

**HOW TO UNDERSTAND AL-ANON:**  
**THE SENSE OF HUMOR**  
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*This article is one in a series about how Al-Anon works. Its purpose is to provide personal observations and a review of the literature that has been created and published by other authors. This article is educational in nature and is not intended for distribution, publication, or commercial use. Material cited or quoted in this paper is limited to the purposes of commentary, criticism, reporting, teaching, scholarship, or research in mutual-help groups.*

The title of this article is simply one I use in the document filing system for my articles that I post. There are no implications contained herein that this article has received—or that the author has applied for—Al-Anon Conference Approval. I make no claim that the contents, opinions, or statements expressed herein are free of error. In fact, my opinions may be wrong. I welcome any corrections, deletions, or edits in terms of any empirical or factual inaccuracies.

As a preface to understanding Al-Anon, particularly for those who are unfamiliar with Twelve Step recovery programs, it may be useful to review how Al-Anon works. The “Suggested Al-Anon Preamble to the Twelve Steps” provides this brief description that is read at the opening of almost all meetings:

“The Al-Anon Family Groups are a fellowship of relatives and friends of alcoholics who share their experience, strength, and hope in order to solve their common problems. We believe alcoholism is a family illness and that changed attitudes can aid recovery.

Al-Anon is not allied with any sect, denomination, political entity, organization, or institution; does not engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any cause. There are no dues for membership. Al-Anon is self-supporting through its own voluntary contributions.

Al-Anon has but one purpose: to help families of alcoholics. We do this by practicing the Twelve Steps, by welcoming and giving comfort to families of alcoholics, and by giving understanding and encouragement to the alcoholic.”

(Al-Anon Family Groups, 2022, p. 12)

The observations on which my opinions are based date back to June 6, 1985. Twenty-five years later, because of four emerging trends that I began to observe in Al-Anon, I made a decision for my November 24, 2010 manuscript (“From surviving to thriving: My story of experience, strength, and hope”) to be my last submission for publication by Al-Anon. When published, the article was retitled (“Learning how to handle the loss of a loved one to alcoholism”) and it appeared in *The Forum* on May 6, 2011.<sup>1</sup>

### Losing the Five Senses <sup>2</sup>

In Al-Anon, “The only requirement for membership is that there be a problem of alcoholism in a relative or friend” (Tradition 3). Before coming into Al-Anon, many family members of alcoholics seem to have lost their minds and relied too much on their senses: vision (sight), audition (hearing), olfaction (smell), gustation (taste), and somatosensory (touch).

With the sense of sight, many individuals living in alcoholism are virtually blind to what is going on around them. It’s denial—and it’s not a river in Egypt. It’s not noticing that they are the problem. It’s like the adage: “If I’m not the problem, then there’s no solution.” How can you tell when an alcoholic is lying? It’s when their lips are moving. Yet many family members of alcoholics continue to believe what they are told by someone who is talking the talk but not walking the walk of sobriety. Actions speak louder than words. Other newcomers have an acute sense of hearing, cringing as they notice the sound of the car pulling into the driveway, not knowing what will be coming through the door.<sup>3</sup> Others notice that they become obsessed while listening to the subtle sounds of the ice cubes clinking.

As a family member begins spiraling downward in the family disease of alcoholism,<sup>4</sup> there is another important sense that is lost. It is the *sense of humor*. As a newcomer takes the first step of recovery into an Al-Anon meeting, among the first things noticed are the smiles and laughter of others.

### Recovering the Five Senses <sup>5</sup>

After attending meetings and working the steps with a sponsor, Al-Anon members notice an improvement in their five senses. First, they notice a *sense of universality* at their first meeting, where they learn that they are not alone in their struggle. Eventually, they learn that they are not alone in their recovery and resilience. Secondly, they begin to feel a *sense of hope* when they begin attending meetings on a regular basis. In their shift from hopelessness and despair to hope and optimism, they learn how to create and manage realistic expectations. Third, they discover a *sense of connection* as they begin making phone contacts and sharing their lives with other members. In breaking through their isolation, they begin to learn a deeper level of intimacy with other members. Fourth, they develop a *sense of accountability* by having a personal sponsor who can be challenging and supportive when one is taking a “searching and fearless moral inventory.” With blaming others—or oneself—no longer an option, members accept responsibility for their own lives. They focus on improving their own lives rather than criticizing the lives of others. Finally, they create a *sense of balance* in life through increased self-awareness, acceptance, and action in each day—one day at a time. They begin to experience a transformation—also known as a “spiritual awakening” by working the steps and practicing the principles of the program. Eventually, many Al-Anon members learn to laugh about the things that used to make them cry. They recover their *sense of humor*.

