

VOLUME LXI | ISSUE V | WINTER 2024

# 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

The year-end holidays are upon us and can feel overwhelming. There's a helpful article in this issue that discusses how to cope. Check out Help For The Holidays on [page 6](#) if you, like many of us, find the holidays challenging.

On a personal note: I'm fortunate to live in a warmer climate for the fall and winter. The other day, I was floating on my back in the pool, looking up at the screen enclosure ten feet above me.

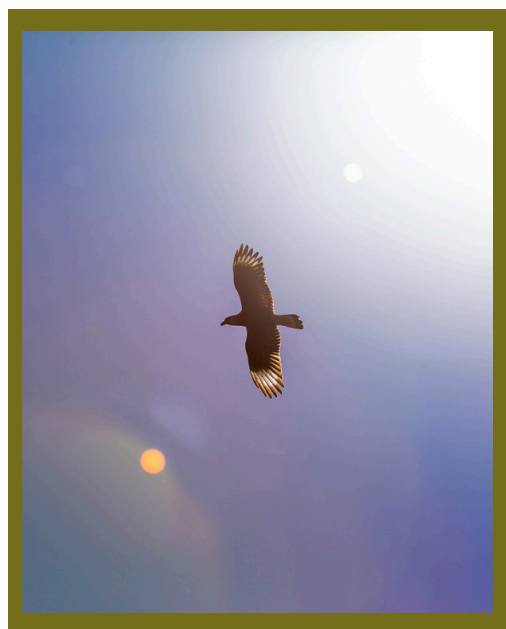
Perched on the outside of the screen was what I thought was a large black moth with wide, fingerlike wings. I was fascinated by this beautiful insect that appeared to be frozen in place. But then it started to grow smaller.

I realized that it was actually moving away, and that it was soaring upward: The "moth" on the screen was, in fact, a hawk, a hundred yards up in the sky, gliding lazily on a warm thermal current. The moth had been an illusion of perspective.

As I watched the hawk, a silver speck emerged from behind its path. The hawk's lazy sideward flight had blocked my view of a high-flying passenger jet that was gleaming in the sunlight. Although the jet was surely traveling at hundreds of miles an hour, because it was so far away it appeared as a tiny bright spear, sailing slowly across the sky.

It's all about perspective.

The problems we face in dealing with our loved ones who suffer from substance use disorder may seem insurmountable and nearly unbearable until we gain perspective through our FA program. Just knowing that others have faced and overcome the same problems helps shrink these problems to a more manageable size.



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## EDITOR'S NOTE

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This shared adversity in itself changes our perspective on the future because we realize we're no longer alone. This gives us hope. No matter how bad things seem, nothing is permanent. Just for today, with the help of FA, we can endure almost anything.

But hope, while a wonderful thing, isn't a strategy. FA is a program of action.

As we continue in FA, we learn that by listening to other members share their experiences and wisdom at our FA meetings, and by reading the FA literature and diligently working the program, we can find and honor our true selves and feel peace and serenity in our hearts, regardless of the choices our loved ones may make. It's hard work, but it's worth it.

We may start out in FA as moths splayed against a screen, immobile and fearful. But by working the program, we can find our wings and fly.

Nothing changes immediately. We try to be better today than we were yesterday, and then do it again tomorrow, recognizing that no one and nothing is ever perfect. If we keep things in perspective, peace is possible.

Eventually we can see the sky again, and not obsess about crashing to earth every time our loved one experiences a setback in their recovery, or refuses to even try to change their ways.

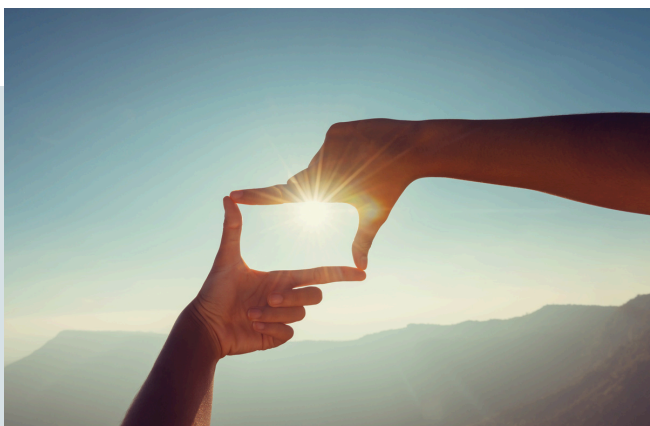
Later that day, I watched the moon rise in a clear sky. It was a sharp crescent, with Venus appearing as a bright beacon riding beside it. Although Venus is at least four times larger than our moon, it appears much smaller in our sky because of their relative distances from the Earth.

The moth, the hawk, the jet, the moon, and Venus. And us in recovery.

It's all about perspective.

Keep coming back.

**IN FELLOWSHIP,  
BOB S.**



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## FOCUS: GROUP

### THE BIRTH OF BRADENTON FA#2056

#### **Cindy S. Shares the Circumstances That Drove Her to an FA Convention, Where a Serendipitous Meeting With Maria S. Led to Bradenton's First FA Group**

My youngest son had just been arrested and charged with five felony counts for stealing an empty suitcase from a college-sponsored apartment complex where he had previously lived. Out of his mind on drugs, he walked into a random apartment quad looking for anything he could steal and sell for more drugs. He encountered two students in their rooms getting ready for a holiday break. My son informed them both that he was with maintenance and proceeded to look about their rooms. As he departed the apartment with the suitcase in hand, one of the students took down his license plate number and called the police.

