

SERENITY MESSENGER

The Newsletter of the Families Anonymous Fellowship

*For relatives and friends concerned about another's use of drugs,
alcohol, or related behavioral problems*

**YOU
ARE NOT
ALONE**



EDITOR'S NOTE

Spring, the season of renewed life. Simply saying the word ignites a spark of hope in my heart. But I didn't always feel that way. There were times, years ago, when I couldn't see hope in the change of seasons or, at times, in life at all.

Our cheerful, bright and optimistic 12-year-old daughter suddenly became afflicted with an eating disorder and fell into a deep depression. This precious child had transformed into a dark stranger who suffered from panic attacks, refused school, cut herself for comfort, and—unbeknownst to us for years—began self-medicating with drugs and alcohol to ease her inner pain.

My wife and I had both grown up in “traditional” middle-class households where no one “did drugs” except “derelicts” and other “bad people.” We couldn't have been less prepared to deal with the raging storm of a loved one in our home suffering from substance use disorder. Predictably, we made many mistakes and, more often than not, added to the madness as we frantically tried to “solve” our family's problem.

The answer, ultimately, was FA. I distinctly remember attending our first FA meeting, in Summit, New Jersey. I was resentful that the family counselor at our daughter's rehab had insisted that we go to FA. Why, I raged, do I have to change? I'm not the one with the substance use problem who's wrecking the family. I'm a victim here; don't blame me! I went into that room angry and suspicious. I just wanted someone to give me “the answer” of how to stop our daughter from destroying herself so I could go home, put the plan into action, and go on with our lives as before, happily “back to normal.”

Of course that wasn't what FA offered at all. Instead, in that room was a warm, compassionate group of other people, just like us, who had somehow found

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themselves entangled in the same madness that was dominating our lives. They listened to and understood us; they shared stories about how they were (successfully and not so successfully) dealing with their loved ones' issues; and, most importantly, members with time in the fellowship showed us how we could find serenity by practicing the Twelve Steps.

So we did learn how to go on with our lives, but it was far from "back to normal." Instead, it was a "new normal" in which my wife and I examined our roles as enablers, learned how to comfort and care for ourselves emotionally and physically despite the ongoing madness, and worked hard to "get out of the way" of our daughter's chance to find recovery. It took time, but we "kept coming back" and our lives slowly but surely got a lot better.

Today, more than ten years later, we're still attending FA meetings and working the program because it continues to enrich our lives and inform our relationships in too many ways to count. We're still growing in our recovery, and thankfully, for today, our daughter is also living a productive, drug-free, responsible life.

I'm not sure what season was on the calendar when we went to our first FA meeting, but that night was the beginning of a renewal in my life. Whatever month it may have been, I know now that it was spring.

Enjoy the season. It works if you work it.

IN FELLOWSHIP,
BOB S.



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Serenity Messenger

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FACE TO FACE WITH ADDICTION

A Member Reflects on the Pervasiveness of Addiction in His Family

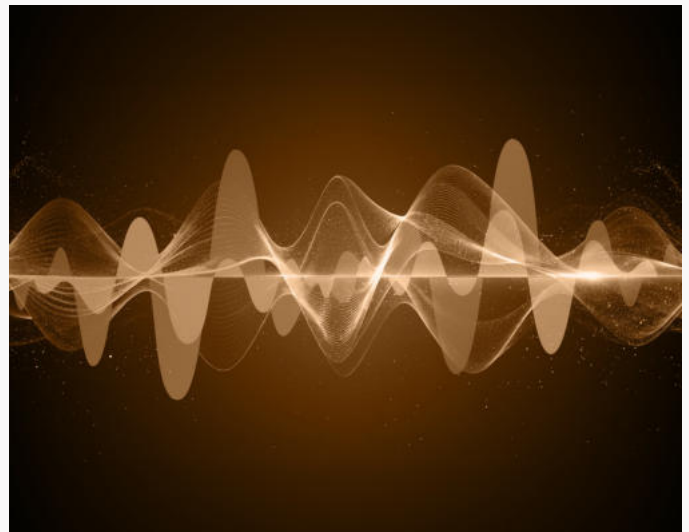
I've had addiction in my life most of my life. I've heard it, seen it, and, yes, even met it face to face.

I was in a family group last year in Palm Springs, California, and was asked to go into the center circle, address Addiction as I understand it to be, and ask it questions or tell it the way I felt. I began by telling Addiction that I have known it all my life. That it probably came over to America with my ancestors on a ship from Ireland a long time ago and has been with me, at some level, ever since.

I first heard Addiction as a young boy, lying in my bed at night and hearing my alcoholic father verbally abuse my mother and older siblings. I heard my mother's futile efforts to get my father to stop drinking and to recognize what his drinking was doing to our family. These sounds later turned to sights as I began to watch these addictive behaviors wreak havoc on most of our family and lay the groundwork for the dysfunction and turmoil that would become the dynamic of our family today. I watched as my siblings began their journey into addiction.

I watched as my older brother, whom I idolized and wanted to emulate, turned into an addict whom I no longer wanted to idolize or emulate. I watched my mother's eyes as I walked her up to his casket and listened to her pour her heart out to God, asking, "Why?" I watched Addiction take the life out of my wife Lauris's brother's lungs and saw him die holding her hand, his body riddled with lesions and disease. His picture is on our team's t-shirts at the AIDS walk each year.

THESE SOUNDS LATER TURNED TO SIGHTS AS I BEGAN TO WATCH THESE ADDICTIVE BEHAVIORS WREAK HAVOC ON MOST OF OUR FAMILY AND LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR THE DYSFUNCTION AND TURMOIL THAT WOULD BECOME THE DYNAMIC OF OUR FAMILY TODAY.

