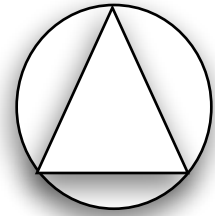


The Messenger



Our Journey Through Recovery . . .

Northeast Pennsylvania Intergroup On-Line Newsletter

March-April-May 2020

We are never alone...

It doesn't matter if you have 24 hours or 30 years of sobriety, if you are struggling with alcoholism and need to talk to another alcoholic, call our hotline. ..."with us, to drink is to die."

(570)654-0488 (800)640-7545

Hi Everyone,

Recent events have forced us to change the way we carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. We are in uncharted territory and will need to learn to apply our Traditions to new methods of communication. Our Traditions are our collective experience on what has worked best in the past. We don't have a lot of experience with how to handle virtual meetings.

The Finance and Public Information Subcommittees of Area 59, will present a workshop "Finances and Anonymity for Virtual Meetings". This workshop will provide information to help our members come to an informed group conscience on how they can handle finances and anonymity issues in virtual meetings.

The meeting will be held on Zoom on Saturday, May 2, 2020 1:00 to 4:00 PM EDT. (The waiting room opens at Noon.) The meeting Id and password:

Meeting ID: 970 8528 5607

Password: EPGSA

Telephone

929 436 2866

Password: 488744

*6 - mute or unmute

*9 - raise hand

All AA members are welcome. Please pass this on to anyone who may be interested. I hope to see you all there.

Thank you for your service!

Steve S.

Chairperson

Area 59, Panel 69

Reprinted with permission from email correspondence.

"Loners" - but Not Alone

What can be said of many A.A. members who, for a variety of reasons, cannot have a family life? At first many of these feel lonely, hurt, and left out as they witness so much domestic happiness about them. If they cannot have this kind of happiness, can A.A. offer them satisfactions of similar worth and durability?

Yes - whenever they try hard to seek out these satisfactions. Surrounded by so many A.A. friends, the so-called loners tell us they no longer feel alone. In partnership with others - women and men - they can devote themselves to any number of ideas, people, and constructive projects. They can participate in enterprises which would be denied to family men and women. We daily see such members render prodigies of service, and receive great joys in return.

-As Bill Sees It, p. 53 (Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions, p. 120)

The Messenger is written (except where noted) and published by Sharon M., Lake Ariel, Newsletter Chairperson for Northeast Pennsylvania Intergroup. Submissions can be sent to the Messenger at theaamessenger@gmail.com.



AA Grapevine Free Online

Due to the current changing health situation, many AA meetings across the U.S. and Canada are finding it safer to close. To help members during this time, we are giving everyone free access to all of our 2020 Grapevine and La Viña issues. (The audio to Grapevine's stories will be available as well, so people can listen to the stories if they like.) Please share with your fellows.

<https://www.aagrapevine.org/we-are-here-to-help>

Our trusted servant did an amazing job redesigning our NEPA Intergroup website and keeping it up date and maintaining it through this pandemic.

New pages and additions to the website are ongoing.

Alternative meetings are listed on the website.

A BIG thank you to Tammy H.

NEPA Intergroup Central Office/Store
CURRENTLY CLOSED DUE TO PANDEMIC
A BLAST WILL BE SENT OUT WHEN IT'S OPENS

AAINTERGROUPNEPA.ORG

Self Supporting... Voluntary Contributions...

Many of us are used to putting money in the basket at the meetings we attend. Many groups then, through a group conscious, make the decision to divide the contributions (after group expenses are covered) and send money to GSO, Area 59, Intergroup and Districts. Because we are in this difficult time and face to face meetings are closed and no basket is being passed around the room for voluntary contributions, I have to wonder how long these service agencies will be able to maintain themselves on their prudent reserves without additional funds coming in. Just because I am in quarantine, my rent, electric and all of my bills still need to be met. The same goes for GSO, Area 59, Intergroup and Districts. These agencies are still working hard to meet our primary purpose of carrying the message to the still sick and suffering and incurring expenses.

Footing the bill

"Now, where do A.A.'s services — worldwide, area, local — fit into our scheme of things?" asked Bill W. in an October 1967 article in the A.A. Grapevine. "Why should we provide these functions with money?"

According to Bill, "The answer is simple enough. Every single A.A. service is designed to make more and better Twelfth Step work possible, whether it be a group meeting place, a central or intergroup office . . . or the world service Headquarters . . .

"Though not costly, these service agencies are absolutely essential to our continued expansion — to our survival as a Fellowship. Their costs are a collective obligation that rests squarely upon all of us. Our support of services actually amounts to a recognition on our part that A.A. must everywhere function in full strength — and that, under our Tradition of self-support, we are all going to foot the bill."

Many of these service agencies have contribution buttons on their websites. Voluntary contributions can also be mailed to the addresses listed below. The amount is not what's important. How great it would be if we could all send a small amount to each service agency so that it could add up to an amount that would help not eat away at the ever so important prudent reserves that may not last as long as the effects of the current pandemic. Even when we are out of quarantine and our meeting places open and money starts being put in the basket again, each service agency will have to find ways to rebuild their prudent reserves. Just like many of us will be playing catch up with our bills when we return to work, these service agencies will be playing catch up, so to speak, to rebuild the reserves used while contributions weren't being passed on to them.

A.A. World Services, Inc.

P.O. Box 459

Grand Central Station

New York, NY 10163

aa.org

Contributions to Area 59 Panel 69

Make checks payable to EPGSA

Mail to: Area 59 Treasurer

14 Casey Drive

Williamsport, PA 17701

area59aa.org

North East Pennsylvania Intergroup
(NEPAIG)

422 N. Main Street

Pittston, PA 18640

aaintergrouppnepa.org

Sobriety is a journey...not a destination

If God seems far away ... who moved?

