

Frequently Asked Questions...

How will Al-Anon help me?

Many who come to Al-Anon/Alateen are in despair, feeling hopeless, unable to believe that things can ever change. We want our lives to be different, but nothing we have done has brought about change. We all come to Al-Anon because we want and need help.

In Al-Anon and Alateen, members share their own experience, strength, and hope with each other. You will meet others who share your feelings and frustrations, if not your exact situation. We come together to learn a better way of life, to find happiness whether the alcoholic is still drinking or not.

What is alcoholism?

Alcoholism is widely recognized as a disease of compulsive drinking, which can be arrested, but not cured. It is a progressive illness, which will get only worse as long as the person continues to drink. Total abstinence from drinking is the only way to arrest the disease. Alcoholism affects the entire family; indeed, everyone who has contact with the alcoholic is affected. Unfortunately, the only person who can stop the alcoholic from drinking is the alcoholic himself or herself.

How do alcoholics affect families and friends?

Alcoholism is a family disease. The disease affects all those who have a relationship with a problem drinker. Those of us closest to the alcoholic suffer the most, and those who care the most can easily get caught up in the behavior of another person. We react to the alcoholic's behavior. We focus on them, what they do, where they are, how much they drink. We try to control their drinking for them. We take on the blame, guilt, and shame that really belong to the drinker. We can become as addicted to the alcoholic, as the alcoholic is to alcohol. We, too, can become ill.

Who are alcoholics?

They could be anyone, from all backgrounds and walks of life. Over 95 percent of alcoholics have families, friends, and jobs. They may function fairly well, but some part of their life is suffering. Their drinking causes a continuing and growing problem in their lives, and the lives they touch.

Who are the members of Al-Anon and Alateen?

Al-Anon and Alateen members are people just like you and me—people who have been affected by someone else's drinking. They are parents, children, spouses, partners, brothers, sisters, other family members, friends, employers, employees, and coworkers of alcoholics. No matter what our specific experience has been we share a common bond: we feel our lives have been affected by someone else's drinking.

Do I have to say anything at a meeting?

It is your choice to speak or not during the meetings. Newcomers are welcomed to meetings, usually provided with literature and a local meeting list, and invited to listen and learn. Some meetings offer beginners' meetings, specifically for newcomers. Members are available to answer questions before or after the meetings.

Will anyone say I've been there?

One of the Al-Anon program's basic principles is that of anonymity. Meetings are confidential, and we do not disclose whom we see or what we hear at meetings to anyone.

How much is this going to cost?

There are no dues or fees in Al-Anon and Alateen meetings. Most groups pass a basket for voluntary contributions. Members are asked to contribute what they can afford, so that the group can pay rent, provide literature, and offer support to local and worldwide service centers.

Is this a religious fellowship?

Al-Anon Family Groups is a spiritual fellowship, not a religious one. We avoid discussion of specific religious doctrine, and members of all faiths (or of none) are welcome. Our Twelve Steps ask us to find a "Power greater than ourselves" who can help us solve our problems and find serenity. Each member is free to define that power in his or her own