

Dear Longtimers in Al-Anon,

We older members of Al-Anon play a very important role in our groups. By our attitudes and general bearing, we can prove to the new members that Al-Anon really works. What we are affects the group for good or bad much more than what we say. Whether we like it or not, newcomers will judge Al-Anon by what it has done for us.

If we have achieved even a degree of serenity, tolerance, and understanding, newer members will aim to acquire these qualities also.

On the other hand, if we try to dominate and do not give the newer members a chance to develop, we are stunting our groups and keeping newcomers away.

From a place on the sidelines, oldtimers can give the group purpose and continuity, but not management—unless asked to fill a special function. We are always willing to help where we can, but the active leadership of the group should be in newer hands. Our passive but inspirational leadership is much more important than the active direction of a group.

If at one time we held the active leadership of our group, it may be particularly hard to “let go.” It is so easy to believe that because we have been in Al-Anon for years, we must be qualified to tell others what to do, but our “actions speak louder than words.”

When taking an inventory, we longtimers need to constantly remind ourselves of this point and ask ourselves if for some personal reason (thoughtlessness, egotism, a desire to dominate) we are still telling others what to do and how to do it.

I have to learn this lesson myself and want to pass it on to all you other longtimers . . .

Yours in longtime Al-Anon,

Lois

Reprinted with permission of **The Forum**, Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc., Virginia Beach, VA.