~Anonymous

WHEN LIFE GETS TO HARD TO STAND . . . KNEEL

~Anonymous

A SOCIAL DISTANCING A.A. Member

I know the term is social distancing but it feels more like social isolation some days. Not being able to walk into a room of my AA family and say hello or hug my friends, my fellow alcoholics, and see the hope and smiles is greatly missed. It gives me a time to pause to really appreciate the fact that I have those meetings to walk in to. They are just temporarily suspended with alternative ways to meet.

I didn't know my appreciation for our spiritual ancestors could be any deeper but it has grown. I'm understanding better exactly how hard it was to get sober before the fellowship sprang up. I don't know if my desperation would have lasted while I wrote to New York and waited for the literature or Big Book to arrive in the mail. My best guess is I would have been drunk by the time I received it and would have put it somewhere I didn't have to be reminded of the desperation I felt when I ordered it or had gone back into the delusional belief I did not have a drinking problem. If I was still having my moment of clarity when it did arrive, again, I don't know if I could have held onto it, tried to understand the program without meetings and a sponsor or until a recovered traveling salesman came to my area to help me understand it, go through the steps and learn how to start a meeting.

Today, we have a fellowship that came together to make sure we have options to stay sober while we are forced to stay in our homes. Our fellow AA's have put even more online meetings together so they are available throughout the day. Not only can we go to online meetings with our local AA family, we can join other area meetings and make new friends and get the message of recovery. I feel so blessed to have the options I do. I can pick up the phone and reach out to give hope or get it when I need it. I can go to an online meeting just about anytime throughout the day. I have been through the Big Book and Steps and I have learned how to apply them in my life so while I may be a little stir crazy now and then not being able to run and go whenever I want, I have a God that gives me the strength and guidance to get me through the day. Not only get me through the day, but to get me through it with a heart full of love and joy.

I have learned through this program to be disciplined. I don't get up and wonder which pajamas to wear that day or what movie to put on. I have my coffee, shower, pray and go for a walk (alone). Then I'm rewarded with more coffee and the to do list I have prepared for the day. Don't get me wrong, some days after my walk, I've come home and made the decision it's movie day but I limit those. I have to for my own sanity.

I have always been in the habit of having the radio on whenever I'm home so I don't sit in front of the television. I love my rock 'n roll. If it's a good song, which all of them really are to me, I sing and dance to it. I don't care who looks in my window. If I'm on the patio, I rock out too. Music has always been mind and mood altering in the best way for me. If I want to laugh at myself and see how much fun I was having by being in the moment I can just rewind my in house cameras and watch myself rocking out. It can be pretty funny sometimes because I like to think I'm a good dancer until I watch myself. But, I'm seeing that I am living in the moment, enjoying myself without a care in the world in those moments and just having fun. Fun because life is good even though we are going through hard times and I am doing it sober. I am doing it sober only because of this program, my fellow AA's and the God AA brought me to.

I am away from my mother who is at end of life and I am no longer allowed in the facility. I don't want to drink over it. I just call her more and keep in touch with her nurses. My mother's roommate had to be tested for the virus and I had to wait twenty-four hours for the results. I learn to depend on God more and more everyday. During a conversation with my mother today she said thank God I have enough faith for both of us. That gave me a moment of pause. It made me realize how this program is working in my life and how over the years I have come to depend on God in all things that I don't even think about it, I just give hope and pray harder. I am away from others that I love and cannot be with or see and I just keep praying for patience and the health and well-being of all of us because it's about doing the right thing today and following direction even if that direction is to stay in quarantine. One thing I am certain of is the situation we are in is not a reason to drink. This is a time to practice these principles in all my affairs. Even in social distancing / isolation, I am never alone. I am a text message, a phone call, an online meeting away from anyone at anytime.

Every day I do not have to say the words 'tengo una mente loca' during this pandemic is a good day. It means I am God centered and practicing the AA program. When those words come to mind, 'I have a crazy mind', I simply turn to God and ask His help, then, if my thoughts do not change, I pick up the phone and talk to someone. I used to live with a 'mente loca' every day. Today, I have a God of my understanding and the program of A.A. and to live with a crazy mind is a choice.



A.A.'s FREEDOMS

We trust that we already know what our several freedoms truly are; that no future generation of AAs will ever feel compelled to limit them. Our AA freedoms create the soil in which genuine love can grow. . . .

THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART, p. 303

I craved freedom. First, freedom to drink; later, freedom from drink. The A.A. program of recovery rests on a foundation of free choice. There are no mandates, laws or commandments. A.A.'s spiritual program, as outlined in the Twelve Steps, and by which I am offered even greater freedoms, is only suggested. I can take it or leave it. Sponsorship is offered, not forced, and I come and go as I will. It is these and other freedoms that allow me to recapture the dignity that was crushed by the burden of drink, and which is so dearly needed to support an enduring sobriety.

NEPA Intergroup Committees can be contacted at:
NEPAINTERGROUP@GMAIL.COM

Available NEPA Intergroup Trusted Servant Positions...

Secretary

Central Office Alternate Committee Chairperson

Activities Alternate Committee Chairperson

Corrections Alternate Committee Chairperson

Treasurer Alternate Committee Chairperson

Unity Alternate Committee Chairperson

Newsletter Alternate Committee Chairperson

Archives Alternate Committee Chairperson

TO SERVE IS TO LIVE . . . Bill W.

The Shared Gift

A.A. is more than a set of principles; it is a society of alcoholics in action. We must carry the message, else we ourselves can wither and those who haven't been given the truth may die.

Faith is more than our greatest gift; its sharing with others is our greatest responsibility. May we of A.A. continually seek the wisdom and the willingness by which we may well fulfill that immense trust which the Giver of all perfect gifts has placed in our hands.

