

# DISTRICT 18

## NEWS

### Al-Anon Factoids

**Did you know.....**the Serenity Prayer was composed by Reinhold Niebuhr? (1892-1971) A theologian, ethicist & professor, he won the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1964.

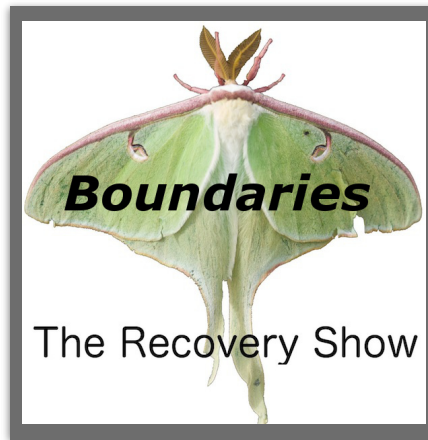
### Next Topic: Patience

**Patience:** *the capacity to accept or tolerate delay, trouble, or suffering without getting angry or upset; quiet, steady perseverance; even-tempered care; diligence:*

Page 1 in *Courage to Change* deals with patience. Is this something you struggle with?

After endless hours of trying to "fix" things, have you run out of patience...for yourself...for your qualifier? Please share your experience so others may learn.

**Email submissions to**  
district18.newsletters  
@gmail.com



### Editor's Note

We talk a great deal about boundaries in Al-Anon and it makes sense, doesn't it? We believe in truths like "boundaries are not an immovable wall". We agree boundaries protect us from other's wrongdoing and

from doing wrong to others. Also true. But how do we actually go about setting boundaries? What are the steps I need to take to create healthy boundaries after having given them careful consideration? If I just react in anger it's more likely to be a huge wall that will only cause damage to myself and to my relationships. I'm likely to become punitive and that's not healthy.

**Will I blame others for what I do on the grounds that I am compelled to react to their wrongdoing?** Since my mind tends to spin when emotions get rolling, it helps for me to break it down into logical steps while not in conflict. By doing so, I can respond instead of react, thereby creating a healthy boundary to contain my own actions and protect me from the violating actions of others. Here's how I do it.

#### *Step One*

**Decide what behavior is unacceptable to me - either my own or another's behavior.** Sometimes looking at my own behavior, and the underlying feelings, (frustration, anger, vengefulness) are a signal to me that something isn't right and I need to do something differently. Perhaps I don't like the way I'm being treated and that causes me to be angry. Do I want to be angry and verbally caustic, thereby adding to the problem, or do I

**"If you don't like being a doormat then get off the floor."  
Al Anon**

### Chair A Newcomer's Meeting

- Changing Attitudes AFG
- Tuesday, 6-6:30pm
- 901 W. Rumble Road, Modesto

OR

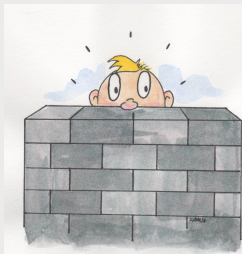
- Keep it Simple AFG
- Saturday, 9-9:30am
- Living Sober Fellowship
- 1064 Woodland Avenue, Suite E, Modesto

*No need to sign up...just show up! Newcomers want to know about Al-Anon.*

*Don't want to chair? Show up anyway and share what you've learned.*

### Thank You!

Special thanks to Keira H. for her original sketches.



want to begin to move in another direction? Once I decide how an event is triggering me or feels violating to me, I then move to the next step.

#### Step Two

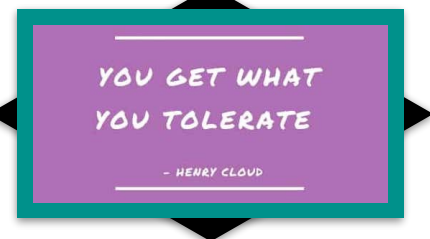
**What are the reasonable consequences if my boundary is crossed?** This is a bit tricky because I don't want to build a wall that can never be modified, thereby trapping myself behind it. The consequence may be that I just have to distance myself from the situation and not allow myself to be treated in a manner that feels disrespectful to me. If I've been lied to, I can calmly confront the person and then disengage from whatever the lie was. I don't have to berate the other for lying, nor get caught up in all their reasons why they think they are justified in doing so. Chances are I've gone over it a million times anyway and that hasn't worked. Time for a different pathway...a healthy boundary.

