

Serving Bainbridge Island, Belfair, Bremerton, Manchester, Manette, Poulsbo, Port Orchard, Poulsbo, Silverdale and more!

The first three Steps: key to feeling better, *By Tamara O., Missouri*

While I was looking at the Twelve Steps on the wall at my meeting, I was suddenly aware of the words "admit," "believe," and "decide."

Step One tells me to *admit* I am powerless over alcohol and that my life is unmanageable. Admit it – that's a big step. To admit I am powerless is to admit that I don't have control and that can be frightening to me. As the adult child of an alcoholic I want to fix things for everyone, but if I don't control it, how can I fix it?

This Step brought such relief to me. My life was a wreck. I had seen many counselors and read all the self-help books. I had been unable to change the alcoholic, my situation, or myself. When I realized that I can't control it, I realized I didn't cause it either.

Step Two tells me to *believe* that a Power greater than myself can restore me to sanity. This brought me hope. I had tried so many ways to fix this problem and had gotten nowhere. I was an emotional, physical, and spiritual wreck trying to find a solution to the behavior.

Finally something more powerful than I am would work on this problem along side of me. I now had a chance of restoring my sanity and bring peace into my life. I stopped looking to the alcoholic for peace of mind.

Step Three asks me to *decide* to turn my will over to God as I know Him. I have a choice. I can keep doing what I have been doing or I can give up the self-will to control things, fix things, and have things my way. God's will might not be mine. I have to accept this reality and turn it all over to God.

When my will is God's will, it is easy to turn things over. The hard part is making the decision to turn my will over to God and to accept the circumstances as they are.

I am getting better at working these first three Steps. There are times when I feel weak, weepy, or worried about my life. When those feelings come to my attention, I remember to *admit, believe, and decide*. Then I always feel better.

[Reprinted with permission of *The Forum*, Al-Anon Family Group Hdqts., Inc., Virginia Beach, VA. Article first appeared in the January 2009 issue of *The Forum*.]



Step it up

The New Year brings us back to the beginning where it all starts. Here are the first Three Steps to review.

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over alcohol that our lives had become unmanageable.

Step 2: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Step 3: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

Whether starting the twelve steps for the first time, or starting over at step one again, each New Year brings with it a new hope for a better today. We learn that there are universal spiritual principles that help us negotiate life with love and serenity. Each one of us will face many challenges in our life – grief, loss, disappointment, poverty – to name a few. Recovery doesn't protect us from life. It enables us to live with life's problems as they arise. Al-Anon gives us access to healthy human support, a Higher Power to guide us, and the Steps and Tools of the Program to live by.

Stay in touch... Schedules, work, illnesses, location changes and a variety of other things happen that pull people away from our meetings. You can really make a difference in a person's life by giving a friendly call to someone missing from your group and let them know they are missed and that you care. Staying in touch by reaching out, not only blesses the person you contact but you may just discover you are on the receiving end of that blessing too!

Stay Connected... At the District Web Site! www.kitsap-al-anon.org

District 26's web site is truly amazing and helpful, thanks to the talents of our volunteer Web Master, Doug. Find out about what's going in our district and check out photos, maps and meeting locations with schedules for our entire area. You'll find many details of upcoming events, links to sites where you can purchase literature and even print out the recent flyers or registration forms!

Taking care of you...

Some of us remember the old song, Button up your Overcoat, with lyrics cautioning our loved ones to take good care of themselves.....



*Button up your overcoat
When the wind is free,
Take good care of yourself,
You belong to me!*

*Oh, eat an apple every day,
Get to bed by three,
Take good care of yourself,
You belong to me!*

Al-Anon teaches us to think about taking care of ourselves so that we are better able to help those around us. We've heard it said in meetings, to "put on your own oxygen mask first" (before assisting anyone else) – this phrase really got me thinking. It had never occurred to me that I should be taking care of myself first! Sure, I would try to fit in a dentist check up, or maybe take a walk if I could find the time. I often had feelings of resentment and thoughts of self-pity when I could not magically find an extra hour in the day for myself. I was an expert at martyrdom, making excuses for why I never had time for myself. Discovering in Al-Anon that my self-care is important, that I don't have to neglect myself, don't have to feel guilty when I put myself first, and that it's okay to consider my own needs – this all came as a shock, and a freedom all at the same time.

At first I struggled with the whole idea of considering myself first, and taking responsibility for meeting my needs – the concept was foreign to me. Al-Anon gives me tools, ideas and information about taking care of myself, "whether the alcoholic is still drinking or not." For so many years I took care of everyone else, and the suggestion of putting myself FIRST, caused overwhelming thoughts of guilt, self-blaming, and self-centered narcissistic visions.