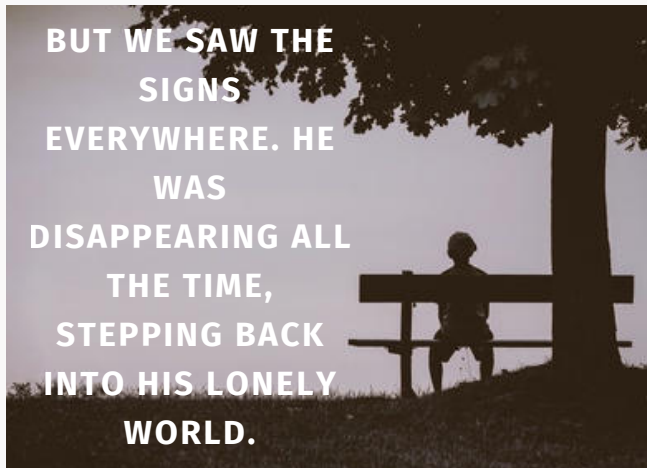


Even after seeing and hearing all I have about this disease, I didn't see it coming again to place its grip on my own children, until it was too late. Once I found myself pitted against it again, the fight was on. In the past, it always ended the same way: my loved one would die. I wasn't going to let that happen again!

I heard some FA members having a conversation once about addiction and debating if it's really a disease or not, and what underlying pathology leads someone to actually choose to lead that kind of life. There is much to debate about disease and choice, but there is no debate that addiction exists. It's real.

FACE TO FACE WITH ADDICTION

cont'd



My son Jay was really trying to hide his using. But we saw the signs everywhere. He was disappearing all the time, stepping back into his lonely world. At one point I was drug-testing him every day, trying to get past his crucial court date to keep disaster from striking. All the talking; his younger siblings wanting to be with him; his stepmother's broken heart—none of it mattered. When I caught him cheating while taking his urine test, that was it. Five hours later we were at the airport heading to Minnesota.

On our way to the airport, Jay was very emotional, and I was really upset. There was just nothing to say. This was the fourth time in 18 months I was taking him to rehab. I wasn't ready to be separated again from my only son. Why can't he just be like everyone else's son? Everyone I talk to at work and all my friends—their sons are doing great, working hard, traveling, and here I am heading off to rehab yet again. This time, though, the unexpected happened. Jay and I got in the car for the drive to the airport but we weren't alone. I was about to come face to face with the invisible demon that is trying to destroy my life and my son's: Addiction.

We were getting closer to the airport, and you could hear a pin drop. His beautiful brown eyes, that for so many years had been full of spirit and clarity, were satin-black and soulless. When I looked over at him, all I could see was his dark silhouette; he looked so grim and cold. He was stiff and rigid, and his scarf was so tight around his neck it looked like a serpent was choking him. He was crying and making sounds; it reminded me of the way he had sounded when he was three years old. The way he said the word "Dad," and those sobs as I held his hand in mine, his hand felt small and weak like a little kid's hand. His addiction was taking him over physically and trying to trick me into feeling sorry for him by making me want to help the little boy I had helped so many times through all of his doubts and fears as a child. The air in the car grew cold, and I was so close to Addiction I could smell it. My mind raced, thinking of my years around it, my brothers that it took, my son that it has in its grip. I realized that it is a living demon with a mind of its own.

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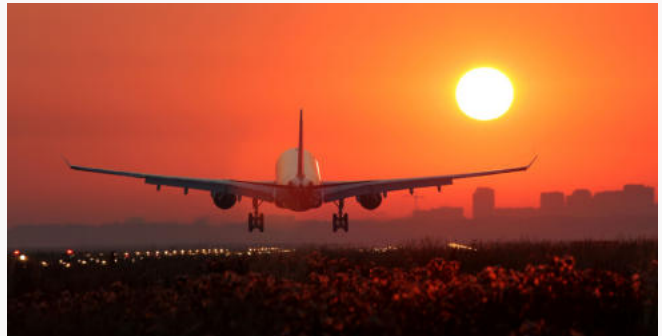
FACE TO FACE WITH ADDICTION *cont'd*

As we got closer to the airport, and the realization came over Jay that he was not going back home, and that his cries were not being heard, and that he was only hours away from getting sober, I saw his inner spirit come through. In a matter of minutes, he went from what I have just described to a smiling face, and I saw him let it go right there. I saw him surrender. As he walked to the gate, he looked back at me and mouthed, "I love you, Dad." For as long as I live, I will look at Addiction as never before. I will argue its existence as a disease, and I will fear its power. I realize that Addiction can't be beaten; I must respect it, put it in its place, but always be conscious of it. It will always be there, and I know it exists: I saw it.

I have several large binders that represent the burden I put on myself and my wife in my attempts to battle my children's addictions for them. What's in the binders represents all levels of the disease and all my efforts to control its outcome. Legal, medical, scientific, therapeutic, physiological—it's all there. Logistically, I went everywhere I could in my efforts to find the answers. I traveled thousands of miles but to no avail. I finally reached the point where I was lost. I began to lose hope. I prayed for my loved ones every minute of the day. I even tried to manage God to help them. I was insane!

Then one day, after months and months of our family therapist telling me, "You need to get help. Go to a meeting. Go get help for yourself," I walked through the doors of my first Families Anonymous meeting. I was greeted by Tom, who gave me a big

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handshake and said, "Welcome. We're glad you're here." From that moment, my life has changed. I made the decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of my Higher Power.