### Warning<sup>6</sup>

Some of the contents in this article may involve ideas, stories, and words that may be triggering to some readers due to descriptions and scenarios depicting acts of abuse, intoxication, or sexual themes. Please take care of yourself while reading this material. If necessary, you may leave the room to take a break or debrief with a peer outside the room. If you need additional assistance, please contact your sponsor or your private psychotherapist. Expectations are that we all will be respectful of each other and will create a safe space for each other while reading this material.

### My name is Bill D.<sup>7</sup>

My Home Group is the Saturday Al-Anon Men's Step Meeting at NABA. Mention my name and you can get in for a dollar (\$1.00). Al-Anon men are like Boy Scouts. We leave people, places, and things better than we found them. We can always be counted on to do the right thing—after we've tried everything else.

I don't even drink, yet one of my AA friends said I reminded him of a Budweiser tall boy beer — empty from the neck up. No one ever attacks me for my ideas — because most of them are not mine anyway. I've listened to alcoholics for so many years that I'm no longer capable of original thought.

I've gone 90 days without a drink — that's in the last 10 years! Seriously, alcohol hasn't touched my lips in over 30 years — I use a straw.

### AA and Al-Anon

You can always tell an Al-Anon — but you can't tell them very much. I've actually met Al-Anons who don't know that Al-Anon evolved out of AA — and that one of Al-Anon's co-founders—Lois W—attended AA meetings. There's a big difference between AA and Al-Anon. First, AA will let in any old drunk. To get into Al-Anon, you've got to know somebody.

**Q:** How many Al-Anons does it take to change a light bulb?

**A:** They just hold up the light bulb — because they think the world revolves around them.

An AA joke is one that Al-Anons will never understand and alcoholics have heard before.

**Q:** Where have you ever heard 50,000 people saying the Lord's Prayer?

**A:** Not at an Al-Anon conference.<sup>8</sup>

Two Al-Pals were searching for a parking space in downtown Atlanta. The driver said "God, if you find me a parking spot, I'll finally start working the steps with a sponsor." He couldn't find a spot. He prayed again, "God, if you find me a parking spot, I'll stop blaming and judging others, and I'll start doing a searching and fearless moral inventory of myself." Suddenly, a parking space appeared in front of him.

"Never mind, God; I found one."

### Al-Anons

**Q:** How many Al-Anons does it take to change a light bulb?

**A:** They don't change it, but just keep flipping the switch off and on—hoping it's going to change.

**Q:** How do you know you're at an Al-Anon meeting?

**A:** Someone spills their coffee, and everyone else cleans it up.

**Q:** Did you hear about the Al-Anon who relapsed?

**A:** She slipped and showed 5 minutes of compassion.

**Q:** If an alcoholic says something in the forest and there's no Al-Anon there to hear him, is he still wrong?

**Q:** How do you know you're late to an AA meeting?

**A:** They just finished saying the Lord's Prayer.

**Q:** How do you know you're late to an Al-Anon meeting?

**A:** Everyone falls all over themselves offering you their chair.

**Q:** What's the difference between a Newcomer and a puppy?

**A:** The puppy stops whining after 6 months.

**Q:** Why can't an AA identify himself as an alcoholic at an Al-Anon meeting?

**A:** It would be bragging.

**Q:** How do you know when an Al-Anon is nagging someone?

**A:** Their lips are moving.

**Q:** How does an Al-Anon make amends?

**A:** "I'm sorry I was being a bitch last night when you were being such an a\*\*hole."

**Q:** How many Al-Anons does it take to screw in a light bulb?

**A:** A healthy Al-Anon detaches—and watches the lightbulb screw itself.

**Q:** What is an Al-Anon's favorite dance?

**A:** The Al-Anon Waltz: 1-2-3-, 1-2-3, not 4.

One group had a Group Conscience about public displays of affection in meetings.