Reprinted from As Bill Sees It, p. 13, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

HELP CARRY THE MESSAGE BECOME
A HOTLINE VOLUNTEER



Keep up to date on AA Happenings

SIGN UP FOR INTERGROUP TEXT BLASTS

Text NEPAIG

To 41400

But for the Grace of God . . .

God As We Understand Him: The Dilemma of No Faith

April 1961

The phrase "God as we understand him" is perhaps the most important expression to be found in our whole AA vocabulary. Within the compass of these five significant words there can be included every kind and degree of faith, together with the positive assurance that each of us may choose his own. Scarcely less valuable to us are those supplemental expressions - "a higher power" and "a power greater than ourselves." For all who deny or seriously doubt a deity, these frame an open door over whose threshold the unbeliever can take his first easy step into a reality hitherto unknown to him - the realm of faith.

In AA such breakthroughs are everyday events. They are all the more remarkable when we reflect that a working faith had once seemed an impossibility of the first magnitude to perhaps half of our present membership of three hundred thousand. To all these doubters has come the great discovery that as soon as they could cast their main dependence upon a "higher power" - even upon their own AA groups - they had turned that blind corner which had always kept the open highway from their view. From this time on - assuming they tried hard to practice the rest of the AA program with a relaxed and open mind - an ever deepening and broadening faith, a veritable gift, had invariably put in its sometimes unexpected and often mysterious appearance.

We much regret that these facts of AA life are not understood by the legion of alcoholics in the world around us. Any number of them are bedeviled by the dire conviction that if ever they go near AA they will be pressured to conform to some particular brand of faith or theology. They just don't realize that faith is never a necessity for AA membership; that sobriety can be achieved with an easily acceptable minimum of it; and that our concepts of a higher power and God as we understand him afford everyone a nearly unlimited choice of spiritual belief and action.

Therefore, faith is more than our greatest gift; its sharing with others is our greatest responsibility. So may we of AA continually seek the wisdom and the willingness by which we may well fulfill that immense trust which the giver of all perfect gifts has placed in our hands.

Reprinted from The Language of The Heart, Eleventh Printing 2011, Pages 251-254, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

Step Three "Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood him.*"

The first requirement is that we be convinced that an life run on self-will can hardly be a success. On that basis we are almost always in collision with something or somebody, even though our motives are good. Most people try to live by self-propulsion. Each person is like an actor who wants to run the whole show...

Our actor is self-centered - ego-centric, as people like to call it nowadays.

Selfishness - self-centeredness! That we think, is the root of our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate. Sometimes they hurt us, seemingly

without provocation, but we invariably find that at some time in the past we have made decisions based on self which later placed us in a position to be hurt.

So our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making. They arise out of ourselves, and the alcoholic is an extreme example of self-will run riot, though he usually doesn't think so. Above everything, we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us! God makes that possible. And there often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self without His aid . . . We had to have God's help.

First of all, we had to quit playing God. It didn't

work. Next, we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director. He is the Principal; we are his agents. He is the Father, and we are His children.

When we sincerely too such a position, all sorts of remarkable things followed. WE had a new Employer. Being all powerful, He provided what we needed, if we kept close to him and performed His work well . . . As we felt new power flow in, as we enjoyed peace of mind, as we discovered we could face life successfully, as we became conscious of His presence, we began to lose our fear of today, tomorrow or the hereafter. We were reborn.

We were now at Step Three. Many of us said to our Maker, as we understood Him: "God, I offer myself to Thee-to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!"

Reprinted from Alcoholics Anonymous, Pages 60-63, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

In all times of emotional disturbance or indecision, we can pause, ask for quiet, and in the stillness simply say: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference. Thy will, not mine, be done."

Practicing Step Three is like the opening of a door which to all appearance is still closed and locked . . . There is only one key, and it is called willingness.

Step Three calls for affirmative action, for it is only by action that we can cut away the self-will which has always blocked the entry of God - or if you like, a Higher Power - into our lives.

The more we become willing to depend upon a Higher Power, the more independent we actually are. Therefore dependence, as A.A. practices it, is really a means of gaining true independence of

the spirit.

Not only are we more independent, we are even more comfortable and secure. Power flows just where it is needed.

So it is by circumstance rather than by any virtue that we have been driven to A.A., have admitted defeat, have acquired the rudiments of faith, and now want to make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to a Higher Power.

Of course the sponsor points out that our friend's life is still unmanageable even though he is sober, that after all, only a bare start on A.A.'s program

has been made. More sobriety brought about by the admission of alcoholism and by attendance at a few meetings is very good indeed, but it is bound to be a far cry from permanent sobriety and a contented, useful life. That is just where the remaining Steps of the A.A. program come in. Nothing short of continuous action upon these as a way of life can bring the much-desired result.

Our whole trouble had been the misuse of willpower. We had tried to bombard our problems with it instead of attempting to bring it into agreement with God's intention for us.

Reprinted from The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Pages 34-41, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

Dr. Bob's Third Step Prayer

Dear God, I'm sorry about the mess I've made of my life. I want to turn away from all the wrong things I've ever done and all the wrong things I've ever been. Please forgive me for it all. I know you have the power to change my life and can turn me into a winner. Thank You, God for getting my attention long enough to interest me in trying it your way. God, please take over the management of my life and everything about me. I am making this conscious decision to turn my will and my life over to your care and am asking you to please take over all parts of my life. Please, God, move into my heart. However you do it is your business, but make Yourself real inside me and fill my awful emptiness. Fill me with Your love and Holy Spirit and make me know Your will for me. And now, God, help Yourself to me and keep on doing it. I'm not sure I want You to, but do it anyhow. I rejoice that I am now a part of Your people, that my uncertainty is gone forever and that You now have control of my will and my life. Thank You and I praise Your name. Amen.

The Third Tradition

The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.

