

FAN & FANonline



Voice of the Families
Anonymous fellowship
Summer 2016

Be kind to yourself!

"The most powerful relationship you will ever have is the relationship with yourself" - Steve Maraboli

"Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes." - Carl Gustav Jung



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

£1

Dear All,



Summer is finally here....ish!!!! Welcome to the Summer FAN and my third edition as FAN editor. The topic this issue is be kind to yourself. This is something that I certainly need to practice!! Self care is such an important necessity that is often the first thing we overlook when dealing with the insanity of addiction. Being kind to yourself after spending years of putting our addicts first can feel alien and downright selfish. How can I possibly go out for an hours walk along the coastline when my addict "needs" me? How can I go away for a break when I need to make sure they are eating and getting up for work in the morning? How will they ever manage without me? At times, we can be our own worst enemy or our own best friend. This is a choice we make and something we actually have control over. We can make the decision to make the best out of everything, to have gratitude for the good moments, give ourselves grace for the bad moments and to let go of what we can't control. Taking just a few moments each day to take time out, have a relaxing bubble bath, take some exercise or just read a book can improve how you feel, in turn if you are feeling happy you may be better placed to deal with the stresses and strains of everyday life. After all, the last time you were on an aeroplane and the airline staff ran through the emergency procedures, didn't they tell you to put on your own oxygen mask BEFORE anyone else's??

What is included in this edition?

- Be kind to yourself!
- 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
- Religion or Spirituality?
- UK recovery Walk in September
- Looking back on the UK Convention and looking forward to the Scottish Convention next month
- Selected Quotes and Clip Art

Please remember that all of your views about FA and FAN can be made known on these pages. All you need to do is email me at sullivan.k2@sky.com or contact me through the office.

So, grab your favourite mug, put your feet up, relax and enjoy this edition!

WLITF Kate –FAN Editor

'Be good to yourself' as seen in 'Today a Better Way'

At meetings we often hear newcomers berating themselves because they have done the "wrong thing." Some of them want to "get the program" and change overnight. Some even stop coming to meetings because they think they're "not doing it right." They don't feel strong enough to follow the principles of the program.

To them we say, "You did not get this way in a day. It took years to get your life this muddled, and it will take time to unscramble the mess. It takes time, study, and the building of faith to be strong enough to carry out the Families Anonymous course of action, or, in some cases, inaction.

"Be good to yourself. Keep coming back, and little by little, one day at a time, you will become stronger, wiser, and more serene."

Today I will patiently take small steps to "clear away the wreckage of the past" and to live today a better way.

[Page 338 in *Today A Better Way*, ©Families Anonymous]

FA UK Convention 2016 - "Let it begin with me"

The UK Convention was held this year again in April at the Hilton Metropole, Birmingham with the theme – Let it begin with me. Our thanks go to Jan and all the Convention Committee this year for all of their hard



work in co-ordinating a truly successful event. It was lovely to see so many faces both old and new, to hear the many success stories, listen to the speakers, catch up with other FA members and take part in the workshops. Plans are well under way for next year's convention, with further details on page 7. Some members chose to make a weekend of it and stayed from the Friday until the Sunday, whilst others travelled up just for the day. If you have any queries or concerns if you've never been before, get in touch with a Board member, someone in your group who has been before or the FA Office. Rooms at the Hotel are available at a very reasonable rate and available to book now.

One of the ideas for this year's convention was to have a recovery tree. Members were invited to write their favourite slogans and messages on coloured leaves which were then hung on the tree (see picture to the left.) The tree was then raffled off at the end of the day. This was a lovely idea and was beautiful to look at too. Some of the messages are shown below.

BE KIND TO YOURSELF – Absolutely – We have to care for ourselves as well as others or we all sink together.

WE HELP THE MOST WHEN WE HELP THE LEAST – Allow my loved one to see the consequences of her inappropriate actions – learn

her own outcomes – accepting her own responsibilities. Releasing with love.

JUST FOR TO-DAY – Thank God for FA and all the people in it who help with their inspirational stories and their love – thank you.

