



FAN & FANonline

voice of the families anonymous
fellowship

Autumn 2014

Yet another PLEA !

NEW FAN EDITOR STILL SOUGHT

CONDENSED WEBSITE VERSION

Without images

Main theme – our MEETINGS

“Someone was there when I was in need....” [A Typical FA Member \(*timeless*\)](#)

£1

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

Greetings !

Autumn Leaves

Dear All !

What have I included in this edition ?

- Our main theme this time is: **Meetings...** The life-blood of our Fellowship where we start to regain our lives.
- 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 is progressing on course with the development of online shopping and PayPal
- Convention Corner; Looking back at the September Scottish Convention and forward to the NEC as usual next April.
- Do you have an FA Members' Handbook to help you understand FA and its **Meetings**?
- Selected Quotes, Poetry and Clip Art

Dear All,

As I write, the nights are drawing in and by the time you read me, it will most likely still be autumn which – as you know – ends with the winter solstice on 21 December. We certainly had some lovely weather not too long ago, then a period of high winds and rain arrived only to cam down to rainy and dull days. These long nights remind me that it is time and my pleasure to address you again

So, what about the main theme of this autumn issue? I have chosen – **Meetings**. For those of us who are lucky enough to live near enough to attend regularly, or even once in a while, our meetings are a continuous source of comfort and support. For those who cannot attend, our literature and website, now with its in-built online shop, have an even more important role to play than in the past. Yes, I can now refer to our online shop as something that exists rather than some project which is still under development or construction. Bur more about that on page 12 of this FAN.

We are, of course in a unique position, unlike most types of enterprise. Before meetings can be held in a specific location, a member or two of the public, perhaps whose lives are becoming unmanageable, feel inspired to launch an FA meeting. But inspiration **2**

has to be followed by commitment so that members can rely on their meeting. Outsiders often do not understand how it can be that FA simply does not start meetings here and there because evidence suggests that our meetings do a lot of good to the people who attend. However much good our meetings may do, I cannot foresee the day when the FA practical and tried formula for establishing its meetings will change.

Sue from Chelsea and Westminster Groups, who has enthusiastically volunteered to run our 2015 National Convention in Birmingham in April next year reminds us on page 7 that time flies. How right she is! All this means that we are now starting the period which finishes with the 'changing of the guard' as far as the FA Board is concerned at the AGM in April. As there are 6 Board-members rotating-off who are at present performing 7 roles, there are too many role descriptions to fit into one edition of FAN. I have started in this edition and will complete the job in the Spring 2015 FAN.

Have a pleasant winter, if that is possible. Till spring!

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 –see last page for details. Happy Winter!
WLITF Richard – *Chair and outgoing FAN Editor.*

Meetings as seen in 'Today a Better Way'

I've heard that if I bring my body to meetings, my mind will eventually follow. And it's true that attending meetings permits me to experience at firsthand the dynamism of people working together in their mutual quest for growth, understanding, and the peace of mind we call serenity.

But just attending meetings is not enough. There are no merit badges or gold stars for perfect attendance! It's important to come to a Families Anonymous meeting in a spirit of open-minded alertness, for when we do so, we discover great rewards.

There are no dues or fees, but there are some obligations. I am obligated to pay attention to the readings and give them more than lip service if I want to grow spiritually. I need to listen to others without wandering off into my own dreams and schemes so that I can respond helpfully to their stories without passing judgement. And I must be truthful; dishonesty would be destructive to me as well as to the group.

TODAY I WILL give thanks for all the blessings I have received from Families Anonymous meetings.

[July 24 page in *Today A Better Way*, © Families Anonymous]



Hallo All! So, what is there to say about meetings? I think that, first and foremost, it needs to be underlined that those who live within reach of a meeting are very fortunate indeed. If we are in that position, we need to realize and remember how lucky we are! Those of us on the help-line are relieved when the caller confirms his/her location to be not too far away from a meeting. Yes, our literature is a life-line too and our volunteers, who understand what the caller is going through, are vital. Our explanation as to why we do not simply open a meeting in their area goes some way to help. Yes, we can call them if one day we open a meeting in their area but some are perhaps understandably nervous to have their name and address in our books *ad infinitum*, although we in FA know that this really carries no risk. The idea of Meetings Without Walls has not been completely abandoned by us, but the concept certainly brings its challenges with it. Supposing we take on the right solution technically, are members willing to offer themselves as leaders week after week? And if we are lucky enough to attend an actual meeting, how long do we intend to carry on going to it? Perhaps a lot of us would not be able to answer that question. When we first join, it is suggested that we attend a minimum of six meetings to see if the twelve step programme might suit us. Obviously. our meetings do not suit those who do not stay, but for those who do stay, attendance can last many, many years.

