

AL-ANON FACES ALCOHOLISM



Al-Anon **Family** Groups
Help and hope for families and friends of alcoholics

"I WAS DESPERATE FOR ANSWERS"

"OPENING UP TO SOMETHING NEW"

"A LIFELINE OF UNDERSTANDING,
HOPE, AND STRENGTH"

FREE
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The Al-Anon Family Groups are a fellowship of relatives and friends of alcoholics who share their experience, strength, and hope in order to solve their common problems. We believe alcoholism is a family illness and that changed attitudes can aid recovery.

Al-Anon is not allied with any sect, denomination, political entity, organization, or institution; does not engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any cause. There are no dues for membership. Al-Anon is self-supporting through its own voluntary contributions.

Al-Anon has but one purpose: to help families of alcoholics. We do this by practicing the Twelve Steps, by welcoming and giving comfort to families of alcoholics, and by giving understanding and encouragement to the alcoholic.

Suggested Al-Anon Preamble to the Twelve Steps

Statement of Purpose

Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism shares the perspectives of Al-Anon members and professionals on how Al-Anon Family Groups can help people troubled by someone else's drinking. Al-Anon cooperates with therapists, counselors, and other professionals, but is not affiliated with and does not endorse any organization or professional. Articles written by Al-Anon members do not speak for Al-Anon as a whole; they only reflect the author's personal experience with Al-Anon Family Groups.

Anonymity in this Publication

In keeping with Al-Anon's tradition of anonymity, stories from members do not include their full names. Photographs in this magazine are licensed for commercial use. They are for illustrative purposes only and are not intended to depict anyone identified as an Al-Anon or Alateen member.

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© 2026, Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc.
1600 Corporate Landing Parkway, Virginia Beach, VA 23454 USA
(757) 563-1600; fax (757) 563-1656; wso@al-anon.org

Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters (Canada), Inc.
222 Queen Street, Suite 1000
Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 5V9 CANADA
(613) 723-8484

Can Al-Anon Family Groups Help Me?

People struggling with alcoholism, which the healthcare community may refer to as Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD), often downplay their behavior, insisting it's not as serious as others believe. At the same time, their family and friends may also minimize how much the drinking has affected them personally. They're often doing their best to maintain a sense of normalcy in situations that can feel overwhelming or even unbearable.

The following questions may help you decide if you could benefit from Al-Anon Family Groups:

- Do you worry about how much someone else drinks?
- Do you have money problems because of someone else's drinking?
- Do you tell lies to cover up for someone else's drinking?
- Do you feel neglected or unloved?
- Do you feel that if the drinker cared about you, she or he would stop drinking?
- Are plans frequently upset or canceled because of the drinker?
- Have you said, "If you don't stop drinking, I'll leave you"?
- Are you afraid to upset someone for fear it will set off a drinking binge?
- Are you afraid or embarrassed to bring your friends home?
- Do you feel angry or depressed most of the time?
- Do you feel you attract people who tend to be compulsive or abusive?
- Do you search for hidden alcohol?
- Have you refused social invitations out of fear or anxiety?
- Do you feel like a failure because you can't control the drinking?
- Do you think that if the drinker stopped drinking, your other problems would be solved?

**If you answered "yes" to any of these questions,
Al-Anon or Alateen may be able to help.**

When Someone Close to You Drinks Too Much...

The person struggling with alcohol might be your partner, child, parent, or even a friend, coworker, or relative. In fact, 49 percent of respondents to the most recent Al-Anon Membership Survey came to Al-Anon because of a romantic partner's alcoholism or addiction, while 14 percent were affected by a parent's drinking and 20 percent by a child's. No matter who it is, their drinking can deeply affect your life. Al-Anon Family Groups offer hope for anyone who's been impacted by someone else's drinking—past or present. You're not alone, and help is available.

How Serious Does the Drinker's Problem Have to Be for Al-Anon to Help?

From the Al-Anon perspective, it doesn't matter whether the drinker is an alcoholic or not. What really matters is: Does their drinking bother you?

Someone Close to Me Has a Drug Problem

Al-Anon Family Groups have one purpose: to help families and friends of alcoholics. Individuals concerned about someone's drug addiction are welcome to attend Al-Anon to determine if it's right for them, with the understanding that the program focuses on alcoholism. Al-Anon's most recent membership survey results indicated that 45 percent of respondents first came to Al-Anon because of a drug problem in a relative or friend. Of those, 88 percent later found that someone's drinking had also negatively affected their lives.

