

Dreaming Big: Envisioning Our Future



Hello we are _____

We will be presenting the results of our Thought Force - Dreaming Big: Envisioning Our Future. Our charge was to consider AI-Anon's history, from the Area perspective, and envision what the future could hold. In order to envision the future, we had to ask ourselves the following questions. What needs to be replaced in order to evolve? What was and is important and must not change? Using 20|20 vision, what might AI-Anon (from the Area perspective) look like in five, ten, or twenty years? What are barriers to "Dreaming Big" and envisioning the Area's future? With these questions in mind, we had to develop strategies that could be used to "Dream Big" and envision the Area's future.

Area Evolution

- Demographics
- Communication
- Inclusivity



The first part of our charge was to look at our Areas' histories and see what had to change or evolve. Since alcoholism has no demographic, societal, or economic boundaries, the makeup of our Areas has changed over the last 70 years. Our membership has evolved from being wives of alcoholics to children, spouses, friends, colleagues, and partners, to name a few. However, our membership is still predominately white. Looking at our histories, we found that many of the barriers that existed in 1951 still exist today. Communication has evolved from making telephone calls, writing letters, and sending post cards to groups and Districts, to communicating through emails, blogs, and Area websites.

Today, technology has made meetings more available to lone members, changed our Area's public outreach strategies, and made communication between groups, Districts, and Areas more fluid and timelier. To be more inclusive, Areas have had to rethink requirements for service positions and/or create new service positions. While attitudes, biases, and perspectives have somewhat changed in our Areas, we still have more growth to experience.

What must stay constant in Al-Anon?

- Three Legacies
- Spiritual Principles
- Program of Love

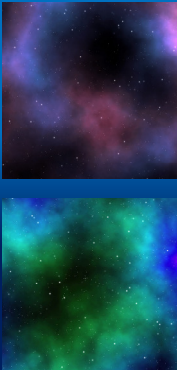


After looking at our Areas' histories, we discussed what must stay constant in Al-Anon. We decided that the three Legacies, the Spiritual Principles, and the program of love must remain constant. Spiritual Principles include: love, autonomy, participation, listening, courage, safety, acceptance, spiritual program—not religious, diversity, good leadership, fellowship of equals, Service Sponsors, unity, trust, live in abundance, ever widening the circle, compassion, respect, open mindedness (*i.e.*, being nimble, flexible).

As Lois stated in *Lois Remembers* (B-7), “These [spiritual] principles must continue to grow or we as a society will perish. For stagnation is retrogression. There is no standing still” (pg. 195).

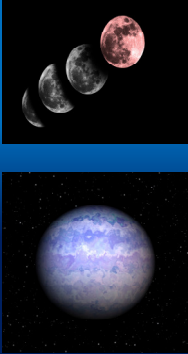
2026

- Hybrid communications
- Language interpretation
- Recovery for all affected by the family disease of alcoholism
- A smooth transition of Alateens to Al-Anon
- Diverse, technology-enhanced Assemblies



The next portion of our charge was to envision how our Areas would look in 5, 10, and 20 years. Five years from now, during the 75th birthday of Al-Anon, we envision an extension of the technology that began in 2020.

- We will see the addition of hybrid communication (a combination of face-to-face and virtual meetings) in group, District and Area meetings, while incorporating language interpretation and translation for all.
 - We see the Area Delegates attend two World Service Conferences a year, one being virtual and one being face-to-face.
 - And we will see hybrid groups and electronic meetings become part of the Area service structure. In addition, hybrid groups are registered and contribute representatives for District and Area positions.
- It is envisioned that Al-Anon brings hope and solutions for anyone where alcoholism is a problem.
- Alateens are transitioned smoothly into Al-Anon meetings.
- And technology-enhanced Assemblies show an increase in attendance, with young people participating, and a diverse group of members serving in service positions. Similarly, coordinator positions will have expanded to include a technology coordinator and a diversity coordinator.



2031

- Diverse Demographics
- Dynamic Communication
- Evolving Service Positions
- Al-Anon - First Tool for Professionals

In 2031, 10 years from today, we envision that Area Al-Anon members will be younger and from diverse ethnic, cultural, and societal backgrounds.

- Dynamic, integrative virtual communication platforms are used by the links of service.
- Evolving service positions have resulted in greater participation at the District and Area level. For example, it is envisioned at the Area level over 50% of groups are represented at Assembly and more than 90% of Districts in an Area have District Representatives.
- Last, but not least, through virtual and face-to-face public outreach, Al-Anon is the first tool professionals recommend to help the families and friends of alcoholics.