#### Step Three

**Enforce the consequence I've decided upon.**

**A boundary without a consequence is useless.**

Executing that consequence is, for me, the hardest part. Boundaries are much easier to enforce with those outside our most inner circle of loved ones. It's very hard to do this with loved ones, particularly if a qualifier is a child. Feelings of guilt and worry over their welfare keep me from enforcing my boundary. It takes a great deal of courage for me to follow through.



This is where I call in my Higher Power and put my loved one in His care so that I can detach with love and not anger or vengefulness. Others have to be allowed to experience the consequence of their wrongdoing, so they can choose if they want to continue down that pathway. For me to get into a power struggle trying to convince them (once again) only muddies the waters and detracts from the real issue. I need to make sure I'm cleaning up my act and not doing my "same old thing" that just adds to the problem.

I can step away from toxic behaviors so that I don't get caught up in the endless power struggle of trying to change someone else. This step generates a great deal of fear in me. What will happen if I enforce a consequence? Will it be the end of the relationship? Will we grow apart? These thoughts drag me back into the endless cycle of enabling until I confront my own fears and turn them over to my HP.

I HAVE DECIDED  
TO BE HAPPY  
BECAUSE IT IS GOOD  
FOR MY HEALTH.  
- VOLTAIRE

## Local Group News

### Speaker's Meeting

- Expanding Horizons
- Sunday, July 30 5pm
- 2019 Yosemite Blvd.  
Modesto
- Hear Fred M. share his story

## NCWSA Fall Assembly

- October 20-22
- McClellan Conference  
Center
- 5411 Luce Avenue
- McClellan, CA 95652
- Rooms available at Lion's  
Gate Hotel - \$115/night
- Reserve hotel by September  
29 - call 916.643.6222
- Use Group Code NCAAO

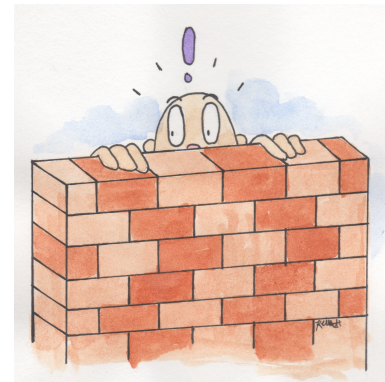
### Step Four

**I can modify my boundary according to what is happening in real time as life unfolds.** A boundary to me is like bringing along a jacket when I'm not sure what the weather is going to be like. If it turns cold, I've got my jacket with me to put on. If not, then I'm okay. I have to remember that as I get better at the process of setting and keeping boundaries, I will be more facile in the moment; deciding what I feel and what I should do in any given situation. I can always give myself a little more time and say, "I'll get back to you on that" while I decide my limits. It's all about giving myself permission to require that I be treated with respect, and if I've done that, I can be more fluid in setting and enforcing boundaries.

*Newsletter Kate*

## Al-Anon Forum Reprint

### Setting Boundaries: Serenity while living with active alcoholism



Long ago I'd given up on the notion that my husband would stop drinking and we would live our golden years walking hand-in-hand down the broad road of recovery. I couldn't even label my husband an alcoholic. I just knew I had a problem with his drinking and needed Al-Anon for my own serenity.

Several people in the program commented by saying I must have been praying for his sobriety for the last 15 years.

"Not really," I told them, "the Eleventh Step suggests I pray *only* for knowledge of God's will for me and the power to carry that out. I gave my husband to his Higher Power long ago."

That's one of the reasons I've been able to stay married to what I call "a problem drinker" for almost 32 years. Another reason is that the situation never became so bad that I felt I needed to leave. And, my Higher Power kept telling me to stay.

Every time I set a boundary with my husband, he didn't cross it.



His behavior improved over the years, along with mine.

That is, until the time he drove drunk after agreeing a year earlier that he'd stop drinking and driving. It took me a few days, but I decided I could no longer be entangled legally with a man who was bound to kill someone, or at least ruin us financially. I was no longer willing to go down with what I perceived as a sinking ship. My Higher Power made it clear that it was time for me to go. I'd learned all I could learn living with active drinking.

Our oldest daughter's announcement that we were going to be grandparents made my decision difficult. However, despite this good news, I still believed my dream about our golden years which I'd let go of years earlier would never come true. I hadn't wasted my life, though, because I'd found serenity, thanks to Al-Anon. Little did I know that taking just one baby step toward moving out—carrying my little TV to the guest room and informing my husband I'd be sleeping in there would be the only step I'd need to take.

