

## Arizona Sponsorship Workshop

Thursday, June 4, 2020

### Segment Seven – Steps 10, 11 and 12.

- Techniques for working these Steps
- Literature used

#### Statement of Purpose:

We asked, “How can we support members by making healthy sponsorship more accessible and less mysterious to all members and to new sponsors?”

Newcomers and other members often feel anxiety and confusion about sponsorship. Reliable, flexible sponsorship has a direct effect on regular participation, effective recovery, service, and retention of members. Sponsored members sponsor others sooner. Sponsors help us better understand the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts, and they teach us application of the Spiritual Principles ourselves. Solid sponsorship is the key to a flourishing fellowship. It conquers many challenges we face, both individually and collectively.

#### *Suggested Preamble to The Twelve Steps:*

*The Al-Anon Family Groups are a fellowship of relatives and friends of alcoholics who share their experience, strength, and hope in order to solve their common problems. We believe alcoholism is a family illness and that changed attitudes can aid recovery. Al-Anon is not allied with any sect, denomination, political entity, organization, or institution; does not engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any cause. There are no dues for membership. Al-Anon is self-supporting through its own voluntary contributions.*

*Al-Anon has but one purpose: to help families of alcoholics. We do this by practicing the Twelve Steps, by welcoming and giving comfort to families of alcoholics, and by giving understanding and encouragement to the alcoholic.*

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#### **Julie:**

Good evening and thank you for this opportunity to grow. This is a little challenging for me and not a format that I'm comfortable with. I feel like I'm with a whole lot of experts, and I've had to work around that. I have not been a sponsor. My only experience is with the one sponsor I have, and it's been a valuable experience. I chose to participate in these sessions because I wanted to grow and learn about sponsorship in case that opportunity to be a sponsor opens up.

I was in Al-Anon about three years before I chose to get a sponsor. I went to the meetings and I did the daily readings and all that, but I was just such a hot mess that I didn't really think I could actually tell somebody all that had been going on. Those three years were wonderful in that the program gave me such freedom to work it as I was able to. This gave me such strength and hope. My oldest son died of alcoholism at 32 and, because I was already into my third year in the program, I was able to have a loving and respectable relationship with him.

I can't even possibly explain how this program reconnected me with God and helped me through that loss that was due to alcoholism. He wasn't the first. I grew up with it in my family of origin, and then I married one. The first husband was an alcoholic, and then both my sons were. Then the second husband was too. I had a lot of experience in the chaos and stuff we come in with. It's taken me a long time to process, but day by day with the help of my sponsor, it's worked out.

Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve are kind of the maintenance steps. Step Ten, "Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it," is such a great one. It helps me reflect on how I'm doing, what's going on, and staying there. I am in such a wonderful place in my life, and I don't want to lose this. I know my daily constant contact with God and how I work this program makes that possible. I can't afford to go where I was before; it was indescribable and I'm not willing to do that.

We say in the meeting, "Keep coming back. It works if you work it, and you're worth it." I need to be the poster child for that one because I knew that made sense and so I just kept working it. I didn't know I was worth it, but I do now. Ten helps me, but I do not reflect on it at night. If I start looking at what wasn't working, that'll just stay all night long, or I'll go places where I can't risk going. I need to go to bed peacefully. I do fall asleep with gratitude of the day or whatever I can grab on to. But in the morning when I get into my Step 11, the first thing I do is take a personal inventory of how that day went and I usually ask myself to find two good things that I did. Then I can see my growth right off, how I'm doing with it, and I'll also try to find one thing in particular where I need to look at my behavior and what I need to do about it. Is it something to pray about or make amends for? I may journal my reflections on this to see if I have a pattern coming up. I keep that in a separate place and share it with my sponsor from time to time. If this keeps showing up, I will have that dialogue with her. That really helps me.

Steps Ten, Eleven and Twelve are really about going deeper. The first time through the steps, I was only able to go across the surface because I couldn't feel. I was numb and I was grieving. I was quite a mess, but I was working into it. Now it's about constantly looking at those things in myself with Step

Ten. My sponsor is always asking me, “Well, what does that mean? What's really underneath that?” And she really holds me to look deeper into those patterns that I'm doing and where we can go with that. Is there literature I could read or amends I should do?

Step Eleven is non-negotiable. I will not start my day without God. I won't go anywhere. I will get up earlier. I will do whatever I have to do so I can sit down in my comfortable little chair with all my material and get in contact with God. If I have the time, I'll read *One Day at a Time*, *Courage to Change*, and *Hope For Today*. If not, I will just sit there. I have to sit down and talk about my day with God. I cannot function without it; my breathing, my eating is my spiritual connection with God.

