

What is Alateen?

More than 50 years ago, the wives of Alcoholics Anonymous members found themselves waiting outside of schools or churches for their alcoholic partners to finish their 12-step meetings. As they talked, they came to realize that they too, had been affected by living with alcoholism and needed help. Out of this need, family groups started to form and soon after, Al-Anon was established.

Alateen is Al-Anon for members between the ages of 12-19. In 1957, the first Alateen meetings were started by a teenager whose father was an AA member. Alateen is a fellowship of young Al-Anon members who come together to share their experience, strength and hope of the family disease of alcoholism.

There are more than 3,000 registered Alateen meetings worldwide. Alateens run their own meetings with the guidance of an adult Al-Anon member, who is called a sponsor. The sponsor is an established and qualified Al-Anon member, just like them. The purpose of the meetings is to come to understand that alcoholism is a disease. Alateens keep the focus on themselves and discuss their problems in order to learn effective solutions by applying the principles of the Alateen program.

Alateen members meet weekly, in church halls, school rooms or other suitable places (many times in the same building as an Al-Anon or AA group but in a separate room).

Alateen members learn through their meetings and literature that compulsive drinking is a disease. They learn that they can detach themselves emotionally from the drinker's problems while continuing to love the person. They learn that they are not the cause of anyone else's drinking or behavior and cannot change or control anyone but themselves. They learn about spiritual and intellectual resources with which to develop their own potentials, regardless of what is happening at home. And lastly, they learn to build satisfying and rewarding life experiences for themselves with the support of the Alateen/Al-Anon fellowship.

Alateen is NOT a religious program, but a spiritual one, with each individual choosing the higher power of their understanding.

Our suggested welcome is the common thread that binds us together, to give us strength and hope in living with the baffling disease, of alcoholism. These powerful words are shared at every Alateen meeting. It begins like this:

We who live, or have lived with the problem of alcoholism understand as perhaps few others can. We too, were lonely and frustrated but in Alateen we discover that no situation is really hopeless, and that it is possible for us to find contentment and even happiness, whether the alcoholic is still drinking or not.

We urge you to try our program. It has helped many of us find solutions, that lead to serenity. So much depends on our own attitudes, and as we learn to place our problems in its true perspective, we find it loses its power to dominate our thoughts and our lives.

Every Al-Anon/Alateen member shares from his or her heart as a individual who has been affected by this disease. Alateen members and sponsors do not divulge another member's sharing or attendance at meetings to anyone.

A few special words to those of you who are considering giving Alateen a try: *Whatever your problems there are those among us who have had them too. If you try to keep in open mind you will find help. You will come to realize that there is no situation too difficult to be bettered and no unhappiness too great to be lessened.*

To find out about a chapter in your area, call your local Al-Anon/Alateen Information service, which is usually listed in the Yellow Pages under Alcohol Abuse & Addiction-Information & Treatment.