**Q:** What exactly is an "inappropriate" PDA?

**A:** Two Al-Anons sitting on the front row holding hands.

**A:** Two AAs sitting on the back row — having sex.

**Q:** Why do Al-Anons close their eyes during sex?

**A:** They can't stand to see an alcoholic enjoying themselves.

**Q:** Why don't Al-Anons ever go to orgies?

**A:** Too many letters of gratitude.

**Q:** What is the very last thing to happen to an Al-Anon before they die?

**A:** Someone else's life flashes before their eyes.

## Qualifiers

They are sometimes called qualifiers—friends and family members who are alcoholics.<sup>9</sup>

In Al-Anon, “The only requirement for membership is that there be a problem of alcoholism in a relative or friend” (Tradition 3).

**Q:** What's the difference between an alcoholic and an addict?

**A:** An alcoholic steals your earrings and then passes out on the couch.

**A:** An addict steals your earrings and then helps you look for them all night.

**Q:** How can you tell that two alcoholics are on their first date?

**A:** There's a U-Haul in the front yard.

I knew a guy who went on a blind date with a woman who said she was really top shelf.

**Q:** He asked her how much she spent on a bottle of wine.

**A:** About 30 minutes.

She was so narcissistic that she had only two speed dials on her mobile phone:

1. Her hair stylist
2. Her psychoanalyst

She was so narcissistic that she called out her own name whenever she was having sex.

She even had a full length mirror installed in her kitchen.

She said her doctor told her to watch her drinking.

She drank so many martinis that an olive showed up in her urine sample.

Whenever she went out drinking, two things always happened:

1. The next morning, she had to locate her car.
2. She had to return the car she took the night before.

At one point, her drinking got so bad that she got addicted to brake fluid.

Talking about denial, she said she could stop any time.

She finally quit drinking when she found out she had an allergy to alcohol.

Every time she drank, she broke out in handcuffs.

She had lost a lot of friends due to alcohol—but not as many as she had gained with Ecstasy.

Her sponsor asked her if anyone else in her family suffered from mental illness.

“Suffered? We all seem to enjoy it,” she said.

Her sponsor told her that there were two kinds of people in the world—and she wasn't either one of them.

### A Partner in the Program

There's nothing better than having a partner in the program.

For our 20th anniversary, she said she would take me to Stepping Stones in New York.<sup>10</sup>  
For our 30<sup>th</sup>, she said she would come get me.

My partner works a mean 10th Step.  
She once told me that my mouth needed an emergency brake.  
I once told her she should embrace her biggest mistake – so she hugged me.

I'm better at avoiding the 10th Step.  
I just keep my mouth shut most of the time.  
**Q:** "I once asked her, "Am I was being a complete jackass?"  
**A:** "No, not completely," she replied.

She said I always do the next right thing – after I've tried everything else first.

She says I only have two faults:

- (1)** I don't listen, and
- (2)** I can't remember.

**Q:** What kind of insurance does a codependent buy?  
**A:** My fault insurance.

When we were doing some estate planning, I told her I wanted to be cremated.  
She made me an appointment for the next Tuesday.  
I told her to take the bouquet off my coffin and throw it into the crowd to see who's next.

She said several of her interns wanted to see me do a lecture in person before I died.

I told her that dying was the last thing I planned to do.<sup>11</sup>

On my bucket list, I shared that I wanted to get my knees replaced.  
She said my doctors had decided to keep the knees and just replace the rest of me.

She once invited me to speak to a group of counselors completing their internships.  
**Q:** I asked, "What should I talk about?"  
**A:** She replied, "About 10 minutes."

Once when she was program chair for her home group, she invited me to tell my story.  
**Q:** "How long am I expected to speak?"  
**A:** "You can talk as long as you want – but we're leaving in an hour."

**Q:** What does an Al-Anon member say after they've told a joke?  
**A:** "It's a process. It works if you work it, so work it, you're worth it."<sup>12</sup>

She's a great writer and an excellent editor.  
When she returned a draft of my last book, she used so much red ink that I thought the paper was bleeding.