I sit as long as I can at the end after I've done all my readings, reflected, prayed, and meditated. I don't say, “15 minutes or 30 minutes and you're done.” That was years ago; now 30 minutes is nothing. I love it if I have an hour and can keep on going with that reflection, but I always end it by asking God's help for my day without dictating to him. I've learned that my own information is not so hot, so I just ask him, “Please, dear God, these are the things that are going to be coming in today and I need your help.” I'll just lay that out there, and it strengthens me. I trust God. He gives me the courage to get up and face that day because I have prayed, asked for help, and listened. A little later something will come flying in, and I'll think, “That's a good idea; I'm glad I prayed a little bit.” It's divine to work with him every single day. It's my work out.

I ask for that in prayer, and that's what it does. Sometimes I'll stop in the middle of a daily reading when something jumps up, and I'll pray, reflect, or journal with it. I love reading the *Forum*, too. It often introduces me to other literature that relates to people or a theme they have going. If it resonates with me, I'll order more literature. My home group likes to laugh about me and *The Forum* because I'm always quoting it. My favorite was the one a couple months ago that discussed how chaos always follows excitement. I was like, “Who was at my house? That's my story.”

Fortunately, my sponsor is a good model for this as well. We have such beautiful conversations because she is so deeply spiritual and has been doing this for quite some time. When I talk to her, I feel like I'm talking with my heart. It's just such a divine connection that we have with one another while looking at ourselves, our lives, and our relationship with God.

In Step Twelve, the “having had a spiritual awakening” part was a gradual thing for me. As a young person, I believe I had a relationship with God, but when the chaos of the alcohol became greater and greater, there was no God. I was in total darkness. Through the grace of this program connecting me back with God, something that I always knew and wanted returned. A gradual light came back on in my

life and the connectedness with God is there now, and that guides everything that I do. It's God, the program, and me working all the time.

With Step Twelve, I share it everywhere I go. It's me. If I'm in a situation, I can see chaos because I've learned what peace and serenity are from the program. When people start acting like that or I start hearing things, I can bring myself back because I practice this program all the time. I ask God to keep me out of trouble and to guide me. When I can see that, I don't have to give my two cents worth anymore. I don't have to take care of people. I did, but I don't need to do that anymore. The program is working, and it's getting better and better every day for me. It works in everything that I do, and I continue to try my best. I don't EVER want to be where I was or I feel like that again.

I practice it in all my affairs. I do still have to look at Step Ten now and then, but I do give it my conscious best. The difference may be that I feel like I have consciousness now after literally being unconscious for several decades. It's about the conscious choices to connect with God and use these principles in all my affairs. I know my relationships, how I behave, and how I solve problems are so much better because of it.

As life would have it, I just retired from 45 years as an educator, and this was my very last day. When asked what I would do, the answer was travel. I am blessed with grandchildren so it's family. This program has helped me so much that I am joyful going into this next phase, and it is because God has supported me. I used to have to be busy because I didn't want to be me before. I didn't like me. Now I'm in a different place and letting go of these other people, their admiration, and all the other stuff. To just be me is so exciting! One thing really stood out while studying and learning for the honor of doing this this evening, and I've just got to get it made into a sign for myself. I read that Al-Anon is my passport to a better life.

**Terry T.**

I'm Terry T. from Juneau, Alaska, and a grateful member of Al-Anon. My home group is the Tuesday Noon Serenity AFG in Juneau, and I really want to thank the members for asking me to participate in this workshop and to thank everyone in Arizona who worked on putting these workshops together. They're quite wonderful.

My favorite CAL that I use both personally and with my sponsees is *Paths to Recovery*. That and *Reaching for Personal Freedom* are helpful workbooks for working the Steps. I also like to use *The Forum* articles on the Steps. Every month they have a meeting article on the Step of the month. Our daily readers always have excellent readings on the Steps as well.

I want to say how much I appreciate that there's no one way to work the Steps. At first this was kind of frustrating for me because I just want it to be easy and to have someone say, "Here, this is how you work it: just do ABC, 123, XYZ." But as you guys all know, everybody learns differently and everybody gets to work the Steps whatever way works best for them. I like workbooks, but some of my sponsees like to write and some don't. I also really appreciate the small group discussion format of working through the questions in the workbook. I was very fortunate many years ago to attend what was referred to as "a good, kick-butt Fourth Step meeting." I'm sorry there aren't more meetings like that for the Steps. Unfortunately, that group is no longer meeting, but it was there for me when I needed it and it kicked my butt.

Steps Ten, Eleven and Twelve are sometimes referred to as the maintenance steps. They help me to be honest and to stay on my side of the street, to be my best self, the person I want to be. The previous nine steps all prepared me for these steps. I really love Step 10: "Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it." I use it quite often. I know that one of my character defects has jumped the fence if I'm trying to control, am being dishonest with myself and others, or am not speaking my truth. Then I start to have feelings of resentment and anger and stuff those feelings.