Since that day, I have accepted and practiced the Twelve Steps of Families Anonymous, and I found something out. While I have always been powerless to control my father's abuse, my brother's addiction, my wife's brother's choices, and the choices of my son and daughter, I am not powerless to control what I do. I can fight this disease; I can stop it from controlling what I do and what happens to me. I am winning that fight.

**JIM M.
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WHY I KEEP COMING BACK TO FA

Though Her Loved One Passed on Two Decades Ago, FA Member Mary B. Has Been Coming Back

I attended my first Families Anonymous meeting in March 2006 due to my husband's opioid addiction. He passed away the next month. He left behind a myriad of financial, legal and emotional problems that have taken me years to resolve.

I am still attending my weekly FA meetings. Why? **I keep coming back because my daily serenity is important to me.** I will do everything in my Higher Power's and my control to make sure I am no longer traumatized by life's events that are still connected to my husband. I attend meetings, read *Today A Better Way* (TABW) daily, study and work through the FA literature, talk with my Higher Power, and, when needed, reach out to others when I am going down the rabbit hole of self-pity, despair and anger. These tools help me to live in the present, not in the past. As the reading *Helping* tells us, "living today is the only way to have a life." This is how I now live my life.

living
TODAY

Another reason I keep coming back is for the newcomer. When I walked into my first FA meeting, there were people in the room. For many weeks, these wonderful people held my hand, passed me tissues, consoled me, and let me pour out my grief and anger without judgment. When I hit roadblocks in my recovery, someone was always there to help me get back on track. It took an FA village to help me. I want to make sure that when a newcomer arrives, there are people in the room. I want to make them feel welcome. I want for them what my FA fellowship has provided for me.



The third reason is hope. When I can tell others about my road to serenity, I help not only myself but the listeners. I no longer dwell on the past but simply use it to share with others my journey. Newcomers have little hope when they attend their first FA meeting. As I share my ups and downs, my growth, and my new life of serenity, newcomers may see the wonderful possibilities that await them in their recovery.

My FA meetings are filled with joy, which is yet another reason I keep coming back. We applaud each other's accomplishments and life events. We laugh at the silly things we did the previous week, or things we heard, and we want to tell others. The meetings are wonderful places for me to recharge and reset my life.



I keep coming back because living my life filled with serenity is how I want to live my life.

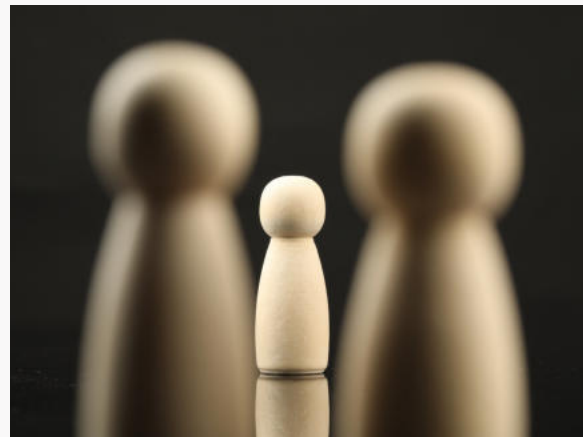
MARY B., GROUP 1096, NORTH CHESTERFIELD, VA

THOUGHTS ON THE REINER FAMILY TRAGEDY

An FA Member Reflects on a Recent Tragedy That Shocked America

Finding Families Anonymous and attending meetings for the past ten years has been a lifesaver, literally. I was in such a bad place, struggling to stop the thinking loop that prevents us from sleeping, concentrating, eating, socializing and, yes, even loving. For me it was a slow emotional and physical death. The more out of control my son was, the sicker I became.

The Reiner family tragedy has burst open the private anguish that families feel when someone they love suffers from substance use disorder and the all-too-common mental health challenges that accompany it. I remember taking the knives from the kitchen and putting them in my bedroom closet. The person you love becomes a stranger, even someone you fear. Love dwindles, exhaustion sets in, and a hospitalization and stint in rehab become the relief. Trying to intervene is like trying to catch water; it just slips through your fingers. But that doesn't stop you from trying to catch the water, over and over.



The person you love becomes a stranger, even someone you fear.

AND MY PERSONAL FAVORITE: IF THE REINERS WITH ALL THEIR WEALTH AND RESOURCES COULD NOT SAVE THEIR SON, WHAT HOPE DO THE REST OF US HAVE?



America is not shocked by much these days, but the murder of Rob and Michele Reiner has crossed all social and political lines because we have all had addiction and/or mental health issues touch us in some way, directly or indirectly. Their son Nick, who allegedly has a long history of substance use disorder and mental health challenges, has fueled lots of conversation since his arrest. I've heard: they loved their son, they were good parents, they loved him too much, they enabled him, they should have moved him away from L.A., they should have institutionalized him, they should have cut him off, we should lock up all the drug addicts and drug dealers. And my personal favorite: If the Reiners with all their wealth and resources could not save their son, what hope do the rest of us have?