This incident was one among many that my son's drug addiction had fueled, so his father and I agreed that we would leave him in jail to teach him a lesson. In the meantime, my best friend had invited me on a cruise. She works in the hospitality industry, and while this would be a work event for her, I could accompany her at a much-discounted rate. I was very grateful for the offer, and we both agreed this would be a great way for me to relax and have some fun after such a traumatic experience.

**ADDICTION HAD LONG BEEN A WAY OF LIFE FOR ME. ALL THREE OF MY SONS HAD TANGLED WITH THE DISEASE, AND I WAS QUITE FRANKLY AN EMOTIONAL WRECK BECAUSE OF IT.**

Sooner or later, my friend told her work associates the real reason I was in attendance. And one day, an older woman and I found ourselves at lunch seated across from one another. She told me in the kindest way possible about a group that she believed could help me. Addiction had long been a way of life for me. All three of my sons had tangled with the disease, and I was quite frankly an emotional wreck because of it. This woman had referenced the FA group in Boca Raton specifically and how it had helped a friend of hers who was in a similar situation to mine. The cruise ended, and I put that information in my back pocket for future use.



**I was amazed to find out that other families had more than one addicted loved one. That alone gave me much solace.**

Years later, while on vacation, I would receive a phone call from my son's drug dealer stating that my oldest and youngest sons had broken into her house and stolen her stash. For \$800, she would forget the whole thing. She sent pictures and stated that there had been witnesses. I immediately went into a tailspin. After much contemplation, I decided to come home and give my sons \$200 each and throw them out of my house. It was at this low point that I remembered Families Anonymous. I went onto the website and saw that there was a Miami convention coming up soon. I made the plan to attend. I had to find a program for myself. I was empty and a former version of myself.

I arrived at the hotel and still, to this day, remember walking through the gateway of balloons into a whole new world with good and kind people who were experiencing or had experienced all the horrible aspects of their loved ones' drug usage turning their lives upside down both financially and emotionally.



# THE BIRTH OF BRADENTON FA#2056

(CONT'D)

The breakout sessions were not only enlightening and informative, but the entertainment was phenomenal, and the buffet of Latin specialties was delicious. I met new people with whom I could share my experiences and who were willing to share theirs with me. I was amazed to find out that other families had more than one addicted loved one. That alone gave me much solace.

On the last night of the conference, I overslept and came down late to dinner. There was only one seat available, and I took it. Little did I know I would be sitting next to someone who has become a lifelong friend. At the end of the night, we were asked to stand and announce where we lived, and that was when I met Maria S. for the first time. We both lived in Bradenton, where there were no nearby FA meetings at the time. We exchanged numbers and together began what would become Bradenton FA#2056. This group has changed my life and become a real family unit. In the beginning we met in a drug rehabilitation center, sometimes with only two of us in attendance. But seven years later we have a consistent group every Tuesday night. Over the years, we have met many wonderful people who have come and gone, yet their stories and personalities have touched us in many ways that cannot be forgotten. It is certain that many of them would not have come into our orbit without this program.



“Little did I know I would be sitting next to someone who has become a lifelong friend.”

I will be forever grateful to this group and this organization as I continue my journey, continually growing with the program.

Dedicated in loving memory of Jimmy K. who forever touched my heart.

**CINDY S.**

*GROUP #2056, BRADENTON, FLORIDA*



Want to learn more about how your FA group can thrive and grow? Go to [familiesanonymous.org](https://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 the Group Outreach Committee at [GO@familiesanonymous.org](mailto:GO@familiesanonymous.org).

Have a great meeting!

# HELP FOR THE HOLIDAYS

The Holiday Season Can Trigger Our Need to Control Those Around Us. Nadine W. Shares Easy and Effective Strategies to Protect Our Serenity and Keep the Season Joyful

The year-end holidays can bring tremendous stress. Even if we're not celebrating a particular holiday ourselves, we can feel our neighbors' tension as they rush around buying food and gifts, decorating their houses, frantically making lists of things to do and places to go, and generally preparing for what's supposed to be the greatest holiday ever—until next year, of course. Television ads tout special sales, popular movies with holiday themes run constantly on TV, and radio stations play cheery holiday music ad nauseam.

But what if you don't feel you have any reason to celebrate? If you have a loved one suffering from the disease of addiction, you may see any holiday as just another "special day" waiting to be spoiled by your loved one's drama. You may spend the season waiting not for Santa, but for "the other shoe" to drop on your head.

**"BUT WHAT IF YOU DON'T FEEL YOU HAVE ANY REASON TO CELEBRATE? IF YOU HAVE A LOVED ONE SUFFERING FROM THE DISEASE OF ADDICTION, YOU MAY SEE ANY HOLIDAY AS JUST ANOTHER "SPECIAL DAY" WAITING TO BE SPOILED BY YOUR LOVED ONE'S DRAMA."**

The good news is, you're not alone. FA members understand how you feel because they've been in your shoes and have dealt with those same feelings of hopelessness and dread. What follows are some sensible, proven suggestions for ways to help you cope with the holidays.

And maybe even enjoy them!

"You may spend the season waiting not for Santa, but for "the other shoe" to drop on your head."



## 1) Decide what you "need" from the holiday.

Let go of your potentially false expectations—both good and bad—of what others may or may not do, and how the day will go. You have zero control over others, but you have full control over your actions, thoughts and reactions. As Abraham Lincoln said, "Most people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be."

Ask yourself what an "okay" holiday would look like, instead of a "perfect" one. If it means a day without drama, quietly enjoying the company of one or two people you love, maybe "okay" is all you need.

For me, I want to focus on having a peaceful holiday atmosphere. My hope is that my son will show up for dinner. But if he doesn't, I'm okay because I'm going to focus on Step 1 and accept that I can't control him; I can only control myself.

