

Oct, 1962 - Letter from Lois stating, "The less changes in AA's 12 steps that Al-anon follow, the better for us."

District Archives

Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc.

P. O. BOX 182
MADISON SQUARE STATION
NEW YORK 10, N. Y.

October, 1962.

Dear Al-Anon Members,

With the exception of a single word, Al-Anon's 12 Steps are an exact replica of AA's Suggested Steps for recovery. AA's last Step says, "...we carry this message to other alcoholics" whereas Al-Anon simply states, "...we carry this message to others."

The marvel of AA's Steps is that they seem to appeal alike to people of all faiths or of no faith. They seem to be a formula to aid anyone who is struggling to climb the ladder to a better life.

Because the circumstances and personalities often are so different, it is not a little strange that the identical principles and even the identical wording should have power to help the mate of an alcoholic as well as the alcoholic.

Before we completely realized this astonishing universality, several early groups of the families of AAs asked me to reshape the Steps for their particular use. Thinking, rather superficially, that an interpretation suited to our own needs would be the best for us, I wrote out a variation of the Steps. Some of the Family Groups who adopted these changes still cling to them. Other groups created versions of their own, a few of which are still in use.

By the time Al-Anon Headquarters was formed, we "old timers" had witnessed many miracles of transformation in the lives of non-alcoholics brought about by the practice of AA's 12 Steps. Therefore, we began to see there was strength in the very wording as well as in the principles themselves. Hence, we concluded, the less change the better for us of Al-Anon.

We also realized if the Steps were altered once they could be altered again and again. Their meaning and power might be lost and group unity would thereby suffer severely.

So we were greatly pleased when, in response to a questionnaire, most Family Groups voted to adopt AA's 12 Steps practically unchanged. Since then confidence in them has broadened and deepened. Most of Al-Anon's 2000 groups, in America and across the seas, try to live by them.

With the publicity Al-Anon is receiving these days, when ministers, doctors, welfare workers, etc. are visiting groups, must it not be confusing to learn from Headquarters what Al-Anon's 12 Steps are and then, perhaps, to discover in their own home town that the Steps are something different?

We hope this explanation will help newer groups to understand how some early ones came to use an adaptation of AA's Steps, but also we hope it will aid the few groups that still employ varied versions to see how much it would strengthen Al-Anon's unity if all of us everywhere lived by the very same principles, stated in the very same words.

Sincerely,

Lois.