THOUGHTS ON THE REINER FAMILY TRAGEDY *cont'd*

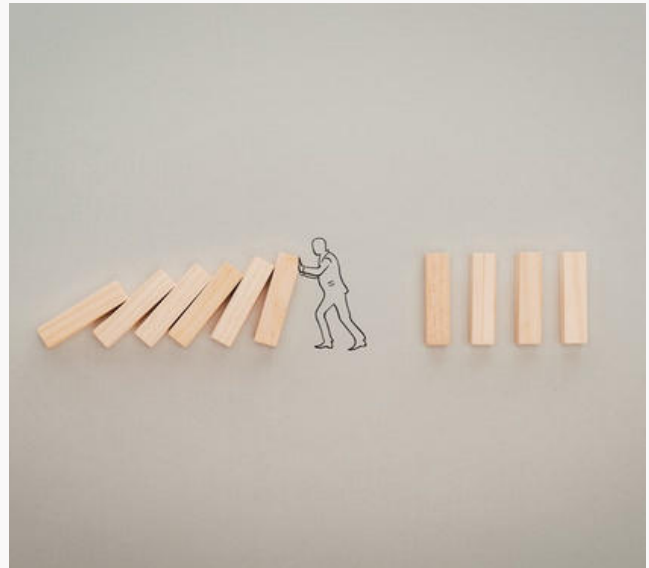
I am thankful to God and for Families Anonymous and the friends I have made here that helped me save myself, which in my case, I believe, was helpful to my son. My husband and I banter FA slogans and topics when deciding how things we say or do might affect or be interpreted by our son, that is to say, what message are we sending? Old patterns die hard, but we keep working the program.

I recently looked on the FA website and oddly enough, there were only six virtual meetings, and one in-person meeting, listed in all of California. That seems surprising and unfortunate: California needs FA meetings; we all do.

For now, I will keep spreading the word: It works when you work it, and you're worth it.

C.M., GROUP 173, PARK RIDGE, IL

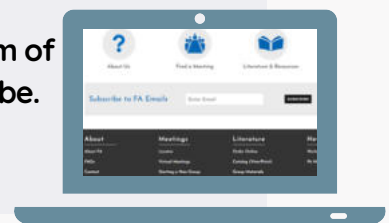
**OLD PATTERNS DIE HARD,
BUT WE KEEP WORKING THE
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I HELD YOU ONCE

A Parent Pens a Heartfelt Poem

I held you once, so small, so pure,
A life of promise, a heart secure.
Your laughter rang like the morning light,
A beacon strong, a future bright.

But shadows crept where dreams should grow,
A storm of pain I couldn't know.
The child I raised, now lost, confined,
In chains of poison, body and mind.

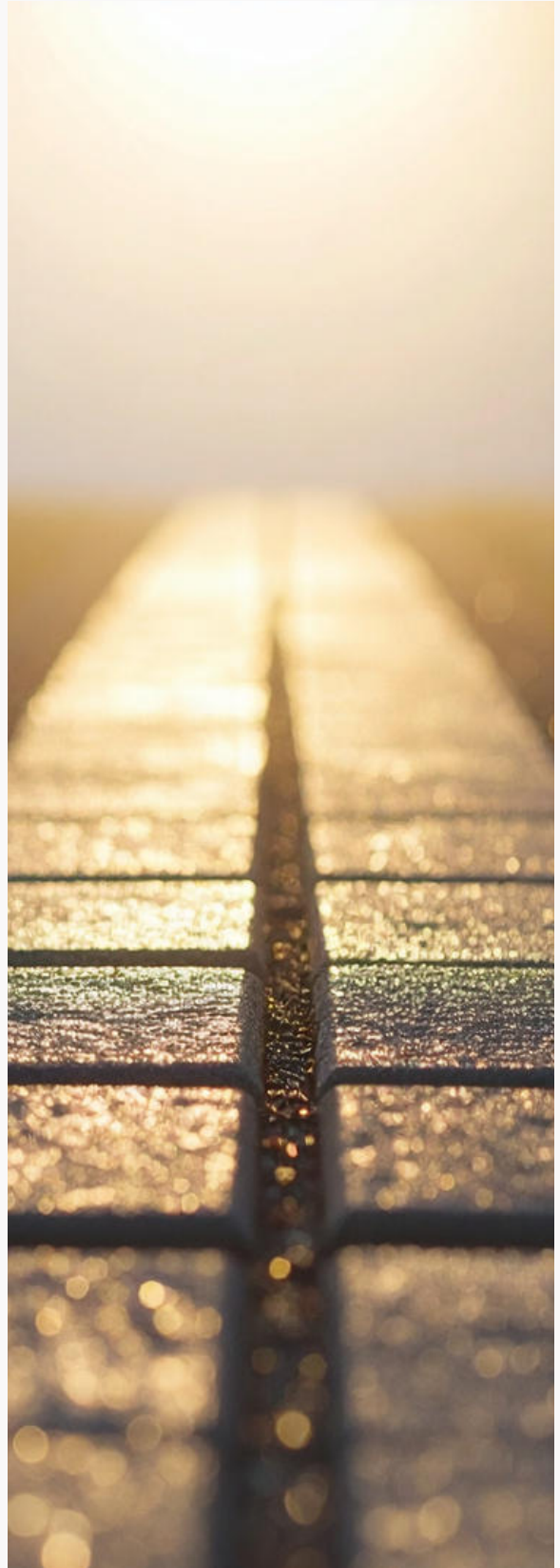
Your eyes, once clear, now veiled in haze,
A stranger walks in your familiar gaze.
The world you build is crumbling sand,
Slipping swiftly through trembling hands.

I scream at walls, I beg, I pray,
For you to find a better way.
Each call unanswered, every plea,
Echoes back like waves at sea.

I fight the guilt, the questions, the shame.
Was it my fault? Am I to blame?
But love's not enough to break your fall
When addiction's voice outshouts them all.

Still, I wait, though my heart may break,
For the day you choose a path to take.
A path that leads you home to me,
Where hope still waits, eternally.

I'll hold the light, though dim it glows,
And carry faith through all the throes.
For though you stumble, though you stray,
You are my child, my love, always.



BILL B., GROUP 1739, LAUREL, MD

AM I ENABLING OR HELPING MY LOVED ONE?

Thoughts from Amber Hollingsworth's "You Are Not Alone" Presentation at the 2022 FA Convention

Am I enabling or helping my loved one who suffers from substance use disorder?