If he's not there, I won't ruin the day by speculating about what he may be up to. He may be taking care of himself; he may not. It doesn't matter because either way, he alone, not me, decides what he will do. I can only release him to the care of his Higher Power and focus on my own peace of mind by staying in the moment and enjoying my day.





“For me, I want to focus on having a peaceful holiday atmosphere. My hope is that my son will show up for dinner. But if he doesn't, I'm okay because I'm going to focus on Step 1 and accept that I can't control him; I can only control myself.”

Even when they do attend a holiday event, our addicted loved ones may be overwhelmed by their feelings and not be able to handle socializing. I will accept that my son will sometimes leave the room suddenly to go outside, or up to his room, and that it doesn't reflect on me.

I don't need him there to have a good holiday.

## **2) Have the phone number of an FA member or understanding friend handy in case you need support.**

If you need to vent your feelings, a quick call or text can really help. If you feel you said something you regret, connect with someone who understands and give yourself grace. You might also want to contact that person ahead of the holiday to let them know they'll be your emotional backstop, if needed, for the big day.

Just knowing they're available to help might be all the support you need. But if you do find yourself uneasy

or sliding toward an emotional crisis, don't hesitate to reach out. A quick, five-minute “reality check” with an understanding FA friend can really help keep things in perspective and let you get back on track.

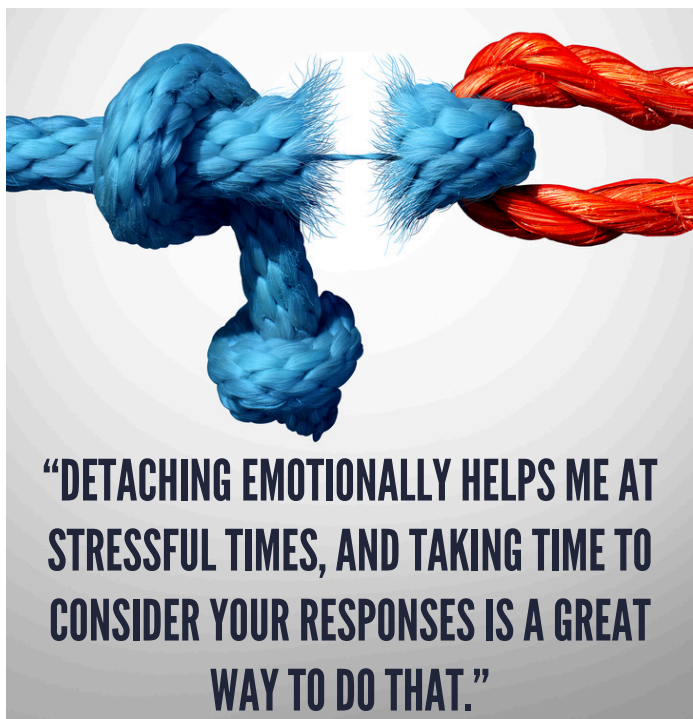
## **3) Have FA literature or favorite FA sayings nearby to ground you.**

In addition to having the hard copies available, you might also list some on your phone for quick reference. Reciting the Serenity Prayer in your mind, or reminding yourself that “this too shall pass,” are great ways to bring yourself back to the present and perhaps to short-circuit negative, unproductive thoughts. Pick your favorites, and have them handy.

The *What Do I Say* pamphlet (publication #1026) also has great suggestions for how to respond to particular questions or situations that may arise with your loved one. Read it over before the big day, or have it available to help you through difficult conversations. You can find it under the Literature tab at [familiesanonymous.org](http://familiesanonymous.org).

## **“RECITING THE SERENITY PRAYER IN YOUR MIND, OR REMINDING YOURSELF THAT “THIS TOO SHALL PASS,” ARE GREAT WAYS TO BRING YOURSELF BACK TO THE PRESENT.”**

Remember, too, that you don't have to respond immediately to a question or demand from your troubled loved one. “I'm sure you'll figure it out,” or “I'll get back to you on that,” are responses that give you time to gather your thoughts by consulting your FA literature and/or calling an FA friend. Detaching emotionally helps me at stressful times, and taking time to consider possible responses is a great way to do that.



If the answer to a particular question or demand is “No,” that’s okay, too. One longtime FA member told me that the rule of thumb in their house was that if their troubled loved one said they needed an answer immediately, the answer was “No.” Followed by, “We’ll get back to you if that changes.”

You don’t have to justify every decision you make; you only need to decide what’s good for your serenity and peace of mind. And that may mean that some things simply aren’t up for debate.

Someone once mentioned in an FA meeting that, once you start trying to justify yourself to your troubled loved one, you’ve lost the argument. You don’t have to engage. “No” is a complete sentence.

#### **4) Plan an exit strategy.**

Before the big day, write out scenarios of what could happen and how you’ll deal with each if it arises. This list isn’t intended to predict what will happen—doing that would be creating negative expectations.

You simply want to decide in advance how you’ll respond in the event these things do occur, because your advance plan will likely be far more appropriate than what comes to mind in the heat of the moment, when you might say or do something that only makes things worse. Make the list, decide what you’ll need to do or say if any of those things happens, and then set it aside.

You should also tell other trusted family members, or your FA support contact, about your plan. Knowing what you need to do to preserve your peace of mind can give you both comfort and the courage to confront what may be difficult situations with your loved one.

When I’m feeling overwhelmed, I like to go into another room by myself, take deep breaths, and remind myself it’s just another day. You can also leave a gathering early to take care of yourself. Whatever helps you, do it!

#### **5) Try to be present and grateful on the holiday.**

Stay in the moment, not thinking about regrets over the past or worries about the future, or even how this day will go. Focus on right now. As the saying goes, “Be where your feet are.”