2041

- Electronic Groups
- Regional and/or Zonal Regions Participation

20 years from now in 2041, the 90th Birthday of Al-Anon, it is an inspiring year, as our membership has grown and become even more diverse. In our Areas, members have a variety of meetings to choose from, and routinely stay connected to the Area service structure. Electronic groups are directly linked to the service structure: Districts, Areas, Regions and/or Zones.



After dreaming about how we wanted the future to look, we considered what some of the barriers are that keep us from achieving those goals. In order to move forward, and to “Dream Big,” we in Al-Anon must not be afraid.

“Living with the fear of what might happen can be emotional static. It occupies our minds and blocks us from moving forward” *Opening Our Hearts, Transforming Our Losses* (B-29) pg 31.

Fear of discomfort keeps us from stepping out and taking on a new position that helps us, and our groups, grow. Our fear of conflict keeps us from trying a new technique to reach those around us who may need to hear the message of Al-Anon. We fear how we may be perceived by friends, family, and fellow members in service, as well as group members, if we give more of our time or suggest something new.

“Once we become aware of our propensity toward fear and worry, we can begin to take steps to change our attitudes” *Opening Our Hearts, Transforming Our Losses* (pg 32).

As we have learned in Al-Anon, as we let go of fear, we increase our capacity to share, to trust, and to love.

From *Paths to Recovery* (B-24), "Some members say fear stands for false evidence appearing real" (pg 39).

Barriers To Dreaming Big



Complacency

Another barrier to Dreaming Big is complacency. It is that feeling of being satisfied with where we are and who we are, so that we no longer think any change is necessary.

One Day at a Time in Al-Anon (B-6) reminds us, “Smug complacency is often at the root of family dissension” (pg 197).

Complacency can cause us to lose touch with how we felt when we came into this program, and how it helped us. Eventually, we can fall into thinking that our group, District, or Area is working the *right* program and has all the answers. The idea that “we’ve always done it this way and it has worked” keeps us from progressing. It may cause us to limit our perception of who needs the Al-Anon program or keep us from reaching out to others in need—especially others who are different from us.



Finally, service gaps are a barrier to dreaming big. We have begun to view service as work instead of a path to recovery. Or, when we do serve, we can overcommit, and we may experience burnout. In other cases, our comfort zone “isolation” keeps us from finding a Sponsor and growth through the Steps. At other times we may be stalling, or not completing Steps One, Two, or Three, because we are afraid of what comes next—hindering us from moving forward.

How can we carry this message of help and hope to others, and practice the spiritual principle of widening the circle, when we ourselves haven't even made it to Step Twelve?

As stated in *Hope for Today* (B-27), “Al-Anon believes that our benefits are measured by our willingness to share them with others” (pg 101).

In the end, we can't give away a program, when we have nothing to give.



The last portion of our charge asked us to develop strategies that might be used to help our Areas “Dream Big” and envision the Area’s future. So, what is a strategy? A strategy is a plan of action designed to achieve a major or overall aim. The next portion of this presentation will focus on some of the strategies that we came up with.



According to our 2018 Membership Survey, the current makeup of Al-Anon members in the WSC structure is 97% English-speaking females 61 years of age. They are 92% white, 65% college educated, and attend for an average of 14 years, with 99% attending face-to-face meetings. In addition, they also attend one or more meetings a week.

Electronic meetings have given us a peak into Al-Anon around the globe and an insight of our need for better diversity.

Subtle, and perhaps even unconscious prejudice, and complacent, fearful attitudes can block individual growth, and the growth of the fellowship—especially for the newcomer stepping outside cultural beliefs and seeking relief from the family disease of alcoholism in our meeting rooms.

The disease of alcoholism divides and conquers, creating attitudes among everyone affected. As with any growth process, change can sometimes be painful.

Tradition Five guides us to welcome and give comfort. Anonymity unites our fellowship by removing individual status so we can listen to the *message* rather than the *messenger*.

Lois W. wrote, "I used to believe *thinking* was the highest function of human beings . . . I now realize *loving* is our supreme function. The heart precedes the mind" *Lois Remembers* (pg 195).

