

# DISTRICT 18 NEWS

## A Poem

“When My Goal Is Peace”

If I accept that God is love  
and in my heart resides the  
God I seek;  
Then as I practice trusting  
in God  
and trusting the love in me;  
Living from the heart can bring  
me peace.

*by Bob M.*

## Next Topic

**Boundaries - “something that fixes a limit or extent; limits that define acceptable behavior”.**

Al-Anon teaches us that walls are solid & inflexible. They keep us isolated. Boundaries are flexible, changeable & keep us safe & respectful. Do you have a story to share about how you set boundaries?

Thoughts to consider:

- Take Care of Yourself
- “No” is a complete sentence
- What new response can you have to unacceptable behavior?

“WHEN YOU LOVE SOMEONE, YOU LOVE THE PERSON AS THEY ARE, AND NOT AS YOU'D LIKE THEM TO BE.” -LEO TOLSTOY

## Editor’s Note

Our District 18 newsletter has returned! My special thanks to those who shared their stories below. As I had hoped, doing this service has helped me grow tremendously. The sharing and viewpoints of my Al-Anon friends has broadened my understanding of detaching with love. Plans are to publish quarterly and post it on the District 18 website. Each quarter will have a distinct topic and the upcoming topic will be announced with each newsletter publication. If you are moved to submit your story of experience, strength and hope on that topic, you can send it to [district18.newsletters@gmail.com](mailto:district18.newsletters@gmail.com) (note that newsletters is plural with an “s”). The publication dates will be



## Local Group News

If you know what somebody is like  
& you get upset when they don't  
act like you want them to, then  
**YOU** have the problem.



### NCWSA SPRING ASSEMBLY

- May 20, 2017 9:30am-5:00pm
- McClellan Conference Center
- 5411 Luce Avenue, McClellan CA 95652

### SPEAKER'S MEETING

- Changing Attitudes AFG
- May 23, 2017 6:30pm-8:15pm
- Church of Christ 901 West Rumble Road, Modesto
- Potluck with 3 Speakers: Al-Anon, Alateen & AA

### SPEAKER'S MEETING

- Expanding Horizons AFG
- April 30, 2017 5:00pm
- Pass It On Fellowship 2019 Yosemite Blvd., Modesto
- Potluck & Forum draw

mid-month as follows: January, April, July and October. Please send your submissions several weeks before publication. Please let me know how you want credit for your submission - either by first name and last initial or as anonymous. One of our more creative members even submitted an Al-Anon Fairly Tale for us this quarter! Some scholars believe that fairy tales of old have special application in our lives as they teach us to confront giants, trolls, and evil. Storytelling is a special art form and has been shared in every culture as a means of education while entertaining us at the same time.

When I was really struggling with detaching with love last Fall, one morning I pulled out my **ODAT** and **Courage to Change**, went to the index and read everything I could find on the topic. I also did an internet search for Al-Anon writings on the subject. For me, learning to detach is a process that has taken finessing as I go along. The Forum Reprint below really spoke to me so I have included it rather than submitting my own thoughts. Debbie L. of Minnesota says it so much better than I. I would only add what my Sponsor taught me...when I've done all I "could" or "should" I then let go. I work to remember "*detachment not amputation*". Happy reading!

*Newsletter Kate*

### *Al-Anon Forum Reprint*

I had two immediate thoughts when I first heard the phrase "detaching with love" and parenting in the same sentence. One, it's a good theory. Two, whoever coined this phrase did not have children. How could a loving parent ever detach from their child - knowing he or she was struggling and in pain?



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## Local Group News

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### SPEAKER'S MEETING

- Path to Serenity AFG
- May 17, 2017 5:45pm-7:15pm
- St. Joseph's Catholic Church  
St. John Paul II Center Rm. 6  
1813 Oakdale Rd. Modesto
- Finger Food Potluck & Al-Anon  
& Alateen Birthdays

### TURLOCK UNITY DAY

- April 29, 2017 Registration  
opens at 11:00am
- AA Event with Al-Anon  
Participation
- Stanislaus County Fairgrounds
- 900 N. Broadway, Turlock

Today, I have a better understanding of this concept. "*Detaching with love*" doesn't mean I don't care about my child or that I'm abandoning him. It doesn't mean I don't love him or think of him often. It doesn't mean that I don't feel sad or disappointed about his lifestyle. I am only detaching from the horrible disease that he has been fighting for the last five years.

I still find myself worrying about him. When that happens, I ask myself if I can do something constructive. I have learned to trust my instincts. When my son was still active in his disease, I told him he could not move back home, but he could call me day or night and I would take him to get the help he needed. When he didn't have access to a phone anymore, I loaned him my cell phone. If I've done all I can without enabling him, I "*Let Go and Let God.*" I pray that God watches over him and keeps him safe for me.