Sometimes serenity comes by living not one day at a time, but one hour, or one minute, at a time. Keep grounded and present by thinking about a particular thing you’re grateful for right now, whether it be that last piece of yummy apple pie, a friend’s kind smile, or a sweet childhood memory.

Connecting with your Higher Power can also be calming and centering. I like the prayer mantra “Bless them. Change me.” to keep me focused on my recovery in times of stress.



## 6) Read over Steps 10 through 12.

Step 10 tells us we must continue to take our personal inventory and promptly admit our mistakes. Step 11 reminds us to keep in conscious contact with our Higher Power, praying only for knowledge of our Higher Power's will for us and the strength to carry it out. Finally, Step 12 tells us to carry the message of our spiritual awakening to others and to practice the principles of the 12 Steps in all our affairs.

If you feel a need, take breaks during the day to connect with your Higher Power, pray for the wisdom to deal appropriately with your loved one, and perhaps reflect on how you might apply the principles of the 12 Steps to react differently to a challenging situation. You can take this time to meditate quietly or to read some comforting FA literature. You'd be surprised how refreshing a short "me time" break can be during a long holiday event.

I hope these strategies will help you prepare for the holidays and hopefully make them less stressful and more joyful.

You deserve to be happy!

Many of the suggestions in this article are taken from Help for the Holidays, an online seminar sponsored by FA. You can find the complete recording of that seminar, and others like it, on the [familiesanonymous.org](http://familiesanonymous.org) website, [here](#).

**NADINE W, GROUP #1301**



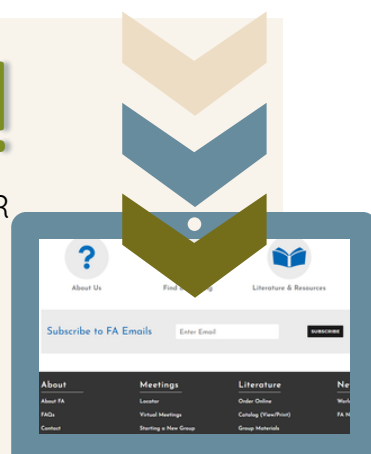
**“KEEP GROUNDED AND PRESENT BY THINKING ABOUT A PARTICULAR THING YOU’RE GRATEFUL FOR RIGHT NOW, WHETHER IT BE THAT LAST PIECE OF YUMMY APPLE PIE, A FRIEND’S KIND SMILE, OR A SWEET CHILDHOOD MEMORY.”**

# SIGN UP TODAY!

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Visit [familiesanonymous.org](http://familiesanonymous.org), scroll to the bottom of the homepage, fill in your email and hit Subscribe.

It only takes a minute - do it now!



# OUT OF THE FOG

Picking his Son Up from the Airport for Christmas was an Opportunity to be Grateful for His Son's Recovery Journey, Writes Bob M.

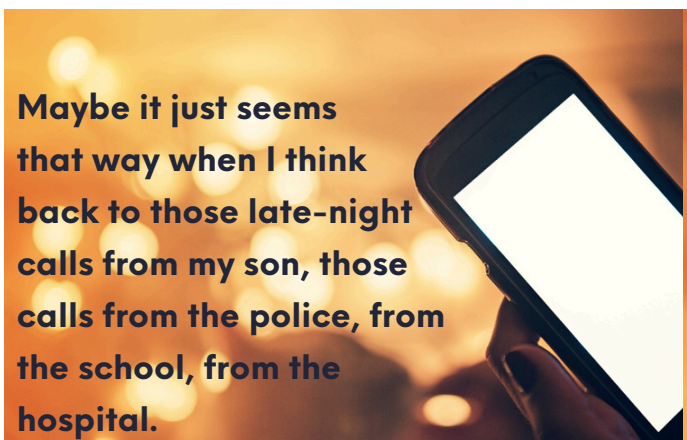


The planning began well in advance. If you want things to be perfect you have to have a plan. There were gifts to buy, gifts that had to fit into a backpack because checked bags cost extra. There were travel plans that had to be made. At one of the busiest travel times of the year, bargain fares are hard to find. There were meals that had to be prepared, special meals, some for those who ate meat, some for those who didn't. And there was cleaning to do. We had to break it to the cat that he could no longer sleep on the guest bed. It had to be free of all allergens, at least till after Christmas. But all the planning was going to be worth it. We were going to be together for

Christmas. It had been a while since the whole family was here, at home, together. It seemed like we'd thought of everything. So, what could go wrong?

Did you ever think you had everything under control, only to find out that you didn't? Just when I was feeling confident, maybe even cocky, the fog rolled in. Really, fog in the winter? When the phone rang, my heart was pounding. My heart always pounds a little when the phone rings because it's never good news. Or maybe it just seems that way when I think back to those late-night calls from my son, those calls from the police, from the school, from the hospital. I've tried to put those memories behind me but, it turns out, the heart doesn't forget so easily. When I heard my son's voice on the other end of the line, all those feelings came rushing back. He was at the airport in Atlanta and I was right, it wasn't good news. He'd already been at the airport for hours when he found out his flight was delayed, and then canceled. The only remaining flight into Midway Airport that night was fully booked, if it went at all. Renting a car meant at least a 10-hour drive through the night, in the fog. He said there was one flight into O'hare but it was twice the price and it didn't arrive till after midnight. Then he said he had to go but he would call us back. Was one day with the family on Christmas too much to ask? As I hung up the phone, I thought: surely, I am cursed.

IT SEEMED LIKE WE'D  
THOUGHT OF  
EVERYTHING. SO, WHAT  
COULD GO WRONG?