I've heard it said that I can't be in serenity and resentment at the same time, and it's quite true. Now when I start feeling or recognizing these conditions, I know what I can do about it. Then I don't have to spend hours or days or nights being wracked by guilt over something I said or how I behaved. I know I can make amends promptly, and then I can get a good night's sleep. I know I make this sound easy and often it is, but sometimes it's not because sometimes I'm dealing with a really difficult person or a sticky situation. When that's the case, I'm fortunate because I know I have tools and can call my sponsor or an Al-Anon friend. I have solutions now. I don't have to be stuck. I like to think of this Step as "I'm done with guilt and shame now."

I talk with my sponsees about what a relief it is to be able to do this Step. I don't want to think about the wasted hours, days, and nights that I've spent on the guilt and shame because I didn't know how to make amends before. I would say I was sorry, but that's not the same. One of the tools I try to use before opening my mouth is the acronym THINK: is it thoughtful, honest, intelligent, necessary, and kind? They say that every year you're in Al-Anon gives you a second before you open your mouth, and I now have about 15 seconds. If I do say something that doesn't measure up to the acronym THINK, then I can promptly admit it.

That word necessary can trip me up and a tool, I learned early on helps me with that. It's one of my favorite slogans, "How Important Is It?" I can start to say something and when I think "necessary," I can also think about that slogan. Quite often, it's not important and much easier for me to let things go. It's

a very welcoming solution step. It asks me to give up denial and be honest with myself and others. I try to remind my sponsees that we're not meant to beat ourselves up, but to use an opportunity to treat ourselves with compassion and love. One of the results my sponsees and I find is that we gain more self-esteem, self-respect, honesty, and the gift of other people's forgiveness.

Step Eleven is a big step with a lot in it: "Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out." The first three Steps really prepared me a lot for Step Eleven which like Step Ten is a welcoming step. By the time I got there, I really wanted to improve my conscious contact with my Higher Power. A lot of my 11th step work with sponsees is talking about what prayer and what meditation is.

I've read and heard it said that prayer is talking to God and meditation is listening. However, I think there's a real distinction between talking to God and asking God for things I want to control. In Al-Anon, I learned that I can ask for help. Asking for guidance and help is under prayer, but it's not praying for specific outcomes. Understanding that difference is helpful and critical to understanding this step.

Meditation or listening for this guidance is more elusive. I still sometimes wonder about this knowledge. What is it and do I have it? Several times a day, I take time to stop, meditate, and listen for my Higher Power's guidance. As with all the Steps, it takes practice; the first time I try to do something new, I'm not going to be very good at it. I share with sponsees that one of the ways I try to do this is to thank my Higher Power for the little everyday things that I'm grateful for. There's a new flower that's just started blooming, a neighbor smiling at me, a parking space opens up when I'm trying to find a spot, or it's raining outside so I get to comfortably sit inside without distractions and figure out what I'm going to say at this Sponsorship Workshop tonight. If I start acknowledging these little things it becomes my practice and that practice gets easier and becomes a habit. Replacing not-so-great habits like self-doubt and negative thinking with good habits helps me become a healthier me.

The tool of gratitude is very powerful and easy to do. It's part of this step, and I ask my sponsees to make a list of three things they're grateful for either every night or morning. Every week I increase it by a few more things. I often ask them to go through each letter of the alphabet and pick something they're grateful for starting with each letter. This can really soothe me when I'm not able to sleep or my life is in chaos. It's in doing these little things that I start understanding what my Higher Power's will is for me. I can ask for his help to carry these things out. Prayer and meditation are such wonderful tools of the program.

Step Twelve, "Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of the Steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs." To me there are three distinct parts of this Step, and the first is the spiritual awakening. I discuss what a spiritual awakening is and how we know we've had one. Some members have distinct, really intense experiences or an incident that is dramatic and really obvious. But for many, there's a culmination of small, almost insignificant experiences before we realize we've had a spiritual awakening.

I define a spiritual awakening as an awareness or an experience where I am prepared to receive, embrace, and grow with my Higher Power's help. Just talking about awareness helps because I hadn't been aware that I was having spiritual awakenings. Every day that tool of reflecting on gratitude in combination with the Serenity Prayer have been the most helpful to me. I ask for compassion for my loved ones and myself. I then ask for patience with the changes in my life and acknowledge that they're going to take time. It's being able to listen for my HP's hand in my life, big or small. That whole prayer and meditation process brings me to the space of being able to receive, acknowledge, and be aware of a spiritual awakening.

