

MEMORANDUM

TO: Conference Members
FROM: Executive Director
DATE: August 24, 2010
RE: Al-Anon Declaration

The WSO was asked at the 2006 WSC to send a copy of questions it receives from Conference members and our responses to all Conference members so that they can share leadership by responding to recurring questions in their Areas. The WSO believes that the following question and our response might be one of those topics.

Question: What is the history of the Al-Anon Declaration? Does it imply that Al-Anon's help is for anyone with any type of problems?

Answer: The November 9, 1973 minutes of the International Convention Committee for Al-Anon/Alateen activities in the 1975 A.A. International Convention with Al-Anon/Alateen participation stated the following:
"Henrietta told the Committee of a call she received from AA telling how impressed they are with our proposed choice of theme—'Let It Begin With Me.' They might even want to adopt it as the overall Convention theme."

The Convention Committee for Al-Anon/Alateen activities then recommended that this theme be used as a declaration. The recommendation was brought to the Policy Committee in January 1974. In April 1974, the Policy Committee reported to the World Service Conference that:

"The slogan 'Let It Begin With Me' is to be worked into a declaration, similar to AA's 'I Am Responsible,' and it is to be printed in a small leaflet to be introduced at the 1974 World Service Conference."

The theme chosen for the 1974 World Service Conference was "LET IT BEGIN WITH ME." At the opening dinner, Conference Chairperson Penny B. stated, "You also have a small card at your place. This is the Declaration built on the theme of our Conference. Let us repeat it together: "When anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, let the hand of Al-Anon and Alateen be there, and LET IT BEGIN WITH ME."

In 1975, the Conference was asked to approve decisions of the Policy Committee. These did not appear as a Conference motion. The 1975 Conference Summary lists the Policy decisions, as revised by the Conference, and states that they were approved as amended. Among them was the following from the March 19, 1974 Policy Committee meeting:

"The following was adopted as Al-Anon's declaration: 'LET IT BEGIN WITH ME—When anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, let the hand of Al-Anon and Alateen always be there and LET IT BEGIN WITH ME.'"

So the declaration was created 35 years ago, and the wording has not changed since that time. The A.A. Responsibility Statement reads similarly, "I am Responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible."

Taken literally, someone could take the Al-Anon Declaration to mean, "when anyone with any problem reaches out..." However, as this passage is internal to Al-Anon members who understand the scope of the help that Al-Anon Family Groups offers, we believe that the spirit of the declaration is implicit, that whenever anyone seeks the help of Al-Anon, it is up to each of us to make sure that the help will be available. It is a reminder to our membership to "let it begin with me," not an invitation to others to seek our help.