**Maybe it just seems that way when I think back to those late-night calls from my son, those calls from the police, from the school, from the hospital.**

I think that when you experience a tragedy in your life, it changes the way you think about tragedy. As I sat, waiting for my son to call back, I thought, this isn't so bad. He can just come in another day. It won't be Christmas, but we could make it like Christmas. We'd faced disappointment before. We'd faced much worse than this. So, what made me think life would throw me a bone now? By the time my son called back I had already prepared myself for the worst, but he said, "I'm arriving at O'hare sometime after midnight. Can you pick me up?" There may have been a time when I would have said, "I don't know if I can stay awake that long", or "It's too dangerous in the fog."





WHEN WE FINALLY DROVE UP TO  
ARRIVALS, HE WAS STANDING  
THERE SMILING AND WAVING  
AND THE FOG WAS BEGINNING  
TO LIFT.

But how many nights had I stayed awake, wondering if my son would make it home safely. And fog, well, I spent months, years in a fog, not knowing what to do or how to do it. I learned the hard way that you have to be patient and proceed with caution. And so, I said I'd be there and my wife and I went out, together, for the midnight rendezvous. And on the way we talked about the journey, not the journey to the airport. I mean THE journey. Then we talked about how, our son spent 7 hours in the airport and found a way to make it home, how he could have given up. How many times had I prayed for my son not to give up? When we finally drove up to arrivals, he was standing there smiling and waving and the fog was beginning to lift. And, as I turned the car for home I thought: surely I am blessed.

**BOB M., PALOS PARK, IL GROUP #853**

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

For our upcoming issue, the deadline to submit  
announcements is **February 10th.**

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

Email us at [newsletter@familiesanonymous.org](mailto:newsletter@familiesanonymous.org).  
We'd love to hear from you!



# THE CHANGE EXCHANGE

FA Member Maureen Shares an Innovative Game to Help Us Choose the Changes We'd Like to Make

Recently, I volunteered to lead my local Families Anonymous meeting. I had every intention of speaking to my group of FA peers on the subject of helping and what that means to me. I stumbled upon FA's basic reading titled "Helping" (#5003-6) and was excited to dig into this topic with my group.

An interesting thing happened as I began to peel back the layers of helping that have occurred over the years in my journey with my son. When I looked back at my own degrees of "helpfulness," I noticed the subtle changes in how my help looked as we grew together through our experiences. As I worked through "Helping," my topic slowly began to evolve into a discussion that was much more about change. It's not lost on me that as a parent with a son who has struggled with mental health issues and substance use disorder, my help has had to change a lot over the years.

The first line of "Helping" struck a chord with me. It reads, "My role as helper is not to do things for the people I am trying to help, but to be things; not to try to control and change their actions, but through understanding and awareness, to change my reactions." My version of helping has most certainly been shaped and reformed over time. As my son has grown into a young adult, I have come to appreciate that only he can help himself. My help is most helpful when it is geared toward helping myself. This has required a shift in focus to my own changes and, more importantly, to how FA can help me make changes within myself for the better.



"It's not lost on me that as a parent with a son who has struggled with mental health issues and substance use disorder, my help has had to change a lot over the years."



To keep things interesting, I developed a game to play with my local FA chapter called "The Change Exchange Game." In preparation for my meeting, I shared my game concept with my son, who very cleverly came up with the name. I based my game on "Helping" and the wonderful content contained therein. My hope is you will have some fun and share the game with your local FA chapter.

After all, CHANGE can be an acronym for Choose Having A New Growth Experience!

The name of the game is THE CHANGE EXCHANGE. As members of FA, we are challenged to accept the things we cannot change, have the courage to change the things we can, and develop the wisdom to know the difference. There is a quote by Socrates that says, "The secret of change is to focus all of your energy not on fighting the old, but on building the new." I created a little game that will challenge us to look at changes we can make in ourselves. Here's how to play...



## I N S T R U C T I O N S



1. Each person draws one slip of paper (a CHANGE) from the jar.
2. Each person may read their slip of paper (CHANGE) to themselves silently.
3. Once everyone has drawn, FA members will all get up and read their CHANGES to at least two other people in the room.
4. If you find a CHANGE that resonates or speaks to you more than the one you drew from the jar, you can say, "I'd like to EXCHANGE MY CHANGE" and make the swap with the person.
5. Everyone is allowed one CHANGE or swap. You may also swap your CHANGE with a slip that remains in the jar.
6. We take about five minutes to do the EXCHANGE CHANGES.
7. Once seated, FA members are free to offer why their CHANGE spoke to them, why they chose it, or what it means to them.

## L I S T   O F   C H A N G E S

Below is a list of twenty CHANGES that can easily be printed on strips of paper, folded and placed into a jar to play the game. Get your local FA friends interacting and thinking about positive change!



✂️-----

I can change my negatives to positives.

-----

I can change my fear to faith.

-----

I can change my contempt for what they do to respect the potential within them.

-----

I can change my hostility to understanding.

-----

I can change my manipulation or overprotectiveness to release with love.

# THE CHANGE EXCHANGE

(CONT'D)

I can change my standard or image to give them the opportunity to pursue their own destiny.

---

I can change my dominance to encouragement.

---

I can change my panic to serenity.

---

I can change my tides of despair to a wave of my own personal growth.

---

I can change my self-justification to self-understanding.

---

I can change my tendency to control by turning my attention to my own life.

---

I can change my situation by changing myself.

---

I can change my fears for the future and focus on being present in today.

---

I can change only myself and simply love others.

---

I can change my advice to active listening.

---

I can change my attitude by releasing the past and my regrets.

---

I can change my resentment into expressions of compassion.

---

I can change my judgment by choosing humility and grace.