She gave me great advice she gave me at my last book-signing event:  
"If you can't be kind, at least be vague."

Talk is cheap – unless you're talking to my psychoanalyst.

### The Spiritual Part of the Program

Old-timers often say, "I came for someone else, but I stayed for myself." In terms of the spiritual awakening, there is another adage: "I came for relief, but I stayed for recovery." Just as the disease is progressive, recovery is also progressive. For those who stay for recovery, resilience and serenity are often found. It's why old-timers tell newcomers, "Stick around for the miracle." <sup>13</sup>

A newcomer expressed discomfort with "the spiritual part of the program." An old-timer replied, "There's not a spiritual part of the program; it's a spiritual program." As many have learned, "The spiritual part of the program is like the wet part of the ocean."

I recall an AA member whose doctor told him he had only 6 months to live. He was advised to marry an Al-Anon.

**Q:** "Doc, will that make me live longer?"

**A:** "No," replied the doctor, "But it will certainly SEEM longer."

Six months later, the AA old timer died.  
He had requested a Bible on top of his casket.  
His Al-Anon wife said "no."  
It's not Conference Approved Literature.

### Agnostics and Atheists

I knew a guy who was an atheist.  
He married an agnostic — that's a cowardly atheist.  
They couldn't agree on which religion not to raise their children in.

**Q:** What did the militant agnostic say?

**A:** I don't believe—and you don't believe either.

I recall an atheist meeting-hopper who often bragged he was a self-made man. <sup>14</sup>  
He certainly saved God a lot of trouble.

He had a really beautiful funeral —  
He was all dressed up with nowhere to go.

Without God, there would be no atheists.

## Notes

1. Having foreseen AFG's future plans to claim copyright of articles submitted to *The Forum*, I had already begun to retain copyright of manuscripts that I submitted. When I submitted my 2010 manuscript, ("From Surviving to Thriving: My Story of Experience, Strength, and Hope"), I retained copyright for myself (Copyright © 2010 by William F. Doverspike, Ph.D.). Because the 2011 issue of *The Forum*, in which my article was retitled and published ("Learning How to Handle the Loss of a Loved One to Alcoholism"), contained a statement indicating that AFG was claiming ownership of published articles ("All sharings become the property of AFG"), I decided to stop writing articles for *The Forum*.

2. In reality, there are more than five senses. Most psychologists agree that there are at least eight sensory input systems: (1) Visual (sight), (2) Auditory (hearing), (3) Somatosensory or Tactile (touch), (4) Gustatory (taste), (5) Olfactory (smell), (6) Vestibular (balance), (7) Proprioceptive (movement), and (8) Interceptive (internal).

Often called the hidden sense, the interoceptive system gives people the ability to feel what is happening inside their bodies. This system plays a role in experiencing emotions. Interoception allows a person to detect changes in their internal state, including sensations of hunger and satiation, feelings, muscle tension, and fatigue. It is the main sensory system for which the acronym HALT (hungry, angry, lonely, tired) is useful in self-awareness and self-regulation.

3. This section on the five senses is adapted from "Listening to the Ice Cubes Clink" (Doverspike, 2006, p. 1). This article was later submitted to Al-Anon in 2006 and it was retitled and published as "From Anger to Action: A Positive Response to Alcoholism" (Al-Anon, 2008, pp. 4-5) in the 2008 edition of *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism*.

4. Although the widely-accepted term *alcoholism* is found throughout the literature of AA and Al-Anon, it is actually a poor choice of terms for a medical disease. Alcoholism is not a philosophy or religion, like Buddhism, Catholicism, Confucianism, or Stoicism. Perhaps a more appropriate term for a medical condition would have been *alcoholitis*—using the taxonomic style of other medical conditions like *arthritis* (inflammation of a joint), *gastritis* (inflammation of the stomach lining), or *pancreatitis* (inflammation of the pancreas).