As of today, my son is sober. At the end of each day, if I haven't heard differently, then I consider it a good day for him. This wasn't how I pictured my life when my son became an adult, but I have accepted the fact that this is my new reality. I thank God for my Al-Anon friends, and I continue to take "*One Day at a Time.*"

*from Forum October 2016 by Debbie L. Minnesota*

### *An Al-Anon Fairy Tale*

## THE PRINCE, THE PRINCESS & THE WARTS



Once upon a time, a very handsome prince was out slaying his dragons when he came upon a beautiful princess being attacked by a fire breathing Leviathan dragon. The handsome prince rushed to her rescue and slew the fire breathing dragon. It was love at first sight and they married. Soon the honeymoon was over and the true reality of each began to set in. The beauty he had married turned homely as her beauty cream dried up and went out of stock at the local pharmacy.

## Local Group News



### FOURTH ANNUAL MEN'S AL-ANON WEEKEND

- April 22-23, 2017 8:00am Saturday to 11:30am Sunday
- A weekend for recovery, sharing, workshops, speakers, and more
- Nature Bridge Conference & Retreat Center, Sausalito, CA
- Contact Joe E. 415.269.4929 [jehrmann@inreach.com](mailto:jehrmann@inreach.com)

### COED SOFTBALL TOURNAMENT

- May 6, 2017 8:00am-5:00pm
- AA & Al-Anon family welcome to play
- Beyer Park "A" and "B" Fields
- Join in for BBQ & Fellowship

He had his flaws too; he chewed with his mouth open and belched loudly after stuffing food down his throat. This really frustrated the princess and she started croaking at him for being a slob. This hurt the handsome prince deeply. He took it personally, and suddenly a wart appeared smack dab on the end of his nose. He could not keep his mind and his eyes off that wart and his eyes became crossed. The princess saw with glee the

results of her croaking so she decided to turn up the croaking a few notches.

She croaked day and night at him. Low and behold, warts began to pop up on the prince all over his body and before you knew it the handsome prince turned into a toad.

One day the toad, the former handsome prince, was out cruising along on his hover board and saw a backpack lying along the road and hopped into the back pack. As the toad searched through the backpack for a tasty morsel, he came across a copy of **O.D.A.T.** and he said to himself, "Self, lets partake."

As he devoured the daily reader he came across a page that said: ***Minding your own business eliminates half of your worries.*** The toad thought, I have nothing to lose so I will try it. BAM! Half of his warts disappeared. "Great!" he shouted as he ripped another page from the book to devour. The page said: ***Keep your wind out of their sail, and row, row, row your own boat.***

After pondering that for a while he chewed up the page and swallowed it and BAM! His remaining warts began to fade. As he chewed up the words of the book he came to ***Detach with love.***

"Hmm," he thought. "What have I got to gain by staying the way I am?" So he made up his mind to detach from her with love and BOOM, BOOM, BANG! All of the warts disappeared from him except the wart in the center of his nose.

The Princess noticed the profound change in the prince who had now returned to his former handsome self and tried to get him back into the toad he was by ***manipulation and control.*** She implemented the tried and true method she had perfected of ***pushing his buttons*** with croaking. But the prince was way ahead of her. When he was a toad he had eaten the page that said: ***Q.T.I.P. Quit taking it personally.*** He considered the source and failed to respond to her croaking by letting the croaking bounce off of his dragon fighting shield. The princess said she

wanted some of what he had and rushed down to the pharmacy and bought some of the beauty cream that was now back in stock as well as extra for future use.

“Wow! ”, the prince said. His homely princess had returned to her former beautiful self. The handsome prince went back to slaying his dragons instead of **Throwing fiery darts** at the princess. She would croak every once in a while out of habit but he remembered the warts, and thought to himself ... **How important is it?** I must **Take things one day at a time, and this too shall pass.** His mind was working again like **A parachute, being open.** He was at peace and could once again slowly drift back to ground when events caused him to jump...this time as a prince and not as a toad. They lived happily ever after, remembering that they **are but works in progress.**

**THE END**

**NO! The Beginning.  
Time Marches On!!!**

*Submitted by Larry S.*

### *District 18 Member Submissions*

#### ***A Wife's Perspective***

I'm not sure if what I did was detaching with love, but here it goes. My husband had been drinking again when I came home from work. Normally on this day I had somewhere to be and would only be home for a few minutes. When he was drinking that was fine with me. This night I didn't need to be there right after work. I had an hour. I saw that he had been drinking and quite calmly I said that we needed to talk if he was sober enough. He said he was and I sat down across from him and began...not angrily, not yelling, not condemning, but again strangely calm. I told him about the night two days after he quit drinking and the seizure he had...how scared I was that I thought I would lose him...how scared I am that one day I will come home from work and find his body and that I didn't want to live with that fear anymore. I told him that I loved him but I couldn't live with the active drinking anymore. I saw that it was time for me to leave so I calmly (again so strange) I grabbed what I needed, told him I loved him again, kissed him and walked out the door. He's been sober for a year.

