

Tacoma's 2014 Al-Anon Workshop Topic – Self-Care

By Maria K.

S = Strength of the Steps

“The Steps teach us about acceptance, humility, forgiveness, and taking care of ourselves.” Taken From “Opening Our Hearts, Transforming Our Losses” page 148

E = Eleventh Step is Practiced

“The third important aspect of self-care is spiritual. Many of us find it crucial to take time every single day to improve our conscious contact with the God of our understanding.”

Taken From “How Al-Anon Works for Families and Friends of Alcoholics” page 89

L = Letting Go and Letting God

“... if we “act as if” we believe, one day we discover that we can Let Go and Let God without worrying about the outcome. For many of us, that is one of the most liberating aspects of Al-Anon.” Taken From “Letting Go” “As We Understood” page 155

F = Forgiveness

“Forgiveness is no favor. We do it for no one but ourselves. We simply pay too high a price when we refuse to forgive. Lingering resentments are like acid eating away at us.”

Taken From “How Al-Anon Works for Families and Friends of Alcoholics” page 86

“... forgiveness can be an important step in taking care of ourselves.”

Taken From “Opening Our Hearts, Transforming Our Losses” page 66

C = Calling our Sponsor

“We can call our Sponsor when we feel confused or overwhelmed, or when we need some extra support and understanding.” Taken From “How Sponsorship Can Help”

“Opening Our Hearts, Transforming Our Losses” page 153

A = Attending Meetings

“Meetings provide us with the opportunity to connect with other Al-Anon members face-to-face. We would limit ourselves if we only sought out people who are going through exactly what we are.” From “Opening Our Hearts, Transforming Our Losses” page 151

R = Reading our Literature

“...we can turn to our literature, which is always available to us. We may be surprised to find that reading just one or two pages can help us feel less alone.”

Taken From “Opening Our Hearts, Transforming Our Losses” page 31

E = Ensuring We're not Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired

“One easy-to-remember acronym for self-care is HALT. It reminds us that when we are *Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired*, we have needs that require our attention.”

Taken From “How Al-Anon Works for Families and Friends of Alcoholics” page 90

Self-Care Reading for Tacoma's 2014 Al-Anon Workshop – Meditation

“I learned a form of meditation during spiritual questioning long before I learned about Al-Anon, and the practice is even more helpful since it has become a part of my program. I meditate whenever and wherever I can quite often. I even find myself meditating in the bathtub. It is quiet and I can expect at least a few moments of uninterrupted solitude. I try to relax my body completely and “empty” my mind. I close my eyes and try to shut out thoughts, words, external sensations and consciousness of time. This takes practice and I am not always able to do it, but when I achieve that feeling of being one with all that is around me, I feel good and whole and at peace. Sometimes I am able to do this while I am washing the dishes or listening to the news. It may only take five minutes, but I find that it makes me look at the world differently when I do it. When I “come back to the world,” I am refreshed, drained of all negative emotions and filled with calm acceptance.” Taken From **“Eleventh Step” “As We Understood”** pages 218 and 219

Self-Care Reading for Tacoma’s 2014 Al-Anon Workshop –

Letting Go and Letting God

“It is not easy to stop worrying, meddling and rescuing. I started out by turning minor problems over to God and chanting to myself, “Let Go and Let God.” Gradually, I worked my way up to the point where I can turn all other people, places, and things over, without any doubts or qualms. To accomplish this takes time - it cannot be done at once – and it needs to be done on a continuing basis. In the same manner, I started working on myself. I started with little problems of my own and gradually learned to turn myself over to the care of God completely.”

Taken From **“Eleventh Step” “As We Understood”** page 182

Self-Care Readings for Tacoma’s 2014 Al-Anon Workshop – Forgiveness

“But the biggest omission was failing to take care of myself. I just didn’t have the energy. So I made amends to myself. I forgave myself for forgetting to enjoy God’s blessings. I forgave myself for acting as if I were being held hostage. I forgave myself for dwelling in despair and self-pity. And I forgave myself for not recognizing that the man I married was headed into alcoholism until the disease had caused irreparable harm to our relationship. Then I was able to make amends to others. I could renew communications with friends and relatives I had neglected for years. And the relief was wonderful.”

Taken From **“Eighth and Ninth Steps” “As We Understood”** page 58

“Forgiveness can be just a change of attitude. I came to Al-Anon full of bitterness toward the alcoholic in my life. When I realized that my bitterness hurt me more than anyone else, I began to search for another way to view my situation.”

