

FAN & FANonline

voice of the families anonymous
fellowship



Summer 2013

STOP PRESS !

NEW FAN EDITOR SOUGHT



main theme – BLAME !

Families Anonymous is a self-help organization for relatives & friends
concerned about another's use of drugs or related behavioural problems

£1



Greetings !

Dear All !

What have I included in this edition ?

- **Blame.....** is something that people can sometimes apportion to others unfairly, so that using it and receiving it have to be done with care .
- Contributions from the Groups, the **most important input** to this Newsletter – **your** response to the editor's requests for individual or group efforts
- BoardWalk – what is going on with the FA Board
- FA UK becomes a Registered Charity
- In search of new Board members
- Convention and AGM corner
- Selected Quotes and Clip Art

Dear All,

It is my pleasure to address you all for the first time in FAN as the 2013/2014 Chair of FA UK, following the vote at the AGM in Birmingham in April. I thank all those who voted for me according to our tried and tested By-Laws which ensure that this appointment is made according to the choice of the groups, either physically through their delegates or proxies, or by post. I certainly regard it as a privilege to become Chair of our fellowship in the UK, but especially to be the first Chair of The Service Office of Families Anonymous (UK, Eire and Gibraltar) Co. Ltd., and, at the same time, of the Registered Charity that it embodies.

Public benefit is at the heart of what it means to be a Charity. The Charities Act 2006 requires all charities to have aims which are demonstrably for the public good. In our Annual Report to the Charity Commission, we will have to provide, apart from the financial accounts, details of how we are serving the public good. Details such as the number of helpline calls and emails we have answered, the spread and number of meetings that we have

provided, and the extent of our PI work will all go towards protecting our charity status.

What about our recovery, you may ask or think! Well, for this edition I have chosen as the main theme: **BLAME**. This phenomenon comes in all shapes and sizes. There is 'self-blame' which is closely aligned with guilt, shame or remorse and might be groundless, e.g. when parents feel compelled to shoulder all responsibility for their son's bad behaviour. Then comes 'victim blaming' in which a victim of a crime or an accident is accused of bringing about the incident himself, either totally or partially – "You brought all this upon yourself!" This might be said when an addict becomes homeless. And finally there is devious blame shifting, either by the addict or by his/her near ones. Needless to say, in FA we try to be aware of, and avoid, blaming others unfairly. We should try to defend ourselves calmly when we too might come in for unfair blame.

Do remember that your views about FA and FAN can be made known on these pages.

Simply email richard.jones813@ntlworld.com

or contact the Office. Happy Summer!

WLTF, Richard – Chair & outgoing FAN Ed.

Blame as seen in 'Today a Better Way'

BLAME
BLAME
BLAME



Society and some conventional "wisdom" would have us believe that our children's personalities are entirely the result of parental behaviour and guidance. This mistaken idea places a great burden on parents. We worry and blame ourselves for every error and faltering step.

Thank goodness, this doesn't stand up to today's reality or the truths of the Twelve Step Program. We do influence those we love, but we cannot play God in their lives. Our loved ones are free agents. Their personalities and unique characters are the result of many interactions of heredity, environment and life experiences.

In Families Anonymous, I've found that I will not always avoid mistakes or faulty decisions, but if I have tried hard and done my best in word and deed, loving without demand or obligation, blame is inappropriate. Our program teaches us to be non-judgmental. With time and the FA program, I am able to accept the possibility of a mistake, admit it, learn from it, and leave it behind.

TODAY I WILL resist the tendency to blame myself and others. Instead, I will learn from my mistakes. [page 204 of *Today A Better Way*, © Families Anonymous]



- Parental, or similar, control can often come under scrutiny as a reason for a potentially addictive person wanting to go his or her own way and to establish his or her identity in front of others, especially when this control is excessive. All this can lead to the person on whom control is being exerted reacting negatively and developing in exactly the opposite way that the person(s) exerting control originally intended. All this might produce an environment where blame might fester between the controller and the controlled. Parents, especially, feel that the responsibilities of parenthood demand control. It is difficult for them to judge when and if to relax controls and not be unfairly demanding. When the child becomes legally an adult, there is a clear line to be crossed, after which control seems inappropriate. However, if the young adult continues to live in the family home, maybe for financial reasons, the parents may well set reasonable house-rules, which are regarded as controlling by offspring. So a blame-culture might be set to continue, each side blaming the other, and with the possibility of the parents blaming themselves.
- FA teaches us to avoid the simple opt-out of blaming other people and other circumstances in life for our misfortunes. Instead it suggests that, in the future, we put right what we can and then home-in on the positives in our lives, which definitively exist if we remove our blinkers. The message is to forget BLAME, which will only prolong our negative actions and feelings, and might well harm another person unfairly.