Eventually I've come to accept that focusing on my needs first, makes me a happier, healthier wife, mother, grandmother, daughter, sister, and friend. I'm learning to schedule regular health check-ups, making time to eat properly and drink plenty of water, take a little exercise and get the rest I need. I'm learning to take time to enjoy life and all it has to offer. The biggest surprise in this growth process may be just how happy my friends and family members are now, to see me finally taking better care of myself!

I encourage you – Just For Today – to consider what you can do to take loving, responsible care of yourself. A good start might be calling your Sponsor, or maybe seeing a Physician for a check-up or visiting your Dentist for a cleaning. Start small, eat an apple a day, take a short walk, reach out to visit with a friend or maybe even take a walk with a friend! Think about steps you can take today, helping yourself become the healthier, happier YOU of your own dreams.

Becky M. Al-Anon Newsletter Editor

Ideas for a Happier healthier you...

- Visit your Doctor for a check up
- Have your Blood work done
- See the Dentist
- Eat a healthy breakfast each day
- Get at least 7 hours of sleep nightly
- Eat a healthy diet
- Drink plenty of water
- Exercise
- Stay in touch with friends
- Attend Al-Anon meetings
- Take your vitamins
- Keep a gratitude journal
- Meditate daily
- Daily conscious contact w/Higher Power
- Read Al-Anon literature
- Dance
- Play
- Create and nurture healthy relationships
- Work your program and the 12 Steps
- Laugh
- Wear your seatbelt
- Don't Smoke
- Sing
- Read
- Be kind to yourself
- Take time out
- Contact Al-Anon friends
- Being open to new possibilities
- Eat a small piece of dark chocolate



Keep it going and create your own list to assist you in discovering all the beauty and wonder inside yourself.

Quotations to ponder:

Today, I set gentle boundaries with myself, experience and honor my own feelings, and find healthy, creative outlets to express my emotions.

~ Amanda H., IL

Meet my needs, fill my own bucket, and give from abundance. I receive; I give.

I love me; I love you.

~ Courtney B., CA

Today, I choose prayer over panic.

