

Conference Approved Literature—A Vital Aspect of Self-Support

When I first started attending meetings, it was all I could do to listen to members share. I had no capacity in my chaos-filled life to quiet my mind enough to be present and absorb any readings from Conference Approved Literature (CAL). But as time passed, I acquired the calmness to hear the recovery messages read from our literature to start the meeting's topic.

My home group always had extra copies of CAL, so I could follow along without purchasing my own copy. When our Group Representative (GR) came back from an Assembly, they reported that the Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. World Service Office (WSO) receives more than half of its annual support from the sales of our literature! And this was true for most years, as documented in the *World Service Conference Summaries* (P-46). Through our group conscience discussion, we decided to keep our extra CAL in saleable condition and encourage each member to purchase copies for their personal use. Having my own copies of CAL allowed me so many benefits:

- I began the practice of daily reading.
- I could pick up a book any time of day to reinforce my serenity.
- I could add highlights and personal notes of reflection in the margins.
- I could study a topic and prepare to lead a meeting.
- I could gift a book to a program friend or someone I sponsored.

Our group began to use our CAL to carry the message in many ways. We kept a supply of *How Al-Anon Works for Families & Friends of Alcoholics* (B-32) to give to newcomers when they came through the doors for their first meeting. We participated in District events by contributing

CAL for door prizes and raffles. We'd get to know new members more closely by sharing our open books so they could read along. Our group used a variety of CAL, so members became informed of the vast selection from which to choose.

Some members arrived with CAL downloaded on their tablet or smartphone. Not all of our CAL is available in ebook format—yet. Some members ask why it takes so long to publish electronic versions of our literature. As technology has improved, the process of converting CAL to ebooks is much less time-consuming than it was in the past. However, understanding the financial implications of offering CAL in ebook format required research. Would members no longer purchase printed books? What are the additional costs associated with selling ebooks on popular ebook platforms? And how will these costs affect the WSO's ability to continue to support the fellowship?

After much research and discussion, the Board of Trustees determined it was necessary to expand CAL's availability in ebook format. As WSO Staff prepared to roll out more ebooks, several Al-Anon Family Groups international structures shared their concern about this decision potentially affecting their abilities to be self-supporting, as they, too, rely on literature sales for a portion of their revenue.

The WSO is currently researching solutions that will allow for the expansion of CAL ebooks while also considering the need of all structures to be self-supporting. While this research is taking place, the conversion of CAL to ebooks is on hold. As we often say, more will be revealed.

Meanwhile, revenue generated by sales of our literature, along with voluntary contributions from members and service arms, enables the WSO to support Al-Anon groups through public outreach and social media; group services, including group and trusted servant records maintenance; and digital tools such as the al-anon.org website and the *Al-Anon Family Groups Mobile App*.

Additionally, the WSO hosts and maintains the online platforms AFG Connects, the discussion community for Al-Anon trusted servants, and Online Group Records (OGR), which Area Group Records Coordinators and Area Alateen Process Persons use to update group information for their Area. The WSO also compiles new literature along with publishing the monthly magazine *The Forum* and other special publications and pamphlets. The Customer Service department processes and ships orders for all CAL right from the WSO warehouse.

I appreciate knowing that whenever I buy a piece of Al-Anon literature, I'm not only benefitting my own recovery; I'm also helping Al-Anon as a whole by supporting the work of the WSO on behalf of the families and friends of alcoholics.

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