My husband apologized to me, but I told him it wasn't that simple. He had a problem and I couldn't live with it anymore. That night, while I slept serenely with my dog by my side, my husband searched the Internet for ways to beat a DUI should he ever get caught. He wasn't trying to save our marriage, just his own hide.

Miraculously, his search took him to the A.A. Web site where he downloaded the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, read through it, and decided, with his Higher Power's help, that he was indeed an alcoholic. He went to two meetings the next day. Even though he'd never been arrested, lost his job, or lost his family, he'd hit his personal bottom. He knew he couldn't control his drinking.

I went with him to an open A.A. meeting. I remember sitting in disbelief when my husband said, "I'm an alcoholic." That was when I started to believe for myself that "changed attitudes can aid recovery." Indeed, going to Al-Anon meetings, getting a Sponsor, working the Steps, and doing service work are the actions that continue to change my attitude. Al-Anon and my Higher Power have kept our marriage together. And now, in this new adventure, it's A.A. and Al-Anon, God-willing, that will keep our marriage together.

Suddenly, even with the ups and downs of new sobriety, that broad road of recovery doesn't seem like a dream anymore. It's quickly becoming my reality one meeting, one step at a time.

*By Dianne L., Colorado  
The Forum, February 2007*

### *Member Submissions*

#### **Boundaries are Not Immovable Walls**

With boundaries God has the final say if I am in a healthy relationship with him. I learned that my obsession and control issues with boundaries can be just as sick as the person I am trying to control with my idea of a boundary which became a wall because it was not God's idea.



I was sure my alcoholic had control issues and in my mind being too involved in her sponsee's recovery as well as some of our family members. After the last sponsee left our home, I boldly told anybody in Al-Anon, or friends and family that no one would ever, ever spend another night in our house!!! We are not a dog gone Recovery Home , AA flop house I angrily stated !! I made that crystal clear to my alcoholic and again any of my AA buddies.

I was drawing my line in the sand . So what would I do if this came up again? Do I have a plan?? Will I ask her and the Person to go to a hotel? Would I go to a hotel? Blow up the marriage ?? Not sure but I knew I was right.

So life goes on, quiet for a while and my brother in law who lived in Bay Area was coming to grips with his disease of alcoholism and he was thinking of coming out for help, and some family recovery support. Now was I going to have to put my WALL to the test against someone who I was very close to all my life, like a brother to me. I made my statement of my wall in the previous weeks before he came out.

Then the night I came home from a late night teaching and my spouse told me my brother in law was sleeping in the spare room, he had to take a bus out here. She told me she had some things in the works for him to stay but that might take a few days. I was livid and now I, notice that word I now had to act or surely all my friends and peeps in Al-Anon would think I was weak and I would be embarrassed and maybe have to go back to Al-Anon pre school. Surely I would be a failure.

I finally did the first right thing. I bowed my head and prayed to God, what do you want me to do . I got my answer, just as my brother in law awoke and came out in our backyard for a smoke and of course my rage stopped for a second long enough to see a shell of the man I used to party with in early years.

He was at least 40 pounds underweight and as my AA buddies at Nirvana group home say “ He was, and looked, *“tore up from the floor up.”*”

God instantly said to my soul!! Do nothing but love my child as I love you. This is your task tonight to serve and love him. My wife went off to bed and he and I talked on recovery, life and God for the next several hours and I know I was blessed and, man...I learned a great lesson.

Yes boundaries are for me, yes they are a part of my recovery, but God is my pilot, he is in charge. No one benefits from walls, My boundaries can change. Walls are not healthy and are part of my disease and not part of my recovery. My walls manifest in anger, resentment and rage. My brother in law was at a good AA friend of ours house in 2 days and got the great support he needed. My wife did her part to honor my request and had this set up before he came out, but there was this short lag time, She was in a tough spot also.

Life is in God's time not mine, as are my spouse's character flaws whether valid or not. Or just my opinion. I thank God for this life lesson on Boundaries and Walls and who really is in charge - GOD.

*Submitted by Greg*

**Boundary: Something that indicates bounds or limits; a limiting or bounding line.**

People-Pleaser, People-Pleaser, that's me! Or that *was* me before Step 4 opened my eyes to the motives behind my desire to please. A deep sense of inadequacy, an even deeper need to be loved, topped off with a big dose of "should do's," left me constantly scrambling to do good and help others. Not that there's anything wrong with good deeds, but when done with the wrong motives, the deed is a dud.