I'm faced with this question frequently as a parent of an adult son with addiction and mental health issues. It's a difficult question to answer, particularly since the "right" thing to do seems to change all the time as I grow in the FA program, and as my son's issues and circumstances change with each passing year.

For instance, should I pay \$700 to get his car out of the impound lot after he was stopped driving without a registration or inspection? Years ago, I did pay it. Now I look back and think that I was enabling him by paying that fine, because my action prevented him from learning the consequences of his actions.

I fixed his problem so he didn't have to deal with it. I did this out of fear that he would be depressed and would overdose. At the time, I thought this was the right decision, so I don't beat myself up now about what I did back then. But through FA, I'm learning how to make better choices.

Amber Hollingsworth spoke at FA's Annual Convention in 2022 about enabling versus helping. I found her thoughts, which I've summarized below, to be helpful.

Amber suggested that one of the ways to tell the difference between enabling and helping is the following:

- If you help someone, you feel good inside afterwards.
- **If you enable someone, you feel bad, resentful or fearful, with a pit in your stomach.** You may feel good for a short period of time because what you've done to "help" your loved one relieves some of your anxiety—but the lingering feeling is a negative one.



Surprisingly, one main way we enable is not by giving money, possessions, or our time but by being the "Bad Guy." The Bad Guy is the person who tells the loved one what they should do with their life, how they should change, what rehab they should go to, how they are hurting their family and themselves, etc. However, when you step out of that role and stop fixing and yelling, your loved one finds it harder to deflect their problems onto you; what they are left with are their own behaviors and situation.

I was my son's Bad Guy for many years. I constantly berated him for not having a job, not being clean, not getting help for his issues. This resulted in him feeling ashamed and depressed and me feeling angry, frustrated and resentful. Then I found FA, and I'm thankful. I was able to get out of the Bad Guy role and let him make his own decisions.

AM I ENABLING OR HELPING MY LOVED ONE? *cont'd*

By enabling your loved ones, you help them to not see their problems or take responsibility for themselves. Amber used the following analogy: Your loved one suffering from substance use disorder is like a person standing on the edge of a cliff, with all kinds of bad things over the edge (sharks, dangerous rocks, etc.). When you're standing in front of them yelling, telling them what to do, they can't see the cliff or the bad things below. You need to get out of the way, or else all their energy goes into blaming and being angry at you.

When I stopped being the Bad Guy, I saw a big change in my son. He started thinking of solutions himself, like helping my husband with his business to earn money, exercising for his mental health, and going to counseling.

I used to give my son money that I knew he was using to buy drugs. I did this out of fear, but I know now I was enabling him. Another time, he asked me to help him look for rehabs. I felt good about doing this, and it wasn't enabling because he was taking a step in owning his problems.

Amber believes the following behaviors by a loved one are not to be tolerated, and that we need to take decisive action either by putting distance between ourselves and our loved one or by calling the authorities.

NON-NEGOTIABLES OR **NO-GO** SITUATIONS

Endangering a Child – For instance, driving while impaired with children in the vehicle or bringing questionable or dangerous people into the home.



Physical Violence – This includes physical violence directed toward family members as well as behaviors that trigger physical violence by others.

Emotional Abuse – If you are afraid to leave your house or your room, you are a hostage.

Stealing – Even the threat of being stolen from is a non-negotiable. A prime example is discomfort about leaving valuables in your house. (I've personally experienced this one, having had to lock up my purse in my own home.)



Suicide Threats – Your loved one might or might not mean it. But call the authorities every time it happens and have them evaluated. This will teach them to not use these threats as manipulation, because it will be clear that, "If I say that, this will happen."

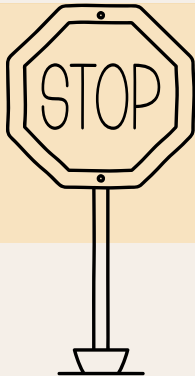
AM I ENABLING OR HELPING MY LOVED ONE?
cont'd

Amber also believes there are a number of things you should try really hard not to do because they will cause more harm than good.

SITUATIONS
THAT MAY CAUSE MORE HARM THAN GOOD.
WE SHOULD TRY TO:

Not go against our spouse in decisions. It's better to make a wrong decision together than to have fights.

Not get our loved ones in trouble. If possible, step back and let the natural consequences happen. Don't get them arrested or they'll just blame you and won't connect their behaviors with consequences—unless the reason is on the non-negotiables list, in which case you should absolutely make the call.



Not pick them up early from treatment. You probably can't stop them from leaving, but don't make it easier by picking them up. Let them learn that their actions have direct consequences, like maybe having to find their own way home, on foot, from a secluded rehab facility.

Not spy on them. Don't track them on your phone or read their texts. It likely won't change their behavior one bit, but it will drive you crazy.

Not talk to them only about their problems. Talk to them about regular stuff. Otherwise they won't want to be around you, or they'll just shut down.



Not let an adult child move back home if still using. They will destroy your home. It would actually be better for you to pay for them to live somewhere else, although she doesn't recommend that either, for obvious reasons.



Not tell other people to stop enabling them. This is you playing the Bad Guy again; your loved one will feel you're undermining them, and they'll resent you for it. Mind your own business. Friends and family will eventually see your loved one's bad behavior and will "get it" after a while on their own. The consequences will come without your intervention.

AM I ENABLING OR HELPING MY LOVED ONE? *cont'd*

A classic definition of enabling is “doing something for someone that they can do for themselves.” For example, in the past, I’ve applied for jobs for my son. (Of course, he didn’t get any of them.)

On the other hand, Amber believes we should “help someone as much as they can help themselves.” For instance, my son is now saving money for a car. I will help him by matching what he saves, because I see him really trying to better himself.

