

have what we want: serenity, inner strength, and the ability to deal with the effects of the disease of alcoholism. When we are ready, we ask them to be our sponsor.

Our sponsor will listen and not judge us. A sponsor will offer Al-Anon suggestions such as, "Perhaps you could try a meeting tonight" or "Have you thought of doing a Fourth Step?" A sponsor is there to guide, explain, support, and encourage.

We find that making the meetings a regular part of our lives, reading Al-Anon literature, and talking to our sponsor helps us get through the day. The slogans that may have sounded simplistic when we were new—"Easy Does It," "One Day at a Time," "Let Go and Let God," "Live and Let Live"—begin to make sense.

As we start to participate at our meetings by setting up chairs or literature, making coffee, and sharing more openly about what we've found helpful, we start to feel as if we belong. And as we begin to detach from the alcoholic, study the Twelve Steps, turn our problems and our lives over to a Higher Power's care, we feel better.

Before we know it, we're sounding just as serene as the others in our meeting. The alcoholic may or may not have found a path to recovery, but we are better able to cope, and even to feel happiness. And one day, we realize: We haven't even noticed how many other men there are. It doesn't even matter. We belong.



Al-Anon is for Men

For information and catalog of literature write to the World Service Office for Al-Anon and Alateen:

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Al-Anon Family Groups

Yes, Al-Anon is for men.

Your world feels upside down. Your wife, child, parent, brother or best friend (someone you care about) is drinking too much—at least it feels that way to you—and it's seriously affecting your life. Maybe you would go as far as to say your life or part of it has become unmanageable. You're having a hard time keeping things under control, meeting your responsibilities; the stress of keeping everything together is greater than it used to be.

So you've decided to try an Al-Anon meeting, maybe after putting it off for a while, and it turns out that the group is made up mostly of women. There's nothing wrong with that, of course, but how can they understand what a man is going through? Is this really the right place for you?

Pull up a chair: you're in the right place.



Al-Anon is for families and friends of alcoholics

Al-Anon Family Groups is a fellowship of relatives and friends of alcoholics who share their experience, strength and hope in order to solve their common problems. This is our only common denominator—we all have, or had in the past, someone whose drinking has affected us.

Although there are more women than men in Al-Anon, we find help recovering from the effects of alcoholism from everyone we meet at meetings—male or female.

We find that it doesn't matter who we are on the outside; it's who we become on the inside that makes the difference in coping with this terrible disease. More and more men are realizing that Al-Anon can help them.

A man's point of view

Many newcomers to Al-Anon feel they are different from everyone else, that no one has gone through exactly the same things. This is true for women as well as for men, for those who live with or grew up with the disease in their homes, and for those who work with someone who drinks too much. At the same time, we may feel like a failure as a father, husband or friend. We may have a nagging feeling that we're disloyal for coming to the meeting in the first place.

It may be intimidating to walk into a room full of women. It's not easy for many of us to make small talk with women we don't know, especially when they seem friendly with each other. It's all too easy to feel like an outsider.

However, once we've been welcomed into the group, we start to realize the circle has already widened to include us too.

Caught in a bind

Many men feel that one of our primary roles is to keep our lives and our jobs under control, to be sure our family is well provided for. Yet alcoholism seems to destroy our ability to stay in charge of our lives. We start acting irrationally, perhaps even neglecting some of our responsibilities. We may start to feel anger and even hatred toward someone we love—these feelings can be downright frightening.

We worry about where the drinker is, whom they are with, and what they may be doing. We become obsessed with the drinking and how to stop it. Our attention shifts away from ourselves until we are almost completely focused on the drinker.

The First Step acknowledges how common our situation is. "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable." It becomes clear enough that alcohol is more powerful than we are.

Some of us feel resentful that we need Al-Anon at all. Pride can be an obstacle to getting the help we need. Our anger is often mixed with feelings of guilt and shame that somehow we're responsible for the

drinker's insane behavior.

Al-Anon can help loosen the grip the disease of alcoholism has on us.

It's up to us

In Al-Anon, we learn that we didn't Cause the drinking, we can't Control it and we can't Cure it—we call these the "three Cs." On the other hand, we recognize that we can help ourselves. It's up to us to make our lives better. And sure enough, if we attend meetings, work the Twelve Steps, talk to a sponsor and read Al-Anon literature, we find an inner serenity. We begin to separate ourselves from the behavior of others. We develop the ability to go about our lives and meet our responsibilities without focusing so much on the problem drinker.

Once we've overcome our hesitation about coming to Al-Anon, we find that the people seem calm, even happy. They share their difficulties, and they share what has helped them—their experience, strength, and hope. Suddenly we're faced with a new dilemma: How can we share our secrets with strangers?

Many experiences in alcoholic relationships are embarrassing, and many of us have trouble talking about them. Our spouse or partner may have had an affair. A parent may have caused a scene in public. Our child may have been thrown out of school or into jail. We may have had the police come to our house—and they may have come because of *our* actions.

What we find in Al-Anon is a group of people, male and female, who can identify with our experiences and our feelings. We realize that they truly understand what we've gone through. When we go to enough meetings, we will hear someone tell a story that sounds amazingly like our own—our comfort level increases.

A sense of belonging

Eventually, we connect with someone who makes us feel especially comfortable. Perhaps that person is like us, perhaps not, but what's important is that they