ONE DAY AT A TIME – Take one day at a time – it's precious. Every moment is important in the day. Enjoy that moment because it may not come back.

IT BEGINS WITH ME – FA means my sanity.

ONE DAY AT A TIME – We can only work with to-day, plan for tomorrow, reflect on yesterday – BUT live for today.

EASY DOES IT – To my son, I hope that you find happiness, health and fulfilment in recovery – love from Dad.

LIVE AND LET LIVE- I can be happy and live a full life if I choose to, regardless of how my son chooses to live his.

JUST FOR TO-DAY – Having laughter, love and conversations with the son I thought I had lost forever.

KEEP AN OPEN MIND – For B – To be the best you can and best wishes and love. For Me – FA has put everything into perspective. I will NOT predict a future that has yet to happen.

WORRY IS OPTIONAL – You can worry or you can pray but it is pointless to do both.

PROGRESS NOT PERFECTION – The drive for perfectionism NEARLY ruined me and my life. Now I understand I do not have to strive for it. Progress not perfect!

LET GO AND LET GOD – FA has helped me to let go – with love – to let go of expectations and allow my addict and other family members to live their own lives – whatever their choices may be. I am truly grateful

for FA.

LISTEN AND LEARN – This has been a long lesson in life for me – listen and learn and thank God – I am learning slowly.

WE HELP THE MOST WHEN WE HELP THE LEAST - I have boundaries to keep us both safe.

WORRY IS OPTIONAL – If I pray – why worry? If I worry – why pray? (Step 3 has set me free – Thanks FA.

JUST FOR TO-DAY – Grateful thanks for ALL my loved ones.

BE KIND TO YOURSELF – I will give my son credit for many victories that are unknown to me – all people are always changing.

I DO NOT HAVE TO ACCEPT THE UNACCEPTABLE

WORDS CHANGE LIVES – The right words are worth millions – think before you speak.

PROGRESS NOT PERFECTION – Knowing I am not alone – knowing there is always hope. Thank you FA.

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT ? – Let go of control.

I DO NOT HAVE TO ACCEPT THE UNACCEPTABLE – FA has given me hope and belief that I can live again and not blame myself for what has happened. It gave me my life back. Thanks.

JUST FOR TODAY – and always, I will love you for what you are xx

IT BEGINS WITH ME – Must put me first.

EASY DOES IT – I try to Let go and Let God these days.

I DO NOT HAVE TO ACCEPT THE UNACCEPTABLE – I am trying very hard to implement this. I feel FA has given me strength to do this more, not just with my addict son, but throughout my life. Thank you FA.

WORDS CHANGE LIVES – For M with love.

PROGRESS NOT PERFECTION – Valuing the positive steps taken by myself and my addict each day, week, month. Life with hope.

JUST FOR TO-DAY – Finally getting to sleep at night.

KEEP AN OPEN MIND – Who am I to judge others.

WORDS CHANGE LIVES – Not to hover anxiously over a future that has yet to happen!

I DO NOT HAVE TO ACCEPT THE UNACCEPTABLE - It took a long time to understand this one!

Religion or spirituality?

A recent TV documentary about alcoholism drew many viewer comments, including one which struck me particularly. The viewer stated that people find Alcoholics Anonymous impossible to engage with because of the 'religious aspect'.

I'm not going to write about AA, but since our own fellowship, Families Anonymous is based on the 12 Steps of AA, the criticism pertains to us also, and I'd like to examine this viewer's statement in an attempt to bust the myth that AA, FA or any other 12-step fellowship is religious.

These are some of what I see as features or attributes of a religion:

- Rules about what to eat
- Rules about what to wear
- Rules about how and when to pray
- Purpose-built meeting places

- Rules about what moral values to adopt
- Auspicious calendar dates
- A single interpretation of God
- A human figure or founder said to have a special relationship with God
- A physical iconic symbol, such as a cross or star and crescent

But FA has none of these attributes, so why do people think we are religious? It can only be because people confuse religion with spirituality. But where does the confusion lie? The only thing that overlaps between religion and spirituality is the 3-letter word G-O-D. We use this word as a shorthand for the spirituality that exists in each of us humans in so many diverse ways.