*Anonymous submission*

My husband has been clean and sober for 96 days. I have been an Al-Anon member for 94 days. Learning how to detach with love in the past 94 days has been one of my greatest hurdles. I was crushed in spirit when I finally set boundaries for my two young daughters and myself. I was angry, hurt, and ashamed to admit that I was powerless over my husband's alcoholism. Processing these feelings is still daily battle

even though my husband is currently clean and sober. Each day brings new hope and healing as I work through the 12 steps. I know that I choose to love my husband even though he has hurt me more profoundly than any other friend, relative, or stranger. I choose to detach from all the negative emotions and experiences that his alcoholism brought into our marriage, because I must - in order to be a better me and a better us.

*Anonymous submission*

I can look back through my recovery and see how I have detached with love when I was married to the alcoholic. For example, one time he had made a mess in a room. Rather than scold him and berate him, I closed the door to the room. I told him that the room would need to be cleaned. I recall my son coming up to me and stating the disturbance of the room. I gently told him that I knew. I closed the door again and put an "out of order" sign up on the room door. We then walked away. As I mentioned I had successfully learned how to detach in the marriage. However, after we separated, it was less easy. I thought the opposite would happen and that life would be calmer. In some ways it is, but I have had to still relearn the basic rules. The defect of character comes flaring back and I have to reapply what I have learned and relearn it again.

*Anonymous submission*



### ***A Parent's Perspective***

Detach with love. The first time I heard this at a meeting, it sounded simple. Of course, they don't know what my son is going through.....Once I started working the steps and realized that alcoholism is a disease it started to make some sense. After working the first 3 steps I began to change me. I accepted that alcoholism, addictions, mental illness are a disease and that I am powerless over all of it. I decided to turn him over to God. I could ask the god of my understanding to take care of him. I no longer had to pretend that I had the power to fix anyone. Everyday I ask my Higher Power to guide me in my day and help me be the best version of myself. If I keep coming back to meetings and practice these things, it becomes easier to detach with love.

*Submitted by Ceci F.*

Detachment with love is one of the first exercises that I was introduced to when I became a member of Al-Anon. Accepting my dear ones “as they are” was a challenge for me. As a parent it was natural to find some solution to their problems. I made a giant effort to get the process started and even though it was one step forward and two steps back at times, I kept practicing detachment with love. Through my program I was always aware that I was never alone. I depend on God for strength. I also spend on other members of Al-Anon for support and encouragement. Their sharing at meetings has been, and still is, invaluable to me. I am so grateful to God and to the Al-Anon program. I use all I have learned, our literature, and prayer to have a much better life than I ever did, before learning and practicing the principle of detachment with love.

*Anonymous submission*

If I was asked 2 years ago what I thought my role as a father was, I would have said some of the following:

- Provide for my children
- Protect them whenever I can
- Anticipate and prevent future problems that might be coming their way
- Help them recover from their mistakes
- Make their paths easier, while helping them head in a positive direction

When they were children, those rules were good to follow. As a father of 5, I kept to my plan. Even as my children transitioned into young adults, it still seemed like a wise strategy for me to use.

As my adult son’s alcoholism progressed over the past several years I endured many ups and downs, many dashed hopes and dreams for him. Boundaries have been violated and despite my following what I thought was being a “good father”, I saw that my attempts to intervene were only enabling him. Money was wasted. I was manipulated and used. I was lied to.

I went through a range of emotions: Disbelief - I couldn’t believe that my dear son would ever act in such a way; Anger - I was angry at how I’d been treated; and Sadness - because I had “lost” that precious child, and might never see him again.

At this point, detachment became easy. I wanted nothing to do with my son - not his lies, not his alcohol, and not his promises. I had been betrayed, and wanted him out of my life. Had I detached? You bet!! Was I at peace? Far from it....

Here, the gifts of Al-Anon began to emerge. At meetings, I listened to other parents: their heartache, their sense of betrayal - which I could readily understand. Yet a number of parents who had been with Al-Anon longer than I also spoke of being able to keep their love for their son/daughter. Their love came with a set of boundaries, that protected both themselves and their child. The detachment that the parents had was from the alcohol and the addiction; they were able to maintain their love for their child who was still inside the person. The Al-Anon phrase L.O.V.E. has been especially helpful to me: “*Let Others Voluntarily Evolve.*”

So what new lessons have I learned from Al-Anon as a father of an alcoholic? Detachment with hate is easy; but can keep me engaged, and there is no peace in my heart. Detachment with love is harder, but much kinder to myself and to my son.