Isn't every organization entitled to have rules for membership? Why did A.A. decide to forgo this privilege, to be "inclusive...never exclusive"? That's easy. Early members tried it the other way, and it just didn't work. As the Fellowship was nearing its ten-year mark, the office that served as headquarters "asked the groups to list their membership rules and send them in," Bill W. recalled. "If all of these edicts had been in force everywhere at once, it would have been practically impossible for any alcoholic to have ever joined A.A. About nine-tenths of our oldest and best members could never have got by!" So the rule books went out the window and were replaced by one uncomplicated sentence: Tradition Three.

But, somebody may ask, isn't this Tradition itself a rule? It does state one requirement for membership. Let's read it again, and ask another

question: Who determines whether or not newcomers qualify, whether they do want to stop drinking? Obviously, nobody except the newcomers themselves; everybody else simply has to take their word for it. In fact, they don't even have to say it aloud. And that's fortunate for many of us who arrived at A.A. with only a halfhearted desire to stay sober. We are alive because the A.A. road stayed open to us.

The problem faced by this Tradition isn't just past A.A. history. It keeps coming up—for instance, when a group debates whether to exclude alcoholics who have problems other than alcohol or have differing lifestyles. The Tradition mentions no such additional requirements, no demand that prospective members must not have a history of drug abuse, a certain lifestyle, or an institutional background. All alcoholics are welcome.

What about the group that seems to impose extra requirements, beyond "a desire to stop drinking"? This might be a "special interest" group or collection of groups in which, for example, each member must be a physician—or a young person, a man, a woman, a priest, or a law-enforcement officer. By their own account, those attending special interest groups consider themselves A.A. members first. They attend general-membership meetings as well as those that fill their other individual needs, and they remain devoted to A.A.'s primary purpose.

These "special interest" groups offer only one instance of the diverse and inclusive membership within our Fellowship. Our Traditions allow unparalleled freedom, not only to every A.A. member, but to every A.A. group.

Reprinted from The Twelve Traditions Illustration, Pamphlet P-43, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

A bit of A.A. history from General Service Office History Archives...

1958 - First International Conference of Young People in A.A.

In late April 1958, the first conference for A.A.'s younger members (then defined as those under age 40) is held at Hotel Niagara in Niagara Falls, New York. "The A.A. Exchange Bulletin" (the precursor to the newsletter Box 4-5-9) reports that the purpose of the International Conference of Young People in A.A. (ICYPAA) is "to provide delegates with a thorough rundown of the application of our A.A. program to the individual difficulties encountered by young people in dealing not only with alcoholism but also with the other problems peculiar to their generation." ICYPAA is held annually.

Postcard from Niagara Falls

1970 - Hospital and prison groups worldwide

A G.S.O. New York report of the 1970 World Service Meeting notes that 54,031 "institution members" belong to the Fellowship worldwide: 20,160 members in 742 hospital groups and 33,871 members in 895 prison groups.

1986 - First paperback Big Book

In November 1986, for the first time, the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous, is published as a paperback. The softcover book makes it easier for A.A. members to carry the message into correctional facilities, where hardcover books are often not permitted.

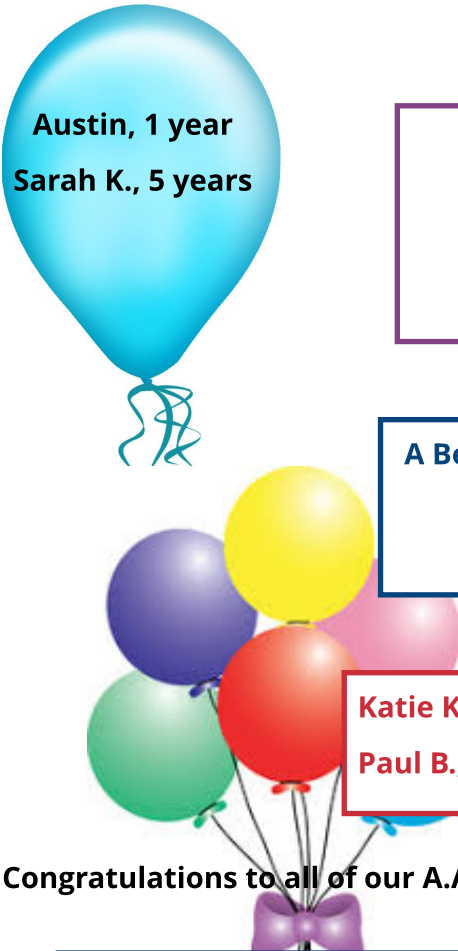
It has been well said that "almost the only scoffers at prayer are those who never tried it enough."

Those of us who have come to make regular use of prayer would no more do without it than we would refuse air, food, or sunshine. And for the same reason. When we refuse air, light or food, the body suffers. And when we turn away from meditation and prayer, we likewise deprive our minds, our emotions, and our intuitions of vitally needed support. As the body can fail its purpose for lack of nourishment, so can the soul. We all need the light of God's reality, the nourishment of His strength, and the atmosphere of His grace. To an amazing extent the facts of A.A. life confirm this ageless truth.

There is a direct linkage among self-examination, meditation, and prayer. Taken separately, these practices can bring much relief and benefit. But when they are logically related and interwoven, the result is an unshakable foundation for life.

Reprinted from The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Pages 97-98, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

HAPPY AA-VERSARY



Austin, 1 year
Sarah K., 5 years

His Will Group
Ruth E., 2 months
Eve, 6 months
Marcy, 3 years

A Better Way of Life Group
Ricky T., 11 years
Tim B., 12 years

Katie K., 4 years, Gal's Group
Paul B., 20 years, Halfway Group

GEM Group
Angelo R., 2 months
Clarissa N., 3 months
Kyra S., 6 months
Bryn W., 1 year
Patrick P., 6 months
Danae L., 1 year
Dan T., 1 year
Tara S., 1 year
PJ K., 3 years
Rodney Y., 3 years
Danielle C., 4 years
Kyndra L., 5 years
Ann S., 10 years
Jerry F., 13 years
Jennifer K., 13 years
Gene M., 14 years

Congratulations to all of our A.A. members who are celebrating.