Here are some examples of spirituality:

- An awareness of nature
- An appreciation of where we fit in the universe
- A sense of awe about the things we take for granted – how birds fly; how fish swim; how babies are made and are born.
- A recognition of our own free will, sometimes called autonomy
- The wonder of good music
- The joy of falling in love
- The magic of dancing
- The will to live, the survival instinct

To sum up – all the things in life over which we have no power. Things which we believe are created by a ‘higher power’. And as a shorthand for all these, we use the word ‘G-O-D’. Could be ‘T-O-M-A-T-O-E-S’. Or ‘S-A-N-D-A-L-S’. Or anything. It’s a shorthand.

In Alcoholics Anonymous G-O-D is sometimes treated as an acronym, standing for ‘Group-Of-Drunks’. It’s the power of the group.

In conclusion, I feel sorry for those who won’t engage with a 12-step program because of their problem with ‘religion’. I would say to such people – if your problem with the ‘G-O-D’ word is greater than your problem with drugs or alcohol, then fine. But if your problems with drugs and alcohol is so great that your life is unmanageable, then your views on ‘G-O-D’ won’t make any difference at all to how much FA can help you.

And finally, I know not to whom this quote should be attributed, but it is widely shared in the rooms:
“Religion is for those who don’t want to go to hell. Spirituality is for those who have already been there.”

Jan

Enabling – One couple’s story.....

As children living and growing up with active alcoholic fathers, when we got married and started our family, we made a deliberate effort and promised each other we would commit to ensuring our kids would have the most secure, happy, loving upbringing we could give them. We were blessed with two beautiful boys, who were, as most parents will identify, the centre of our universe.

We were devastated to find ourselves with our youngest son, at the age of 15-16 involved in a growing number “out of control” and abusive situations, which we initially put down to a “difficult adolescence” or possibly some kind of mental health issue. It took us to over a year later for the horror of what was happening to our boy to reveal itself, which left us with one very big question “Why? – where did we go wrong?”

Over the next four years his using had led us to endure intimidation, physical violence, verbal abuse, destruction of our property, a police house raid, physical threats with a kitchen knife, a court case, paying drug debts (thousands of pounds) and eventually our emotional breakdown. We felt lost, defeated, cheated and chained to a life of unimaginable fear, worry and dread. For very different reasons, yes,

indeed our son was the centre of our universe – a universe wrapped up in mental, emotional and spiritual turmoil and pain.

When we found out about FA we felt, for the first time in years - there **was** hope. We were shocked to find out we had spend years enabling our son by softening every blow and allowing him to continue causing carnage – all in the name of what we thought was being good and supportive parents. What a relief to find out we could **not** control, change or cure our sick son, and, as importantly, we **did not cause it**. This understanding was the key to us withdrawing all our enabling efforts and allowing him to feel the painful consequences of his addictive, self-destructive behaviour.

Following one last episode of explosive aggression and violence and only three months in to attending as many FA meetings as we could, we both took the brave and difficult decision to release with love our son from the family home, and reclaim the life we had forgotten to live.

Today, after a year in FA, we have the mental and emotional freedom to enjoy each day, and be a couple again. We try to be good to ourselves and each other, and are enjoying having laughter and peace back in our home for the first time in years. We feel **part** of the world again, instead of existing in some parallel universe to it.

We read our daily readings from our “Today a better way” book in the car on hour long trip to work every day, and the strength and wisdom in it has breathed a whole new life and perspective in to what was once a marriage swirling about in the abyss, somewhere.

Our son is still living a life of self-destruction, pain and turmoil, but we are no longer running around with that safety net trying to catch him when he falls and rescuing him from all the consequences of his reckless living. We live in hope, that one day; he too will find recovery from this terrible destructive disease. Thanks to FA, we have been able to accept our powerlessness over him and now embrace the freedom to pursue a life for ourselves, which is grounded in a wonderful philosophy for living each day.

So thank you, FA, for this new life, the friendship, sharing, caring and support that at every group meeting we attend is there for the taking. For our new found serenity and the security that, no matter what the future holds, we are no longer alone, but among friends who understand, have been there, and remind us that we, too, can reclaim and live the life we promised to each other all those years ago.