No Appointments or Referrals Needed

If you're concerned about someone else's drinking, you're welcome to attend any Al-Anon meeting. Meetings are free, and you don't need an appointment, a referral, or to give advance notice.

Alateen meetings, for teenagers affected by someone else's drinking, are often held at the same time and place as Al-Anon meetings and are open to teens only.

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Decide for Yourself Whether Al-Anon Can Help You

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Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc.
gratefully acknowledges our members and the professionals
who contributed their experience to this publication.

I Felt Worthless and Unlovable

My dad died from alcoholism when I was 16 years old. I never realized he drank heavily, so it came as a shock. Before his death, he moved back to his hometown a few states away. I remember spending time with him every other weekend as a kid, but once he left, he rarely visited. I never knew the reason he moved, so naturally, I blamed myself.

After he died, I felt robbed of the father-daughter relationship that I had desperately wanted. In my adult years, I felt worthless and unlovable. I surrounded myself with emotionally (and literally) unavailable men. I sabotaged any bit of happiness in my life and filled it with chaos and drama.

At my lowest point, I found Al-Anon. While I knew my dad's death had affected me, I never thought his alcoholism did. Wow, was I wrong! At my first Al-Anon meeting, I met other adult children of alcoholics and quickly realized I wasn't the only one. It was the first time in a while that I felt seen and accepted just by being present.

By Alexandra W., Virginia

How To Find an Al-Anon or Alateen Meeting

Visit al-anon.org/family or call
1-888-4AL-ANON (1-888-425-2666)
for meeting information.





Years of Rage and Isolation

I walked into my first Al-Anon meeting convinced it wasn't for me. I'd been in the military, led training classes, and managed teams. I could handle anything. Sitting in a circle talking about feelings with people who I thought were just giving up on the alcoholics in their lives? That wasn't strength. That wasn't responsibility. But I kept coming back anyway, even though I left meetings early more times than I stayed.

What I didn't recognize then was that I'd spent my whole life being a chameleon and a doormat. Growing up with alcoholism, I'd learned to be whatever anyone needed me to be—quiet, helpful, capable, and invisible. I never asked for anything. Never made my needs known. And underneath all that competence was years of rage and isolation I'd never acknowledged or expressed.

I thought being helpful meant I was strong. I was exhausted from holding everything together. I was angry but couldn't admit it. I had lost myself in caring for others. But I discovered that the person I really needed to care for was the one I'd been ignoring—myself. That is who Al-Anon is for. Al-Anon is for me.

By Bob H., Louisiana

Al-Anon Family Groups

Meet Families Where They Are

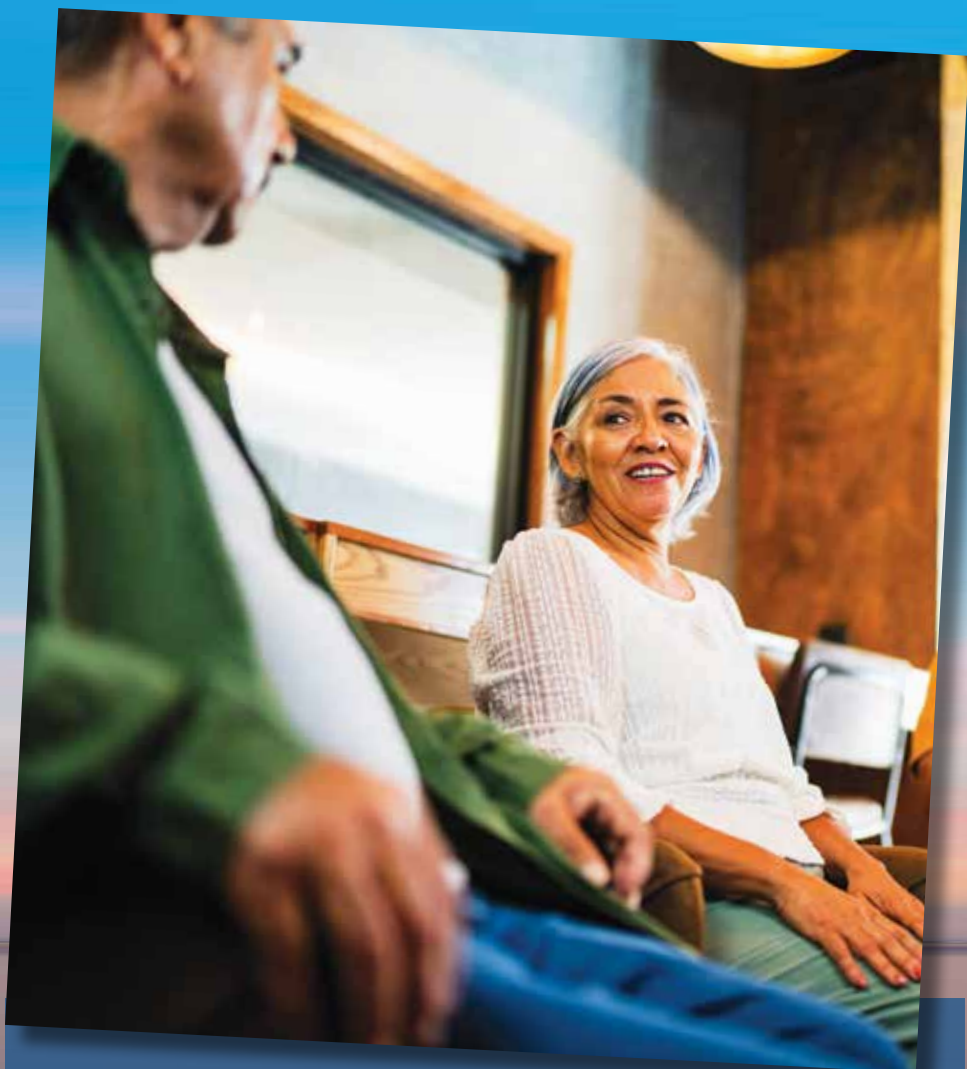
As a person in long-term recovery—and someone who has been deeply impacted by a loved one's alcohol use—I understand the emotional toll that alcohol addiction can take on families. The confusion, fear, shame, and isolation are often overwhelming and invisible. At our national recovery advocacy organization, we believe that recovery is not just an individual journey, but a shared one. Healing must extend beyond the person with the alcohol use disorder to reach into the lives of everyone affected.