Anniversaries appearing in our newsletter have been submitted to The Messenger for publication. Anniversaries can be sent to the Messenger at theaamessenger@gmail.com or text your information to Sharon M.

Step Four "Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves"

First, we searched out the flaws in our make-up which caused our failure. Being convinced that self, manifested in various ways, was what had defeated us, we considered its common manifestations.

Resentment is the "number one" offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else. From it stem all forms of spiritual disease for we have been not only mentally and physically ill, we have been spiritually sick. When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically.

...this business of resentment is infinitely grave. We found that it is fatal. For when harboring such feelings we shut ourselves off from the sunlight of the Spirit. The insanity of alcohol returns and we drink again. And with us, to drink is to die.

If we were to live, we had to be free of anger.

We realized that the people who wronged us were perhaps spiritually sick. Though we did not like their symptoms and the way these disturbed us, they, like ourselves, were sick too. We asked God

to help us show them the same tolerance, pity and patience that we would cheerfully grant a sick friend. When a person offended we said to ourselves, "This is a sick man. How can I be helpful to him? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done."

We avoid retaliation or argument. We wouldn't treat sick people that way. If we do, we destroy our chance of being helpful. We cannot be helpful to all people, but at least God will show us how to take a kindly and tolerant view of each and every one.

We reviewed our fears thoroughly. We put them on paper, even though we had no resentment in connection with them. We asked ourselves why we had them. Wasn't it because self-reliance failed us? ... Some of us once had great self-confidence, but it didn't fully solve the fear problem, or any other. When it made us cocky, it was worse.

Perhaps there is a better way - we think so. For we are now on a different bases; the basis of

trusting and relying upon God. We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves. We are in the world to play the role He assigns. Just to the extent that we do as we think He would have us, and humbly rely on Him, does He enable us to match calamity with serenity.

We reviewed our own conduct over the years past. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate? Whom had we hurt? Did we unjustifiably arouse jealousy, suspicion or bitterness? Where were we at fault, what should we have done instead? We got this all down on paper and looked at it.

In this book you read again and again that faith did for us what we could not do for ourselves. We hope you are convinced now that God can remove whatever self-will has blocked you off from Him. If you have already made a decision, and an inventory of your grosser handicaps, you have made a good beginning. That being so you have swallowed and digested some big chunks of truth about yourself.

Reprinted from Alcoholics Anonymous, Pages 64-71, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

Creation gave us instincts for a purpose. Without them we wouldn't be complete human beings.

Yet these instincts, so necessary for our existence, often far exceed their proper functions. Powerfully, blindly, many time subtly, they drive us, dominate us, and insist upon ruling our lives... Nearly every serious emotional problem can be seen as a case of misdirected instinct.

By discovering what our emotional deformities are, we can move toward their correction. Without a willing and persistent effort to do this, there can be little sobriety or contentment for us. Without a searching and fearless moral inventory, most of us have found that the faith which really works in daily living is still out of reach.

Alcoholics especially should be able to see that instinct run wild in themselves is the underlying cause of their destructive drinking. We have

drunk to drown feelings of fear, frustration, and depression.

If, however, our natural disposition is inclined to self-righteousness or grandiosity, our reaction will be just the opposite... We shall claim that our serious character defects, if we think we have any at all, have been caused chiefly by excessive drinking.

We also clutch at another wonderful excuse for avoiding an inventory. Our present anxieties and troubles, we cry, are caused by the behavior of other people - people who really need a moral inventory. We firmly believe that if only they'd treat us better, we'd be all right. Therefore we think our indignation is justified and reasonable - that our resentments are the "right kind." We aren't the guilty ones. They are!

We thought "conditions" drove us to drink, and

when we tried to correct these conditions and found that we couldn't to our entire satisfaction, our drinking went out of hand and we became alcoholics. It never occurred to us that we needed to change ourselves to meet conditions, whatever they were.

The primary fact that we fail to recognize is our total inability to form a true partnership with another human being. Our egomania digs two disastrous pitfalls. Either we insist on dominating the people we know, or we depend upon them far too much.

Therefore, thoroughness ought to be the watchword when taking inventory. In this connection, it is wise to write out our questions and answers. It will be aid to clear thinking and honest appraisal. It will be the first tangible evidence of our complete willingness to move forward.

Reprinted from The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Pages 42-54, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

The Fourth Tradition Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.

A member who does any amount of traveling finds the A.A. spirit much the same everywhere. But apart from this inward kinship, there are vast differences among groups. Here, the traveler finds three members discussing the Steps in somebody's living room; there, 300 listening to speakers in a church auditorium. In one part of the U.S., respectful silence greets the speaker who begins, "My name is Ann, and I am an alcoholic." In another, everybody happily shouts, "Hi, Ann!" And in many other places, she may introduce herself with her full name—at a one-hour meeting or a 90-minute meeting. In each neighborhood in every part of the world reached by A.A., the local group is free to work out its own customs.

As always, freedom brings responsibility. Because each group is autonomous, it's up to each group to avoid any action that might harm A.A. And there have been such actions—or this Tradition would be unnecessary. "Implicit throughout A.A.'s Traditions," Bill W. wrote, "is the confession that our Fellowship has its sins. We admit that we have character defects as a society and these defects threatens us continually."

Blown up to multiple size, the Big Ego may inspire one group to take over all the public information work for its area, without consulting any of the other local groups. Once the group has decided, "We have all the answers," the lid's off. The group may then decide that, let's say, the Eleventh Tradition is an outdated technicality: "This is a competitive age! We're going to come right out and give A.A. some good, vigorous promoting!" To the general public, this one conspicuous group is A.A. Its antics reflect, not only on the ignored neighboring groups, but on the entire Fellowship.

