



How Can AL-Anon HELP You?

In Al-Anon we do not offer advice on how you can help the drinker to change their behavior. It can take a while to truly understand that Al-Anon is for your benefit alone, to help you deal with the effects of someone else's drinking. That's why we recommend you attend at least six meetings before you decide if Al-Anon is for you.

Whatever your story, you can expect to be warmly welcomed and not judged or pressured in any way. Al-Anon meetings are designed to help members to come together and find the strength to solve their own problems.

We also have a wealth of inspirational Al-Anon literature to help you gain understanding to provide additional support.

WHAT HAPPENS IN A MEETING

People often show up for their first Al-anon meeting looking for someone in charge. You won't find anyone. Just like Alcoholics Anonymous, one of the traditions of

Al-Anon is that members are all but trusted servants; no one governs. The person chairing is just like you, someone affected by the disease of Addiction and has volunteered to chair the meeting.



Most Al-Anon meetings begin with a moment of silence followed by The Serenity Prayer:

God, grant me the Serenity to accept
the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
and Wisdom to know the difference.
Amen.

After reciting the Serenity Prayer something like the following is read at the beginning of every Alanon meeting:

"We welcome you and hope you will find in this fellowship the help and friendship we have been privileged to enjoy. We who live or have lived with the problem of alcoholism understand as perhaps few others can.

We, too, were lonely and frustrated, but in Al-Anon/Alateen we discover that no situation is really hopeless, and that it is possible for us to find contentment and even happiness, whether the alcoholic is still drinking or not.

We urge you to try our program. It has helped many of us find solutions that lead to serenity. So much depends on our own attitudes, and as we learn to place our problem in its true perspective, we find that it loses its power to dominate our thoughts and our lives. The family situation is bound to improve as we apply the Al-Anon/Alateen ideas.

Without such spiritual help, living with an alcoholic is too much for most of us. Our thinking becomes distorted by trying to force solutions, and we become irritable and unreasonable without knowing it.

The Al-Anon/Alateen program is based on the Twelve Steps (adapted from Alcoholics Anonymous) which we try, little by little, one day at a time, to apply to our lives along with our slogans and the Serenity Prayer.

The loving interchange of help among members and daily reading of AL-Anon/Alateen literature thus make us ready to receive the priceless gift of serenity. Al-Anon/Alateen is an anonymous fellowship. Everything that is said here, in the group meeting and member-to-member, must be held in confidence. Only in this way can we feel free to say what is in our minds and hearts, for this is how we help one another in Al-Anon/Alateen."

Next, the preamble is usually read by the Chairperson:

"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."

They may pass a basket around for donations, this is strictly voluntary. Introductions are made around the room with first names only. If you choose, this may be the only time you'll have to share **anything** with the group.

Some groups take turns reading the Steps and some of the Traditions and Concepts:

√ Twelve Steps

√ Twelve Traditions

√ Twelve Concepts

This all sounds like a lot but all these preliminaries really only take a few minutes at the beginning of the Alanon meeting.

Now For the Meeting . . .

A topic of discussion is suggested either by the chairperson or by someone else in the meeting. Maybe someone has had a particularly bad week, dealing with some issue that relates to alcoholism or the alcoholic in his/her life. Sometimes they share readings on the day's topic from a Alanon book or it may be a Step meeting where they will discuss a certain step and do readings and shares on that step.



AI-Anon Protocol

When I first started attending AA and AI-Anon meetings, it was not what I expected in terms of a "meeting". But there was something reassuring to me in the structure.

Usually, when a group of people gather for discussion of any kind, you expect a lot of interchange back and forth. The more outgoing people tend to dominate while the more reticent hang back and listen. People tend to talk over each other or interrupt. The topic can sometimes take a different turn, even getting WAY off track.

You can expect none of this in an AI-Anon or Alateen meeting! So if you are a "talker", you'll have to learn to listen and to wait your turn to speak. It's just the way it is. Try going to your first few meetings and JUST LISTEN. You'll get a feel for the structure and protocol.

So what if it comes your turn to share and you JUST DON'T WANT TO?

Then don't!! Simply say this: "My name is _____, and I think I'd like to listen." Or simply say "I'll Pass" no one will mind or judge you. We have all been there and understand.

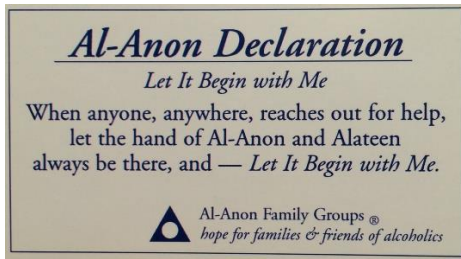
At the end of the meeting, you might hear the following read:

"In closing, I would like to say that the opinions expressed here were strictly those of the person who gave them. Take what you liked and leave the rest. The things you heard were spoken in confidence and should be treated as confidential. Keep them within the walls of this room and the confines of your mind.

A few special words to those of you who haven't been with us long: Whatever your problems, there are those among us who have had them too. If you try to keep an open mind you will find help.

You will come to realize that there is no situation too difficult to be bettered and no unhappiness too great to be lessened. We aren't perfect. The welcome we give you may not show the warmth we have in our hearts for you. After a while, you'll discover that though you may not like all of us, you'll love us in a very special way—the same way we already love you. Talk to each other, reason things out with someone else, but let there be no gossip or criticism of one another. Instead, let the understanding, love, and peace of the program grow in you one day at a time.

Will all who care to, join me in a closing prayer."



So what is the "Closing Prayer"?

It may be the Serenity Prayer, The Alanon Declaration or even the Lord's Prayer. Reciting a prayer, holding hands together at the end of each meeting has been a tradition in meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon for decades. Some groups still may hold hands, some may not. You do what you're comfortable with. There are no must in AL-Anon. If you don't know the words, its ok to just listen.

Here is the Lords Prayer-

"Our Father, Who Art in Heaven,
Hallowed be Thy Name.
Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done
On earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
Forever and ever."
Amen.

And that's it! You've just attended your first Alanon Meeting!
After the meeting some members will stay to talk and can give you more information about books and other meetings in the area, Sometimes they will give you a phone list Of members you can contact for additional support.

Anonymity

Your anonymity is protected by using first names only. You will not be asked to reveal your surname or any other details about your identity or that of the drinker. Anything discussed within an Al-Anon meeting is treated as confidential, including your presence at the meeting.