That's why we wholeheartedly recommend Al-Anon and Alateen as essential resources for families seeking connection, clarity, and hope. In our work with communities across the country, we frequently meet individuals who are doing everything they can to support someone struggling with alcohol use. Yet many don't realize that their own well-being matters just as much.

When we recognize signs of emotional distress, dysfunctional response patterns, or chronic stress in family members, we often recommend Al-Anon as a safe, welcoming space where they can begin to focus on their own healing. These support groups offer something truly powerful: shared understanding. Families find comfort in knowing they're not alone. They hear stories that reflect their own experiences and gain practical tools for coping, setting boundaries, and rediscovering joy.

Over time, we've witnessed remarkable transformations. Family members who once felt powerless begin to reclaim their lives, improve communication, and foster healthier relationships. Al-Anon's inclusive, nonjudgmental approach helps break down the barriers that often prevent families from seeking help. Whether someone is just beginning to acknowledge the impact





of a loved one's drinking or has been living with it for years, Al-Anon meets them where they are. Healing is possible. And no one has to walk that path alone.

As professionals, we have both the opportunity and the responsibility to guide families toward resources that support their

healing. Al-Anon remains one of the most effective, accessible, and compassionate options available. We encourage families to take that first step—not just for their loved one's recovery, but for their own.

By Patty McCarthy

Chief Executive Officer, Faces & Voices of Recovery, Washington, DC

I Was Desperate for Answers

I came to Al-Anon at the suggestion of a mental health counselor. I had spent most of my time with her in tears, expressing my confusion and fears about what was happening to my husband. I knew nothing about alcoholism. My parents were social drinkers, and I had never seen them or anyone else behave the way my husband was behaving. So, I took her advice and went to a meeting.

I hoped someone there would tell me what I could do to get my husband to stop drinking, because I was sure that was all that was needed for us to return to a normal, perfect family. But no one did. I went to a few more meetings after that, but I still didn't understand what it all meant. I soon stopped going because I didn't want my husband to get angry with me.

Sobriety came and went several times in our household, but each time it came, it had nothing to do with any of the tricks I used to try to get him sober. It usually had to do with consequences he suffered due to his drinking. During one of these sober times, I realized I was still miserable, even though he was doing fairly well and even going to Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.).

Out of desperation, I returned to Al-Anon. At the meeting I went to, they were reading an Al-Anon booklet called *Living with Sobriety*. Suddenly my eyes were opened to what was really happening and how I had been affected by it all. I continued to go and to learn how I could live in this situation if I chose to. I needed tools to keep me from always getting emotionally tied up in dramatic scenes. I needed to learn that I did not have the power to keep my husband sober.