~ Atiya M., NC



~~~~~ Calendar of Events ~~~~~



February

- ~ **District Meeting** (first Wednesday), February 1, 2012 / 6:30-8pm at the Crystal Grange
[2160 NE Paulson Road, Poulsbo, WA – near Brownsville]
- ~ **Voices of Hope Speaker Meeting**, Saturday, February 11th, at St Charles Church in Poulsbo.
- ~ Group Representatives **Register for Pre-Conference Assembly** as information becomes available
[see WA Area 59 website: < <http://www.wa-al-anon.org> > link to Calendar of Events]

March

- ~ **District Meeting** (first Wednesday), March 7, 2012 / 6:30-8pm at the Crystal Grange
- ~ **March 30, 31, April 1, 2012** ~ Pre-Conference Assembly in Wenatchee, WA.
See Area website for registration form, special Hotel rates, deadlines, Motions to be brought to your Home Groups, and please plan to attend the March District meeting to coordinate carpooling with fellow GR's.
- ~ **Group Reps** – Begin plans to attend Seabeck Service Assembly, May 18-20, 2012
[Register early, when information and registration forms become available]

April

- ~ **District Meeting** (first Wednesday), April 4, 2012 / 6:30-8pm at the Crystal Grange
- ~ **Father Tom & Father Jim Event**, April 28-29, 2012, at Suquamish Tribal Center (between Poulsbo and Bainbridge)
For more information, contact Jan (360) 620-7355, or Aubrey (360) 874-0233

May

- ~ **District Meeting** (first Wednesday), May 2, 2012 / 6:30-8pm at the Crystal Grange
- ~ **Seabeck Service Assembly**, May 18 – 20, 2012, at Seabeck Conference Center, Seabeck, WA
[Group Reps are sent by their groups; must register as information is available]

June

- ~ **District Meeting** (first Wednesday), June 6, 2012 / 6:30-8pm at the Crystal Grange
- ~ **4th Step Workshop**, June 1 – 3, 2012, at Pilgrim Firs Retreat Center near Port Orchard, WA

“VOICES of HOPE”

Monthly open Al-Anon Speaker meeting (with AA participation) ~ **2nd Saturday** of the month, **7–8:30 pm**
~~ Social time with food & beverages begins at 6:30 ~~
Open to anyone interested in hearing Al-Anon and AA members' personal stories of recovery.]

February 11, 2012 - AA guest speaker – Jet W., Kingston, WA

Al-Anon speaker – “M”, Olympic Peninsula

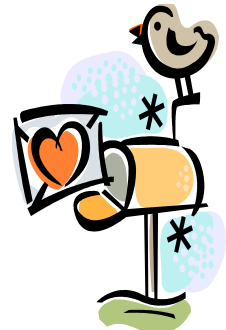
March 10, 2012 - AA guest speaker – Martin B., Lemolo, WA

Al-Anon speaker – Angela L., Des Moines, WA

April 14, 2012 - AA guest speaker – Rita Mc, Bainbridge Island, WA

Al-Anon speaker – TBA

~ Upcoming meetings: May 12, June 9, July 14, August 11, September 8



Meeting location: **St. Charles Anglican Church, 20295 Little Valley Rd. NE, Poulsbo, WA 98370**

(Just off Hwy 305 near Taco Time, Central Market & across from Chase Bank. → From Hwy. 305, turn **LEFT** toward Central Market, by Taco Time, on Forest Rock Road. Make immediate left onto Little Valley Road; turn left again into the parking lot of St. Charles Anglican Church.

For information call: **Anna P.** 360-471-2941; **Jan S.** 360-620-7355; **Dana C.** 360-779-1900
OR see the District 26 website -- <www.kitsap-al-anon.org>

Insights while serving as Group Representative, or Stuff I didn't know when I agreed to serve.

by Aubrey, currently GR for Manchester Sunday Spiritual Awakening AFG

- 1) There are three annual, Area-Sponsored Assemblies, and, according to the Service Manual, each group is supposed to send their Representative. AND, it's important for all groups to send a GR, because only the GRs can vote. The District Rep is also required to attend, but DRs cannot vote.
- 2) There is Fall Assembly (usually October), Pre-Conference (Spring), and Summer Service Assembly (Seabeck, in May). These Area-wide business & service meetings move around the State, so that travel & lodging expenses alternate between regions. For each assembly, individual Districts volunteer to coordinate specific organizing tasks, such as Hosting, registration, etc.
- 3) Locally, I attend a monthly District meeting, help make decisions, and bring news back to my Group.
- 4) I'm in my final year of a 3-year term as GR, and I have to say that serving has helped me. What a paradox. My favorite of the Service Concepts is #4, "Participation is the key to harmony." I love the simplicity of this invitation! I felt as if I didn't belong, so I decided to volunteer for service to my group (and my Sponsor suggests that in doing service, I consider "obedience to the unenforceable"), and sure enough, I feel I am part of a family that works together for the good of all.
- 5) Serving helps me to focus in constructive ways, stay in the present, and to learn more about living the Slogans* – like "How Important is it?" and "Listen and Learn," and especially "Let it Begin with Me."

* Did you know we have twelve slogans? Find them, beginning page 65 in How Al-Anon Works



~ Save the date for Father Tom Event, April 28-29, 2012! ~

Anyone who has not yet heard Father Tom and Father Jim address recovery – you're in for a real treat, because these two long-time members of both AA and Al-Anon are pure fun to hang out with!

Their presentations bring hilarious humor, insight, and spiritual wisdom to some of the big issues we wrestle with as we "trudge the happy road of destiny" in working the 12 Steps of AA and Al-Anon together.

Nothing Fancy, Nothing Special

A workshop with Father Tom W. & Father Jim H.

Saturday, April 28, 2012 ~ 9:00am – 4:00pm

Sunday, April 29, 2012 ~ 9:00am – 1:00pm

Suquamish Tribal Center Gymnasium
15838 Sandy Hook Road ~ Poulsbo, WA

More info? See our website < www.kitsap-al-anon.org >

Or call Jan (360) 620-7355 or Aubrey (360) 874-0233

Presentations will be recorded,



CDs from these and other Speakers/Events will be available for purchase onsite.



Editorial Invitation

The Al-Anon Newsletter needs your help! We would like to receive your sharing's. Please consider submitting your gratitude, stories and Al-Anon news in an upcoming edition of the Gratitude Newsletter.

Submit your story on-line at the website:

Alanonnewsletter@hotmail.com

Waiting eagerly to hear and share your story.

Welcome new C0-Editor

Joining the Editorial staff of the Gratitude Newsletter is Aubrey N. of Manchester. Aubrey has amazing writing and publishing skills and brings with her a history of extensive experience as well as a delightful spirit and positive attitude. Aubrey will be a huge asset to the team and I'd like to personally thank Aubrey for offering her service and taking on the challenges of putting out a quarterly Newsletter. Please join me in welcoming Aubrey to her new position.