

The Fearless Thought Force Meets Again

Cast of characters:

Farrah Fearsome - Sherry H
Nancy No Change – Barbara H.
Silent Sam – John Mc
Alice All-Alone – Mary Jo Y
Olive Opinionated – Patti P.
Jackie Judgmental – Anu B.
Diversity Dan – Tom C
Vulnerable Veronica – Cindy J.
Terrified Theresa – Sharon F.

Setting: Conference Room worktable. Everyone has service manuals, and papers and pens. Big Placards with our names on them so people can see.

Terrified Theresa: I'd like to call the meeting to order. *(takes a deep breath)* Can we start with a moment of silence followed by the Serenity Prayer.

(the group says the Serenity Prayer all together)

Terrified Theresa: Our meetings have been really productive as we looked over the work of our Thought Force , including.... *(Theresa is interrupted by Nancy No Change)*

Nancy No Change: Remember! We are not going to change anything, Theresa! I want you to know where I stand – No Changes! This is a great program and I like it just the way it is!!

Olive Opinionated: In my opinion we have to at least talk about change if we ever want to make any changes. <big eye roll>

Terrified Theresa Let's go around the room and introduce ourselves, and share our thoughts on the where we are and what we have on Fear of Change.

Farrah Fearsome Hi, I'm Farrah Fearsome and my perspective on Fear of Change is I'm really afraid to ask for help. I prefer to do everything by myself, and get it

done. Of course, sometimes I come across as bossy or controlling, but really I have a good heart and I'm trying to be fearless. I just want to do it on my own. So, I am in the process of answering all the KBDM questions myself, and I'll have them ready at the end of this meeting. <types on her computer>

Nancy No Change: Hi my name is Nancy No Change and my perspective on Fear of Change is: Al-Anon is perfect as it is and always has been. No changes, ever. I'm not afraid of change – I just know it's wrong!

Silent Sam: I'm Silent Sam. My idea about Fear of Change is: not to talk about it. Whenever I say something at home I am told I don't know what I am talking about. I have learned to keep my mouth shut or suffer the consequences. I guess I can say I have a "**Fear of Failure**" that no matter what I say it will fall on deaf ears. Then I do have some "**Fear of Success**", that if people like what I say they might want me to be some kind of leader. Silence suits me because it is safe. I can't fail, I can't succeed. I can sit in isolation and worry uninterrupted about the drinkers in my life. So, I'm not sure what could possibly come of talking about this anymore.

Alice All-Alone: My name is Alice All-Alone and when I hear Fear of Change I: know I'm probably always going to be alone in my ideas about how things should go. I don't think anyone has the same experiences I have. I think I'll just listen for now.

Olive Opinionated: I'm Olive Opinionated and my opinion, actually it's a FACT, about Fear of Change is: We have been hearing that question since the dawn of time! I'm tired of going over this every time we turn around. It should be a settled matter.

Jackie Judgmental: I'm Jackie Judgmental and, well, I have some pretty firm ideas here, mostly because I've been around forever and pretty much know everything about Al-Anon. If we are going to make changes we have to make SURE that people follow the Service Manual. If we are going to look at doing new things, we need to make SURE that it looks like we have always done it this way. And if we are going to change the way we do service – well, I think that is cruising for a bruising and I may have to just watch to see what kind of craziness we are talking about for I weigh in on that. Believe me I will let you know what I see!

Diversity Dan: My name is Diversity Dan and I'm pretty new to Al-Anon. I can't believe we have to all meet in person to have this conversation. I really feel out of place, but I also think I belong here. My perspective on Fear of Change is: I'd like

to see more people like me, more people who are different and sharing about different experiences. I think we can address fears of change in ways that will help people be open, and accepting and respectful. Sounds like Al-Anon to me.

Vulnerable Veronica: I'm Vulnerable Veronica and regarding Fear of Change: I've been through a lot in my years in Al-Anon and have really come to change my mind about change. I know it makes me feel vulnerable, but my experience in Al-Anon has been that changes make me stronger, and my experiences help me have hope to share with others.

Terrified Theresa: I'm Theresa, sometimes I have been terrified in my life, but in Al-Anon I've also learned how to have courage even in the face of my fears. So now I'm the Chairperson of this Thought Force and I suggest that this is how we will proceed: We have generated lots of sharing and discussion and research on the fear of change in Al-Anon and now it's time to wrap it up.

Olive Opinionated: This is a very excellent list, I like the way it's organized. I'm not sure if I agree with all the statements, though, is there room for my opinion too?

Alice All-Alone: Well, I think this is interesting, these ideas sound a lot like many of the things I hear in meetings.

Jackie Judgmental: We all know about Concept 5 so I guess if you have opinions that are different you can voice them. But to be honest, it looks like the Thought Force covered a lot of the fears that I have heard about in meetings and in the coffee meeting after meetings.