"Minds are like parachutes. They only function when they are open "
- heard at a twelve-step meeting

What meetings mean to me.....

by 'Anonymous' at Bexley & Erith Group of F.A.

The question is a pertinent one. In Bexley our numbers are down, sometimes only two at a meeting and the maximum is five! We struggle along and I fear that our little group will not survive. We are currently brainstorming for ideas to get it back on track and keep it strong. We find that newcomers come along for a couple of weeks or so but then do not come back and we are in the process of having one last push to attract new members and put the word out that we are here.

At my first meeting I had an idea of what to expect. I knew this was about fixing myself, not my loved one. I searched for help because as my loved one found his own recovery, and had stopped many of his destructive ways, I was left in a state where I continued MY negative behaviour despite his improvements. I felt like a lunatic, still acting out and checking up even though I knew he was in his own meetings. I needed help because my own saintly ego and sanity was questionable.

There was the promise of serenity, oh how I craved that, to feel at peace. At my first meeting I met some people who felt love, had warm hearts, open minds and who had let go of resentment and I wanted that for myself. So I kept going back. Every week I learned something new, I was very excited to start feeling good. I felt more energetic and most importantly, my sleep suddenly improved. It was almost like at last I had been given permission to look after myself BEFORE others.

But this is real life, so I can't live in denial and so I also learned that peace of mind is transient if it is not worked for. I saw disharmony in the group, fallings out, people leaving without coming to talk first to see if problems could be fixed. And the numbers

have declined. Basically I saw personality come before principles and that made me sad because I had an ideal.

For me right now the meeting is my pick-me-up, the cushion that softens the blow when life becomes unmanageable. Newcomers arrive, they remind me of my journey, the pain I was suffering years ago when I first started to attend. The broken heart, the tears shed, the chaos.

The group was my salvation when I had to ask my loved one to leave home. The hugs soothed the pain, the back up was there when it all felt too much. Never in my life have I shared in a place so safe, with people so warm and generous and un-judgemental.

I write this, having just returned home from the Bexley and Erith meeting. Tonight every single member of this little group helped me attend in my hour of need. Despite unconventional circumstances, I would not have been able to get there at all without the help that was given. Am I not the luckiest woman alive to have this support? I really feel blessed.

BoardWalk

BOARD MEETING HELD AT BATTERSEA OFFICE ON 27th. SEPTEMBER 2014

This was the second Board Meeting of the 2014-2015 Service Board at the start of the autumn which has actually offered us a fair helping of sunshine from time to time.

- Whilst the purpose of Board meetings is quite obviously to discuss and agree how best we can manage the affairs of our Fellowship, these meetings also allow the participants to realize the significance of their roles and the friendly interaction which they stimulate.
- I was just about to report on one particular matter when I asked myself whether it would be a good idea to do so. It occurred to me that I am not writing to FA members but that I am writing to the whole world and his dog, or more precisely to everyone on the planet who has a computer. Not that I was going to write about anything illegal or earth-shattering but there are some things which are best not discussed in front of a world audience. I suggest that if any member wishes to know what I am talking about, that they contact the office and ask for a copy of the Minutes to be sent to them.
- Discussions continued as to whether we are going to opt for a franking machine at the office. It was agreed that more work needed to be done on our postal spend and flows before we consider signing the required annual contract. Thanks again to Bev for his work on this matter.
- Some other matters discussed included the reprinting of TABW as stocks diminish; what, if anything to do about MWW, website e-shop training; donation to WSB.
- It was agreed that we should fund two FA members to represent us at the very relevant Substance Misuse Management in General Practice (SMMGP) Conference in Birmingham.
- 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.

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

Remaining Board meetings: 6 Dec 2014, 28 February 2015

AGM: Sunday 19 April 2015

**We are going to need to take on six new volunteer Board Members
to operate FA as it should be run IN 2015-2016!**



& CONVENTION CORNER

SCOTTISH CONVENTION 2014

Glasgow, Saturday 14 September last

For the second time in quite some time, our Fellowship in Scotland decided to supplement this year's convention calendar by hosting its own event. . The host city was Glasgow again and the event was divided onto two distinctive parts. Again, both were held in the facilities of a Partick church. Saturday's weather turned out fine again, giving an aura of inspiration to the day. Then, with the sun shining through the windows, we listened to moving shares from family members from both sides of the situation in which we and our families and friends find ourselves. This is when the inspiration, that I just referred to, became reality. All this was broken up only by a very enjoyable and informal lunch with a chance for everyone one to exchange thoughts and experiences. Everyone was sad to notice that the attendance was not as good as in 2013 but – on the other hand – everyone who came committed him, or herself, to enjoy this experience to the optimum.

