



The Forum

Welcome to the Forum Coordinator's Corner

Coordinator: Sue Gaskell

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How to submit your sharing to *The Forum*...

- Go to our W.S.O. members website at, www.al-anon.org/members. You will then need to sign in to the member's website with your password, which is your home group's name followed by afg. Then click on Publications followed by *The Forum* and then "Submit a personal sharing on-line"

OR



- Go to our W.S.O. members website at, www.al-anon.org/members. You will then need to sign in to the members' website with your password, which is your home group's name followed by afg. Then click on Publication followed by *The Forum* and then open *The Forum Writing Guidelines* and follow the Guidelines instructions. Once your sharing is completed:

FAX to (757)563-1655

Or

Send by postal mail to:

AFG Inc., Attention: The Forum
1600 Corporate Landing Parkway,
Virginia Beach, VA 23454-5617



The Forum

Writing Guideline (F-1)

Recovery is about tears and fears, joys and laughter. There are sorrows. There are miracles. There are setbacks and steps forward. Each stage of recovery has its own challenges. Whether you're a newcomer or a longtimer, everyone has something to share.

You don't have to have all the answers. Recovering from the effects of someone's drinking is a journey that is often confusing and painful. Just share from the heart. You don't have to be a professional writer. *The Forum* staff will edit for grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

Writing for *The Forum* gives you the privacy and safety to take a close look at the really difficult issues we face in dealing with the effects of alcohol. Intimacy problems, abuse, anxiety, and crises of faith are among the personal challenges that we face day-to-day as Al-Anon members. As we share, we learn about ourselves and realize that we are not alone.

It takes courage to write with complete honesty—but finding that courage is a step forward toward recovery, for you as well as for those who read your sharing.

Here are some suggestions to keep in mind when you share your recovery in the pages of *The Forum* with the worldwide fellowship of Al-Anon.

- Write about your own experience, not something you heard about from someone else. Keep the focus on your path to recovery, not the alcoholic.
- Explain how one of the Legacies or tools of the program helped you deal with a specific challenge in your life.
- Write in the first person (I, me, we, and us). True personal sharings do not give direction; they express your own experience, strength, and hope.
- Avoid generalities, outside issues, treatment-center language, and religious philosophy or doctrine. Al-Anon members in other Twelve Step programs, including A.A., are asked to write only of their experience in using the Al-Anon program.
- Kindly observe Al-Anon's Twelve Traditions when sharing.

A short sharing for the Zip 23454 Department is 50-75 words; most feature and Legacy sharings are 300-400 words. "My Story" is our longest feature, which could be up to 1,200 words.

Please complete this form, including your name and address so we can acknowledge your submission. Also, if your article is published, we will send you a complimentary copy of the issue in which your article appears.

Name: _____

Address: _____

State/Province: _____

Zip/Postal code: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

If the article is published in *The Forum*, do we have permission to put it on the Internet? Yes No



- Please use my first name, last initial, and state for credit
- Please sign me "Anonymous"
- Please use my pseudonym

Please photocopy and invite others to share. All sharings become property of Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. and may be used in whole or part in the development of Al-Anon material.

Please submit your sharing and this form to: AFG Inc., Attn: *The Forum*
1600 Corporate Landing Parkway, Virginia Beach, VA 23454-5617

Fax: (757) 563-1655 Members' Web site: www.al-anon.org/members (Go to Submit a Personal Sharing)

The Forum

Sharing Recovery, Unity, and Service



Information and tips for GRs as *Forum* Representatives (F-2)

Announce at meetings that *The Forum*, as a concept, is Conference approved, and encourage its use in meetings. Please refer to the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27) for more information.

Inform members that *The Forum*:

- is the “voice of the fellowship”
- contains fresh, contemporary sharings each month
- contains Al-Anon and Alateen meeting topics
- shares World Service Office (WSO) news

Encourage groups and individual members to subscribe (gift subscriptions are also available). Have *Forum* order blanks (S-41) available. (*Order blanks are available at your local LDC or by ordering on-line through the WSO.*)

Remind members to use the complimentary copy that all English-speaking groups receive via their Current Mailing Address (CMA).

Distribute the *Forum* Writing Guideline (F-1) and encourage members to submit their sharings to *The Forum*. Members' sharings are what makes the magazine a relevant recovery tool.

Suggest an occasional writing meeting.

Introduce newcomers to *The Forum*.

Consider a group project to provide a gift subscription to new members.

Share with enthusiasm what *The Forum* means to you and your recovery.

Remind members that *The Forum* is written *by members, for members*. Encourage your group to use *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism* as an alternative for public outreach projects.

Thank everyone for supporting *The Forum*.

Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc.,
1600 Corporate Landing Parkway, Virginia Beach, VA 23454

F-2 revised 10/2013

The Forum – Its History & More!

What is it? When did it start? Who reads it? Who writes it? A member of Al-Anon at the Regional Service Seminar in Virginia earlier this year asked if it was possible to publish a history of *The Forum* in "Inside Al-Anon" and provide answers to commonly asked questions. We thought it was a great idea and asked our WSO Archivist Barbara M. to provide us with the "real scoop!"

The first printed communication between "members" was a newsletter started by Ruth G. of San Francisco, California in 1947, even before Al-Anon was established. She called her newsletter *The Family Forum*. In 1951 it became a pamphlet. After the Al-Anon Clearing House was set up, co-founders Lois W. and Anne B. periodically sent bulletins to the groups in the form of a letter. In 1954 Henrietta S. became the first paid secretary and edited the first official Al-Anon newsletter. Later that year, Margaret D. was appointed editor and with the September 1954 issue the newsletter's name became *Family Group Forum*. The name was introduced as follows:

"Forums in ancient days were places where people met to do business, hold law courts and decide public matters. Our Family Group Forum can be a real meeting place of all groups, via the written word, and will be truly representative only when all of you contribute to it."