I hope at least some of these thoughts from Amber Hollingsworth will be helpful for you; I know they’ve been useful to me. But please remember: Amber’s thoughts are merely suggestions. There are no hard and fast rules. Every situation is different, and we can only do what feels right to us at that moment in our recovery.

No one is perfect, but we can make progress, one day at a time, one decision at a time, with help and guidance from the teachings of our FA fellowship.

NADINE W. GROUP 1301, SYRACUSE, NY

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

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

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!



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 the Group Outreach Committee at GO@familiesanonymous.org.

Have a great meeting!

THE WISH

FA Member Bob M. Writes About the Importance of Connection With Others



When I woke up, I was lying on a beach in a lounge chair with an ice-cold glass of lemonade in my hand. In the distance, I could hear the waves lapping on the shore. The sun was shining, and there was no one else around.

I smiled because my wish had come true: some solitude, a chance to just relax, nobody depending on me, no problems to solve, no broken relationships to mend, just me, the sun, and the sand. What could be better? I took a sip of my lemonade. It was so refreshing, a little sweet for my taste, but definitely something I could work with. I breathed a deep sigh.

Even the nagging tension in my neck, and the chronic back pain I'd been enduring for years, had miraculously disappeared. I lay there for a while just soaking it all in, until I became a little restless and decided to take a walk on the beach.

When I got up from my chair, I must have scared a bird that was perched on the tree behind me because it took flight. It was beautiful, with its bright colors and wide wingspan. When I saw the bird, I instinctively pointed to it so that everyone could enjoy its beauty. But then I realized that there was no one else, and I felt a little foolish.

As I looked out over the ocean, I saw a pair of dolphins break the water in perfect unison, then dive down and resurface farther down the shore. I knew a little bit about dolphins. I knew that dolphins were social creatures that traveled in pods and relied on one another for their survival, that they were mammals and had to breathe air, and that...well, I guess it didn't matter. There was no one there to share my fun facts with except God, and I suspected that God already knew.

But the dolphins reminded me that I was also a social creature, and that I, too, depended on others for my survival. What if I step on a jellyfish and it stings me, I thought, or if I cut myself on some coral? Who would help me? No one.



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SURVIVAL.**

THE WISH *cont'd*

As I walked along, I focused on the sand in front of me, and that's when I saw it: glistening, mostly hidden, but still shiny enough for me to see. It was a coin, an old coin.

But how did it get there? Was it a gold doubloon from a sunken Spanish galleon or all that remained of a pirate's booty that had washed ashore? Either way, I was convinced that I was rich. I wanted to celebrate my good fortune with someone, but once again I realized that there was no one else around, and I was lonely.

**I THOUGHT ABOUT HOW PEOPLE
THAT WE SOMETIMES FEEL WE
CAN'T LIVE WITH ARE REALLY PEOPLE
THAT WE CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT.**

So I sat down in the sand and began to think. I thought about how people that we sometimes feel we can't live with are really people that we can't live without. I thought about how every person is unique, how the differences that attract us to someone become the very things we try to change about them, how I found the lemonade refreshing but was determined to make it just a little less sweet.



I thought about how relationships take work. I thought about dashed hopes and hurt feelings and about the power of saying, "I'm sorry." I thought about the best moments in my life and about love that never fails, and I got up and walked to the water's edge. I reached into my pocket and pulled out the gold coin that I had found.

Then I closed my eyes, made a new wish, and threw that coin into the ocean.

When I woke up I was lying in my bed. In the distance, I could hear the faint sound of soft snoring. I looked over and saw my wife asleep next to me. As I rolled over, I felt a familiar twinge run up my spine: my chronic back pain had returned.

Still, as I put my arm around her and she pulled me close, I smiled, because my wish had come true.

BOB M., GROUP 853, PALOS PARK, IL



SPOTLIGHT ON LITERATURE:

The Twelve Step Workbook [English]

A father had been attending Families Anonymous meetings for several months. He was grateful for the knowledge he was gaining from the other members, the FA resources, and the friendships he was making along the way. But he kept emotionally “relapsing” in his decision-making, and he didn’t know why.

Somebody suggested he start working the Twelve Steps. So he found a sponsor, and the two men agreed to meet for coffee to begin the work. But Day 1 didn’t go as the father expected. He opened his copy of *The Twelve Step Workbook* and started reading the questions and speaking his answers out loud.



“Hold on,” the sponsor said. “We’re not there yet.”

He asked the man to read Step 1.

“We admitted we were powerless over drugs and other people’s lives, that our lives had become unmanageable.”

“Do you have an issue with any of that? Do you agree with it?” the sponsor asked.

“Well, most of it,” was the response.

“Most of it? Not all of it?”

“I don’t think I’m completely powerless. I think there are still some things I can do to help stop my son from using.”

“Close the Workbook,” the sponsor said. “We need to talk first.”

And they did, for more than two hours. The sponsor asked a series of questions, hoping to get the father to realize that he was only in control of his own thoughts and actions, not somebody else’s decision-making.



“The more your actions are tied to your son’s ups and downs with drug use, the more you’re going to relapse. Your problem is, you still think this is up to you,” the sponsor said, before adding, “Now you can open the Workbook.”