I pay no attention whatever to anybody's praise or blame. I simply follow my own feelings.

[Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart](#)

I blamed everyone !

I would never have known that I was only responsible for myself and my own behaviour if I hadn't attended Families Anonymous meetings. By the time I reached the doors of F.A. I was on my knees with despair and I had become a first class accuser. **I blamed everyone !** My son would not have known freedom from his illness if I hadn't let him go to find help for himself. I read in a book the statement "Let go and Let God". That action I had to take was so difficult and emotionally painful for me, that I had to learn to do it a day at a time. I wasn't sure which way to turn anymore and I was beaten to my knees. Families Anonymous was my last resort and I truly meant it.

Although my son had an obsession with drugs, I did not realise that I had an obsession with him and his behaviour, and I tried to control him. In my life I was a trained professional person, and I knew what was best for other people. I was paid to know that, but this illness {or addiction} had me beat. My son was the most gentle of all of my children. He was kind, considerate and helpful, always part of the family. You could rely on him for anything. I asked myself over and over again what happened to him. There must be a reason. Surely I would be able to help him sort out the problem, but it seemed as if he was unable to hear me. I concentrated on him and forgot about my other children. He had all of my attention.

As I focused on his life I noticed all of his newly acquired friends and it was easy to blame them. I didn't think that for one moment other mothers may have blamed mine. He had never stayed out late until he met them. The police had never been at my door either until he met them. We had always been a close family. We talked and went out often, but now he was withdrawn, sometimes he was irritable and I walked on eggshells. As his illness progressed he had to attend court for crimes committed to finance his illness. Surely the judge would know that it was the fault of the dealers, and in fact the government wasn't doing enough to catch those people. I saw my son as the victim.

At that time rehabilitation centres only took in clients who could afford to pay or had private insurances. If you couldn't get your GP to help, you were in big trouble. How cruel life became! Rejection became common place. Then there were the hospitals; as far as they were concerned drug addiction was self-inflicted. I have since learned that it is not self-inflicted. I took resentment to one of my sisters; her husband and herself weren't nice to my boy. They didn't let him into their home in case he took something that didn't belong to him. Not all addicts are the same and they don't all steal from homes. I remember when he was good to all of them. Had they forgotten that? My mother, well, she was also a bit too protective; she took him into her house when I said he had to go.

It must be because we live in this area. We will all have to move; it's called a geographical change and it doesn't work either. You have to be willing to change yourself first. So, could it be my fault now? I was working twelve hour shifts at the hospital, days and nights. My mind was in overdrive. I thought of everything and blamed everyone that I could. Anger and control became my closest emotions. I could go on and on. Finally I became exhausted trying to figure out reasons and a way out of this misunderstood madness. In desperation I was brought to my knees. I questioned God: had he deserted us? I heard about Families Anonymous and I haven't a clue who told me about it.

Finally I went to my first F.A. meeting. I will always remember that night. I felt sure that it wouldn't work for me. The unity of the group was amazing; the mothers, fathers and partners of addicts were there and they were so kind and supporting, for they had travelled a similar road before me. They spoke of unity and a Higher Power; they shared their experiences. I knew I was in the right place. Later I joined the group and turned up every week, I learned the difference between love and tough love, support and enabling. I went to my first FA Convention in London with the group - a great experience.

BoardWalk

BOARD MEETING HELD AT BATTERSEA OFFICE ON 11th. MAY 2013



The absence of some rotators-off was strange indeed, because the Board becomes a cohesive, friendly body. Chris, outgoing Chair and Angela, outgoing Secretary, sent their apologies because they were unable to attend this hand-over Board meeting, first of the 2013/2014 FA Year. They, and other rotators-off, were thanked for their service.