The second part of Step Twelve is about sharing our recovery gifts through service and outreach. I've heard for years that in order to keep my Al-Anon program, I need to give it away. I do everything I can to welcome newcomers during meetings and volunteer to take literature to places. I also know that I can lead by example so when I'm asked to do service I try to say yes. Service can look like all kinds of things, and there's usually an outreach aspect to every service position. I tell sponsees, "Service, Service, Service will grow your program." We talk about what feels most comfortable for each of us as individuals regarding outreach service.

And the last part of Step Twelve, "to practice these principles in all our affairs," is talking about my new spiritual life. When I'm being my best self, I'm a mature individual and it's reflected in all aspects of life. Sponsees and I also read and talk about the many spiritual principles. As delegate, I really appreciate that one of my biggest gifts was learning more about spiritual principles and how they applied to our Three Legacies. They're all in the Service Manual.

The spiritual principle of Respect: I need to treat people the same way I want to be treated, learn to listen carefully, and treat everyone with dignity. Trust and Faith: These two principles go together for me. So many of us come into the program with trust broken time and time again so it's really hard to trust somebody. My first sponsor taught me about trusting again, and it's a huge advantage to having a sponsor-sponsee relationship. In trusting my sponsor, I also learned to regain the lost trust in myself. Faith followed because I could trust again -- Integrity, Honesty and Trust. Those sponsor-sponsee relationships form a foundation for building healthy relationships with trustworthy others.

Humility: Honest appraisal of myself, less preoccupied with self, reaching out to help others.  
Responsibility: filling my commitments. It's okay to say no; I also need to be responsible to myself.  
Unity: Being open to seeing other people's perceptions and opinions. I don't have to be right all the time or have it my way. Participation: A favorite, "the key to harmony." It involves cooperation, working well with others and accepting others' leadership. And Presume Goodwill: Compassion, generosity. I could go on and on. I do want to put in one more plug for the *Just for Tonight* bookmark. It's one of my favorites.

### **Teri M.**

I want to thank you for your shares, Terry and Julie. Many things that you spoke about were things I have in my little notes here. It's great that we have a similar theme and yet all get to do it differently. Thank you for the invite, Claudia, and thanks to all the friendly faces I've seen here. I don't like speaking in crowds, but I think this is such an awesome opportunity. One of the things I want to talk about is the fact that I don't work Steps Ten, Eleven and Twelve on a regular basis with my sponsor today. I've been in a long time, and no longer am in the desperate place I was at first. This program has actually changed who I am and is really my go-to place when my brain works. It's a miracle when I think back to what it was like. All I wanted to do was get him sober and then later it became needing to help myself. I did a lot of faking it in the beginning while trying to figure out how this was going to work for me. It continues to be a very slow, evolving process.

I've had several sponsors over the years. Once I had one just because I thought I needed to have one, but today I have a sponsor that I truly work with and love. We have very, very different ideas on what a Higher Power looks like, and she allows me that freedom. It has to be that way. If I didn't have the freedom to find and work with a Higher Power that I could understand, this would have never worked. I would've left right away if I thought for one minute it was going to be a whole God thing. I would have walked out.

I just keep thinking how I didn't arrive one day and say, "Oh, I'm on Step Ten." I did a lot of different things to get to where I am. We had a Fourth Step in a little blue book that's grown up into a bigger book now. In the beginning, we even did workshops out of the Big Book. That's where I got my first Fourth and Fifth Step and then worked through the rest of the Steps. Those tools don't apply or work for me today, but they were there back when I needed them. *The Forum* is one of the tools I love and continue to use, looking forward to it every month. I know it'll talk about a different Step, Tradition and Concept, and I love the stories that go in there.



I was part of a workshop where we used *Paths to Recovery*, and yet all these things have never been in a straight line. I love *How Al-Anon Works* and wish we would spend more time reading that book. That and the daily readers are so good. I think those are the things that kept Steps 10, 11, and 12 in my mind after I got to a point when I wasn't in so much pain. And I've heard it said that these are maintenance steps. I think of it like car maintenance; some years ago, when the car would start making a knocking noise, I was convinced it was just my imagination. I mean every part of my life shows up in every other part of my life. As with the car, I learned I had to start taking care of things as they came up. And that's what Step Ten does for my life today.

Sometimes I'm embarrassed about how long it took me to get to the point where I was doing my daily maintenance. It's really an ongoing maintenance because my inner voice gets loud and it gets loud fast, until I can't ignore it. With the tools I don't have to live that way. I was thinking about how we do our personal inventories and it's really good to remember those things that worked well. I had a recent experience at my home meeting when a guest speaker came to our small group. She brought a bunch of her friends so we had people from the West Coast join the middle country here. I noticed one of our home group members who had talked and cried a lot when she was new. I was watching her listening more and was really seeing her presence, the way she's taking care of herself, change.