In January 1957 the *Family Group Forum* changed from mimeograph to a printed booklet with a distinctive first page heading and the name became *Al-Anon Family Group Forum*. Margaret retired after 20 years of service in June 1974 and Louise M. became the editor. Louise later married and moved away from the New York area.

In April 1977 Hildegard M. became editor of *The Forum*. A new Forum design and size was presented at the 1978 World Service Conference with the May issue. Hildegard resigned in 1983. Fran H., was *The Forum* editor from 1983-1988. In 1988, Fran M. became the new Forum Administrator.

In May 1996, with the move of the WSO to Virginia Beach, Fran M. resigned and Pat Q. moved from Washington state to accept the job in Virginia. Before leaving, Fran left her mark by coordinating a revamping of the magazine including returning *The Forum* to its original size and initiating a new logo, features and design. Today the Fellowship Communication team, WSO designer and long time printer/printer help Pat to complete the magazine on a timely basis.

WSO's dedicated Business Services staff enter the thousands of renewals and subscriptions into our data base annually. They have



weathered new computers, software, and many other challenges to keep our records accurate--Thanks!

We often receive letters at the WSO with questions that many of you probably wish you had asked. We thought we would take this opportunity to answer them for you with the following information:

What are the writing guidelines for *The Forum*?

The suggested guidelines for submitting a sharing to *The Forum* are:

1. Share an experience from the heart with the focus on yourself, not the alcoholic or others.
2. Relate a personal experience based on a program principle such as detachment, acceptance, a Step, Tradition or Concept of Service, etc., and give an instance of how and where you used it.
3. Use the first person (I, me, we, us). True personal sharings do not give direction; they express your own experience, strength, and hope. Please avoid the use of the pronoun "you."
4. Avoid generalities, outside issues, treatment center language, and religious philosophy or doctrine. Al-Anon members in other Twelve Step programs, including AA, are asked to write only of their experience in the Al-Anon program.
5. Kindly observe Al-Anon's Twelve Traditions when sharing.

How long will it take for the Forum Editorial Advisory Committee to review my sharing?

When a sharing arrives at the WSO, the Fellowship Communication team reviews it to see that it meets the writing guidelines. If it meets the criteria, it is typed for Forum Editorial Advisory Committee review in order of receipt. The committee reviews 200 sharings, four times per year. It is our best guess at this time that if a sharing arrives in the office on December 15, 1997, the committee will review it for the October 1998 meeting. After the sharing is approved by the committee, it goes to the WSO Forum Coordinator who puts it in an active file for use in an upcoming issue beginning with the December 1998 Forum.

What types of photos do you want and are there any guidelines?

We need:

- ◆ Pictures relating to the Steps, Traditions or Concepts (please tell us which one).
- ◆ Outdoor settings depicting seasons of the year.
- ◆ Spiritual (not religious) photos.
- ◆ Pictures depicting life experiences discussed in stories.

Why are the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions no longer printed on the back cover?

By having both the Steps and Traditions on the back cover, the size of the type was exceptionally small and too difficult for visually chal-

Here's the latest news about *The Forum*.

- **Welcome to new *Forum* Coordinators:** Thanks to all new Area Coordinators for your willingness to serve! Attached you will find the *Area Forum Coordinators* Guideline (G-32). If you have any questions for the WSO staff regarding *The Forum* or your role as *Forum* Coordinator, please call 757-563-1600 between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. ET, Monday through Friday, or email questions to wso@al-anon.org, with “*The Forum*” in the subject line. Don't hit "reply" to this thread unless you want it to go to all Coordinators. Questions you have for other *Forum* Coordinators or ideas you wish to share with them can be posted anytime as a discussion thread here on the *Forum* Coordinator community of AFG Connects.
- ***The Forum* still needs more sharings!** We remain very short on sharings about the three Legacies—especially about Steps Five through Twelve, and all Twelve Traditions and Concepts of Service. Also needed are sharings from Canada and from Alateen members.
- **Instant Step Meetings:** Beginning in January, the "Instant Meeting" feature of *The Forum* began to include, in addition to the two or three brief sharings on the Step of the month, several thought-provoking questions to get the conversations started. We'd love to hear feedback to know if this addition is helpful in encouraging conversation.
- **Forum Subscription Reports:** In an effort to provide you with information you can really use, we'd like to know if the subscription reports we post every quarter are helpful. Please keep in mind that we do not currently have the resources to provide an individualized report to each Area Coordinator, but if there is some general information you could use that is not currently on the report, or if there is current content you don't need, please let us know. We can't promise immediate changes, but please know we would like to make improvements. First, however, we need your input.
- **THE FORUM BOOK (working title):** So far, members have sent in over 441 titles and publication dates of *Forum* articles that they consider the best of recent years. So far, only one article from the first quarter of 2017 has been suggested. (We hope we're doing better than that!) Please keep encouraging members to let the WSO know which *Forum* stories they want to see included in this book. And don't forget to send in your own selections!
- **The *Forum* Writing Guideline (F-1)** is being revised. We'll post a .pdf once it has been designed.
- **New Writing Guide for Incarcerated Al-Anon Members:** For those Areas that have Al-Anon meetings in correctional facilities, please see the attached writing guideline. We'd love to include sharings from these members in *The Forum*.
- **An easier way to find the e-magazine version!** You can now find direct links for ordering the electronic version of *The Forum* magazine on the Al-Anon Online Store at al-anon.org/onlinestore under the “Electronic Literature” category.

Many thanks for all you do as a *Forum* Coordinator!

Tom Coffey

Associate Director—Literature