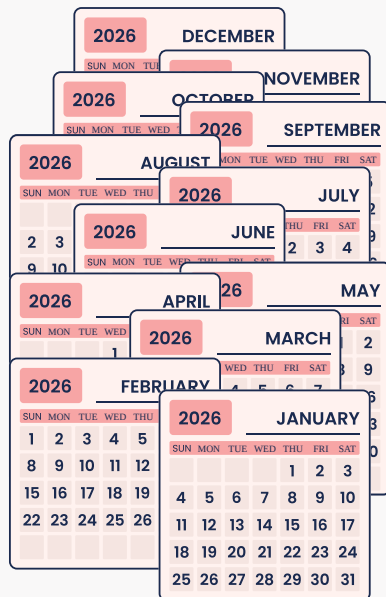
Families Anonymous is a program of rigorous honesty. If we’re not honest with ourselves about situations, our needs, and the motivations behind our actions, we’re going to struggle. That’s where working the Twelve Steps comes in.

Absorbing FA’s philosophies, resources, and supportive community can help us in innumerable ways. But the real work is in the Step work: It takes our recovery to the next level.



SPOTLIGHT ON LITERATURE:

cont'd



There are many different ways to work the Twelve Steps.

Some FA groups devote one meeting each month to Step work, often aligning it with the calendar (Step One in January, Step Two in February, etc.).

Some members work the Steps with a sponsor or, if they do not have a sponsor, with a trusted friend or counselor who is familiar with the FA program and recovery process and holds the sponsee accountable.

Some gather in small groups, outside their regular meetings, to work the Steps together, especially when experienced members are not available to act as sponsors.

Still others use the Workbook on their own, growing that way, while at the same time learning from the experiences and wisdom shared in their group meetings.

With *The Twelve Step Workbook*, we can explore the Steps in depth and in order. We can't ask a Higher Power to remove our defects of character (Step Six) before we've made a searching and moral inventory of ourselves (Step Four) or until we have clarified who or what our personal Higher Power is (Step Two).

The Workbook also enables us to track our progress over time. It is ideal for repeated use: Its pages are three-hole punched to allow their insertion into a three-ring binder. By adding blank notebook sheets after each of the exercise pages, we can write our thoughts on those sheets rather than directly on the Workbook pages. In this way, we can easily and repeatedly rework the Steps and then, over time, compare our responses from one go-round to another to assess how well our recovery is progressing. Many of us go back and rework the Steps repeatedly, either all the Steps or certain ones that seem needed to help us get over a sticking point or deal with new struggles that have arisen.

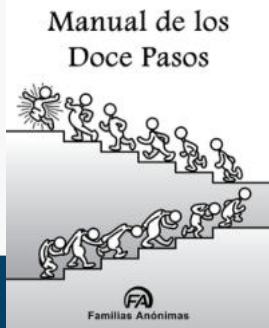
One FA member recalled: "During my first year of being in FA, I got together with two other women from my FA group. We each had our own copy of the Workbook, and we met for dinner in a diner to review each Step as we completed it. We were all co-sponsors of each other in a way. (We actually met a waitress there who was deep into recovery in another Twelve Step program and helped us at times when we felt stuck! A coincidence? Or was she a messenger from a Higher Power?) It may be my personal bias, but I believe working the Steps with a sponsor, or with at least one other person, is the best and most meaningful approach. But, as we say in FA: 'Progress, not perfection.' So, working the Steps, however you do it, is what's important."





SPOTLIGHT ON LITERATURE:

cont'd

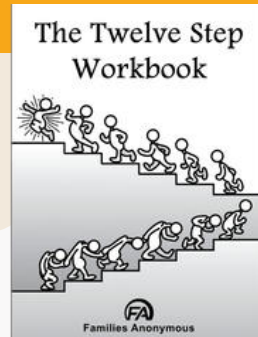


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You can find even more help on the Families Anonymous website. Under the Events tab is a Catalog of Educational Recordings. Scroll down to the “Twelve Step Workbook Workshop” entry, with its separate, one-hour recording for each of the Twelve Steps. These recordings are video links that you can access and view on your own or share with others, such as your sponsor or your group.



CLICK HERE FOR RECORDINGS

All these tools—the Workbooks and the Recordings—are ready and waiting to guide you on your journey forward toward serenity and recovery. Bon voyage!

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SPOTLIGHT ON LITERATURE:

Manual de los Doce Pasos [Spanish]

Un padre había estado asistiendo a Familias Anónimas por varios meses; estaba agradecido por el conocimiento que estaba adquiriendo de los otros miembros, por los recursos de FA y por las amistades que estaba haciendo en este camino. Sin embargo, continuaba “recayendo” emocionalmente en su manera de tomar decisiones, y no sabía por qué.

Alguien le sugirió que comenzara a trabajar los Doce Pasos. Entonces, él encontró un padrino y los dos hombres acordaron reunirse a tomar café y comenzar el trabajo. Sin embargo, el Día #1 no sucedió como el padre esperaba. El abrió su copia del Manual de los Doce Pasos y comenzó a leer las preguntas y a decir sus respuestas en voz alta.



“Espere un momento”, le dijo su padrino. “No hemos llegado ahí todavía”.

El padrino le pidió al padre que leyera el Primer Paso.

“Admitimos que éramos impotentes ante las drogas y ante la vida de otras personas, y que nuestras vidas se habían vuelto ingobernables”.

“Tiene algún inconveniente con esto? ¿Está de acuerdo con esto? le preguntó el padrino.

“Bueno, con la mayoría” fue su respuesta.

“La mayoría? ¿No, todo?”

“No creo que sea completamente impotente/incapaz. Creo que todavía hay ciertas cosas que puedo hacer para ayudar a que mi hijo deje de usar”.

“Cierre el Manual”, dijo el padrino. “Primero, necesitamos hablar.”

Hablaron por más de dos horas. El padrino hizo una serie de preguntas, con la esperanza de que el padre se diera cuenta que él solo tenía control sobre sus pensamientos y sus acciones, y no en la toma de decisiones de otra persona.