I bring this up because that catalyst or that part of my daily routine, to get the speaker to come to the meeting, makes my heart just swell. That's something I think I need to remember in my 10th Step, too. I mean, I do remember my personal inventories, but on the other hand, I've got two daughters who don't get along very well and I got into it. I didn't like that they weren't getting along too well and stuck my nose into it. I was telling my youngest how I thought she should behave.

The funny thing about this is that I talked about this with my home group and my sponsor. Then there was an article in *The Forum* about a mother who had two daughters who were not getting along together. I brought it to my meeting and said, "Look, you guys. I did not write this. But it was exactly, EXACTLY my story." What we're talking about today is when I don't take care of myself and I don't look at this behavior, then I get into my judgment and resentment and I'm the one who it hurts. My isolation and anxiety also hurt. But I don't have to stay there and live in that place today and I'm so grateful for that.

In Step Eleven we talk about prayer and meditation. This is a tricky one for me. In the very beginning of coming to the meetings, I was in so much pain that I would chant the *Serenity Prayer* and *Let Go and Let God*. Step Eleven is very connected to the Serenity Prayer. It is about making that contact and helping me to let go. It's different for me today but doing those things in the beginning started changing my behavior, and it didn't happen overnight.

So today my prayers are different. I still say things like, "Help." I still say things like, "Protect me. Help me get through this situation." I didn't think I was going to be able to manage or survive going through the death of my husband, but I do believe that was the time I didn't have to pray for it; I was carried. Whether it was God, the Higher Power, or the powers that be, I couldn't do it for myself. The fellowship is what stepped in for me, bringing meetings to my home. I was carried in ways I hadn't thought. That is the prayer in action.

I don't have a formal meditation today. I have tried things like reading up on and going to places to learn how to meditate. Now my meditation is more of a daily practice. It's when I'm doing something that takes me completely out of myself and my focus is not there. That is meditation.

I do that when I'm doing my quilting. I do that when I'm sitting out in my backyard with the waterfall and when I'm hiking. And now in this environment of being isolated at home, I've taken up a new kind of drawing. I have to go into myself and the focus is just there. And I do believe that that is where God speaks to me. If I had to narrow it down, these are the two things that meditation is for me: the gratitude I have to live in and being in the moment.

I went downstairs the other day to do some sewing, and I was just kind of in that space. I have one of those little robot vacuum cleaners and I heard it go off. When I came upstairs, I looked at it, and I said, "Thank you" out loud. I was so grateful that that little thing did my vacuuming for me.

I guess this is how I live my life today. It's a simpler, more mature life. I like those words, but I know that it's not that I'm having to pray and wait and listen. If I'm not, I'm okay in the moment unless I get nudged. When I get nudged, I know it's time for me to pay attention, and that is God's will for me today. I can't pretend to be any other way. It just is how it is for me.

I really got Step Twelve wrong when I first came in here, but I was really excited about it, and thought it was pretty cool. This is a great program and I wanted everyone in my family to get this and I just didn't even think about Steps 1, 2, or 3. I just went straight to Twelve not thinking of it as being controlling. I just thought, this is really good. I even think of it this way today, too. There were times when the significant other and I would be at a speaker meeting, and this is how I thought I was carrying the message. There would be something that was said that I thought was really, really powerful so I gave the nudge, "Did you hear that? Please hear that."

Today my spiritual awakening is something so entirely different. I used to look for burning bushes, and I think several key things happened along the way. This wasn't an event for me, just a long process.

This disease affects people. It did me, in my perception of how I see things, and through working these Steps I'm able to see things differently. Doing my Fourth Step was where I needed sponsors, fellowship, discipline, and the tools so that I could see things differently. Today it's also about carrying the message by showing up.

I have a sponsor that said to me one time, "You know you're working the Step when you're living it in your home life, taking it out of the meetings." For a long time, it didn't occur to me that that was what I needed to do. I know today it's about showing my children how to deal with grief. It's walking through it. I know that's how it is and was for me.

My oldest daughter is grown up with grown children and what she tells me is, "Mom you've shown me how to live." It's not something I planned, but I couldn't have done it alone or without the Steps. And there are people I go to. I often go to sponsees, my sponsor, and other Al-Anon members to reason things out.

**Question:** What are the most important things you've learned about sponsorship from the sponsorship meetings?

**Panelist Response (Julie):** I just thought doing the Steps there must be a manual y'all have, so you don't lose, confuse people, or go the wrong way with them. I have all I can do to get me on the right road, although there isn't really a road to it. It's just everything that embodies Al-Anon. That's what you all have been doing, to slowly work and re-work the Steps. Above all, it's LOVE I learned from my own sponsor. It's all about the love that I hear in all your conversations. Sponsors have to learn how to love themselves and then they learn to help others to love themselves. Program teaches you about God's love and then love for one another, a love that's unconditional and is so amazing. What I will take forward is that I don't need to worry about anything. If I just show up, it will be okay. Like that little quote, "Keep coming back. It works if you work it." Just try to take them where they're at. Having retired, I now have time. I can do that, and I know that some will come forward.