---

I can change my reaction from criticism to curiosity.

---

I can change my expectations to simply love and let be.

---

**MAUREEN., FA PLANO, TX**



# HOW I STOPPED “HELPING” MY SON

A Mother Shares How She Learned to Step Back and Release Her Son With Love



My son is 33 years old and dealing with addiction and mental health issues. He lives with me and my husband. When I came to FA five years ago, I believed it was my job as his parent to “help” him with his problems. I tried everything, including pushing him to go to rehab, begging him to go to counseling and meetings, looking for jobs for him, rescuing him from legal troubles, etc.

None of my “help” actually improved his life, and it left me feeling very frustrated and resentful. In fact, I think my actions made his issues worse because he was ashamed that he couldn’t live up to my expectations. My expectations were that he should be independent financially. I didn’t think this was a lot to ask for. But looking back now, I realize it wasn’t something he was capable of doing then.

At that time, he rarely talked to me. He stayed in his room a lot, sometimes for as long as three days, only coming out to eat. I knew he was depressed and had a drug problem, but he wouldn’t admit it.

Since coming to FA, I have learned to let go of my expectations for his life and to let him decide how he wants to live it. It’s been a hard road of changing my thoughts and actions. But now he and I have a much better relationship. He opens up to me a lot more. There’s much less frustration and tension in my house and a peaceful atmosphere, most of the time.

FA also taught me that I’m powerless to change him. It was a great relief to me when I stopped thinking it was my responsibility to get him on the “right” path. It is his responsibility to change himself, if he chooses to.

A few years ago, I said this to my son: “This is your life to live as you please. I am not going to tell you what I think you should do anymore.”

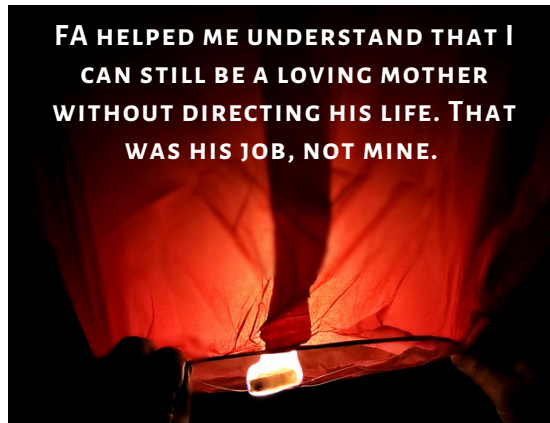
After that talk, I felt a big shift in our relationship. He stopped being angry at me and owned his problems. I’ve seen a lot of growth in him since I stopped “helping.” He is now working part-time and enjoying his job very much. He has grown socially and sees friends frequently. His relationship with his sister has improved greatly. He is exercising regularly. He even goes on vacation with us once a year. Overall, he is much happier.

FA helped me understand that I can still be a loving mother without directing his life. That was his job, not mine. Just as my life is my own to lead. My expectations have changed from wanting him to be independent to wanting him to be happy, healthy and safe and have meaning in his life. Now I have hope for the future.

Nowadays, I don’t “help” him unless he asks me to. I “release with love” and support and love him as best I can.

**IN FACT, I THINK MY ACTIONS MADE HIS ISSUES WORSE BECAUSE HE WAS ASHAMED THAT HE COULDN’T LIVE UP TO MY EXPECTATIONS.**

**FA HELPED ME UNDERSTAND THAT I CAN STILL BE A LOVING MOTHER WITHOUT DIRECTING HIS LIFE. THAT WAS HIS JOB, NOT MINE.**



**ANONYMOUS**

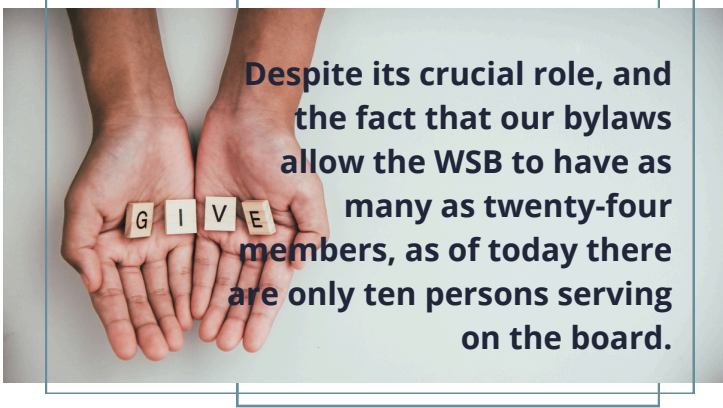


# WORD FROM THE BOARD

WSB Call to Service

## We Need You to Join the World Service Board!

**FA Cannot Continue to Thrive Without Strong, Dedicated Members Serving on the WSB**



**Despite its crucial role, and the fact that our bylaws allow the WSB to have as many as twenty-four members, as of today there are only ten persons serving on the board.**

"Giving back" through service provides a powerful tool in our recovery "tool box." An ideal way to perform service to the fellowship is to volunteer to become a member of the World Service Board ("WSB" or "board") and to serve on one or more of its committees.

The WSB, and the volunteer FA members who serve on it, are vital to the continued vitality of our FA fellowship. Yet despite its crucial role, and the fact that our bylaws allow the WSB to have as many as twenty-four members, as of today there are only ten persons serving on the board.

There is much to be done to keep FA moving forward in this fast-paced world, but not enough WSB members to do it.

**We need your help!**

**CALL for VOLUNTEERS**

So, how exactly does the WSB work, and most importantly, what role can you play?

