

## **Obedience to the Unenforceable**

The purpose of forming and registering an Al-Anon group with the World Service Office (WSO) is to gather together for mutual aid and to offer help and hope to *anyone affected by the family disease of alcoholism*. We do this by using the Al-Anon tools: meetings, the Twelve Steps and Traditions, Conference Approved Literature, sponsorship, and service according to the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27) and service guidelines, to name a few.

Understanding the value of service and the links of service as outlined in our current *Service Manual* requires discussion at the group level. By holding meetings on topics like personal and service sponsorship and the Traditions and Concepts of Service, group members practice the principle of Tradition One: unity. Inviting the Group Representative, an Area Officer, or the District Representative to share their journey in service may prove incredibly valuable to our recovery. As members, we learn together the importance of practicing these principles in all our affairs.

Groups that register with the WSO agree to abide by the Traditions and affirm that meetings will be open to *anyone affected by someone else's drinking*. While we say there are no "rules" in Al-Anon, we rely on the spiritual principles found in our Traditions, which are interpreted by policies found in the *Service Manual* created by the World Service Conference, Al-Anon's largest representative group conscience.

Our Cofounder Lois W. said it best:

We speak of the Traditions as guides. They are only that. They are not laws, rules, regulations or any other sort of compulsion. To those who are familiar with business or government, such lack of management control may be unthinkable.

What, then, holds the Al-Anon fellowship together? What makes it grow and show such astounding results?

It is based on a set of principles which its members use in solving problems related to alcoholism. Al-Anon derives its strength from *concentrating those principles on that one problem*. It holds together by means of a loving understanding among its members. Al-Anon is united—without organization, without management, without a chain of command or a set of rules—by its members' willingness *to be obedient to the unenforceable*.

Willingly they struggle to face up to their personal problems and solve them with the help of the Twelve Steps of spiritual remotivation. Willingly they apply the Twelve Traditions to the affairs of the groups. Nobody compels them. They are learning to overcome self-will, false pride, resentment and self-pity by recognizing that principles are more important than personalities and by accepting a program on which they know they can depend for help.

*The Al-Anon Family Groups—Classic Edition (B-5) pp. 166–167*

Al-Anon is a program intended to change the thinking and actions that resulted from our being affected by someone else's drinking. We participate in that action of change by coming to meetings; by getting involved in service at the group, District, or Area level; and by being

receptive to the spiritual principle of “obedience to the unenforceable.” *By Sue P., Associate  
Director—Group Services*

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