**Question:** We would like to know if you would say something more about acknowledging the little things.

**Panelist Response (Terry T.):** Yes, acknowledging the little things. I think that I first kind of learned that through my yoga program. I had a hard time trying to do a home practice. I was just going to classes. I learned that it's baby steps. I had read that a 10-minute practice every day is more beneficial than an hour-and-a-half class once a week. Well, I didn't know if I could start at 10 minutes, but I could start with just doing four poses a day. I was then able to build that up to a little practice that I try to do on a

daily basis. I was learning that about the same time I was getting into Al-Anon and in Al-Anon I kept hearing how it's the baby steps. And it's so true if I just do the little things.

I was in my backyard with my sponsor once when I was pretty new in the program. We had some crackers and cheese, and I just had a box of crackers out there. The wind came up and spilled the crackers on the ground. At that time, I had this dog that loved food and in a flash that the dog was right onto those crackers. And my sponsor started laughing and said, "Look, the dog's had a spiritual awakening." And I realized it doesn't have to be the giant sunset or that I'm hearing a symphony in the sky or something. It can be, "Oh. I'm hungry. There's crackers. I can eat."

It's just so simple and I think that's why I tie it so much to gratitude. I learned that early in the program. I was such a hot mess when I came in. I didn't have any happiness or believe there was anything to be grateful for. The program taught me I could be grateful that I can get out of bed or that the sun came up. If I can do that, it just builds and builds.

**Question:** We would like to know how Steps Ten, Eleven and Twelve helped you walk through your grief?

**Panelist Response (Teri M.):** A day at a time, I don't know what else to say. The grief was overwhelming, and I couldn't function at the time. I was even serving as delegate then and it was really challenging for me. I think I was really angry at God in the immediate parts. I don't think I was able to walk through it. It was just too raw. It was through the grace of my kids that I felt like I had to pull it together and maybe they were speaking to me through the God of my understanding, but I knew that was the reason. I had to be aware of what I was doing and more than anything, I had to be honest through it; otherwise I couldn't have gotten through it.

I feel I was carried in many ways, but God and I had a real hard time because I was really angry for a while. But I felt like it was okay to do that. I did have a friend text me a week after and say, "How are you doing?" And I said, "Hell, my heart's broken." I don't know how to answer that question, and I felt angry. I think maybe just the acceptance of myself and where I was helped. And the fact that I was serving in a role that I was so confused about; I had this grief and yet I felt so honored to be doing this Al-Anon position. It was really tough, but I was able to put the grief aside and do the service work. I guess that's part of it, too, because the maintenance is taking care of yourself one step at a time.

**Member share (Lisa T.):**

Thanks! I am enjoying the speakers and the answers to the questions. I tried not to think about what I was going to say so I'd not get too nervous. By the time I got to Steps 10, 11 and 12, I'd had a number

of years in the program, although I probably had done some spotty Step Ten. It took me a long time to work Step Eleven. Like others, I went from Step Two right to Step Twelve and skipped the rest when I was new. I was trying to believe and went from came to believe to let's spread the word and tell everybody what I'm learning in the first three weeks.

I had a wonderful sponsor for over seven years who was a black-belt Al-Anon, old school. She taught me everything that I eventually learned to work with my sponsees about. All I know is what I worked through -- my own experience, strength, and hope. I tend to tell stories and talk too much, but I am a writer and I use the stories when I work with sponsees, giving examples of times when I did something. That's how I share more than teach. I really try to keep it in the "I". This is what happened to me or this is what I experienced or what I did.

When doing Step work with sponsees, I do what was taught to me. I just have them read for two weeks anywhere in any book of CAL literature they want on Step 10, Step 11, Step 12, etc. For Step Eleven, I had a sponsor who told me to be still because I didn't know how to shut up my mind or my mouth. And that was a key phrase for me. I would just practice for 30 seconds sitting in a chair while being still and now today, after many years, I actually can sit and be still. I don't have to have the TV on or any other distraction.

I want to mention that I work Step Ten almost every day. I need to make amends because of what is said from my mouth almost every day. I can still be a reactor. When new in the program, I used to hate making amends so much that I would try to avoid it. I would think and stop myself before blurting something out. Today, it's not like that. I now feel very comfortable making amends.