With love and gratitude in the fellowship,

Paul and Louise – Tuesday night Anderson/Kelvingrove group.

BoardWalk

BOARD MEETING HELD AT BATTERSEA OFFICE ON 23rd April

- Discussions were had about future events that FA could be involved in, along with group allocation to Board members and the 2017 Convention.
- Any member is welcome to receive full Minutes of these, or any other Board meeting or AGM, simply by asking the Office to email or post them out a copy. Please do get involved!
- All members of the Fellowship are reminded that they are more than welcome to come along and observe any Board meeting. Please discuss with your Board member about the possible reimbursement of travel costs by FA.

Remember! Please raise any concerns you may have with your Board Member.

Future Board meeting dates: 22nd October 2016, 4th February 2017 & 26th March 2017



Faces and Voices of Recovery UK annual conference and recovery walk 2016

The Faces and Voices of Recovery UK annual conference 2016 is on Friday the 9th September 2016 in partnership with the University of Chester and Halton Borough Council. This year it takes place at Select Security Stadium, Lowerhouse Lane, Widnes WA8 7DZ. FA has been invited to have a stall and to speak also on stage at the conference! There is a full programme of talks and sessions starting at 9.30a.m and running through until 4.30p.m. Further information about the conference can be found [here](#). The following day on Saturday the 10th September there is also a recovery walk taking place at Widnes Rugby league Stadium. This is a lively event with a carnival feel where members can celebrate their own and other people's recovery. More information about the recovery walk can be found [here](#). Come along, celebrate what recovery means to you and show your support.

Volunteering and giving service

Have you considered giving SERVICE to FA? If not, why not?

As ever FA is in search of volunteers of all descriptions! We are appealing in particular for office volunteers to carry out basic admin tasks and ideally an Office Manager. Please



do consider giving service, it can make a difference to FA and to your own life! If you don't live near London and are worried about the distance this can be got around. With today's technology you can play your own part through attending a meeting without even being there via a conference call. Helping out in the office doesn't necessarily mean that you have to venture down to Battersea; some jobs can be handled remotely, however, sending out literature and dealing with post needs to be carried out in the office. Basic travel expenses can be covered and full training will be given. There are several upcoming events that rely on the support of volunteers. The Board have been in contact with the Head

of Alcohol and Drugs Team, Public Health England (London) and they have asked FA to take part in the following events at their office; Fleetbank House, Salisbury Square, EC4Y 8JX.

Event 1: **4th October 2016**, Boroughs: Tri-borough, Barnet, Harrow, Brent, Ealing, Hillingdon, Camden, Islington

Event 2: **18th October 2016**, Boroughs: Barking and Dagenham, Havering, Redbridge, Hackney, City of London, Tower Hamlets, Newham, Waltham Forest, Haringey, Enfield

Event 3: **24th October 2016**, Boroughs: Sutton, Merton, Kingston, Richmond, Wandsworth, Hounslow, Croydon

Event 4: **27th October 2016**, Boroughs: Bromley, Bexley, Greenwich, Lewisham, Southwark, Lambeth. If you are able to volunteer to take part in any of the above events, please contact the FA office ASAP. Thank you.

A quick word from a previous FAN editor re Service....

Dear FAN,

Service..... Service..... Service

RE: no more Fan!!!

About 15 years back the Walsall Group was very much a fledgling meeting... simply a few months old; no matter the secretary at that time received a letter from the FA Office in Battersea from the Editor of the newsletter stating that the time had arrived for the present Editorial Team to hand the job on.

The secretary and I had started the Walsall meeting together and around the time when the letter arrived I happened to be visiting her at home. (At the time this was a regular occurrence as this amazing fellowship which she had found brought about a surprising and unexpected friendship for both of us – we met because of our need for FA).

On receipt of the letter regarding the possibility of there being NO MORE NEWSLETTERS (in just a few

weeks) the secretary knew immediately how I would feel. She handed the letter to me while she made a drink. I was shattered..... quite devastated in fact. You see the Newsletter was, for me, an essential link with this truly amazing organisation. At that time there were two small meetings in the whole of the West Midlands and other than that was an office *somewhere* miles away in London which we knew very little about. FAN was the connection between us and the rest of this truly amazing Fellowship.