5. Some people call it "the doorknob syndrome." They never know what is coming through the door—*Jaws* or *Flipper*.

6. Formerly known as a *trigger warning*, before the term itself became emotionally "triggering" for some students, this concept was later described as an Activation Notification (Doverspike, 2011, 2015, Sl. 16). The wording for the notices used in my classes was adapted and modified from The College of Arts Administration of The Ohio State University (n.d.). Many graduate students have come from U.S. culture, families, and schools in which the students

develop a great deal of social anxiety and become traumatized by social media comments, likes, dislikes, and followers. In response to a lecture that I gave students regarding professional writing style, one of my students even said, "It's considered rude to end a sentence with a period."

For a brief historical and philosophical overview of this phenomena, see *The Coddling of the American Mind* (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018). By the spring semester of 2014, First Amendment attorney Greg Lukianoff "began hearing about students asking for triggering material to be removed from courses. By the spring of 2014, *The New Republic* and *The New York Times* were reporting on this trend" (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018, p. 6). As an adjunct professor who has taught graduate courses ranging from Addictions Counseling to Psychopathology, I (WFD) began noticing this trend in early 2012 and it seemed to reach a pre-pandemic peak in 2016.

In 2013, the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education broadened the definition of sexual harassment to include verbal conduct that is simply unwelcome. According to Greg Lukianoff and social psychologist Jonathan Haidt (2015), the definition of harassment continued to broaden into what psychology professor Nick Haslam (2016) has described as "concept creep." In their article in *The Atlantic* magazine, Lukianoff and Haidt (2015) explain it this way:

"Out of fear of federal investigations, universities are now applying that standard—defining unwelcome speech as harassment—not just to sex, but to race, religion, and veteran status as well. Everyone is supposed to rely upon his or her own subjective feelings to decide whether a comment by a professor or

a fellow student is unwelcome, and therefore grounds for a harassment claim. Emotional reasoning is now accepted as evidence."

(Lukianoff & Haidt, 2015, para. 29)

Among their other observations about the coddling of the American mind in schools and universities, Lukianoff and Haidt (2018) contend that students have gone so far as to claim that some of the content of their books and courses "interfered with their *ability to function*" (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018, p. 6, italics original). In the halls, during breaks, and via emails between my (WFD) own classes, I currently hear or read such complaints from students in every course in every semester. Lukianoff and Haidt (2018, p. 7) arrive at this sobering conclusion:

"What is new today is the premise that students are fragile. Even those who are not fragile themselves often believe that others are in danger and therefore need protection. There is no expectation that students will grow stronger from their encounters with speech or texts they label triggering."

(Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018, p. 7).

7. For "Big Book Al-Anons" and members of Alcoholics Anonymous, "Bill D." was the name of the first man with whom Bill W. and Dr. Bob met together at a local hospital in Akron, Ohio. As the story is told in the Big Book of AA, "One day they called up the head nurse of a local hospital. They explained their need and inquired if she had a first class alcoholic prospect" (Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 2001, p. 156). The story continues in the Big Book:

She replied, "Yes, we've got a corker. He's just beaten up a couple of nurses. Goes off his head completely when he's drinking. But he's a grand chap when he's sober, though he's been in here eight times in the last

six months. Understand he was once a well-known lawyer in town, but just now we've got him strapped down tight."\*

(Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 2001, p. 156) The reference to Bill D. is noted by an asterisk footnote at the bottom of page 156 of Chapter 11 ("A Vision for You") in the Big Book of AA:

"This refers to Bill's and Dr. Bob's first visit to A.A. Number Three. See the Pioneer Section. This resulted in A.A.'s first group, at Akron, Ohio, in 1935."

(Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 2001, p. 156)

8. This reference is to the Lord's Prayer by over 50,000 people at the 2015 International AA Convention, which was held in Atlanta from July 2-5, celebrating AA's 80th anniversary. Over 57,000 members attended at the Georgia Dome, Georgia World Congress Center, and the Omni hotel. Although for many years both AA and Al-Anon closed their meetings with a Protestant version of *The Lord's Prayer*, Al-Anon's (2022, p. 19) *Service Manual* suggests a more inclusive approach ("Will all who care to, join me in closing with the \_\_\_\_\_ prayer?"), regardless of the specific prayer that is used. Over the past two decades, Al-Anon groups have increasingly shifted from using the Lord's Prayer to the Serenity Prayer when closing their meetings. In part, the shift reflects Al-Anon's efforts at inclusivity as a response to the increased diversity of members. More recently—particularly in the last 10 years or so—the Closing Prayer is sometimes replaced with the more secular Al-Anon Declaration ("Let it begin with me") as a closing chant. The Al-Anon Declaration was largely derived from AA's 1965 Declaration of Responsibility (see Doverspike, 2024, pp. 3-4).