I just did it with my husband last night on the phone. He stayed back in Arizona to continue working while I drove across country by myself with my three cats and a dog, and now I'm 3,000 miles away. If that doesn't bring up your control issues, nothing will. I talked about that even tonight, the second day after I made my amends. I was trying to explain that the underlying cause of that need for me to be in control was being so far apart from him. That's something I do pretty regularly and then Step Twelve is as important for me as my personal recovery.

**Question:** For any of the main speakers. How do you encourage the members you sponsor to stay on track with step work so they can get to Steps 10, 11 and 12?

**Panelist Response (Terry T.):** I am just going to say that I'm not very good at cracking the whip. I think if they want to do it, they will and being that example is one of the best ways.

**Member share (Sandra):**

Hi, I'm Sandra. What I want to say tonight follows the question that was just there but kind of taking the other side. I can't believe how much deeper I am in the program because I have done the Steps with a sponsor. And when I think about Steps 10, 11 and 12, I think about the opportunities that have been presented to me. I was in Al-Anon for quite a while before I actually officially started doing the Steps with a sponsor. It was after moving to Arizona. It's interesting how when you work a Step, the opportunities to do that Step present themselves. I'd always felt pretty good at Step 10, good at apologizing. But as I worked Step 10, I had two significant opportunities to make amends. One with a stranger who called and gave me advice. I didn't appreciate this and responded in such a way that I'm sure she recognized. I had to call and make an amends and she didn't even take it as anything. But I remembered and I've learned it's my amends. Whatever the response is, is theirs.

And the second amends was with my daughter, the person I struggle with more than ever. That was a really difficult amends, but being in the throes of Step Ten and reporting it back to my sponsor was a terrific opportunity. I said to my sponsor, "I can't believe how much deeper I feel in the program as a result of these Steps." I find it with Steps 11 and 12 as well, relating a lot to previous speaker's shares. With Step 12, I thought it was going to have to be like God saying, "Okay, Sandra, you've now had an awakening." Then when I do my readings, they say you learn that you're not alone and that's what a spiritual awakening is. The readings are so powerful along with working with a supportive, encouraging sponsor. I have so much to be thankful for in life and in the program.

**Member share:**

I wanted to let everybody know that I heard a story this week about somebody asking someone to sponsor her. That person didn't have the availability to sponsor, but she had heard in these workshops to say, "No, but I can help you." She suggested that the person listen to some of the sponsorship recordings. She did this and met somebody on the recording that she liked a lot, and now we have a new couple. If you have any success stories, let us know.

**Question:** For all the main speakers, just quickly: Julie, Terry T., Teri M., name your favorite sponsorship literature.

**Panelist Response (Julie):** Let's see. I've reread everything I have for this latest thing, thanks to you and will say my favorite literature is the daily readers. They just bring me back in and through and around things all the time. I would encourage somebody to be reading one of them every day to be sure they're keeping connected with it.

**Panelist Response (Terry T.):** I'll say *Blueprint for Progress*. It's a fourth Step, but it also addresses all the other Steps, too.

**Panelist Response (Teri M.):** *Paths to Recovery*.

**Member share (Anna):** I'm Anna R. and I'm out in Kazakhstan, in central Asia. I have been here going on six years. Before that I was in the States. For the last six years one thing of concern to me was about the program, having meetings, and about how to continue to work these Steps. I had worked the Steps with a sponsor face-to-face in the States and then started to move to texting. Just recently in this daily practice, I've been thinking a lot about how making a gratitude list is a part of the 10th Step.

Since being in quarantine, I've been on even more (electronic) meetings. I met a woman and although we haven't even seen each other's faces, we send each other a daily gratitude list. She's in New Zealand, I'm in Kazakhstan, and we write to each other. What am I grateful for today? Sometimes it's bigger. Sometimes it's smaller. Sometimes it's, "I'm not in a great spot so...air is really great or I'm really grateful that I have a body." I'm grateful that I just exist today, and other times it's deeper. I've added checking in with myself to that and the need for amends to myself by asking about self-care. What self-care have I done today or am I planning to do? Also, what am I proud of myself for? Sometimes I do this in the morning. It can be: I'm proud of myself that I got up or I came to a meeting. This was this morning. And last night I wrote I was grateful for the sunset, the beautiful sunset. I was proud of myself for getting up and stopping my work to go and look at it. It was self-care to leave my house, go, and be in nature and "see" it. So keep working the program. It works if you work it.

**Member share (Ramona):**

I'm going to speak a little bit about Step Twelve. A few months after I came into the program, as we read Step Twelve at every meeting, what kept hitting me was "carry this message to others." I was determined to do that. Every time my adult children came home from college or to visit, I would just accidentally leave a book here, literature there, even in their bedroom, maybe on the table, wherever I thought they would see it. I really wanted to get the message to them of this program I was in. They caught on quite quickly and would say, "Oh, Mom, you left your book. It's called *Courage to Change*." "Oh, I did? Just leave it there. I'll pick it up later." And this probably went on for a year when they would come to visit.