In a way, the Fourth Tradition is like the Fourth Step: It suggests that the A.A. group should take honest inventory of itself, asking about each of its independently planned actions, "Would this break any Tradition?" Like the individual member who chooses to make the Steps his or her guide toward happy sobriety, the wise group recognizes that the Traditions are not hindering technicalities—the are proved guides toward the chief objective of all A.A. groups....

Reprinted from The Twelve Traditions Illustration, Pamphlet P-43, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

Submitted by AA Member Howie

What is AA... AA is a recovery program founded by two drunks, where one drunk helped another drunk get sober with the help of 12 Steps and the God of our understanding.

What is a home group... This is a place where we feel at ease (safe haven) to learn about ourselves, the 12-Steps, Traditions and the rest of the AA program (district, area and intergroup).

What is a sponsor.... This is a person that we feel comfortable enough with in early sobriety to talk to and for them to help direct us with daily problems we are having. They are not going to find us a job, save our marriage, help with our finances or get us out of our legal problems.

What is a coffee maker... Usually a newcomer to AA (doesn't have to be a newcomer) who makes coffee for the group and sets up for the meeting (scrolls, books, chairs, tables and puts them away after the meeting is over). The main reason for a newcomer is to get them to a meeting.

What is a greeter... A person who welcomes everyone at the front door and

gets to know them and they get to know us.

The slogan... Those sayings we see in frames or sitting on the front table that make little or no sense when we first see them but later we come to live by them. They are around to help us.

What the AA collection is for...The money collected by AA members (only) is for books, literature, rent, coffee. It is also used to educate people about the AA program in having share-a-days, round robins and other conventions. They are hosted by the intergroup, district or area. This money is not to be used for dances, sports or even to buy flowers for a sick AA member. For things, we dip into our own pocket. The has the right with the okay of the group conscience to donate to the meeting place to help with the cost of fuel or electric, not for the facility members personally.

What is a group conscience... That is everything our group decides what to do to run a meeting; how to open and close, what type of meeting, what day to hold celebrations. This is all done following the 12 Traditions as a guideline. Majority vote rules the group conscience. Minority vote

can also be heard. Everybody has a voice in AA.

What is happening to AA.... What I see, is the power of the group is getting weak and members are not following the Traditions. The Traditions are put in place for a reason. To keep the group strong. Most so called groups are just meetings. They tend to business but don't strengthen the core of AA. Big difference between the two are the meeting is like a social club for AA members does little to help support or communicate with AA as a whole. The group on the other hand sends donations where they have to do (district, intergroup, area). Send representatives to those same places so each group has a voice in how things are done. The power in AA is the group, not AA World Service or GSO. As members of AA, there is a responsibility to AA. The primary purpose is to get sober and help another alcoholic do the same. The singleness of purpose is to deal with our problems as they relate to alcoholism. I am an alcoholic and I am in the right place. For those who have an addiction, find the right 12-Step program to go. Don't water down my program. That's why other 12-Step programs were started. Find them and leave mine alone.

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

By Bill W.

(co-founder, Alcoholics Anonymous)

Perhaps there is no suffering more horrible than drug addiction, especially that kind which is produced by morphine, heroin, and other narcotics. Such drugs twist the mind, and the awful process of withdrawal racks the sufferer's body. Compared with the addict and his woes, we alcoholics are pikers. Barbiturates, carried to extremes, can be almost as bad. In A.A. we have members who have made great recoveries from both the bottle and the needle. We also have a great many others who were — or still are — victimized by "goofballs" and even by the new tranquilizers.

Consequently, this problem of drug addiction in its several forms lies close to us all. It stirs our deepest interest and sympathy. In the world around us, we see legions of men and women who are trying to cure or escape their problems by this means. Many A.A.'s, especially those who have suffered these particular addictions, are now asking, "What can we do about drugs — within our Fellowship, and without?"

Because several projects to help pill and drug takers are already afloat — projects which use A.A.'s Twelve Steps and in which A.A. members are active — there has arisen a whole series of questions as to how these efforts, already meeting with not a little success, can be rightly related to the A.A. groups and to A.A. as a whole.

Specifically, here is a list of questions: (1) Can a nonalcoholic pill or drug addict become an A.A. member? (2) Can such a

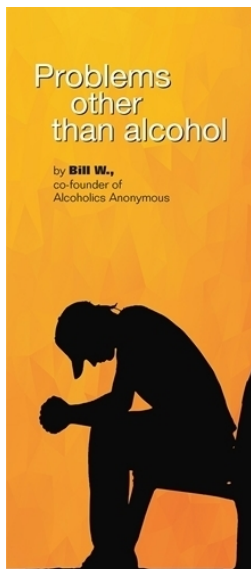
person be brought, as a visitor, to an open A.A. meeting for help and inspiration? (3) Can a pill or drug taker, who also has a genuine alcoholic history, become a member of A.A.? (4) Can A.A.s who have suffered both alcoholism and addiction form themselves into special-purpose groups to help other A.A.s who are having drug trouble? (5) Could such a special-purpose group call itself an A.A. group? (6) Could such a group also include nonalcoholic drug users? (7) If so, should these nonalcoholic pill or drug users be led to believe that they have become A.A. members? (8) Is there any objection if A.A.s who have had the dual problem join outside groups, such as Narcotics Anonymous?

While some of these questions almost answer themselves, others do not. But all of them, I think, can readily be resolved to the satisfaction of everyone if we have a good look at the A.A. Traditions which apply, and another look at our long experience with the special-purpose groups in which A.A.'s are active today — both within and without our Society.