WSB members are elected by the fellowship for a two-year term. All that's required for membership on the board is that you be an FA member with at least one year in the fellowship. The board meets via videoconference on the third Saturday of each month, except December. These meetings typically last from one to one-and-a-half hours.

The board's overriding goals are to safeguard adherence to the FA program and its guiding principles and to ensure the continued vitality and growth of the fellowship. The WSB is the major working body that conducts World Service business. In particular, WSB members formulate policy and oversee the administrative functions of FA, such as generating budgets, ordering and mailing out literature, keeping corporate records, maintaining a directory of registered FA groups and meetings, maintaining our website, and responding to questions from FA members and the general public.

But the bulk of the WSB's work is done through its standing and ad hoc committees. Unless already serving as a board officer (chair, vice chair, treasurer, or recording secretary), each board member is expected to actively serve as a member or chair of one or more WSB committees.

**SATURDAY**

The board meets via videoconference on the third Saturday of each month, except December.



# WORD FROM THE BOARD

(CONT'D)



FA has twelve standing committees that support the fellowship:

**Budget, Financial Oversight, Group Outreach, International Groups, Literature, Long-Range Planning, Newsletter, Parliamentarian/Bylaws, Public Information, Sponsorship, Technology, and World Service Office. Thus, we have a continual need for volunteers with various skills, experience, and backgrounds.**



**Do you have a background in marketing, sales, advertising, or social media communications?** Perhaps you'd like to serve on our Public Information (PI) Committee, which works to foster general awareness of the FA program and its benefits. Thanks to the PI Committee, FA now has a presence on social media (Facebook, Instagram, Youtube). The committee is also working on video vignettes in which FA members share their powerful stories of recovery.

**Do you like to write?** Do you have a background as an editor? Our Literature Committee is responsible for our powerful FA recovery materials. This committee creates, develops, and revises our FA literature, including books, booklets, bookmarks, and pamphlets delving into the FA program.



**Do you want to help our members and friends share current stories of and wisdom about recovery?** Your writing, editing, or layout skills would be put to good use on the Newsletter Committee, which oversees the creation, publication and distribution of our quarterly newsletter, the Serenity Messenger.

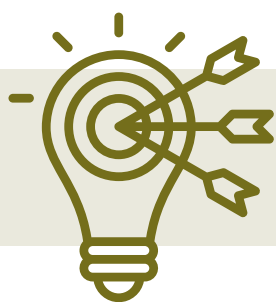
**Have you been an FA sponsor or benefited from having one?** The Sponsorship Committee communicates to the fellowship the importance of this tool in our personal recovery. It assists the Literature Committee in developing sponsorship source materials and also helps individual groups establish their own sponsorship programs.





**Would you like to contribute personally to the growth of FA?** Our Group Outreach Committee encourages and supports the healthy growth of the FA fellowship by fostering the establishment of new groups, providing guidance to the new groups as they get “going and growing,” and advising existing groups that might be struggling with low membership, traditions issues, or other group problems.

**Interested in technology?** The Technology Committee oversees the FA website, ensuring that it remains an attractive, useful tool for the public and our members to use in accessing FA literature and finding information about where and how to attend FA meetings.



**Are you a strategic thinker?** Join our Long-Range Planning Committee, which develops forward-looking plans to help focus the activities of the WSB in meeting the future needs of the membership.

Volunteering to join the board and its standing or ad hoc committees is an ideal way to “give back” to the fellowship. You can have a significant impact even if you have only a few hours a week to give.

Working our program means living our program. Want to live the Twelfth Step? Step up, join the WSB, and work with one or more of our committees.

### If you don't, who will?

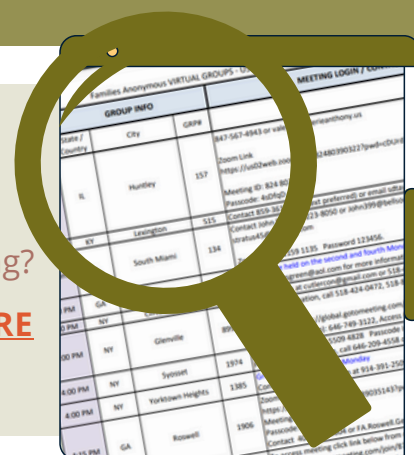
If you would like to discuss joining us, or if you have questions about the WSB or committee work, please contact Maria S. at at [marias@familiesanonymous.org](mailto:marias@familiesanonymous.org).

*Looking for a Meeting?!*

New to Families Anonymous and looking to join a meeting?

Interested in checking out either a new Virtual or In Person meeting?

Find all our Meetings Directories on our website, by clicking [HERE](#) or under the “Meetings” > “Find a Meeting” tab.







# LITERATURE SPOTLIGHT



## FA Gifts

It's the holidays! A time for giving and receiving, and a perfect time to reflect on the gifts we have received from our FA family.

We can all name what we have gratefully absorbed from our time in FA—be it a serenity we never thought we would ever feel again, extraordinary friendships, or a sense of humility that is new and ever so important.

There are two pieces of literature that directly address FA gifts and that make meaningful presents for family and friends as well as for ourselves



***Gifts of the Spirit*, #1025 in the FA catalog and *The Gift of Awareness* #1034 in the FA Catalog**

## Gifts of the Spirit

***Gifts of the Spirit*** hones in on the gifts of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. All these gifts are related to each other, so that “accepting and nurturing any one of them makes it easier to embrace and develop the others.”

As we foster a connection to our Higher Power, these gifts help reshape and energize our hearts. Here is a sampling of what you will find in *Gifts of the Spirit*.

### The Gift of Love

Releasing, letting go, not seeking to control—these are all healthy forms of loving. Learning to love ourselves is also a gift of the spirit.