I aim for peace in my heart.

*Submitted by Robert D.*

### ***A Daughter's Perspective***

I had absolutely no idea what this meant when I first heard the phrase in the rooms of Al-Anon. Nor did it become any clearer when I read about it in our literature. Detach with Love sounded so counter intuitive to me. How do you detach, let alone, detach with love??? Growing up in an Alcoholic home, the way I learned to “detach” was with “an axe”, or more accurately, for me, with my tongue – making sure I sharpened both sides of it before I uttered one word.

When growing up, words were what I heard coupled with the behavior I saw that came along with them. My harsh, cruel, cutting words were all I knew. I emulated this behavior. This is what I knew would protect me, keep me from being vulnerable because I did not want to be or get hurt. Little did I know or understand, at the time, that I was doing more harm to myself than to the person on the receiving end. Learning how to Detach with Love, sounded wonderful, sounded so freeing, but, I did not know how to do it.

I got it when I read an article in **The Forum** (June, 2013) titled “**I Can Step Back With Love**”. (see below) This was the AH HA moment for me – simply said, “STEP BACK” – WOW!!! I finally GOT IT, I finally understood!!! I could, if I chose to, just step back from the craziness, the person, place, thing or situation that I was struggling with, obsessing about, wanting to fix, wanting to control, or...the list goes on.

I thought as soon as my loved one, my Dad, found AA and sobriety that ALL my problems would be solved, would be resolved and that my life would be great, all because the drinking had stopped. Not so. His sobriety has given me another growth opportunity. Remembering and knowing to step back helps me in my relationship with my Dad. Working my Al-Anon program, working on my personal recovery and in doing so, using all the Al-Anon tools available to me, particularly *Detach with Love* gives me the chance, the opportunity, to learn about me, to learn about my Dad and to learn about our relationship. It gives me an opportunity and the choice to let our relationship grow and flourish by being a willing participant in it.

Stepping back continues to teach me to detach with love in all my relationships, especially in my relationship with myself. I now embrace the many growth opportunities; the good ones, the difficult ones and the painful ones, my Higher Power, God, presents to me. I was not able to do this before coming to Al-Anon.

Today, *One Day at a Time*, I use the suggestions of the Al-Anon program – I go to meetings, I have a sponsor that I work with on a continual basis, I work The Twelve Steps, and I do service. And, I use the Al-Anon tools, especially *Detach with Love* as I now *Step Back*.

*Submitted by April M.*



### **I Can ‘Step Back’ With Love**

Am I the only Al-Anon member who has trouble with “detachment?” I have seen the troubled expressions on newcomers’ faces when they hear that word, and it remains until they understand that it means to detach from the emotion of the conflict with the alcoholic, not leaving the alcoholic.

The word detachment is too harsh for me. The words “step back” work better for me. I can step back from an emotional confrontation. I can step back in my mind and view the situation and my place in it. I can also step back physically. I can step back all the way outside, to walk in the garden.

I will not detach from her, but I can step back from a confrontation with her. I can step back from offering my brilliant suggestions of what she should do. I can step back with love from the minefield of words.

*Reprinted from The Forum June 2013 by Larry S., Texas*

### **Other Perspectives**

Detachment is a learned process for me. Early on it meant to back away but only after saying my piece. (Explaining why their plan was stupid and not going to work). It also was my responsibility to let them know how drinking or using was ruining my life as well as tearing apart the family. Today I know what works best is to just say “no, yes or maybe” without explanation. When the drinking is getting to the point I need a break I can go to the bathroom, do dishes or soak in a hot bath and go to bed saying “goodnight and I love you”. I have also learned in a disagreement to say “let’s revisit this in the morning over coffee”. I have learned I don’t want to shut them out. I just want to be happy whether the alcoholic is drinking or not!

*Submitted by Lin E.*

I thought detachment was never being able to see that person while they are in their active disease. I have learned through Al-Anon that detachment means setting boundaries and not enabling, while still allowing myself to love. The guilt of saying “no”, for me, was overwhelming. I am learning that saying “no” isn’t saying “I don’t love you”. For so long I would be angry and cried when attempting to communicate with my alcoholic. This, you see, protected my heart and covered up the devastating hurt and loss I was feeling. I still struggle with detaching with love, but now, two years into my Al-Anon program I am able to recognize my faults much more quickly and it allows me to make my amends and practice Step Ten of my recovery.

*Submitted by Laura H.*