One result of my people pleasing cycle was that I not only allowed, but almost invited people to walk all over me. My qualifier knew I could be manipulated to take care of things that were his responsibility. People in general knew that I could be counted on to jump in and fill the gaps in their lives. It was an exhausting roller coaster, *UNTIL...*

I came to Al Anon and began learning about myself and why I was so driven to please. Imagine my surprise when I recognized that my people-pleasing was actually a character defect! Enter the Al Anon tool bag.

The concept of boundaries has been an important addition to my tool bag. By setting healthy boundaries I have eliminated a lot of resentments, and that feeling of being "used." I have come to realize that I am worthy of love, and don't need to earn it. I now recognize that by overstepping my boundaries I not only hurt myself, but I shortchanged others from finding their own way and solving their own problems.

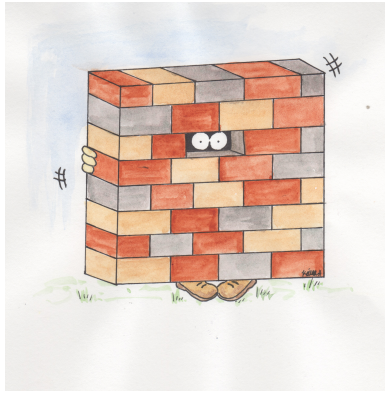
A few things about boundaries:

- They are not walls to keep others out.
- They protect me from being too other-centered, and allow me to work on my side of the street. (This is self-care, not selfishness.)
- They offer others the dignity of making their own decisions and taking their own action.
- They help me to know my limits, and respect them.
- They help me trust my Higher Power to do the things I shouldn't do.
- Best of all, boundaries are changeable! I can reset them any time, according to the situation, or as my life changes.

Boundaries, as described in Al Anon, are *HEALTHY*, and I'm a much healthier person because of them!

*Submitted by Beth G.*

## The Impostor



I have constructed a false self. Like the chameleon, I change colors, so to speak, to protect myself from facing the responsibility for who I really am. I live a pretext, lying to myself and believing others are the reason for my insecurity and my low self-esteem instead of accepting I am the one to blame. I didn't have to take their bait, but I did. What you see in me is not the real me. I have altered myself over the years to be what others want me to be. I set no boundaries for myself on how far I would go to please the other person. As long ago as preschool I was changing myself to please others. I have had years to practice and have become quite good at it. There has been a cost to my being so flexible. I have lost my true identity; so much so that I don't really know who the true me is. But I am trying to find it in Al-Anon.

I believe I could be called **F.E.A.R. (False Evidence Appearing Real)**. That makes me "**Deception**". Every time I was corrected I would be quick to tweak myself to become what the other person seemed to want me to become, avoiding **confrontation** at all costs. I didn't stop long enough to see if this idea of theirs was to benefit just them or me. I conformed to please them and their ideas of who I should be. I believe that now I see clearly, that I am **F.E.A.R. manifested**. I bent with the pressure of **control and manipulation** and have responded with **passive aggressive behavior** ...anger buried and not expressed has led to **bitterness and resentment** on my part and the other person is wondering... "what's his problem?" Unless I communicate and set boundaries, the other person will not realize that they are crossing them, then I have only myself to blame.

Now here is the problem. The person I have become is different from the person I really am. I am struggling to find the real me. I have learned in Al-Anon that *I have to set reasonable boundaries for myself and I can't set boundaries for the other person.*

So, I am setting those reasonable boundaries for myself on how I act and react to confrontation or criticism. How important is it? What part of this is really my problem that I need to change or correct? Will I allow someone to talk to me that way? Is this change good for them as well as me? The other people in my life may not like my changes. After all, I trained them for years to manipulate and control me, and now I am establishing boundaries.

The more I work my program the more I change. I am not the same person that I was yesterday, and my being a **work in progress**, I will not be the person tomorrow that I am today. Can the other people in my life adapt to the real me instead of the counterfeit? Only time will tell, but I must change and establish survival boundaries. I don't really think my sanity will survive the alternative.

*Submitted by Larry S.*

**This story is my journey - of discovering boundaries.**

A Google search on that word finds a straightforward definition.

A **boundary** delineates what's mine and what yours. It can be as solid and real as was the Berlin Wall during the height of the Cold War, and it can be as vague as the demarkation of where Earth's atmosphere becomes outer space.