I got pretty creative about where I would leave all this literature. I would check the next day, and I knew it hadn't been moved because I would put in a certain location, maybe put a little string on it and see if they had moved it. Nothing. I kept thinking, "What am I'm doing? It says here I'm supposed to take the message to others." Then one day, I sat down and really looked at the Step. I had missed an

important part: “and to practice these principles.” I realized I needed to do the program for myself. I had heard that at our meeting.

Little by little I started practicing the principles. I was being more trustful of them, showing them more love and the big one: minding my own business, not counting how many beers or glasses of wine they were having. Once I started minding my own business, our relationship really improved. I wasn't on pins and needles about how much they were drinking, and they seemed to be more relaxed. Even now, they'll text and I'll say, “I have a meeting.” They say, “Okay. Enjoy your Al-Anon meeting.” Logging on Zoom was hard at first so my daughter said, “Oh, let me know if you have any problems when you go to your Al-Anon meetings. I'll help you log on.” It really helped a lot for me to understand that step. Yes, we want to carry the message, but for me it was more to model the principles.

**Question:** How did your sponsor encourage you to connect with your Higher Power when your son passed?

**Panelist Response (Julie):** Honestly after he passed, it didn't take me long to get back to Al-Anon. I don't know if I even missed two weeks because it just was a place to go that was a comfort zone. I knew everybody there knew a little bit of the story and would understand where I was with losing him to alcoholism. Well, I knew my sponsor in meetings and was drawn to her because she was very spiritual in her answers regarding what she was doing in her own program. And not just talking spiritual, I mean that's who she is. I needed that. God guided me to her just like he brought me to Al-Anon. I really was and am blessed. I agree with Terry one hundred percent that all you can do with that grief is one day at a time. Sometimes it's just like our program: one minute, one hour. It's just such a lost feeling -- you just can't do any more than that. But the Al-Anon people really helped me get through, as well.

**Member share (Joy):**

(member quoted *Paths to Recovery*) It speaks about how in practicing all the Steps, Traditions, and the Concepts, we keep growing in recovery, learning to apply it in our lives, and also pass it on. I had to be reminded of that because I always want to give it to people, but I have to know that this is about my own recovery and not anybody else, and in order for me to keep it I have to work with others.

**Member share:** One of my favorite stories about Step Twelve is the fact that there are two seas in the Middle East. One is the Dead Sea, full of salt with nothing going on. One is the Sea of Galilee, a beautiful sea with kids, fishing villages, and the whole nine yards. They both start from the Jordan River, and it doesn't make sense that one's thriving and one's dead. The only difference is that the Sea of Galilee has an outlet, so you can't keep it unless you give it away. I love that.



**Question:** I am going to ask Terry T. if she can say just a few words about spiritual principles and how she developed an awareness.

**Panelist Response (Terry T.):** I was introduced to the spiritual principles by being in meetings and just reading the literature. Although it really was spending three years being delegate where I learned so much more about working with the spiritual principles, applying them to different aspects of Al-Anon, the program, and my life. I do want to put in a plug that the *Service Manual* is being rewritten every three or four years and they've been incorporating the spiritual principles into the manual. It's not as dry as it used to be and our beautiful spiritual principles are there.

**Question:** We would like to hear what your absolute favorite 12 Step work is.

**Panelist Response (Teri M.):** I think it has to be the result of working the Steps and I will say this: I had a very contentious relationship with my mother most of my life. Had it not been for Al-Anon, that relationship would not have healed. I was able to be with her as she passed and hold her hand. Finally, in her passing, I learned how much I could really love her. That may sound ridiculous, but I know what I'm talking about.

**Question:** I'm going to go to Julie first, Terry T. and then Teri M. The greatest gift of Step 10, 11 or 12? If you talk about those Steps working with a sponsee, you get bonus points.

**Panelist Response (Julie):** Well, I can't get the bonus points. I do count on those steps. The greatest part is just going deeper. When I get to Step 10, 11 and 12, I just continue taking what I started with the first time through and just working it over and over. My sponsor always says, "What's behind that? Go deeper." I think that this is where I just continue to personally thrive and grow and be more excited and my life is so much better.

**Panelist Response (Terry T.):** The greatest gift is Step 11, being able to learn to pray, to meditate, and have that conscious contact. I was an atheist when I came in this program so it's a great gift to not be alone in the world.

**Panelist Response (Teri M.):** I think it's learning to trust, be vulnerable, and accept myself. And once again learning that I'm not alone in the world. That's hands down.