The afternoon session continued along the same lines, with the notable addition of a raffle. At about 7 in the evening we re-assembled for the 'social' in the same hall, bringing along our preferred drink if desired, and being offered hot food, including curry. With music for all, and a floor suitable for dancing, the convention certainly did not end early and was enjoyed by all. The following morning brought the satisfaction of a good day and evening well spent!!

NATIONAL CONVENTION AND AGM 2015

The Theme: 'A Better Life' FA Needs You !

The 2015 National Convention will be held on Saturday 18 April 2015 in Birmingham at the Hilton Metropole Hotel for the seventh year running, with the AGM on Sunday 19 April 2015. It is a superb venue and is very central with good transport links. Since 2012 a committee of FA members from various groups has organised this event under the leadership of Michael. So, Sue – who is stepping into Michael's shoes for the 2015 event, writes: *"Here we are virtually in December, which will gallop by, and before we know it, the New Year will be upon us. No time for complacency. Time to think about our FA 2015 Convention, the most rewarding and exciting event of the FA calender. The boring part has been done ie: venue, date, accommodation package, conference rooms - this has all been reserved. So it's up to us to make the convention a memorable occasion. Help find yourself 'A Better Life' and get involved in organising a great day to be enjoyed by us all. You can reach me via the Battersea office, or for those of you who have my email/telephone number, please feel free to contact me direct. I really look forward to hearing from you."*

WLTF

Sue (Chelsea & Westminster)

PLEASE VOLUNTEER !

"Remember: It's ok to look back but don't stare "
- heard at a twelve-step meeting

“And what Meetings mean to me”

I always look forward to the FAN newsletter and was happy to volunteer to write a piece for this Autumn edition. Walking into my first Families Anonymous meeting in September 2013 was one of the very hardest things that I ever have had to do in my life. I was reeling from the stark revelation of my brother's secret alcohol abuse and I was desperate to find somebody/anybody that could tell me what I could do to go and fix it tomorrow! The ladies at our Tuesday night Hitchin meeting were very friendly and welcoming to me and have been a rock ever since. I sat and listened to everyone's contributions and was surprised with the laughing and the honesty of those present. I was then invited to speak and briefly outlined the reasons that had brought me there. I quickly realised there and then that I was only responsible for me, and that what I should be worrying about is my own well-being, not the behaviour of a 33 year old man and our co-dependent mother.

I swiftly took the very hard decision to take a step back from them both in the form of some tough love. Throughout the last year, attending regular meetings has helped me to cope and to put the focus back onto me. At times, as a single parent with a full time demanding career, it is difficult to find the spare time to follow the steps and to work my own programme, but coming together with friends on a Tuesday evening, helps to keep my feet on the ground, remind me of what it important and what can be let go, and reassures me that I am not alone.

Sadly my brother's condition has deteriorated and he has started to abuse drugs also. I can honestly say that I have made the right decision to step back and don't regret it. He often turns to me for support and advice and I have

accompanied him to see his counsellor. He knows I can't let him see his niece

whilst he is so ill and I know this hurts him, but she is my responsibility, whilst he isn't. With the help and support of meetings I have been able to find the right words to be firm but kind with him and I now think he understands things through my point of view.

I still have very dark days, days when I dread my phone ringing, or the beep of a text with more bad news. It's at times like these when I feel the need to go to meetings more than ever. It's easy and common I think, when things are going well to assume "I can miss this week, I don't need to go". In my experience, this is the very time that you will hear something new that you can take away with you. I've been able to take my turn in leading meetings and feel that I have something very valuable to contribute.

I thank my higher power for helping me to find the group in the first place and I hope that my experiences as a sibling of an addict will help others too.
Kate S. - Hitchin Group

And now **FROM ACROSS THE ATLANTIC!**

Entitled – ‘Fable About Personal Pain’

Here is a fable about a sad young man who went to a village wise man for a solution to the pain in his life? The wise man told the young man to put a fistful of salt in a glass of water and drink it. The young man did and immediately spat out the bitter tasting salt water.

Next, the wise man told him to put another fistful of salt into a freshwater lake and take a drink. This time the water tasted fresh because he couldn't taste the salt".

The wise man offered this wisdom to the young man.

The pain of life is pure salt; no more, no less. The amount of pain in life remains exactly the same. However, the amount of bitterness we taste depends on the container we put the pain in. So when you are in pain, the only thing you can do is to enlarge your sense of things a bit.

If you keep your pain to yourself it is like drinking salted water from a glass. Remember, fellowship is our freshwater lake.

[An anonymous contribution taken with thanks from the Twelfth Step Rag Sep-Oct 2014]



Back home now: How is your Group run?