9. The word "qualifier" does not appear in Al-Anon's Service Manual nor in any of Al-Anon's Conference Approved Literature. Personally, I do not like the term because I find it depersonalized and demeaning.

10. Stepping Stones is the historic home of Bill and Lois Wilson. It is located 62 Oak Road, Katonah, near Westchester County, in New York. After they had faced two years of homelessness, Bill and Lois purchased the home in 1941 and named it Stepping Stones. It served as their base as Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon grew worldwide. In 1971, Bill passed away at Stepping Stones. In 1988, Lois Wilson passed away at Stepping Stones, and left the house and its contents to the Stepping Stones Foundation.

11. I originally heard this phrase from my father, a pastor had a variety of jokes about death, funerals, and funeral directors. These jokes were shared only with other ministers. Many years later, I heard a similar line from Gary Edward "Garrison" Keillor, the author, humorist, singer, and radio personality. Keillor created the Minnesota Public Radio show *A Prairie Home Companion*, which he hosted from 1974 to 2016.

12. When prompted with "What is a clean Al-Anon joke?", Google Gemini generated text with "What does an Al-Anon member say after they've told a joke? 'It's a process. It works if you work it, so work it, you're worth it.'" (Google, 2025).

When prompted with "Write a joke about the use of humor in Al-Anon," Google generated text with "Why did the Al-Anon member

start a comedy club? Because they needed a new way to practice detachment and found that laughing at the jokes was a lot easier than laughing at the problem" (Google, 2025).

When prompted with "Write a clean joke about Al-Anon," Google generated text with "Why did the Al-Anon member get a new phone? Because they were tired of receiving all those calls from people who wanted to "fix" everything for them" (Google, 2025).

When prompted with "Write a joke about recovery in AA," Google generated text replied with "Why did the Big Book get a promotion? Because it had a great track record of helping people turn their lives around, one page at a time" (Google, 2025).

**13.** Although Alcoholics Anonymous uses the endearing term *oldtimer* to refer to a member with long term sobriety, Al-Anon eventually began using the politically correct term *longtimer*. The problem I have with the Al-Anon term *longtimers* is that people can sit in meetings for years, but doing so won't automatically give them serenity. In contrast, Al-Anon *oldtimers* are those who have grown old while learning to live happy, joyous, and free. By whatever name called, newcomers and oldtimers both have unique values as reflected in the following adage:

"Newcomers tell me where I've been.  
Oldtimers tell me where I am going.  
And a sponsor tells me where I am."  
Anonymous

**14.** *Meeting hoppers* are individuals who have no home group and usually no *sponsor line*. That is, they have no sponsor (or their sponsor has no sponsor), and they do not sponsor others (Doverspike, 2023, p. 3).

### **Acknowledgements**

**Gary Neidhardt.** I would like to express my appreciation to author and historian Gary Neidhardt for providing information, inspiration, and insight into the early history of Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon Family Groups. He is not only the author of several books that reflect meticulous research and eloquent command of the English language; he is one of the few excellent writers who can also write computer code.

**Deborah Midkiff.** I would like to express my appreciation to book editor, counselor, and spiritual director Deborah Midkiff, MS, NCC, SD, for providing text editing and proofreading of this manuscript. Because she is an avid reader who has been assessed as having a 40,000 word vocabulary, she was also helpful in providing some margin notes with alternative word choices.

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In the 19th printing of the *ODAT* (May 1985), the most cited work is Thomas à Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ*, which is never credited or referenced at all. However, the 16 quotations attributed to Kempis are from *The Imitation of Christ* (c. 1418–1427). There are 11 quotations from Proverbs, the second most cited source quoted in the *ODAT*. Ralph Waldo Emerson has 7 quotes. Marcus Aurelius has 6. William Shakespeare and Thomas Merton have 5 each. The diversity of names otherwise is pretty remarkable including Hoagy Carmichael, Martin Buber, Kahlil Gibran, Friedrich Nietzsche, and many others. Books of the Bible that are cited include a total of 16, which include four from the Old Testament (Ecclesiastes, Psalms, Proverbs, and Isaiah) and one from the Apocrypha (The Wisdom of Solomon). From the 12 quotes derived from New Testament, there are citations from two Gospels (Matthew, Mark), five Pauline Epistles (Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Thessalonians), as well as the Epistles of James, I Peter, and I John.