Some strategies to overcome Biases and Attitudes:

- Use of the bias inventory created by the 2018 WSC Task Force: Celebrating Our Differences and Common Purpose, to address our Area's biases, and challenge us to move out of our comfort zone.
- When conducting business meetings, or group conscience meetings, encourage the spiritual principles of participation and minority opinion—Concept Four and Five.

- Invite diverse members to speak at meetings and Area events.
- Form Tradition study groups and take group inventories.



Having goals, and a creating a vision for three to five years from now is important, so we don't remain in the same place. Let's face it, if you do not know where you are going, you might wind up somewhere else. Do we envision the future and set goals to reach the dream?

Some strategies for setting goals are:

- Use KBDM and establish Thought Forces and Task Forces to develop an Envisioned Future (10-15 years), set Area goals (3-5 years), Area objectives (2-3 years), and Area strategies (1-2 years) to ensure the goals and objectives can be met.
- Use the 2020 WSC Fear of Change Thought Force (and their skit) to open the discussion on fear; so that Areas can replace the fear of the unknown, with our primary spiritual focus.
- Review and update descriptions of coordinator and officer positions every three years. For example, an Area might need a Website Coordinator, a Technology Coordinator, or a Diversity Coordinator.



Goal setting, the use of technology, and strategic planning will help us to be more inclusive in our Areas. We envision the result to be that more men, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, young people, ethnically diverse members, and people from different cultural, religious, socio-economic, and language-speaking backgrounds, will carry out service.

- Possible strategies to be more inclusive in our Areas might include:
 - Language interpretation and/or translation for all
 - Creation a Diversity Coordinator position.
- Service strategies might include holding an AI-Anon Service Day or weekend and considering inviting WSO Staff or Volunteers to attend.
- Technology has become an important tool for keeping members informed and involved, especially since the pandemic. Some strategies for Areas to expand the use of technology include:
 - Review and update (or create) the role of Area Technology Coordinator or Webmaster.
 - Incorporating technology into Area & District meetings and establish hybrid and/or virtual Area meetings, so that all members can participate.
 - Utilize technology to make service, beyond the group level, easier to perform.
 - In order to ease the transition, create technology teams to provide training sessions prior to the meetings and ensure technical help is available during virtual meetings.
 - Develop discussion boards, so that all members of the Area structure can communicate and share information.
 - Utilize technology to encourage multiple Areas to come together to share experience, strength, and hope.
 - Create an Area electronic newsletter and make it available to all Area members, at all levels of Area service, to improve communication and involvement of members.

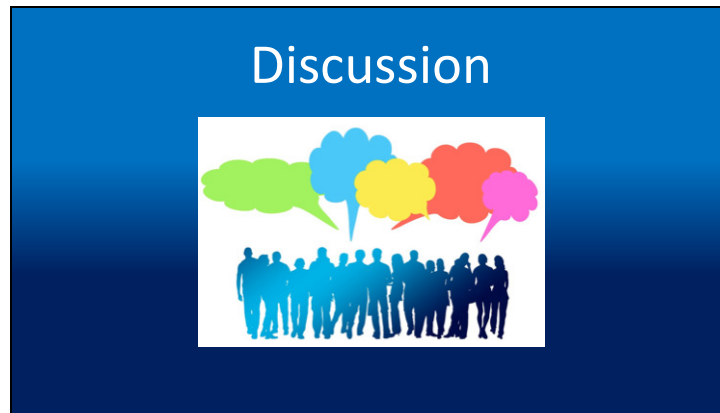
- Utilize technology to collect and distribute the Seventh Tradition.



Lois was Dreaming Big in 1951 when she and Anne ordered and mailed 1000 copies of *Purpose and Suggestions for Al-Anon Family Groups* (P-13) to groups.

When we do public outreach in our Areas, how can we dream big instead of just offering solutions?

- Network with other organizations in your Area who are seeking diversity through dialogue, leadership, and action. Consider creating cultural mentors in public outreach and consider electronic outreach to teens at middle and high school levels.
- Create new groups to support various cultures. Encourage discussion regarding diversity and culture within our business meetings.
- Support the Al-Anon Family Groups mobile app.
- Use WSO digital media at health fairs and community events and/or to send electronic messages to professionals.



Thank you,

That concludes our presentation. We would now like to hear your thoughts.

How will your Area look in 5, 10, 20, or 30 years?

What strategies will you use to overcome the barriers to change, so you can achieve your Area's envisioned future?

See Discussion Handout distributed before Conference/presentation.