The letter ended with a short comment along the lines of... 'anyone who wanted to find out more... or discuss the matter could contact the retiring Editor by telephone.' Straight away I said that I would do just that. My new friend, I recollect, had some idea what might happen should someone ring that telephone number – but not me: **I did ring soon after... and the rest as they say is History!**

That telephone call changed my life: I very quickly found that the new and extremely 'green' Editor of FAN was me. Our meeting secretary agreed to support me, after I convinced her that we could do it! (What arrogance). You see it didn't occur to me to stop and think whether it was... 'do-able': simply the idea of No More Newsletters was simply unthinkable.

Ps... without question was one of my better decisions and the rewards have been truly amazing.

WLITF

NB I'm not standing down; this piece was written by a previous editor to show how they gave something back and reaped the rewards. ☺

Scottish Convention 2016 – 3rd September 2016

The FA Scottish convention 2016 will be held on Saturday September 3rd at Hamilton Academical Football Stadium, New Douglas Park, Cadzow Ave, Hamilton, South Lanarkshire, ML3 0FT.

The theme this year is UNITY.

How to get there: By train to Glasgow Central train station then train to Hamilton West train station. Once at Hamilton West station it's a short 5 minute walk along pathway that leads straight to the stadium.

This is a list of some hotels nearby that range from £60 upwards per night.

Holiday Inn Express 0871 902 1634

Avon Bridge Hotel 01698 420525

Days Inn 01698 281682

Clydesdale Hotel 01698 891897

Villa 01698 891777



Clydesdale and Villa hotel are a 5 minute walk from the Stadium and others are one stop via Hamilton Central Station or 5/10 minute by bus or car. Please complete and return the registration form [here](#).

Registration is from 11am in the function suite on the first floor of the stadium, there will be an FA member to welcome you at the front door and direct you to the suite. The cost is £7 on the day or £5 if you register in advance. The cost will cover food and refreshments.

If you would be interested in staying on for an evening event i.e. Disco, or go for a meal afterwards could you please email scot.convention@aol.co.uk with preferred interest and any dietary requirements/allergies as soon as possible to give an idea of numbers as we need to give the function suite management plenty of notice if we require the suite for the evening if there is enough interest or book a restaurant in advance.

Kind regards from all the Hamilton Group we are looking forward to seeing each and everyone of you at the convention. WE ARE NO LONGER ALONE.....



FA UK Convention 2017 – 25th & 26th March 2017

Having had another successful and enjoyable weekend in April, the National Convention & AGM will again be held at The Hilton Metropole at the Birmingham NEC in 2017 according to the vote at this year's AGM. All FA members and interested parties are encouraged to put this event into their diaries and to take the opportunity

to attend both the FA UK 2017 National Convention on the 25th March and our AGM on the morning of the 26th March. A number of hotel rooms have already been put aside by the hotel; booking details have been sent out via group secretaries, rooms can also be booked [here](#).

I can thoroughly recommend the staying overnight option.... the breakfast is awesome! - Ed

Dates for your diary.....

- Scottish Convention 3rd September – register now!!!!
- UK Recovery Walk 2016 is taking place from 9th September 2016 - 10th September 2016 in Halton (Widnes Rugby League Stadium) Please see the following website for further information:
<http://www.facesandvoicesofrecoveryuk.org>
- London Public Health England events:
 - 4th October 2016
 - 18th October 2016
 - 24th October 2016
 - 27th October 2016
- FA UK Convention 25th & 26th March 2017



This issue has focused on be kind to yourself.

The content, unless specifically identified as from another source, is written entirely by FA members and presents 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 "making amends". Any and 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.

For the coming Autumn 2016 issue, the following groups are asked to make a special effort: Chelsea, Hamilton, Swansea and Tower Hamlets. If you can't think what to write about, I'll give you some suggestions. Together, we can work it out! Of course nothing is compulsory!

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