A variation on our article in FAN Autumn 2011 edition

Our By-Laws point out tellingly, that unlike a typical hierarchical organization in today's society, where power and influence flows from Chair downwards, in FA the flow is upwards to the Chair from the Final Authority: The Group Conscience. All members should try to concern themselves with, and contribute to, the running of their group, thereby assuring its Unity. Unity is important when a group has difficulties. Nobody likes being contested; group members, who feel that the running of their group could be improved, would do better - perhaps - to reach for FA tools, like the FA Handbook (every member is encouraged to possess one) and the Conscience Meeting leaflet, so that troubling issues can be approached in a sensitive and effective fashion. In no way is FAN suggesting that members should refrain from talking to Board members about their concerns; absolutely to the contrary! But a solution that comes from within will always be better than one that comes from without. Whilst doing so, FAN requests that members take all this into account, as well as suggesting that you say - Let's do a Group Health Check - turn to the next page

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LET'S DO A GROUP HEALTH CHECK

Are meetings held on a regular basis and started on time?

Is the meeting room prepared early enough in advance? Are proper supplies of literature on hand? and refreshments?

Is literature on display? Are literature packets given to newcomers?

Is the FA Meeting Format always used?

Are our meetings interesting and helpful? Do we make good use of our literature? The Twelve Steps, Members' Handbook, etc., - as themes and subjects of meetings?

Do we concentrate sufficiently on FA ideas? Do we stress: "How was I before coming to FA" "Ways I have improved" "What have I learned at FA that has helped me most"?

Do we have a different Group Leader each week? Do we try to bring in speakers or leaders from other FA or other self-help groups?

Is the Meeting's leader assigned in advance so there is time to develop a subject and review the Group Handbook (especially Tradition 4 and the Four Destructive Forces)?

Do we strike a balance in making the meeting meaningful to both new arrivals and regular members?

Do we give newcomers sufficient attention and support? Do we encourage the exchange of telephone numbers, especially for the use of newcomers between meetings?

Do we protect the anonymity of our members?

Do we abide by all our Traditions, as explained in the Members' Handbook?

Do we stress their importance to group success?

Do we support our FA UK Office through donations and the purchase of literature?

Do we all understand that the donation basket is passed at meetings to pay for literature, meeting room expenses, refreshments, support of the World Service and UK Office?

Has every member of the Steering Committee studied the Members' Handbook? (Has the Public Relations person especially studied Traditions 11 and 12, the Treasurer Tradition 7, and the Secretary especially Traditions 1, 2 and 9 in the Members' Handbook?).

Does our group have regular business meetings? Is every person invited? Do we encourage group decisions and rotation of Steering Committee?

If another group or two is nearby, have we tried to form an Intergroup?

If already part of an Intergroup, is our group represented at every Board meeting by a delegate – or alternatively – who shares and brings back ideas for improving our programme?

Do we have a good public relations policy? Do we do our part to alert the community to the FA programme via doctors, school counsellors, teachers, probation officers, etc.?

Do we attract families in distress? Do we take our Group Inventory often enough?

On the reverse of this leaflet (get copies from the Office) – evaluate 'My Part in the Group'.

All Groups are reminded that February 2015 is to be the year's Gratitude Month. You are invited to give extra if at all possible and your group treasurer or secretary should send the resulting collection separately to the FA Treasurer in Battersea, marking the payment 'Gratitude Month 2015'. Your generosity will be highly appreciated by the Board and by future members who have yet to find us. Thank you!



Online shopping with PayPal becomes a reality for FA UK on the New FA Website

They say that patience is a virtue! We have been talking about it, planning it and working on it for a long time, but finally we have arrived. People phoning the helpline no longer have the problem of having to go and buy a stamp to post their cheque to the FA office in Battersea if the result or purpose of their call was to buy FA Literature or other articles. We have joined the modern world so that groups, FA members, and members of the public alike can simply buy online in our e-commerce shop. Whether you are an FA member, group treasurer, or group secretary, this new development should make things simpler for you. Donations can be done this way too! By requiring online donators to be FA members or FA groups, we uphold our Seventh Tradition which requires us to be fully self-supporting. If you haven't seen the new website yet, go and have a look! The Forum is linked to the new site as before, and there is also a link to the new WSB website. Thanks go to all those who played a part in getting the new site and shop up and running, led by Jan from Gloucs., Sarah from Hitchin and Matt and his team at SKDA Cornwall, our website designer. Well done, everyone!



This issue has focused on Meetings

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 always, active feedback is welcomed about any changes that 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 Spring issue

The focus will be on **Choices**. 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 – departing from the old mixed-up alphabetical system and choosing groups who have not been approached for about three years. This leads me to the following groups for the approaching Spring issue: **Birmingham Tues., Chelmsford, Sevenoaks and Horsham**. If you can't think what to write about, I'll give you some suggestions. Together, we can work it out!

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

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