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Of the respondents, 87.1% were women, 11.9% were men, and 1.0% identified as “neither male nor female” (p. 3). On average, members reported attending their first meeting at 44.4 years old, although differential average ages for men and women are not reported. Results showed that the average age of Al-Anon member respondent is 63.4, whereas the median age is 66 years old. Again, the mean and median ages are not reported for men and women, which is a significant absence given that there are so many women and so few men respondents.

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On April 10, 1939, 4,730 copies of the first edition of *Alcoholics Anonymous* were published by Works Publishing Company at \$3.50 per copy. The printer, Edward Blackwell of the Cornwall Press, was told to use the thickest paper in his shop. The large, bulky volume became known as the “Big Book” and the name has stuck ever since. On page 170 of *AA Comes of Age* Bill W. wrote that the idea behind the thick, large paper was to convince the alcoholic he was getting his money’s worth. The second edition was published in

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The Activation Notification, formerly known as a Trigger Warning, is contained on Slide 16 and as an animated pop-up on other selected slides before slide content is revealed.

Doverspike, W. F. (2023, July 15). *How to find a good speaker*. [https://drwilliamdoverspike.com/files/how\\_to\\_find\\_a\\_good\\_speaker.pdf](https://drwilliamdoverspike.com/files/how_to_find_a_good_speaker.pdf)

Doverspike, W. F. (2024). *How to understand Al-Anon: Four emerging trends*. [https://drwilliamdoverspike.com/files/how\\_to\\_understand\\_al-anon\\_-four\\_emerging\\_trends.pdf](https://drwilliamdoverspike.com/files/how_to_understand_al-anon_-four_emerging_trends.pdf)

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Table 1. *Frequency Count of References to Humor in Al-Anon's Daily Readers*

Conference Approved Literature	Pages (Frequency of Use)	N
<i>One Day at a Time</i> (1968)	p. 164 (2), includes "humorous"	2
<i>Alateen: A Day at a Time</i> (1983)	0 (0)	0
<i>Courage to Change</i> (1992)	pp. 9 (0), 73 (2), 205 (1), 323 (1)	4
<i>Hope for Today</i> (2002)	pp. 97 (4), 113 (1) 143(2), 200 (4)	11
<i>A Little Time For Myself</i> (2023)	pp. 5 (0), 234 (0), 243 (1), 323 (1)	2
Total		<b>19</b>

*Note.* This word frequency count was calculated by the author using careful visual inspection. For this reason, there may be a margin of error in the word counts. The shaded numeral (i.e., 73) indicates that the page was not listed in the index although the page did contain the word "humor." In other cases, index entries that referred to pages with "humor" but that did not use or refer to the word "humor" are designated with a zero (0) in parentheses.

## Correct Citation for Reference Entry

The reference entry correct citation styles for this document are illustrated below. Students should defer to the style preferences of their individual course instructors to determine whether the course instructor has preferences that are more specific than those shown below:

### American Psychological Association

Doverspike, W. F. (2025, September 10). *How to understand Al-Anon: The sense of humor*.  
<https://drwilliamdoverspike.com/>

### Chicago Manual of Style / Kate Turabian

Doverspike, William, “How to Understand Al-Anon: The Sense of Humor,” Sept. 10, 2025.  
<https://drwilliamdoverspike.com/>

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### Modern Language Association

Doverspike, William, “How to Understand Al-Anon: The Sense of Humor,” Sept. 10, 2025.  
<https://drwilliamdoverspike.com/>

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Published Sept. 10, 2025 | Updated Jan.. 01, 2026

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Content and references last updated 2026

The correct citation for this article is Doverspike, W. F. (2025). *How to understand Al-Anon: The sense of humor*.  
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