By Ann S., Virginia

What Kind of “Answers” Will I Find in Al-Anon Family Groups?

Al-Anon members support each other by sharing how they use the tools of the Al-Anon program to improve their own lives.

This peer-to-peer exchange often reveals new choices and new ways of thinking about how to handle the effects of another's drinking. Members are free to take what they like and apply it to their own situation; they do not give each other advice or direction.

Opening Up to Something New

After seven years in a relationship and six years of shared parenthood, my partner and I decided to marry. He had been abusing alcohol all along, but our wedding sparked my obsession: I wanted to fix him and his alcoholism.

Our marriage spiraled into a constant fight about drinking. After an entire winter of hostility and sleep deprivation, we were both exhausted. I was in a permanent state of emergency, and my husband had developed panic attacks and was self-medicating with even more alcohol.

I believed I had tried everything: arguing, begging, blackmailing. I had searched for doctors, therapists, and shamans who could fix my husband—all without success. I knew of Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) through dear friends, so I decided to go to Al-Anon to manipulate my husband into going to A.A.

However, my first Al-Anon meeting took an unplanned course of its own: I was welcomed with love and respect. I found myself trusting these complete strangers as I cried openly and spoke of my life with my husband's drinking for the first time. I wasn't aware of it then, but that day, I admitted to my absolute powerlessness



over alcohol. My life had become unmanageable. And I had become willing to hand over my life and open up to something new.

No one at this meeting told me to divorce, and no one tried to indoctrinate me. I had the impression, though, that many people responded to my story, because in their personal sharing, they told of similar experiences. This comforted me.

I continued to attend meetings, did the Twelve Steps, and got back on my feet. Since then, the Al-Anon principles have helped me deal with other situations unrelated to alcoholism, including crises in my dysfunctional family of origin, challenges at work, coping with the COVID-19 pandemic, and navigating changing stages of life.

By Nancy C., Austria



I Thought It Was My Fault

My life was hard because I believed it was my fault that the alcoholic in my life was drinking. But in Alateen, I found this belief was not true. We have a saying called the Three Cs, which says: I didn't cause it. I can't control it. I can't cure it. Here, I can talk to people who understand me and won't judge me for the place I come from. Being a part of Alateen helps me live a better life.

By E.B.

Help With Anger

In elementary school, I got into fights every day. Now, I never get into fights. I am so grateful to Alateen for helping me with my anger.

By Joshua

Al-Anon and Alateen—Where You Can Find Help

Al-Anon is a mutual support program with meetings facilitated by members. Our program is for people who have been or are being affected by someone else's drinking.

Alateen meetings are for teenagers who have been affected by someone else's drinking. While Alateen members conduct their own meetings, certified adult Group Sponsors are there for safety and guidance.

I Learned to Love Myself

Before Alateen, I constantly put myself down. I believed I wasn't a good enough daughter because I thought my father chose alcohol over me. I hated myself so badly that I would punish myself, either by skipping meals, talking bad about myself, or even harming myself.

Alateen has helped me realize that my father has a disease. I have learned to love myself and to accept that there are things I cannot change. Along the way, I've made great friends. My hope is that one day I can help other people who struggle with the same things I have, just as Alateen has helped me.

By Jayden



The Effects Spread Across a Family

I was unaware of any alcoholism in my family, although I knew both my wife's parents had suffered from the disease. But they both passed away before I met my wife. We had been married for four years and I felt something was wrong, but I couldn't tell you what. So, when a friend asked if I would like to go to a meeting, I said yes.

I don't recall what was said about alcoholism at that meeting, but I sure do remember the love, kindness, and, most of all, acceptance I felt there. I could barely wait for the next meeting. I wanted to find out what was making me feel so good. I did find the answer to that question, but I also learned something else important: that the effects of someone else's drinking can spread across a family even if the drinker is no longer living.

By Kenneth H., Florida



Lasting Effects...

Even if there is no active alcoholism in your life now, a past relationship with a problem drinker can sometimes have long-lasting effects.

Al-Anon and Alateen members help each other understand and unravel the lingering effects of someone else's drinking, which creates an opportunity for healing and growth.

I Needed Help for Me

I grew up in a home in which alcohol flowed freely. My dad was an alcoholic, and the tension in the household was palpable as far back as I can remember. I tried to be invisible and, at the same time, make sure I was pleasing people so as not to get in trouble. When I left home for college, I made a decision to pack alcoholism in an imaginary box and leave it on the top shelf of my closet. Out of sight, out of mind.