Silent Sam: I'm reminded that there are indexes in our Daily Readers – and I think there is a topic of Fear. With lots of readings. So maybe our Literature already covers all the things we could say?

Diversity Dan: One of the things I like about the topic Fear of Change is that it asks us to think about a particular *kind* of fear – not all of them. And, not fear as one big tornado of emotions. I like being able to see areas of my life where I do have a fear of change, and also the places where I'm not afraid of change at all. That's funny, I never thought of that before.

Farrah Fearsome: Can we go around the table and share one of these things that brings this all home to each of us? I'm interested in hearing what others think.

Terrified Theresa: Great idea – Sam, why don't you go first?

Silent Sam: I was afraid to reach for help at first. I feared that no one would understand. Then, we talked about fear of change in my Area. One of the members shared that on hearing the Delegate report about the process of making a change in literature or policy he was reassured about the changes we make. He was relieved to hear how long it takes and how thoroughly we research things, and that nothing happens quickly in Al-Anon, we have time to fully understand the proposed change, to seek consensus and know that the decisions we make are based on knowledge and agreement.

Vulnerable Veronica: Getting to the other side of fear helps me grow, it helps my self-esteem. Our entire program is based on the idea that we CAN change. In working with the members of this Thought Force I was again reminded that most of us came from situations where we had little control over the changes in our lives and that change was often unwelcome or frightening. We had reason to fear change. We have come a long way with the tools of Al-Anon, not to say that we never fear change, but that we can stop and understand our fears and make clear decisions.

Olive Opinionated: I have to admit that I can make changes. I have taken Step One. Change is possible. Sometimes members propose a change in our literature or policy and we often respond with an almost knee-jerk reaction, "we don't do it that way." But we really have evolved in many ways over time, making adjustments as they become necessary, accommodating technology, population changes, cultural diversity. We aren't speedy, but we do manage to grow with the times. We need to always remember that our members come from many different traditions, cultures and beliefs and our own viewpoint is just one of many.

Jackie Judgmental: I thought I wasn't worthy of help and that people would see that. I get to realize that what I'm doing isn't working, that there might be a better way. Living with an alcoholic really reduced my ability to see my options, my horizons gradually reduced to a very small window on the present. Change nearly always meant that something I liked would be reduced or eliminated. This is the experience I bring to the table when change is proposed. I am so grateful that I

have the tools and experience using them in Al-Anon. I can look fear of change in the face, see it for what it is, and continue to widen my horizons.

Diversity Dan: I think it is profound that no dues or fees are required and that membership is voluntary. I am learning that I do belong here, and that I am already feeling the positive effects of that. I can feel myself changing. Within our individual Groups, Districts and Areas there is the fellowship. We learn that we are not alone, that we do not have to work a step alone and that our sponsor will be with us all the way. We do not have to take on a new responsibility alone, we have the benefit of service sponsorship and members who have previously held a service position are willing to share their ESH. We have the ability to meet new people, and reach out across barriers to find answers and gain understanding.

Alice All-Alone: I didn't speak and didn't introduce myself. Then someone said they'd like to hear from me. That encouragement really helped. And if we can do that for others – be encouraging – then I think it would be great. We have more choices today about our daily lives, and how we spend our time; we can surround ourselves with those in recovery/working their program to the best of their ability in everyday life.

Farrah Fearsome: As I read through the materials here, I am realizing that I don't have to do everything alone. We have a wealth of literature and we build healthy relationships. I'm so grateful to see my fear shifting, and that I can let go of trying to do everything myself. Although the global culture is quite diverse, we have a simple program that encourages us to better understand the spiritual part of our program/fellowship; when we "let it begin with me: we can use the tools to get us through a change.

Nancy No-Change: By learning to focus on ourselves, our attitudes and well-being improve. We can allow others to experience the consequences of their own actions and the joys of their own successes. I think I see that changing my attitude can help others. Maybe that's the kind of change I can get behind!

Vulnerable Veronica: So, it sounds to me like we have come to some sort of consensus, right? I'm so relieved that we have been able to be honest with each other, and even have differing opinions, but still feel like I belong and that my opinion matters.

Alice All-Alone: I think so. I mean, I don't feel alone any more, I feel like we are in agreement at least about a few things. We all try to live One Day At A Time, to keep an open mind, strengthened relationships with our Higher Power and know that our Higher Power is in charge.

Jackie Judgmental: I think I can withhold judgment until we get more information. And this KBDM way of doing things helps me be less scared and less judgmental. My sponsor is going to be really happy to hear that I have found another way to Let Go and Let God.

Diversity Dan: Well, Theresa, what's our next step?

Terrified Theresa: We will need to work on a report of our findings. And, I think we have substantial unanimity to recommend that the Board of Trustees create a Task Force to create a service tool or piece of literature addressing the Fear of Change!

Then we end it, with some time for Q and A.