“Entre más atadas sus acciones estén al vaivén del consumo de drogas de su hijo, más recaídas usted tendrá. Su problema es que todavía piensa que esto depende de usted” dijo el padrino, antes de agregar, “ahora puede abrir su Manual”.

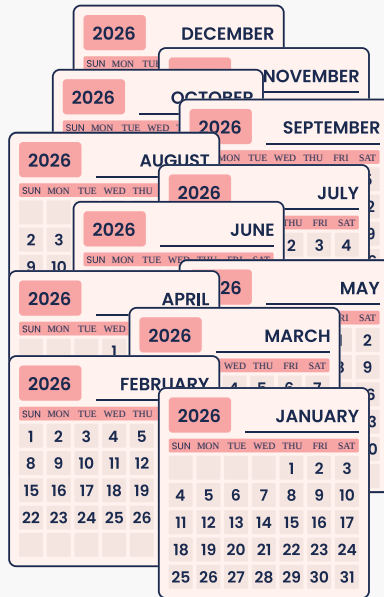
Familias Anónimas es un programa de honestidad rigurosa. Si no somos honestos con nosotros mismos sobre las situaciones, sobre nuestras necesidades y las motivaciones detrás de nuestras acciones, vamos a tener problemas. Ahí es donde entra el trabajo de los Doce Pasos.

Acoger las filosofías, los recursos y el apoyo de la comunidad de FA nos puede ayudar de innumerables maneras. Sin embargo, el trabajo real está en el trabajo del Paso: Lleva nuestra recuperación al siguiente nivel.



SPOTLIGHT ON LITERATURE:

cont'd



Hay muchas maneras de trabajar los Doce Pasos.

Algunos grupos dedican una reunión al mes para el trabajo de los Pasos, generalmente alineado con el calendario (Primer Paso en enero, Segundo Paso en febrero, etc.)

Algunos miembros trabajan los Pasos con su padrino/madrina, o si no tienen, con un amigo de confianza o consejero quien esté familiarizado con el programa de FA y el proceso de recuperación, y quien mantenga al ahijado responsable.

Algunos se reúnen en grupos pequeños, fuera de las reuniones habituales, para trabajar los Pasos juntos, especialmente cuando miembros experimentados no están disponibles para actuar como padrinos/madrinas.

Algunos otros usan el Manual por sí solos, creciendo así a su manera, al mismo tiempo que aprenden de las experiencias y sabiduría compartidas en sus reuniones grupales.

Con el I, podemos explorar los Pasos con profundidad y en orden. No podemos pedirle a nuestro Poder Superior que remueva nuestros defectos de carácter (Sexto Paso) sin antes haber hecho un minucioso y detallado examen de conciencia de nosotros mismos (Cuarto Paso), o hasta que no hayamos clarificado quién o qué es nuestro Poder Superior personal (Segundo Paso).

El Manual también nos permite hacer un seguimiento de nuestro progreso a través del tiempo. Es ideal para ser usado repetidas veces: sus hojas están perforadas con tres huecos lo que permite que sean insertadas en un folder de tres anillos. Al agregar hojas en blanco después de las páginas de los ejercicios, podremos escribir nuestros pensamientos en esas hojas en lugar de hacerlo directamente en el Manual. De este modo, podemos trabajar los Pasos, fácil y repetidamente, y con el tiempo, comparar nuestras respuestas, de una ronda a la otra, evaluando que tanto está progresando nuestra recuperación. Muchos de nosotros volvemos a trabajar los Pasos varias veces, ya sea todos los Pasos o algunos que parezcan necesarios para ayudarnos a llegar a un punto álgido o para afrontar nuevas dificultades que han surgido.

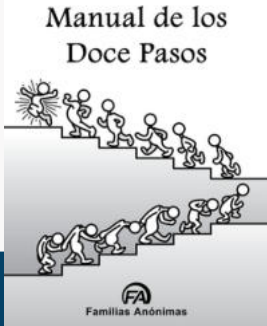
Un miembro de FA recordó: "Durante mi primer año en FA, me reuní con otras dos mujeres de mi grupo de FA. Cada una tenía su propia copia del Manual y nos reuníamos para cenar en un lugar para revisar los Pasos a medida que los completábamos. De alguna manera, fuimos co-madrinas unas de otras. (De hecho, conocimos a una mesera en ese lugar quien estaba en plena recuperación en otro programa de Doce Pasos y ella algunas veces nos ayudó cuando nos sentimos ¡atrapados! ¿Coincidencia? ¿O era una mensajera de un Poder Superior? Puede que sea mi preferencia personal, pero trabajar los Pasos con un padrino/madrina o con por lo menos otra persona, es la mejor y la más significativa manera de hacerlo. Pero como decimos en FA: 'Progreso, no perfección'. Así que, lo que es importante es trabajar los Pasos, independiente de la manera en que usted lo haga."





SPOTLIGHT ON LITERATURE:

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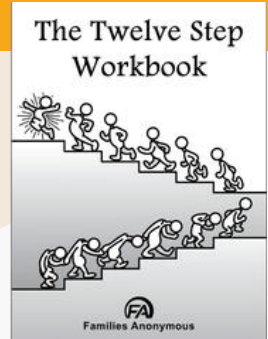


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Usted puede encontrar aún más ayuda en línea de Familias Anónimas. En la pestaña de "eventos" hay un Catálogo de grabaciones educativas. Baje hasta donde dice "Taller del Manual de los Doce Pasos" y allí encontrará grabaciones de una hora para cada uno de los Doce Pasos, las cuales son enlaces de video que puede mirar por sí solo o compartirla con otros, ya sea su padrino/madrina o su grupo



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