Well, alcoholism followed me. As I observed appropriate behaviors in adults I trusted, I realized that my behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs were strongly influenced by the family disease of alcoholism. I learned about Al-Anon Family Groups and went to meetings off and on, but still I thought I could keep that box on my closet shelf.

When our daughter graduated high school, she seemed to have a serious problem with alcohol from her very first drink. Again, I attended Al-Anon meetings but didn't stay involved. Then two more family members became severe alcoholics. At that point, I finally decided I needed help for me. The box came tumbling down. My life was unmanageable. All my efforts to control had the opposite effect, and I was distraught.

But participating regularly in Al-Anon meetings, reading Al-Anon literature, and working with a sponsor have given me a positive, spiritual path toward serenity. Over the past ten years, as I've continued to absorb the fundamental principles, integrate the Twelve Steps into my life, and open my eyes to new ideas, I have been transformed. Now I act in my own best interests, feel of value, and face life with hope, strength, and courage.

Healing is possible. Al-Anon is my path.

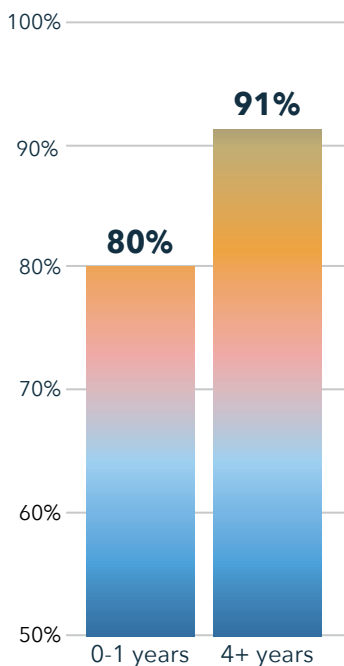
By Kae M., Colorado



Feeling Better Starts Here

Starting something new can feel overwhelming, but you're not alone. According to the latest Al-Anon Membership Survey, 80 percent of members say their mental health improved within their first year of attending meetings. That means real change is possible, even early on. And the longer people stay, the more they benefit—91 percent of members with four or more years in Al-Anon report improved mental health.

Visit **al-anon.org/surveyresults**
for the most recent
Al-Anon Membership Survey report.



Check out the ***Al-Anon Family Groups Mobile App!***

The *Al-Anon Family Groups Mobile App* (AFG Mobile App) offers a barrier-free, safe, virtual space for recovery and community. With just a couple taps in the *AFG Mobile App*, English-, Spanish-, and French-speaking Al-Anon members and newcomers from around the world can come together for mutual support.

AFG Social Media

Find Al-Anon Family Groups on social media.
@Al-AnonWSO (English), @Al-Anon_OSM (Spanish),
and @Al-Anon_BSM (French).

A Lifeline of Understanding, Hope, and Strength

In my counseling work with teens and families facing substance-related challenges, I meet parents, siblings, and caregivers who are exhausted and unsure where to turn. They may not drink themselves, yet alcohol is shaping their daily life. When I see signs like chronic stress, sleeplessness, or constant “what if” worry, I know these loved ones need support that focuses on their well-being as much as on the person who drinks.

That’s when I introduce Al-Anon and Alateen. I explain that these peer support groups are not treatment or religion, but safe communities where people share experiences, find understanding, and learn healthy coping skills. They also learn about the disorder of addiction and alcoholism—what it is, what it isn’t, and how it affects the entire family. Many parents and teens hesitate at first, afraid of being judged or thinking they should “fix” the drinker instead. I reassure them that Al-Anon is about self-care and connection, not blame.

Families who attend regularly report remarkable changes. Parents describe less conflict and more calm at home. They gain

practical strategies for setting boundaries and letting natural consequences unfold. Teens tell me they finally feel heard and less alone. Relationships gradually shift from being crisis driven to more respectful and supportive.

I recommend Al-Anon and Alateen because recovery isn’t only about the person with the alcohol problem. Families also deserve healing. By combining professional counseling with ongoing peer support, they build resilience for the healing pathway that is recovery.

Each week I see how this simple referral changes lives. A mother who once felt overwhelmed now speaks with quiet confidence. A teen who felt to blame for a parent’s or sibling’s drinking now smiles more than they scowl. These benefits don’t happen overnight, yet they are real and can be lasting.

When families ask what first step to take, I say, “Call 1-888-4AL-ANON or visit al-anon.org/family to find a meeting, and try a few until you find one that feels right.” In that first small step, many discover a lifeline of understanding, hope, and strength for the road ahead.

