

***The Forum*—What Is the Process?**

Early in my Al-Anon recovery, I heard that it was my responsibility to ask for what I needed. So, I promptly gave my husband a list of ways I needed him to change. Imagine my shock and indignation when he did not drop everything and do what I asked!

Thankfully, some older, wiser members guided me to focus on myself. As I worked the Steps with my Sponsor, I learned to identify my legitimate needs and recognize my unrealistic expectations of others. It was truly a banner day when I had finally developed the courage to not only voice what *I* needed but also let go of any expectations for the outcome! Learning to “Let Go and Let God” take care of my needs gave me a freedom I’d never had before. My needs might not have been fulfilled in the way or at the time I imagined they would be, but speaking my truth and trusting my Higher Power brought growth and healing nonetheless.

When I review submissions to *The Forum* each month, I think about the courage it takes to “voice” one’s sharing in writing and send it in. I am grateful for every sharing received, and I honor the effort of the person who sent it. I understand that hitting the “Submit” button or dropping an envelope in the mail involves letting go and letting God determine the outcome. And, because we can’t publish every sharing, I trust that the act of writing and submitting furthers the growth and healing of every member who submits, whether their sharing is published or not.

But how, actually, is the decision to publish a sharing made? And what is the process that brings about a new issue of *The Forum* every month?

It has a lot to do with a very special group of volunteers: the *Forum* Editorial Advisory Committee (FEAC). This dedicated group of five At-Large Al-Anon members reads 50 sharings every month and makes recommendations for publication. They use a scoring system in which a score of 1 means “highly recommended,” 2 means “approved, but with less enthusiasm,” and 4 means “not suitable for publication.” These scores are not based primarily on the quality of the writing, but rather on the degree to which a sharing reflects the experience, strength, and hope of the Al-Anon program. In addition to giving numerical scores, FEAC members also comment on each sharing, noting what they found useful or moving, or, when a score of 4 is given, what excerpt might be appropriate for the “One Quote at a Time” feature or the back cover.

The FEAC and I meet online every three months, at which time the Committee members also provide feedback on recent issues of the magazine. Thus, the role of this volunteer At-Large Committee is crucial to *The Forum*, as a concept, being Conference Approved, which means it can be read at meetings and used as a recovery resource as well as being a vehicle for communication from the World Service Office (WSO).

In addition to the role of the FEAC, creating each issue of *The Forum* involves a number of WSO Staff members. From the FEAC-reviewed sharings, I, as editor, make selections; draft a manuscript; edit it for grammar, punctuation, clarity, and length; and then submit it to the Associate Director—Literature for review. Once his revisions are incorporated, the manuscript goes to the proofreader, and, finally, the Director of Programs for review.

Only then does the approved manuscript go to the graphic designer to be laid out in magazine form. The designer selects several member-submitted photographs as well as the stock photography that we purchase to complement the sharings. Stock photography is sourced and licensed from thousands of photographers who, along with their subjects, remain anonymous. Once the magazine is laid out, it goes through a second round of reviews and then to the Executive Director for final approval before being sent to the printer and ultimately to subscribers.

A Higher Power is clearly at work in this process, from the sharings received to the FEAC responses to the Staff collaboration and reviews. Sometimes, a sharing submitted years ago will present itself as just the piece needed for the current issue. This spiritual process helps me continue to grow, to trust, and to “Let Go and Let God” be in charge of the outcome.

By Carol C., Magazine Editor

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