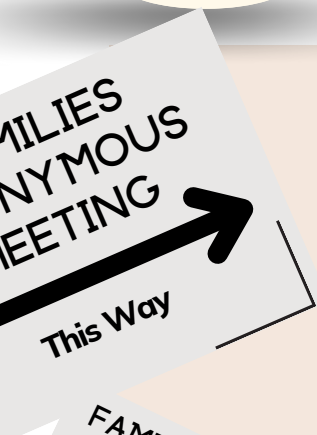


LITERATURE SPOTLIGHT

Meeting Location Signs

DOES YOUR FA GROUP MEET IN THE BACK ROOM OFF THE LEFT-HAND CORRIDOR OF THE BASEMENT OF THE CHURCH? OR UP THE ELEVATOR ON THE 3RD FLOOR OF THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL?

WHEREVER YOU MEET, NOW IT WILL BE EASIER TO FIND THE MEETING PLACE THANKS TO THESE HANDSOME NEW DIRECTIONAL SIGNS.



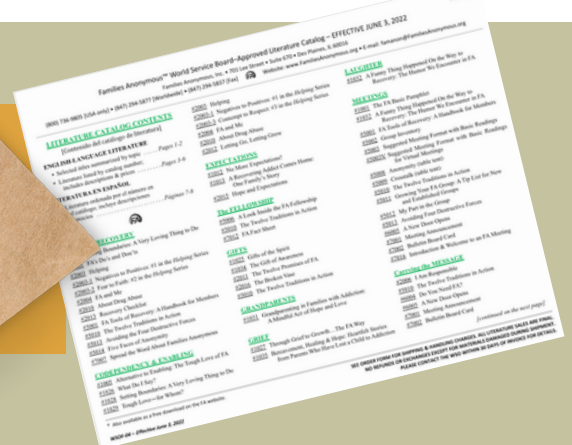
Available only as a free download on the FA website on our **FREE DOWNLOADS** page.

[CLICK HERE](#) to download yours today!



(Listed as #5015 Meeting Location Signs in the Literature Catalogue.)

Interested in our full literature catalog? Download your own copy [here](#), or check out our [eStore online!](#)



DONATIONS

COMMEMORATIVE DONATIONS

- In honor of Laurie G, on behalf of Deborah S.
- In memory of Thomas D, husband of Kathy D., on behalf of Group 494
- In memory of Jim R., on behalf of Mary W.
- In memory of Don S., on behalf of Dennis S.
- In memory of Jack, on behalf of Group 554
- In memory of William Jack F., on behalf of Group 780



DONATION MATCHING PROGRAM

Help Us
Reach Our
Goal!

Year-End Matching Gift Opportunity



Thinking of making a [tax-deductible donation](#) to Families Anonymous? Has the fellowship been helpful to you this year? Are you looking to give back so others may also find resources and support? [Would you like your gift to be doubled?](#)

A group of donors from within the fellowship have offered to [match up to \\$5,200](#) of contributions made now through December 31st of this year, and we've almost achieved our goal. As of mid-December, we are [within 12% of our target!](#) If you have not yet participated in this opportunity, please consider a tax-deductible donation to Families Anonymous before the [deadline of December 31, 2022](#).

Our 7th tradition restricts us from participating in most donation matching programs, but this is a unique situation falling within our traditions. Please take advantage of this special opportunity where your important gift, an investment in Families Anonymous, may have [twice the impact](#).

Thank you to those of you who have already made donations - your support will bring hope and encouragement to other friends and families just like you.

[CLICK HERE TO DONATE](#)

FamiliesAnonymous.org/Donate

Thank You



Families Anonymous, Inc. is a tax-deductible 501(c)(3) non-profit charitable organization.