By Susan Raphael

International Certified Addiction Counsellor, Sustainable Recovery Counselling, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, and author.

A Transformative Program

My husband, his Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) sponsor, and I sat in my kitchen. I was crying. My husband was relapsing weekly, it seemed. I was distraught and out of hope. Our children were two and five years old. I told my husband that I would gladly die if it meant he would get sober. At that point, his sponsor said, "You need Al-Anon." I had no idea what that was, so he explained that it was a program of recovery for me.

I went to the meeting and couldn't stop crying. I heard the group members tell stories just like mine and share secrets that I could not have spoken about. It was as if a light turned on and I saw that there was hope—hope for me to recover my life and my joy. I couldn't wait to go to my next meeting.

We had no car and we were broke because of my husband's addiction, but a very kind woman offered to take me to meetings. Al-Anon became my lifeline and my hope. I began to focus on my own recovery and to detach from my husband with love—something I learned about in the meetings—as he began to practice his program.

It has been 12 years since that first meeting, and I remain very involved with Al-Anon. I am a grateful member who found help and hope, "One Day at a Time," little by little, in this remarkable, transformative program.

Today, my husband and I have a home of recovery, by the grace of God, and we have regained our health, hope, faith, and joy, thanks to the incredible Twelve Step programs of Al-Anon Family Groups and A.A.

By Anonymous



Explaining the Disease to a Young Child

"We may not want to think that our children know what is going on, but they often *do* know something is terribly wrong. Children have an amazing capacity for dealing with the truth. Shrouding the illness in mystery and lies is far more frightening than a down-to-earth talk about the disease of alcoholism.

"In explaining the disease to young children, it is helpful to compare it to a chronic illness that they know. We can point out that the alcoholic is sick and doesn't mean all the things said while drinking. We should be careful to explain to our children that they are in no way responsible for the drinking and remind them that they are loved."

From the Al-Anon pamphlet *How Can I Help My Children?*

About Where Al-Anon Meetings Are Held...

Groups meet in a variety of settings, from renting rooms for in-person meetings to gathering on electronic platforms, making support accessible wherever you are.

Many Al-Anon groups meet at libraries, hospitals, or other community facilities, including churches. While some Al-Anon meetings take place in religious facilities or places of worship, Al-Anon itself is not connected to any church, denomination, or religion. Al-Anon is a spiritual program whose meetings are open to anyone affected by someone else's drinking, including people of any religious faith or of none.

No Dues or Fees

Al-Anon and Alateen groups are self-supporting.

During meetings, members typically pass a basket or provide a link for voluntary contributions to cover routine costs like rent and Al-Anon literature.

Professional Perspectives

"I work with college students in a counseling center and often meet those navigating the emotional toll of a loved one's alcoholism. Al-Anon offers a safe, nonjudgmental space to share experiences, gain insight, and begin healing—not from alcohol, but from the chaos it creates in relationships. For many students, this marks the beginning of a new chapter."

Fumie Abe, MA, LCMHC, LCAS, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, North Carolina, AOD, Coordinator/Provider

"In the rural area where I work, I meet parents, partners, students, and teens who quietly carry a heavy load from a loved one's drinking. I recommend Al-Anon because it complements the trauma-informed tools I teach. By learning practical skills for self-care and boundary-setting, family members discover they can regain balance even if the drinking continues. These shifts ripple outward, strengthening entire rural communities and reducing the generational cycle of stress that often surrounds alcohol use."

Jon Dance, MPH, CPRS, PhD student at Virginia Tech, Christiansburg, Virginia

"Faced with the challenging emotional, mental, and financial effects of living with a loved one's alcoholism, my clients find that the combination of professional help and Al-Anon (or Alateen) is often more beneficial than either one alone. Research shows that participating in self-help groups like Al-Anon and Alateen results in measurable improvements in social support, symptoms, coping skills, and individuals' control over their lives."

Jerry Manney, MS, LADCI, Drug and Alcohol Counselor, Ashby, Massachusetts



on Al-Anon and Alateen



"I have been a family-law attorney for 36 years. Each day, I see clients who are living with or leaving a relationship involving a partner who drinks. I want my clients to find a support system outside of our legal relationship. I recommend Al-Anon because it is free and because the support system a client finds there is more meaningful than anything a lawyer can provide."