Taken From **“Forgiveness” “Courage to Change”** page 178

Self-Care Readings – Application of the Steps and Giving Love (Service)

“We take the Twelve Steps because we want to have rich, full, satisfying lives, and no one else can give that to us. Taking the Steps is an act of self-love.” **“Tradition Five”**

“How Al-Anon Works for Families and Friends of Alcoholics” page 113

“We, too, need to spend some time each day contemplating the marvelous light with which the Steps illuminate all our human problems.... The Steps are a guide to total good living. As such, we would deprive ourselves of a precious boon (boon means benefit) in not realizing what they can do for us.” Taken From **“One Day at a Time”** page 141

“I stayed stuck in the confusion until my sponsor told me that the only Steps that didn’t work were the ones I didn’t use. So I worked the Steps.”

Taken From **“Steps: in general” “From Survival to Recovery”** page 281

“Working Step Four is an act of self-love, for it helps us take the focus off the alcoholic and encourages us to take time to pay attention to ourselves – the only person we can help.” Taken From **“Step Four” “Paths to Recovery”** page 43

“Today, as we continue to practice all we have learned, we care for ourselves physically, mentally, and spiritually far better than we had ever thought possible. Part of that self-caring involves understanding that love is not lessened when given away. In fact, the more love we offer, the more love we will find within ourselves. Thus, whenever we truly give of ourselves, almost magically we find that there is more of our *selves* to give.

Ironically, the only real way to keep the riches we receive is to give them away. By taking advantage of these opportunities to practice unconditional love, we make love an ongoing part of our lives and we learn that by giving, we always receive.” **Chapter 14 “How Al-Anon Works for Families and Friends of Alcoholics”** pages 100 and 101

Self-Care Questions for Reflection and Consideration

1) “What is one positive thing I can do for myself today?” **“Discovering Choices”** pg 72

2) “What am I doing to exercise my mind so that I can learn new things?”

Taken From **“Self-Worth” “Blueprint for Progress”** page 15

3) “Do I trust my Higher Power to care for me?” **Step Three “Paths to Recovery”** pg 36

4) “When I “Let Go and Let God” take care of my life, am I willing to follow the guidance I receive?” Taken From **“Step Three” “Paths to Recovery”** page 36

5) “What consequences have I had from taking care of others instead of myself?”

Taken From **“Step Four” “Paths to Recovery”** page 52

6) “What three simple things can I do to take better care of myself the next time I am with my family of origin?” **“Opening our Hearts, Transforming our Losses”** page 73

7) “Have I considered the benefits of making a gratitude list at times when I feel more resentment than gratitude?” **“Opening our Hearts, Transforming our Losses”** pg 177

Self-Care Topic: Tending to our Physical, Emotional and Spiritual Well-Being

Taken From **“Opening Our Hearts, Transforming Our Losses”** pages 145 and 146

“There is no one right way to care for ourselves. What it means to take care of ourselves will be different for each of us. We can start by looking at those aspects of ourselves we may have been neglecting – whether physical, emotional, or spiritual.

Caring for ourselves while we are grieving is critical to our healing. Even if we've become masters at caring for ourselves, we can find ourselves slipping while in the midst of grief. Some days we might forget to eat or exercise. We might stop attending meetings or reaching out to others, or we may find it difficult to pray or meditate.

If we are feeling confused about what we need, we can keep it simple by asking ourselves if we are hungry, angry, lonely, or tired. One member allowed herself what she called "do-nothing days" and "cry days." If we are feeling stressed, we can soak in a hot bath or treat ourselves to a massage. Discovering what interests us and what brings us joy is another way we can care for ourselves. We might decide to learn something new or take up a hobby we've always wanted to try.

It's hard to separate our physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being from each other. All are parts of the whole that is us. When one part is fed, all are nourished. Yet if one part is neglected, all can become out of balance. As we grow more comfortable tending to our basic needs, we may find it easier to branch out and try new ways of taking care of ourselves. Making time each day to check in with ourselves – even if it's only for a few minutes – allows us to see what kind of attention we most need. The following list might help if we are not sure where to begin:

- Am I nurturing my body by eating right, exercising and getting plenty of rest?
- Am I taking time for myself and participating in activities I enjoy?
- Am I honoring my feelings?
- Am I able to ask for help?
- Am I spending time in daily prayer and meditation with my Higher Power?
- Am I getting to enough meetings?
- Am I reaching out to my Sponsor or other Al-Anon friends?
- Am I making use of Al-Anon literature when I can't get to meetings or talk with someone?

We would most likely feel overwhelmed if we had to tend to all our needs at once. This is not about perfection; it's about making the effort to treat ourselves better.

We can expect to feel uncomfortable when we first starting taking care of ourselves. Some of us might question whether we should be using our time and resources to benefit others instead of ourselves. We can remind ourselves that we have a right to treat ourselves well. Most new behaviors feel uncomfortable at first. Much like strengthening a muscle, we may feel discomfort in the beginning. Though just as with exercise, the more we practice taking care of ourselves, the easier it becomes."