- A warm welcome was given to our new Board members and no time was lost in discussing 'who would do what' on the new 2013/2014 Board. The first new Board member was Phyllis from Sevenoaks Group who was inspired at the AGM to offer service as FA Secretary and was co-opted, there and then, to the Board to take over from Angela. We were very pleased to hear from ex-Board member and ex Office Manager, Cassandra, a couple of days before the Board meeting, offering to become our Literature Chair. This meant that we had only six Board members plus Chair, which was going to necessitate doubling-up on some tasks and giving less than ideal coverage on others. The full complement in our By-Laws is twelve plus Chair. We still have not achieved the minimum of eight. It was unanimously agreed to appoint Jan, our Office Manager, as Vice-Chair.
- Diane explained how FA UK was now a Co. Ltd by Guarantee with Charity Status. Everyone congratulated her! She was now going to investigate where we have to display our Company and Charity details. Did you miss seeing them in the small print on the front cover of this FAN? Her next steps were going to be to open a new bank account for our Co. Ltd. [see p.12 of this FAN for the latest] and to register our company with HMRC. Diane also reported, naturally, about our finances and the pressure on them, brought about partly by the need to order a new supply of *Today A Better Way* at today's prices and the purchase of our new office computer.
- A lively discussion took place about the formation of Standing Committees as prescribed in our By-Laws but not actively realized in recent years. You can see on the next page that the PI Standing Committee acts as interface with, not only the general public, but also a public institution, Prisons, and organizations such as relevant fellowships, thanks to the expansion of Toni's portfolio. Apart from that, included in the Groups Liaison Standing Committee is New Group Liaison, now as a non-Board role. Kate who rotated-off the Board, kindly agreed to cover this.
- Diane and Richard reported that FA will have to substantiate its existence and purpose to the Charity Commission on an on-going basis. This is going to entail the collection of information concerning, amongst other elements, the number of meetings, telephone helpline calls, website hits, requests for literature and prison visits, as well as our detailed company accounts.
- Please take into account that this report is only a sketch of what happened on 11 May, but that any member is welcome to receive full Minutes of this, or any other Board meeting or AGM, simply by asking the Office to email or post them a copy. Do get involved!
- All members of the Fellowship are reminded that they are more than welcome to come along and observe any Board meeting. This would entail a discussion with a Board member about the possible reimbursement of travel costs by FA to the person attending.

WLITF Richard - Chair and outgoing FAN Editor.

Remember ! You are encouraged to ask for a Board discussion on any preoccupation you may have!

Future Board meetings: 07 September 2013, 30 November 2013, 01 March 2014

AGM: Sunday 27 April 2014

FA SERVICEBOARD 2013/14 *showing group allocation*

Phone numbers. emails, further details given or queries answered at the Office – 0845 1200 660. Your Board Member is there to help!

Name	Office	groups represented
Richard (Horsham & Brighton) 2014	Chair	Bristol, Cardiff, Chelmsford, Harrow, Barnstaple.
Phyllis (Sevenoaks) Co-opted 4/13 2016	Fellowship Secretary	Chelsea, Egham, Bournemouth, Horsham, Walsall, Willenhall, Wolverhampton
Diane (Westminster) 2013	Treasurer, continuing temporarily until a new volunteer is in place.	
Volunteer sought	FAN	
Volunteer sought	Groups Liaison Chair (SC cl.4)	
Michael (Aberdeen) 2014	Website Chair	Edinburgh, Glasgow Tues', Thurs. and Sat., Dundee, Gibraltar. Contact: iMWalls
Jan (Cheltenham) 2015	Office Manager/ Vice Chair	Gants Hill, Sevenoaks, Tower Hamlets, Borehamwood, Hitchin, Leeds, Birmingham Tues.
Paul (Gants Hill) 2016	Eve/Weekend Phone Rota	Norwich Tues a.m. and p.m., Shard End, Bermondsey, Stroud. Contact.Dungannon.
Volunteer sought	PI Chair (SC cl.2)	
Cassandra (Chelsea) Co-opted 5/13 2016	Literature Chair	Swansea, Swiss Cottage, Cambridge, Liverpool Wed., Brighton, Westminster.
Toni (Bermondsey)	Prisons & Fellowship Liaison (SC cl.2)	Aberdeen, Inverness, Chiswick, Fraserburgh, Bexley & E Bexley, Woolwich
Non Board Member		
Kate	New Group Liaison (SC cl.4)	

Standing Committees (SC) are denoted by their By-Laws Clause Number

»» NEW FAN EDITOR SOUGHT! ««

INTRODUCING TWO NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Firstly Phyllis as Secretary -

I would like to introduce myself as the new secretary of the Board. I am a member of Sevenoaks Families Anonymous and have been attending this group since February 2007. I have given service as treasurer for a few years within my own group and after attending my third Annual Convention at Birmingham, this year, I was prompted to increase my service hence being co-opted onto the Board as secretary. I have had tremendous support and love from my fellow members at Sevenoaks and this is my way of being able to give something back to the fellowship. I am still very new in my role and quite dependent on my fellow board members for support but hopefully will learn quickly, allowing me to start to build up relationships with the groups in the nearest future. When I complete my first year, I hope I will have managed to have carried out my duties with efficiency and correctness but most of all enjoyed my experience. WLITF Phyllis.