Julie Ashworth, Attorney, Collierville, Tennessee

"We teach our students that one hour of weekly psychotherapy may not provide sufficient support to counter the stressful, dangerous, or enabling impacts of people's family and social circles. Al-Anon groups provide a supportive, understanding, and healthy community for clients whose loved ones struggle with alcohol addiction. Al-Anon also provides educational resources and leadership opportunities, so people with different levels of interest and knowledge can engage with Al-Anon in different ways and across many years. Meetings are free and accessible to people who do not have the resources or ability to travel."

Lyuba Bobova, Associate Professor, Adler University, Chicago, Illinois

A Place Where I Truly Belong

I had been affected by my dad's drinking from the day I was born, and I had plenty of emotional scars and unhealthy attitudes to show for it. After my dad got sober, he and my mom made amends to me and encouraged me to go to Al-Anon.

After a couple of false starts, I gave regular Al-Anon attendance a shot. At the time, stress from work and my relationship with my first boyfriend was getting to me. I had a lot of reservations about going. I had recently come out as gay and was afraid of how people would treat me. What's more, I usually felt extremely uncomfortable in large groups. My early recovery was slow. For two years, I attended just one meeting a week. This meeting focused on adults who had grown up with alcoholism.

I felt uncharacteristically relaxed when I was there. For the first time in my life, I was part of a group where I truly felt like I belonged. I felt an abiding sense of warmth and camaraderie there. Still, it was not easy letting my guard down after so many years of mistrusting others. However, I learned that when I took a risk and shared something that was hard to say out loud, I felt both closer to the group and better about myself.

I keep going to meetings because life keeps happening. While a major life crisis can still stir up old trauma from growing up with alcoholism, I am light years from where I started. The meetings and other tools of the program have given me confidence that I can cope with whatever life brings my way.

Coming to Al-Anon was the greatest gift I ever gave myself. Now, I know that I belong because I was affected by another's drinking. Absolutely anyone who has been affected by someone else's drinking is welcome in Al-Anon. I no longer feel afraid of sharing what's in my heart with the group or trying a new meeting, for I will always be treated with love and respect.

By Michael B., New Jersey



The Person I Was Meant to Be

When I first went to Al-Anon, I was just biding my time until my life could go back to “normal.” But after a scene of physical violence in my home, I ended up in a women’s shelter. During my stay there, some Al-Anon members called me and took me out for coffee. I was deeply touched, and for the first time in my life, I felt like I belonged. Those people loved me when I felt unlovable, and they accepted me even when my behavior was somewhat unacceptable. A sense of belonging was something I had desired all my life, and here it was.

In my early recovery, I found several alcoholics hidden in the closets of my childhood and my adult

life, and I saw the lasting effects upon me. I kept attending meetings, and with time, the program filtered into my life and my soul without my really realizing it.

When my son started to drink heavily at the age of 14, I already had some years in the Al-Anon program. Although it was very painful, I survived his rage towards me, his running away, trafficking, and even his time in federal prison in Canada by using the tools I learned in the program. Because of the support and love I received from fellow members, I went through those difficult times with dignity.

My son is now 42 years old and still actively drinking. Thanks to this program, I can have a healthy relationship with him and his family.

Even during the worst of his disease, I could still see the beautiful little boy with a kind soul behind his suffering from alcoholism, and I could love him unconditionally.

Coming to Al-Anon and putting its principles into practice in my life has allowed me to become the person I was meant to be and given me a quality of life for which I am grateful.

By Trudy C., Quebec



Why I Refer Families to Al-Anon: A Clinician-Educator Perspective

A graduate student once stopped into my office with questions about whether alcohol use disorder could be inherited. Her professional demeanor quickly broke down as she shared through tears that her child's father had unmanaged alcohol and other substance use disorders, and that addictions of all kinds were common in his family. Her underlying question was deeply personal: if she raised her child well, loved him fiercely, and strictly limited his exposure to alcohol, would he be safe from addiction as he matured to adulthood?

I wished I could offer easy reassurance. I wanted to affirm that her maternal love and a stable upbringing would protect her child. Instead, I shared what I've learned in 40 years as a psychotherapist, certified addictions professional, and professor of social work.

Family history and genetic predisposition are risk factors for addiction, but risk is not destiny. The "Three Cs" are the beating heart of Al-Anon Family Groups: you did not cause it, you cannot control it, and you cannot cure it. What you *can* do is build security through healthy coping strategies and a stable support network.