“Through FA, we find the gift of love in new ways; the gifts of joy and peace come with practice and patience; gentleness and the other gifts of the spirit follow.”

“Love is a gift...from our Higher Power that provides new understanding and requires practice to take root and grow.”

### The Gift of Joy

As we work our FA program, we experience joy “as a by-product of our changed thinking.”

“Enduring joy...can engage and disarm us, emotionally and mentally, despite painful circumstances.”

“The gift of joy transforms people.”



**BUY NOW**  
**\$4 EACH**

## The Gift of Generosity

Generosity is a gift of FA that we can bestow upon ourselves and everyone around us, whether within or outside our groups.

"FA gatherings are marked by mutual caring and understanding. Problems are met with the most important form of generosity, which is loving acceptance.... This generosity is either a gift of the spirit or a positive consequence of common suffering, or both."

"It is in giving that we receive."

## The Gift of Gentleness

We follow "a path of gentleness" in our FA meetings that carries over into our daily lives.

"The gifts of the spirit often work together to help us be more gentle with ourselves."

"The gift of gentleness can restore us to sanity."

## The Gift of Awareness

**The Gift of Awareness** presents us with yet another gift, another tool in our toolbox.

"As we hone and refine our awareness, we come to know ourselves better. ... Awareness gives us those precious few moments to pause and consider the potential ramifications of what we might say or do, and to then choose a healthier 'FA program approach' that has a greater likelihood of bringing about our desired results while keeping the connection between ourselves and our loved ones intact."

Awareness helps us find our true selves and joy in our lives. We recognize the real choices we have in our behavior and responses. Awareness also builds humility.

This booklet highlights how awareness is involved in each of the Twelve Steps, one at a time.

"We build awareness by working through Step One (I can't do it myself.), Step Two (My Higher Power can.), and Step Three (I'm going to surrender my willpower to the guidance of my Higher Power.), until we eventually arrive at Step Seven, where we humbly ask our Higher Power to remove our shortcomings."



**BUY NOW**  
\$3 EACH

# LITERATURE SPOTLIGHT

(CONT'D)

As we work the FA program, we develop the sense of serenity and peace that we had been finding so elusive until now.

"Awareness of these welcome feelings nurtures a new sense of gratitude for all we are, for all we are learning, and for all the lessons that life is offering us."

Both ***Gifts of the Spirit*** and ***The Gift of Awareness*** are gems that you will want to keep close by for rereading over and over.

And finally, don't forget the ***Serenity Medallion with Serenity Prayer Card*** (#3051-A) as another gift of Families Anonymous this holiday season. The medallion is a perfect gift for anyone in any Twelve Step program; it comes ready to be hung on a keychain, worn as a pendant, or carried in a pocket or purse. The Serenity Prayer Card is an added bonus completing the message on the medallion.



 ORDER NOW

## Bundle and Save!

Now, for the very first time, you can buy all three pieces together and save 10%!

### ALL-NEW: The Gifts Collection (#9005)

contains:

*Gifts of the Spirit* (#1025)

*The Gift of Awareness* (#1034)

*Serenity Medallion with Serenity Prayer Card* (#3051-A)

**All three for just \$13.45 per set!**

**Give a special gift of recovery to those you especially love!**



**BUY NOW**  
**\$13.45 PER SET**



# YEAR END GIVING



## 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 Families Anonymous to be doubled?**

A group of donors from within the fellowship have offered to **match up to \$3,500** of contributions made now through December 31st of this year. If you have not yet participated in this opportunity, please consider a tax-deductible donation to Families Anonymous before the **deadline of December 31, 2024.**

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](https://FamiliesAnonymous.org/Donate)

*Thank You*

Viewing a printed copy of the newsletter?  
Scan the QR Code to Donate.



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

# DONATIONS

## COMMEMORATIVE DONATIONS

- In honor of Jimmy K, a friend and mentor, may his memory be a blessing. On behalf of the FA Englewood, NJ Group 1152
- In memory of Jimmy, on behalf of Laura D.
- In memory of the daughter of our member, Lavonne, on behalf of FA Vista, CA Group 121
- In memory of William L, III, on behalf of FA Culver City, CA Group 1191



## GROUP DONATIONS: August - October 2024

### Over \$500

- GR0494 IL, Winnetka
- GR5004 Spain NSB

### \$101 to \$500

- GR0134 FL, South Miami
- GR0173 IL, Park Ridge
- GR0641 CA, Redlands
- GR0746 IN, Evansville
- GR0976 NJ, Colts Neck
- GR1152 NJ, Englewood
- GR1301 NY, Syracuse
- GR1480 Canada MTBA Winnipeg
- GR1811 MI, Clinton Twsp
- GR1833 Canada, Winnipeg
- GR1882 WI, Elkhorn
- GR2056 FL, Bradenton
- GR3001 IL, Chicagoland

### Up to \$100

- GR0121 CA, Torrance
- GR0162 IL, Des Plaines
- GR0171 IL, Arlington Heights
- GR0279 NY, Amityville
- GR0478 IL, Glenview
- GR0590 NY, Islip Terrace
- GR0777 IL, Chicago
- GR0831 IL, Skokie
- GR1096 VA, Richmond
- GR1097 KS, Shawnee Mission
- GR1191 CA, Culver City
- GR1346 CA, Santa Barbara
- GR1773 WI, Madison
- GR1847 GA, Lilburn
- GR2105 PA, Lafayette Hills

As per the Seventh Tradition, each group should be self-supporting. Your donations also help support the activities of the World Service Office. For more information on how to donate, please [click here](#) or visit [www.familiesanonymous.org](http://www.familiesanonymous.org) and click **DONATE!**

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

***Your contribution is tax-deductible.***

DONATE