...and secondly the return of Cassandra as Literature Chair

I first learnt about FA through an article that appeared in the Sunday Times many, many years ago. I kept the article because I thought it 'might come in useful sometime' as I had two late teenage children. One was behaving erratically and often depressed but it never occurred to me that drugs and alcohol might be the real reason for the depression and strange behaviour. But I still kept the article.

It was not until there was a crisis and drugs were identified as the problem that I thought of contacting the FA Helpline. Despite speaking to a very helpful volunteer I still did not get to a meeting but I did read the free Information Pack the FA Office sends out to Helpline callers. That was in 1998 and I can still remember how the tears streamed down my cheeks when I read 'Do You Need Families Anonymous'. How could I have been so blind for so long! Even so it took me several weeks to get to a meeting. I felt very apprehensive as to what it would be like. Of course, I need not have worried. I was made welcome and everyone understood my problems without me having to explain in endless detail. No one said 'why don't you' or 'you should' etc. I will always be grateful for the warmth and support I received at that first meeting. It was suggested that I 'keep coming back'. And that is exactly what I did.

That was fifteen years ago and despite many ups and downs my family circumstances have changed so much for the better – in no small part because of what I have learnt through the 12 Step Programme. I still attend the Chelsea meeting and will continue to 'keep coming back'.

Initially, a long time FA member at the Chelsea meeting gently encouraged me to give service – "*perhaps I would like to come into the office and see what it is like*". Soon I was going regularly into the FA Office in Battersea and learning how things got done in FA. This then led to being co-opted onto the FA Board to temporarily fill the post of Secretary which was vacant. After formally joining the Board at the next AGM, I volunteered to become Office Manager. By the time I rotated off the Board three years later my family circumstances were changing and my 'volunteering' has been much reduced in recent years e.g. answering office e-mails remotely when other volunteers were on holiday.

However, when I read that it had not been possible to fill all the Board vacancies at the 2013 AGM -and that one of those was the Literature Chair - I felt that I had to do something. So I have put on my volunteer hat again. FA is now a Charity and also will be using PayPal on its website so that literature can be ordered and paid for online. Hopefully, this will boost sales which will not only spread the word further and faster but also provide much needed income to support the running of the FA Service Office. Digital publishing is becoming accessible to all at relatively little cost and this may prove to be another way for FA to make its publications available. Then there is always the question of developing new literature, with the agreement of the WSB. I am looking forward to being part of a new and challenging phase for FA's literature. WLITF Cassandra

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At least two more Board members are needed - one as Public Informarion (PI) Chair; the other as Groups Coordinator Chair. (see By-Laws - Standing Committees Sections 2 & 4) These Role Descriptions follow. Do please consider offering service !

FAMILIES ANONYMOUS UK

ROLE DESCRIPTION – PUBLIC INFORMATION [PI] CHAIR

This is an opportunity for an FA-member to become our PI Chair and for the applicant to repay what FA has done for him/her. A chance to find fulfilment and support as an FA Board Member!

Useful Skills and Attributes Useful Skills and Attributes

- Enthusiasm, imagination, commitment and belief in self to do the job, given support and help until confident.
- Efficiency in email and general electronic communications.

Location:

- There is no requirement to attend the office for this role, although see below under general duties. As PI opportunities occur anywhere in the UK, delegation and follow-through with local members is important. The PI Chair might only be expected to attend when circumstances call for this and it is economically viable.

Role details:

- The FA Board appoints the PI Chair and the PI Sub-Committee which currently includes Fellowship Liaison and Prisons, two areas where FA needs to extend a public face. There is generally no requirement specific to these roles to attend the office.
- The PI Chair role entails fostering the awareness of the Families Anonymous programme to the general public and to professionals working in the area of drug abuse and related behavioural problems; developing awareness of Families Anonymous to public agencies, the medical and legal professions, schools and school counsellors and other personnel at the local levels who might refer families or friends to Families Anonymous. The Committee will prepare announcements for newspapers, radio and television, maintaining anonymity of individual members, some of which will be appropriate for individual group use in their particular areas. All national announcements and national public speaking engagements shall be cleared through the PI Chair. They would include review of manuscripts written for national publication.

Getting started: At present there **is** no PI-specific volunteer on the Board and this function is being covered by other Board members. The induction of a new volunteer will therefore be looked after by other members of the Board.

General duties of Board members:

- *Attendance at 3-hour Board meetings at our office in Battersea about 4 times a year, normally on Saturday mornings. Phone-conferencing available, if appropriate.*
- *Participation in general Board business, mostly by email, as and when necessary, and occasional contact with groups allotted to you.*
- *FA will repay all agreed outlays that are necessary to perform all Board functions*

Duration of Service: A satisfying three-year period, a chance to serve The FA Fellowship and to be an integral part of its decision making process. For the duration of service, an invitation will be extended for the applicant to become a Trustee of the FA charity and a Director of the FA company limited by guarantee.