Now there are certain things that A.A. cannot do for anybody, regardless of what our several desires or sympathies may be.

Our first duty, as a society, is to insure our own survival. Therefore, we have to avoid distractions and multipurpose activity. An A.A. group, as such, cannot take on all the personal problems of its members, let alone the problems of the whole world.

Sobriety — freedom from alcohol — through the teaching and practice of the Twelve Steps is the sole purpose of an A.A. group. Groups have repeatedly tried other activities, and they have always failed. It has also been learned that there is no possible way to make nonalcoholics into A.A. members. We have to confine our membership to alcoholics, and we have to confine our A.A. groups to a single purpose. If we don't stick to these principles, we shall almost surely collapse. And if we collapse, we cannot help anyone.



Step Five "Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs."

HAVING MADE our personal inventory, what shall we do about it? We have been trying to get a new attitude, a new relationship with our Creator, and to discover the obstacles in our path... This requires actions on our part, which, when completed, will mean that we have admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being, the exact nature of our defects.

We must be entirely honest with somebody if we expect to live long or happily in this world.

When we decide who is to hear our story, we waste no time... He should realize that we are

engaged upon a life-and-death errand.

We pocket our pride and go to it, illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past. Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator. We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience.

Returning home we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we

have done. We thank God from the bottom of our heart that we know Him better... Carefully reading the first five proposals we ask if we have omitted anything, for we are building an arch through which we shall walk a free man at last. Is our work solid so far? Are the stones properly in place? Have we skimmed on the cement put into the foundation? Have we tried to make mortar without sand?

If we can answer to our satisfaction, we then look at Step Six.

Reprinted from Alcoholics Anonymous, Pages 72-76, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

All of A.A.'s Twelve Steps ask us to go contrary to our natural desires . . . they all deflate our egos. When it comes to ego deflation, few Steps are harder to take than Five. but scarcely any Step is more necessary to longtime sobriety and peace of mind than this one.

A.A. experience has taught us we cannot live alone with our pressing problems and the character defects which cause or aggravate them . . . if we have come to know how wrong thinking and action have hurt us and others, then the need to quit living by ourselves with those tormenting ghosts of yesterday gets more urgent than ever. We have to talk to somebody about them.

This vital Step was also the means by which we began to get the feeling that we could be forgiven, no matter what we had thought or done. Often it was while working on this Step with our sponsors or spiritual advisers that we

first felt truly able to forgive others, no matter how deeply we felt that had wronged us. Our moral inventory had persuaded us that all-round forgiveness was desirable, but it was only when we resolutely tackled Step Five that we inwardly knew we'd be able to receive forgiveness and give it, too.

Another great dividend we may expect from confiding our defects to another human being is humility - a word often misunderstood. To those who have made progress in A.A., it amounts to a clear recognition of what and who we really are, followed by a sincere attempt to become what we could be. Therefore, our first practical move toward humility must consist of recognizing our deficiencies. No defect can be corrected unless we clearly see what it is. But we shall have to do more than see. The objective look at ourselves we achieved in Step Four was, after all, only a look.

Only by discussing ourselves, holding back

nothing, only by being willing to take advice and accept direction could we set foot on the road to straight thinking, solid honesty, and genuine humility.

Provided you hold back nothing, your sense of relief will mount from minute to minute. The dammed-up emotions of years break out of their confinement, and miraculously vanish as soon as they are exposed. And when humility and serenity are so combined, something else of great moment is apt to occur. Many an A.A., once agnostic or atheistic, tells us that it was during this stage of Step Five that he first actually felt the presence of God.

This feeling of being at one with God and man, this emerging from isolation through the open and honest sharing of our terrible burden of guilt, brings us to a resting place where we may prepare ourselves for the following Steps toward a full and meaningful sobriety.

Reprinted from The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Pages 55-62, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

The Fifth Tradition Each group has but one primary purpose...to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

No matter how different our own personal concerns, we are all bound together by one common RESPONSIBILITY....
to carry the message to the suffering alcoholic.

Every newcomer learns (some of us the hard way) that the business of staying sober must have top priority. If we fail at that, we can't succeed at anything else. The Fifth Tradition tells us that groups should remember their "one primary purpose."

Often, unthinking enthusiasm puts a group off the main track. One, for instance, offered an "expanded A.A. program" that included helping newcomers to find jobs. Tradition Five doesn't frown on the individual A.A. who tells another about a good opening. But when the group turns itself into an employment agency, newcomers may get confused about their primary purpose. A.A.'s function is to help them get sober—then they can find work for themselves.

Using discretion, a member may lend a few dollars needed for a meal or a hotel room, or may even invite a broke alcoholic to be a temporary houseguest. But the A.A. group as a whole is not a friendly finance company, nor a welfare department, nor a housing bureau.

Even when acting on their own, as individual members, A.A. lay people

certainly shouldn't award themselves honorary medical degrees and hand out diagnoses and prescriptions and amateur analysis of other people's neuroses. Exactly because this personal failing is so common, the A.A. group in all its dealings should be extra careful to emphasize that it is not invading the medical field. Through the personal experiences of its members, it is qualified to carry only one message: how an alcoholic can recover in A.A. That's all.

Yet one group recently felt itself equipped to set up an "alcoholism information center." The temptation is understandable; it was even stronger at the time this Tradition was written, because public ignorance about alcoholism as an illness was more widespread than it is now. Since then, other agencies have sprung up to assume the task of educating the general public on alcoholism. That is not A.A.'s purpose, but these agencies also are trying to help the active alcoholic. They are our friends—and Tradition Six marks the boundaries of the relationship....

Reprinted from The Twelve Traditions Illustration, Pamphlet P-43, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

THE RULE IS WE MUST BE HARD ON OURSELF, BUT ALWAYS CONSIDERATE OF OTHERS.

Submitted by AA Member Carrie B.