Al-Anon and Alateen are central to that network. Therapists can teach coping skills and safety planning, but Al-Anon offers what professionals cannot: the companionship and understanding of people who also love someone struggling with alcohol. Meetings are free and available online and in person. Special-focus options include LGBTQIA+ groups and meetings in American Sign Language, although anyone who is troubled by another's drinking is welcome at any Al-Anon meeting.

I've noticed that many clients who participate in Al-Anon eventually shed their fear, fury, and frustration. Their feelings of stress, desperation, and isolation diminish. Their homes grow calmer as they set consistent boundaries and surrender the impossible task of managing others' behavior.

To fellow clinicians and students entering practice, I affirm that referring appropriate clients to Al-Anon improves care. I encourage them to display Al-Anon literature and local meeting schedules in their waiting rooms to reduce shame and normalize participation.

To clients who are nervous about attending their first meeting, I emphasize that they won't be pressured to speak. I encourage them to listen without judgment and ask them to notice if they recognize themselves in others' experiences.

Love cannot prevent or cure addiction, but it can choose community, strength, and hope. In Al-Anon and Alateen, many people find all three.

By Dr. Elizabeth Ruegg

CounselingWorks, New Port Richey, Florida



What "Anonymity" Is All About

One of Al-Anon's basic principles is anonymity. Meetings are confidential, and members do not disclose whom they see or what they hear at meetings to anyone. Anonymity also helps to support an atmosphere of unity and equality, ensuring that people of all backgrounds feel welcome at any Al-Anon or Alateen meeting. Because members can be sure that what they say in a meeting will be held in confidence, they can feel free to express themselves honestly and from the heart.

Al-Anon Taught Me How to Live

I entered Al-Anon because my husband's substance abuse counselor told me I had to. I was angry, resentful, and exhausted. It felt like one more thing I had to do for a man who, in my opinion, wasn't doing anything for himself. But I went. And in that first meeting, something shifted. They read the first chapter of *How Al-Anon Works for Families & Friends of Alcoholics*, and I felt seen. The stories sounded like mine. The pain was familiar. For the first time, I felt like I wasn't alone.

Since then, I've become a dedicated member. I've worked the

Twelve Steps and built a relationship with a Higher Power that makes sense to me, even if it doesn't fit traditional definitions. I've learned how to coexist peacefully with others, including my alcoholic loved one, my family, and my coworkers. I've discovered how to live in community, how to lead with compassion, and how to take responsibility for my own life.

Today, my home isn't perfect, but it's peaceful. I've learned that serenity isn't something that happens to you; it's something you choose, something you practice. Al-Anon didn't just help me survive, it taught me how to live.

By FloAnn Y., Arizona



How To Find an Al-Anon or Alateen Meeting

Visit al-anon.org/family or call 1-888-4AL-ANON
(1-888-425-2666) for meeting information.

Decide for Yourself Whether Al-Anon Can Help You

The day I walked into my first Al-Anon meeting, I was desperate to find peace—because the only solution I saw was suicide. I wanted an answer to why I kept repeating self-destructive behaviors. There, I met people who shared familiar feelings and experiences, and I realized they had found solutions, which gave me hope.

At the time I joined, I was not married to an alcoholic, and I wasn't trying to solve someone else's problem. Yet, I had grown up in a home where alcoholism was present. This laid the foundation for negative patterns of behavior in my life, which haunted me until I came to Al-Anon.

The counselor I was seeing felt I needed a support system to sustain my efforts between sessions. That led me to the questions on the Al-Anon website (and on the first page of this magazine), to which I answered mostly "yes." Still, I was concerned I wouldn't belong.

But what I discovered is that Al-Anon Family Groups are a diverse fellowship of people seeking help and support in their recovery from the effects of another person's alcoholism. Groups consist of spouses, partners, parents, grandparents, siblings, children, and friends who have been affected by the disease. We all share the message of hope that comes from practicing the Twelve Steps and being of service to others.

Today, my life is full of hope. My commitment to using the principles of the program has enabled me to have a vibrant career, which led me to become the Executive Director at Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. Al-Anon tools have helped me improve all aspects of my life.

Al-Anon Family Groups have been helping people like me for over 75 years, since the organization's founding in 1951. If you are wondering whether you belong in Al-Anon, why not visit a meeting, either in your local community or online? Al-Anon meetings occur globally and 24/7 on electronic platforms—and they are all free. Members will welcome you and encourage you to decide for yourself whether the program can help you with your circumstances.

By Vali F.

Executive Director, Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc., Virginia Beach, Virginia



**Do you worry about
someone else's drinking?**

**You are not alone.
Al-Anon and Alateen can help.**

**For meeting information, call
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