Could be interested?: If you could be interested and would like to know more, why not get the phone the Office and have an informal chat without obligation? The reality of learning a new skill can be pleasing and is much less daunting and demanding than this role-description might suggest! Surprise yourself!

July 2013

FAMILIES ANONYMOUS UK

ROLE DESCRIPTION – GROUPS COORDINATOR CHAIR

This is an opportunity for an FA-member to become our Groups Coordinator Chair and for the applicant to repay what FA has done for him/her. A chance to find fulfilment and support as an FA Board Member!

Useful Skills and Attributes:

- Enthusiasm, imagination, commitment and belief in self to do the job, given support and help until confident.
- Efficiency in email and general electronic communications.

Location:

- There is no requirement to attend the office for this role, although see below under general duties.

Role details:

- The FA Board appoints the Groups Coordinator Chair and the Groups Coordinator Sub-Committee which currently includes New Group Liaison.
- The Groups Co-ordinator Chair acts as a liaison officer between all member groups and the Service Office, encouraging support from neighbouring groups, and co-ordinating the forming of new Intergroups and encouraging new groups.
- He/She is the principal contact between the Board and the groups, in addition to the specific Board member allocated to each group as detailed on the current FA Service Board List. As this is a new role, the Board as a whole will need to explore with the new Groups Coordinator how best to maintain contact and communication with the groups.
- FA's acquired Charity Status requires the Board to formally demonstrate annually that the fellowship is achieving its stated charitable objectives. The Group Coordinator Chair will play an active role concerning the input about the groups to be declared to the Charity Commission in conjunction with the whole Board, but especially with the Treasurer and Office Manager, both of whose records are held in the Office and are available for inspection.

Getting started: At present there is no Groups Coordinator volunteer on the Board and this function is being covered by other Board members. The induction of a new volunteer will therefore be looked after by other members of the Board.

General duties of Board members:

- *Attendance at 3-hour Board meetings at our office in Battersea about 4 times a year, normally on Saturday mornings. Phone-conferencing available, if appropriate.*
- *Participation in general Board business, mostly by email, as and when necessary, and occasional contact with groups allotted to you.*
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Could be interested?: If you could be interested and would like to know more, why not get on the phone to the Office and have an informal chat without obligation? The reality of learning a new skill can be pleasing and is much less daunting and demanding than this role-description might suggest! Surprise yourself!

July 2013



- Diane, our outgoing Treasurer, is now able to come nearer to declaring our expenditure for 2013-2014 as being general running costs of £11,000, plus some website and accounting costs. But in addition, we are going to have to buy a minimum of 2000 TABWs at a price which bears absolutely no relation to our last order about 8 years ago, plus recently having to buy a new computer. We are seeing our reserves being severely reduced and our donations not covering our costs. We do not have to be gifted mathematicians to work out where this will take us if nothing changes.
- All this might make us think of the 'Pound in Your Pocket' speech of Harold Wilson in 1966 when he tried to convince the nation that devaluation had no consequences. When you were earning £10 a week then, £1 had considerable value. What will it buy you today? One copy of FAN without the postage.
- If an FA member put £1 into a meeting collection 5, 10 or more years ago, it had value. Today it will hardly buy a cup of tea, not even daring to think about the luxury of coffee! It is very easy to fail to notice that the cost of running FA is constantly creeping upwards, but we have to remind ourselves of this truth. If we ignore it, purposefully or purely because it simply hadn't occurred to us, the medium or long term future of FA UK does not look rosy. FA is dear to us all, but it costs money.
- Nobody is going to tell you, nor wants to tell you, how much you ought to put onto the 'pot', especially in these difficult financial times. If you have been putting the same amount into 'pot' for years, perhaps you ought to re-think what FA has done for you, so that FA is still around for coming generations.
- But all is definitely not GLOOM & DOOM! As we start to sell our remaining and new stocks of TABW, our reserves will become healthier. If we all take heed of the situation, there is no need to be negative.
- What happened to Gratitude Month in February? Oh dear! No Board member remembered it. What an admission! Excuse? So much distraction in the climax of the Charity process around that time is a good one and a valid one. Hopefully, all of us will take this into account in the coming month, and long-term the level of donations in general.

WLITF Richard, Chair.

IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM DIANE – acting Treasurer

For all those who give regular contributions to FA through Bank Standing Orders and/or Direct Debits.

First of all many thanks indeed! Your regular contributions make a huge difference to our finances.