Fun fact from a friendly Tradition geek...

The reason we changed the name of the "Alcoholic Foundation" to the General Service Office when the Traditions were adopted is because words like "foundation" and "donation" imply charitable causes.

One of the things I try to do in respect of the spiritual principle behind our 7th Tradition is I try to remember to use the word "Contribute", rather than "donate" .

AA is not a charitable organization, and the "D" word implies giving to a charitable cause.

I don't donate to the IRS. I am a contributing member of society.

I don't "donate" to my household bills at home. I contribute. I donate to the animal shelter.

AA does not accept "donations" because we are self supporting. The word "Contribution" is consistent with our AA Conference approved literature and service material.

I am PART of AA. Its my responsibility to contribute. If my group is part of AA as a whole we want to contribute.

Just some food for thought.

Thank you so much for allowing me to share. I love Alcoholics Anonymous.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF SELF-SUPPORT

A.A.'s evolving Tradition of self-support was to move a long way from the financially desperate period, around 1938, when Bill and others around him wished silently and urgently that John D. Rockefeller would bestow the fledgling Fellowship with large donations.

In 1947, Bill said "voluntary contributions or pledges of A.A. members ought to be A.A.'s principal support, and, eventually, its sole support." Although it was necessary in the beginning when A.A. desperately needed a little outside help (which, he noted, made possible the Alcoholic Foundation, the book Alcoholics Anonymous and the General Service Office) times had now changed. He sensed "... a very powerful feeling, ... spreading among us that A.A. ought not to be taken from society, any longer. Instead, let us be givers." Additionally, the news that every A.A. group had become self-supporting would create invaluable goodwill in the outside world.

The General Headquarters, predecessor to G.S.O., published a monthly newsletter for distribution to the Fellowship. In the February 1949 issue, the purpose of voluntary contributions was defined: 1. To meet the expenses of General Headquarters, which operated a plan of service to alcoholics the world over, in keeping with A.A.'s primary purpose (it was described as international Twelfth Step work); and 2. To meet those expenses of General Headquarters incurred in its operations as a coordinating center for all A.A. groups. The article emphasized the voluntary nature of the contributions; they were "not dues or fees." It also stated that such contributions would "... be used for A.A. operating expenses only."

In September 1950, lack of voluntary contributions led Bill to issue to the Fellowship a five-page plea for support, including a request that the group secretaries call a special business meeting for the purpose of reading his (Bill's) written plea. "Without A.A.'s Services we'd often fumble that new man or woman just coming in the door; without our Services, we'd certainly spoil the main chance of these millions who don't yet know."

In November 1957, Bill wrote a Grapevine article entitled "Respecting Money." In which he juxtaposed outside contributions and self-support: "Our spiritual way of life is safe for future generations if, as a society, we resist the temptation to receive money from the outside world. But this leaves us with a responsibility—one that every member ought to understand. We cannot skimp when the treasurer of our group passes the hat. Our groups, our areas, and A.A. as a whole will not function unless our services are sufficient and our bills paid."

Ten years later, as if in conclusion, Bill wrote in the A.A. Grapevine, "Both these principles we understand: that A.A. wants no charity; that we support our own services. We understand—but we sometimes forget."

GENERAL SERVICE BOARD OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, INC. • P.O. BOX 409, GRAND CENTRAL STATION, NEW YORK, NY 10163 • (212) 870-3400 • FAX: (212) 870-3000 • www.aa.org

G-36496-01

"Self-support begins with me, because I am part of us — the group. We pay our rent and utility bills, buy coffee, snacks and A.A. literature. We support our central office, our area committee, and our General Service Office. If it were not for those entities, many new people would never discover the miracles of A.A."

Reprinted from SELF-SUPPORT: Where Money & Spirituality Mix, AA Pamphlet F-3, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

SELF-SUPPORT

The Seventh Tradition states that Alcoholics Anonymous is self-supporting through our own contributions. The contributions help to cover the group's expenses. But the Seventh Tradition is more than simply paying for rent and other group expenses. It is both a privilege and a responsibility of individual groups and members to ensure that our organization, at every level, remains forever self-supporting and free of outside influences that might divert us from our primary purpose.

The monetary amount of each contribution is secondary to the spiritual connection that joins us in unity with A.A. groups around the world.

Service Material from the General Service Office

It was testament to Bill's genius that he thought to call them Traditions. Had they been called "laws," "rules," "by-laws," or "regulations," they might never have been accepted by the membership. Bill knew his fellow alcoholics well; he knew that no self-respecting drunk, sober or otherwise, would willingly submit to a body of "law" - much to authoritarian!

The name "traditions," however, would come a bit later. At first, he dubbed them "Twelve Points to Assure Our Future," because he saw them as guidelines necessary to the survival, unity, and effectiveness of the Fellowship. Under that title, there were first published in the April 1946 issue of the Grapevine. In subsequent issues, Bill wrote an editorial for each point, explaining its origin and why it was necessary.

To say that Bill was the sole author of the Traditions is both true and untrue. He was certainly not the sole author of the experiences from which they evolved, but he was the person who interpreted and culled meaning from these experiences. The meanings, as derived by Bill, subsequently became the backbone of the Traditions.

Reprinted from Pass It On, Page 306, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

How did Alcoholics Anonymous, our basic text, come to be known as the "Big Book"?

There was one last question to be discussed and argued before the presses began rolling: What would be the list price? They finally decided on \$3.50, rather high for 1939. To compensate for the price, they chose the thickest paper in Blackwell's plant. "The original volume proved to be so bulky that it became known as the 'Big Book,'" Bill recalled. "Of course the idea was to convince the alcoholic purchaser that he was indeed getting his money's worth!" The first printing was a half inch thicker than the current edition - although the latter has 14 more personal stories, plus other additional copy.

Reprinted from Pass It On, Page 205, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.