**My Early days at Al-Anon**

It started as a bad dream, and the sickening realization that our adult child is an alcoholic. The roller coaster of anger, shame, guilt, denials - permeated my home. It was clear that I was helpless, and I was drowning. Then I discovered an Al-Anon meeting!

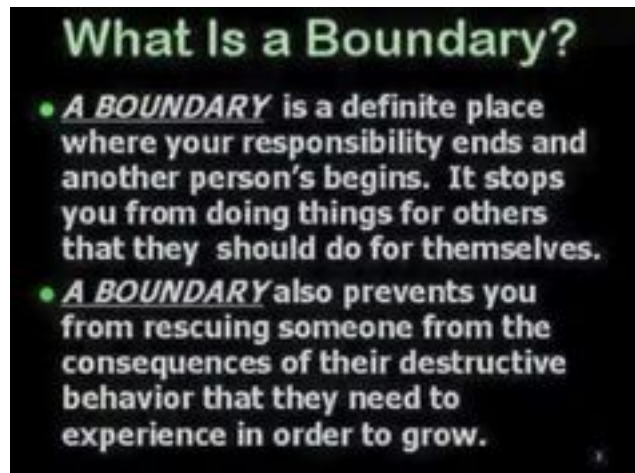
In the early days of my recovery as an enabler of an alcoholic child, Al-Anon was a life-line, and I clung onto it for dear life. The stories of others told me that I was not alone, that I didn't cause the alcoholism, I couldn't control it and I certainly couldn't cure it. In my readings, I also came across the concept of having a boundary with the alcoholic, and detaching from the alcoholic. People talked about their growth in accomplishing both those tasks, but everyone said it wasn't easy.

HAAH! I said to myself - Given the hurt I had felt, the idea of detaching from the alcoholic, and developing a boundary - would be child's play. Yet I wasn't going to just have a boundary - oh no - I planned to build an impenetrable wall around me and the rest of the family. The wall would give me both a "boundary" and "detachment", so I started building it. (Of course, the true phrase is "*detach with love*", but at this stage, I had forgotten about the key word: "love". Luckily, love re-appears later.)

**So I build a wall...**

I make a plan on how to build my wall, a huge wall, and as I look around my psyche I can see that I have a surfeit of materials to build with. For the stones of my wall, I made them out of the deep hurts and disappointments I had endured. I used my anger as the mortar to bind the stones together.

Yet even when my massive wall was nearing completion, I looked at it - and it still wasn't enough to "protect" me, and so I added sharp barbed wire to the top. This wire was made out of my shame and embarrassment - for apparently failing as a father.





**But something doesn't feel right...**

My wall serves its purpose well. Nothing gets through - Nothing escapes - I am invincible. As some time passes, I come to realize that something isn't right. In my safety, I am also isolated - and alone. I feel it, as does my family. Although initially I had been unable to hear the word "love" during my first Al-Anon meetings, it finally sunk in - "*Detach with love*" is the goal, not "*amputate*". Then comes a realization - I AM alone, and I miss the son that I love ... the person I love.



WE CAN SAY WHAT WE NEED TO SAY. WE CAN GENTLY, BUT ASSERTIVELY, SPEAK OUR MIND. WE DO NOT NEED TO BE JUDGMENTAL, TACTLESS, BLAMING OR CRUEL WHEN WE SPEAK OUR TRUTHS.  
— MELODY BEATTIE

**I begin to dismantle parts of the wall...**

The words of other Al-Anon members sink in more, and I find I am curious about the person that I love - my qualifier. As I sit back and look at my wall, I begin chiding myself for building such a huge monstrosity. I start by taking down the barbed wires down. Next comes the walls - I start dismantling it - brick by brick.

However, this goes slowly, as I test the waters, and test my own resolve - to love my son. But life isn't always easy - some event happens - I get hurt, and so I rebuild a wall, but one that isn't as tall, or formidable. Fortunately, the love for my son (that never really went away) whispers to me again to tear it down yet again.

**Fast forward to today...**

My mental wall is gone, all dismantled - although you can still see where the emotional soil around me had been torn up by it. Now I've got just a boundary, and I have detached with love from the addict, and love my son.

Just last week, our son came over to our house with a new girlfriend, just to visit. It was good to see him, even though his future and recovery is uncertain, and certainly is out of my control. I am still learning my way through these waters, but being gentle on my own humanity is a good first step for me to take.

*Submitted by Anonymous*