We have just opened our new Bank account as a registered charity and will shortly be closing the account we currently use. I am sorry for the inconvenience, but could you please contact your bank and ask them to cancel the SO and/or DD that you currently have made out to our Bank of Scotland account and arrange to set up the SO/DD with our new Lloyds account (Account number: 27765868 and Sort Code: 30-90-69). If you have any queries, please contact me through: office@famanon.org.uk

The good news is that any donations that you make can be Gift-Aided! If you would like to Gift Aid your donation, please contact me and I will send you a form. All this means that, if you are a UK tax-payer, paying more tax than your donation(s) to FA, FA can claim a percentage of your donation from HMRC.

And finally, if there are any members out there who might consider making a regular contribution, please do also get in touch either with your bank directly with the new account details above, or with me if you need any help or to make (a) Gift-Aided donation(s).

With many thanks again
WLITF
Diane

and now FROM ACROSS THE ATLANTIC!

It is difficult to believe that Marc M. is no longer the Chair of the World Service Board. We thank Marc for his dedicated service and, as far as we Brits are concerned, the way he got involved with us, including by participation in our Forum. Marc M.'s place as WSB Chair has now been taken by George R. to whom we send our best wishes and thanks.....



In the summer of 2012, we

conducted a survey of approximately 225 USA group secretaries.. We received responses from 130 of those invited to participate. We would like to share the following picture of our fellowship based on our analysis of these survey results.

What are our groups like? Most of the registered FA groups have been in existence for at least 5 years (72%). Most groups meet once a week (90%) and have 20 or fewer members attending each meeting (83%). Most of the meetings occur at a place of worship (63%) or a hospital or treatment center (19%) and 4 of our groups meet in cyberspace. Between meetings, group members keep in contact with each other by phone (87%) or email (47%). When asked about sponsorship, 42% of the secretaries responded that some of the members of their groups had an FA sponsor. Few groups however (18%) have a list of people willing to serve as sponsors.

What do our groups talk about? Most of the groups read the FA 12 Steps at every meeting (82%) as well as some or all of the FA 12 Traditions (70%). Typical topics of discussion at our FA meetings included readings from Today A Better Way (92%), the FA 12 Steps (89%), other FA literature (77%), members' personal experiences (72%), 12-Step-Rag articles (52%) and the Serenity Prayer (48%). Topics that were more rarely discussed at FA meetings included the FA 12 Traditions (<30%) and sponsorship (10%). Other topics mentioned were "Alternatives to Enabling," The Step 4 workbook, "The Language of Letting Go" and forgiveness. Guest speakers were invited at 33% of the groups at some point during the last year. Some groups (13%) do not have a formal topic at their meetings but instead use an open discussion format.

How healthy are our groups? The group secretaries were asked to describe the health of their group by selecting one of four categories (Excellent, Good, Fair, or Poor). 26% rated themselves as "Excellent; our group is growing and we rarely have difficulty getting volunteers to lead and help with conducting the meeting. 55% felt their group health was "Good; our meeting attendance is stable and we have adequate numbers of volunteers to rotate leadership activities". 17% rated their group health as "Fair; our meeting has fewer attendees; only a few people are leading at all the meetings." Finally, 2% of the secretaries felt that

and

A Summer FA Group Survey as reported by FA USA last year...

their group was in poor health and feared that the groups may have to close due to lack of interest and low attendance.

Improving the health or our fellowship. The final question of the survey asked, "What would best help to improve the health of your fellowship?" In response 35% of the secretaries replied that "No help is necessary, we are doing fine." The other three choices offered by the survey were:

1) Help us contact other groups in our area. 10% of the survey responders requested help contacting other groups in their area. If your group wants to interact with groups in your area, your local area intergroup is an excellent place to start, if one exists. If no intergroup serves your area, you can search for nearby meetings using the 'Meeting Locator' tool on the Families Anonymous Web site. Finally, the Group Outreach Committee of the FA World Service Board (go@familiesanonymous.org) may have additional suggestions specific to your geographic area.

2) Help us with sponsorship. 10% of the group secretaries wanted help with sponsorship to improve the health of their groups. Among the actions you can take that can help encourage sponsorship in your group are:

- Get the booklet "Families Anonymous and Sponsorship" and make it available to your members.
- Make sponsorship a discussion topic at a meeting.
- Read the "12 Step Rag" articles on sponsorship that appear in almost every issue.
- Read the pages on sponsorship in "Today A Better Way" at a meeting
- Ask your members if they would be willing to identify themselves as sponsors on the group's phone list

For additional help, contact the FA Sponsorship Committee sp@familiesanonymous.org

P.T.O.