From **"Taking Care of Ourselves"** **"Building Self-Esteem"** pages 91 and 92
"How Al-Anon Works for Families and Friends of Alcoholics"

"At some point in our recovery, most of us must confront our low self-esteem. Years of abuse and neglect, not only by others but by ourselves, have often left us with a poor self-image. We feel inconsequential, hopelessly flawed, doomed to failure and unworthy of the kind of care and attention we would give to those we love. We certainly don't love ourselves.

In order to overcome these feelings of inadequacy and self-hatred, many of us must force ourselves mechanically to go through the motions of taking care of ourselves. We learn to act as *if* we love ourselves and behave accordingly. We don't have to feel worthy to see the dentist, we merely have to show up for the appointment. Our teeth get just as clean, and perhaps that will lift our spirits just a bit. We may be uncomfortable about taking the time for a massage or a bubble bath when we could be worrying on behalf of someone else, but improving our lives may not always feel comfortable at first. When in doubt, we can try to choose the action most likely to enhance self-esteem. Even if we are only going through the motions, our loving behavior will help us to feel better about ourselves. In time, our actions will become more comfortable, and we will begin to feel more deserving until our self-esteem gradually reaches a healthier level.

Other Al-Anon members can also help us to learn to build self-esteem. Sometimes we have to surround ourselves with those who accept and love us before we can learn to love ourselves. Those of us who have been told or have told ourselves for so long that we are awful, pathetic creatures may not be able to recognize how magnificent we really are, how courageous, warm, lovable, fascinating, and loving we are at heart, until we see those qualities reflected in those who can see us more clearly than we see ourselves. When those we admire treat us as worthwhile human beings, we tend to be more open to the possibility that they *could be right*. We learn by their example. We may never have had role models who cared for themselves properly, or we may have forgotten how it was done. But we do have the right to learn these skills just as we would any other, and one of the best ways to learn is to observe others who have mastered the art and are willing to share with us what they know.”

Taken From **“I Had to Learn to Love Myself”**

“Alateen – Hope for Children of Alcoholics” page 83

“For the first time in my life, I’m starting to really care about other people, mainly because I feel like a worthwhile person. I believe the saying that you can’t love someone until you first care about yourself.”

Additional Self-Care Readings for Tacoma’s 2014 Al-Anon Workshop

“Any vigorous exercise is a good outlet for anger. Sports like bowling or golf and tennis are great for releasing hostility. In addition to that, concentrating on winning the game keeps our minds free from tormenting thoughts.”

Taken From **“Coping with Anger”** **“The Dilemma of the Alcoholic Marriage”** page 25

“Choosing love means I stay away from physically, emotionally, or spiritually unhealthy situations. I no longer accept unacceptable behavior. I love myself and care about myself enough to walk away from hurtful people and relationships. I look at my part in

situations, own my mistakes and change my behavior. Choosing love means I accept and embrace my humanity and that of others. Then, with my Higher Power's help, I can see defects and weaknesses with compassion, which brings me release, joy, and serenity.”
Taken From **“Love” “Hope for Today”** page 104

“One day my sponsor asked me what I did to relax and have fun, and I had no answer... So I did what I could. I invented recipes for chicken and garnished the plate with flowers. I bought a coloring book and a set of magic markers. I made up song lyrics. Going to coffee after meetings was extremely helpful.”

Taken From **“Recognizing my Need to Relax” “In All Our Affairs”** page 148

“The idea of self-care caught my ear as I immersed myself in Al-Anon meetings and just listened. It was a foreign concept, but I was willing to attempt it. I established a “self-care account” in an old notebook and made two columns: “meddling” and “self-care.” In the self-care column, I listed things I needed to do or would like to do to nourish myself mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Each day I wrote down the minutes and hours I spent meddling and considered the cost in terms of my health and well-being. For example, instead of spending 30 minutes nagging my adult son, I could have been making a doctor's appointment to address my headaches. Finally I had a concrete way to keep the focus on me.” Taken From **“Self-Care” “Hope for Today”** page 232

Excellent source of **self-care** questions for reflection and consideration

From **“Courage to Change”** page 354 and **“Blueprint for Progress”** pages 14 – 17

From **“Opening Our Hearts, Transforming Our Losses”** pages 146 and 164

More sources of **self-care** chapters and readings from our Al-Anon literature:

From **“... In All Our Affairs” Chapter Seven** pages 143 thru 156

“Opening our Hearts, Transforming our Losses” Chapter Eight pages 139 thru 164

From **“How Al-Anon Works for Families and Friends of Alcoholics” Chapter Twelve** pages 87 thru 93