3) Help us organize an outreach effort in our community. A large number of group secretaries (41%) felt that their group's health would be improved by assistance in spreading the word about FA. Among the resources available to assist groups to reach out within their communities are:

- The booklet #7007, Spread the Word About Families Anonymous offers suggestions for increasing your community's awareness of FA; guidance for interacting with professionals, other groups, and the media; and support available from the FA Group Outreach committee.
- The "Spreading the Word" page on the FA web site contains several free public information items that can be downloaded and printed for use in your local public information efforts.

- The Group Outreach Committee of the FA World Service Board can offer support and guidance. Contact them at go@familiesanonymous.org

Many thanks to the FA group secretaries who took the time to respond to the survey.

Yours in Service, FA USA Long Range Planning Committee



& CONVENTION CORNER



SCOTTISH CONVENTION

Glasgow, Saturday 14 September 2013. Venue to be announced

NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND AGMs

Our important April weekend took place on Saturday 21st and on Sunday morning 22nd. with the new but tried format of having the Convention on Saturday and the AGM on Sunday morning. Once more, it all started on the Friday evening with a convivial dinner for those who wished to maximize the experience. Why not try it yourself next year if at all possible?

"I CAN Change Myself" was the theme of this year's Convention, held as usual in recent times, at the Hilton Metropole Hotel at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham. Those who were able to attend found it enjoyable, informative, supportive and a break from daily routine in a very relaxed atmosphere at highly competitive prices. As always, we were privileged to hear shares from different viewpoints, including from the NA aspect, and to be amidst so many like-minded people.

The AGM on Sunday morning presented the usual opportunity for the FA membership to meet Board members and to hear their individual reports, plus our outgoing Chair's view of the year as a whole. The AGM is, of course, where the Group Delegates vote on motions proposed by the Groups and the Board. Postal votes received from Groups, having no delegate present, were also counted for inclusion in the results,

Michael has kindly already booked the Hilton Metropole according to the vote at this year's AGM.

The event is set for 26 and 27 April 2014. Thank you, Michael! We are looking to members for volunteers for the The Cross-Group Convention Committee which plans and runs this event. Please complete the flyer enclosed or simply tell the Office by phone of your willingness to give service.

LETTING GO OF BLAME

I was walking home tonight after a very pleasant evening spent at the home of my brother. As I stepped off the pavement and into my courtyard, I was touched by an overwhelming feeling of peace and wholeness. It seemed that all the stresses and fears brought on by a lifetime of difficulties had been washed away from me, and I was master of my own destiny.

I was aware of myself as an entity entirely separate from all those people who have brought pain to me; a whole person. I was alone on a new planet, in a new life, and I could do with this life whatever I wished. I gazed up at the sky and revelled in this rebirth. This experience could be seen as an impromptu meditation. It cleared my head, and made me receptive to the wisdom of my higher power. I decided to record my thoughts as they came to me, and this is what I am now doing.

In recent years, the drug addiction of two of my children has caused me much pain and anguish. Those who have gone through similar experiences can imagine the terrible battle I had with my emotions. I found myself bouncing between terror, anger, depression and denial. I tried rational discussion, tears, manipulation and bribery. I trawled the internet looking for a cure. I put together plots involving boarded up windows and doors, and cat flaps through which chamber pots and plates of food could be passed. At times I

congratulated myself on my resourcefulness. At other times I berated myself on my uselessness. I fell apart and put myself back together to start all over again.

Weaving through all of this horror, dipping in and out on almost daily basis, was that most awful and destructive thing of all; BLAME. I blamed their father, and his destructive attitude to child rearing. I blamed my two addicted children for being so stupid as to admit drugs into their lives. I blamed my son's teachers (and myself) for not recognising his autism spectrum disorder. Naturally, however, I considered myself the most guilty party. I should have left their father. I should have known how to prevent them from wanting to do drugs. I should have provided such a cosy blanket that they wouldn't need to wrap themselves in a chemical haze.

With the help of FA, I have learnt to control most of my destructive thoughts and behaviours a lot of the time. I still struggle, but on the whole I think I am doing very well. However, I have found it really difficult to keep myself from secretly pointing an accusing finger all over the place. It is time for me to move on from this thought pattern. I will remind myself of the following facts every time I find myself apportioning blame -

1. **None** of us are perfect. We are all works in progress. We should forgive others, just as we would wish to be forgiven for our faults and weaknesses.
2. We cannot know all the causes of negative action in others. At the same time, it is not practical to lay the blame for that negative action on a third party, because it then becomes necessary to pass the blame backwards onto a fourth party and so on, all the way back to the birth of mankind.
3. Blaming others causes pain and anger to ourselves. There is no way to move forward from it. The only cure is forgiveness.
4. Amidst all our aberrant behaviour, there is always goodness. I can hear the early birds singing their greetings to a new morning. Today I will adopt an attitude of forgiveness and acceptance.

>> Jane B, FA Barnstaple <<

'Whatever side I take, I know I will be blamed'
Louis XIV of France 1638-1715

And read even more about this popular subject -

BLAME

I blame the parents" - how many times have we heard this? Child gets into trouble at school (bad parenting?), teenager gets into trouble with the law (parents split up?), son or daughter goes off the rails (absent father /mother?). None of these applied to our family yet still our eldest is a heroin/crack cocaine addict. Were we too soft? - possibly. His two brothers are not addicts, so who/what is to blame?

My addict blames us for moving the family from north to south when he was 10 years old (the move went with the job - no move, no job), then he blames me for choosing the secondary school he attended in the town and even blamed me for the reputation of the town (I had no say in his choice of school as I was at home looking after his two brothers while he and his father chose it - I had suggested another school in another town which he rejected out of hand). His brothers both went to a different school in the same town so we can't blame the town.

For a long time I did blame myself. Should I have given him more information on drugs? Should I have given him less? I know his school was informative - perhaps we should blame THEM for putting the idea in his mind.

Then I came to FA and gradually I realised that the addict must always have someone to blame - it is never his fault. I also came to realise that I was NOT to blame.

My son CHOSE to move out of the family home so that he could be independent. (I suggested flat sharing to start with as he may find himself lonely)

My son did get lonely but CHOSE to try heroin for a bit of excitement. He CHOSE to use it a second and third time by which time it was too late.

Then he CHOSE to inject instead of smoke it.

Then he CHOSE to use crack cocaine.

I was not to blame for this - it was his choice but I still felt guilty and desperate to fix his problem for him.

Ten years on my addict entered a study in Cambridge. The doctor wanted to scan the brain of an opiate addict to see if there were any similarities, differences between addicts and non-users. It transpires that he has a part of the brain which predisposes him to become an addict if he takes mind altering substances. So now he has SOMETHING TO BLAME - IT IS NOT HIS FAULT!!

Meanwhile, through the help of the FA programme and the friends I have made within my group I have learned to take control of my own life and let my addict take the consequences of his actions. I have learned to BE GOOD TO MYSELF. I am no longer feeling guilty, I have retired (because I wanted to), I go out and about with friends and family (because I want to) and I eat cake (because I want to)!! I hope the latter does not become an addiction - I haven't had the brain scan!

By Angela – Hitchin Group



This issue has focussed on Blame

The content, unless specifically identified as from another source, is written entirely by FA members and represents each author's personal experience, strength and hope as part of their individual Twelve Step journey. Every editorial effort is made to ensure that the articles present a positive attitude "in spite of unsolved problems". Once again, if you read something that does not agree with your viewpoint, please try to apply what we read at meetings: "take with you that which you can accept and leave the rest. As before, active feedback is welcomed about any changes you, the membership, would like to see in this newsletter. You may, for instance, want the focus to be on particular aspect of our recovery?

In the next Autumn issue

The focus will be on **Worry**. All contributions will be more than welcome! They certainly do not have to be about our focus subject. The more topics on offer the better! Write a letter to the Editor, get something off your chest, or offer - perhaps the most valuable and important element in our fellowship – a share.

And, as usual, I will ask specific groups to take their turn to contribute – using the alphabetical system, starting with the first and last in the alphabet and two groups in the middle. My calculations make this, for the Autumn issue: Chelsea, Fraserburgh. Egham and Dundee. Also to be included will be an explanation of the 'alphabetical' system.

If you can't think what to write about, I'll give you some suggestions. Together, we can work it out!



A CATHEDRAL CITY SOMEWHERE! WHERE?
PICTURED IS NORWICH – EASTERNMOST UK LOCATION WHERE F.A. HAS LEFT ITS MARK!

Whichever part of the country we come from, the challenges that we share are the same

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& in: USA (HQ), Canada, Gibraltar, Greece,



India, Italy, Mexico, Portugal, Russia, Spain, S. Africa



Hilton Metropole, National Exhibition Centre,
Birmingham.

FAMILIES ANONYMOUS

UK CONVENTION & AGM 26-27 APRIL 2014

Cross-Group Convention Committee

Volunteer Nomination Form

*Please complete this form if you are interested in giving valuable service for this event
Alternatively telephone or email the FA Office to declare your interest*

Member's Name (first name only) _____

FA Group Attended _____

E-mail Address _____

Contact Phone number _____



2013

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