



THE ROAD BACK



includes AA News Sheet

JAN - MAR 2023
ISSUE NO. 440

‘spring is a great time for growth’

Editorial

Welcome to the Spring edition of The Road Back. Firstly thank you for all your kind comments about the last publication. We endeavour to include content that is relevant to everybody and the last issue was full of articles from home, maybe this is why it resonated with so many of our readers, we'd like to think so. Despite our endless efforts requesting more homegrown articles, we've unfortunately received very little response. Hopefully this can change with the next issue, so let's encourage even just one person to write or email us a short article. Maybe have a chat about it over the cuppa you have after your meeting has finished. Sharing your experience through the Road Back, which essentially is like a meeting in print, could change the journey for even one of our readers.

Well, Spring has arrived, although with some of the changes in weather recently, we could be forgiven for thinking winter was still lingering. Nature isn't fooled though. The snowdrops have come and gone, the daffodils are flowering in many places, and we can see that stretch in the evenings! It brings with it a sense of hope, a new beginning and chance to reboot as we move towards the year ahead.

We are delighted to announce that a new printed version of the meeting guide 'Where to Find AA in Ireland' (also known as the AA Directory) is being compiled at the moment. The new print will be refreshed and will include online meetings for the first time. It will be the first print since September 2019, before the outbreak of Covid-19. Check the AA News Sheet section on page 15 for more information.

AA Structure wise it's a busy time for all in Service as most our structure meetings also move back to physical meetings. The GSBAA Annual Report was published recently and is available to view on the AA website. In mid-March the Annual General Conference of AA in Ireland took place. There were quite a few more motions than in previous years, with many decisions reached. It was great too that everybody was once again able to meet in person for a full conference. Next up in April is the Annual All Ireland Convention which will be held in Monaghan. Hopefully many of you will be able to attend at some stage over the weekend. An itinerary for this event is included on page 27.

Once gain the editorial team at the Road Back would love to receive your articles. Our editors have asked for submissions to be an absolute maximum of 500 words. Pop them in an email to roadback@alcoholicsanonymous.ie or post them to GSO, the Road Back Team will look after the rest.

For now, we wish you and your families a happy and healthy spring.

The Editorial Team.



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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.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organisation or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any casues.

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

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The Only Requirement

“Tradition Three - The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.”

Tradition Three, is in a way pretty simple and straightforward – if you want to stop drinking but are unable to do so of your own volition, you are already one of us, from the moment you first reach out for help. And this tradition reminds us as a whole that this help will always be offered to the newcomer, the still suffering alcoholic, the untreated “dry drunk”.

Many times in my early sobriety I found myself wondering whether I was “doing it right”. That old fear of not fitting in or not being good enough or the right type rose up. Not in any way because of the people in the Rooms, who have always shown me nothing but support and friendship, but because of my old insecurities and low self-esteem. This Tradition helped me a lot with that, reminding me that this program is here for all those who like me were unable to stop drinking under their own power.

It is said that the Steps are for us individually and the Traditions are for the fellowship as a whole but this particular Tradition is very meaningful to me and my individual journey. It banishes those self-pitying, dispiriting thoughts of “I’m not doing this right” or “I’m not as good at this as others here”. It reminds me that I’m no better or no worse than anyone else in the Rooms, no less deserving of help than any other struggling alcoholic. And it reminds me of the help and the support the Rooms offer when I’m feeling lonely or upset. There will always be help, support, a friendly face or a kind word available when I need it and this in turn inspires me to offer those same things to the suffering newcomer whenever I can.

Thank you to all those who keep me sober on a daily basis – and thank you to my higher power for helping me do what I can to support those taking their first steps on the journey of sobriety.

Robbie H, Northampton
(Share March 2022)

My Last Drink

My last drink was on the 6th September 1981. I had 13 Pint Bottles and 2 small ones. It was exactly 3 o’clock on Monday evening. I got a spiritual awakening in the Bostons.

I walked out without saying goodbye to anybody. I walked up home. And I knew I had my last drink. I went into bed.

I thought of two lines from the Big Book. No

human power could relieve my alcoholism. God could or would if he was sought.

I sought my higher power that night. The God of my understanding. I asked him for help. And 41 years later drink never bothered me once. I didn’t do it without meetings.

Brendan C, Bantry,
July 2022

Today is my choice....

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 the hurt.

Alcoholics Anonymous Pg 62.

Charming is the Word for Alcoholics

Down at the bottom of the social scale of AA society are the pariahs, the untouchables, and the outcasts, all underprivileged and all unknown by one excoriating epithet – relatives. I am a relative. I know my place. I am not complaining. But I hope no one will mind if I venture the plaintive confession that there are times, oh, many times when I wish I had been an alcoholic. By that I mean that I wish I were an AA. The reason is that I consider the AA people the most charming in the world.

Such is my considered opinion. As a journalist, I have found it my fortune to meet many of the people who are considered charming. I number among my friends, stars and lesser lights of stage and cinema; writers are my daily diet; I know the ladies and gentlemen of both political parties; I have been entertained in the White House; I have broken bread with kings and ministers and ambassadors; and I say, after that catalogue, that I would prefer an evening with my AA friends to an evening with any person or group of persons I have indicated.

I asked myself why I consider so charming these alcoholic caterpillars who have found their butterfly wings in Alcoholics Anonymous. There are more reasons than one, but I can name a few.

The AA people are what they are, and they were what they were, because they are sensitive, imaginative, possessed of a sense of humour and an awareness of universal truth.

They are sensitive, which means that they are hurt easily, and that helped them become alcoholics. But when they have found their restoration, they are still as sensitive as ever, responsive to beauty and to truth and eager about the intangible glories of life. That makes them charming companions.

They are imaginative, and that helped to make them alcoholics. Some of them drank to flog their imagination on to greater efforts. Others guzzled only to black out unendurable visions that rose in their imaginations. But when they have found their restoration, their imagination is responsive to new incantations, and their talk abounds with colour and light, and that makes them charming companions, too.

They are possessed of a sense of humour. Even in their cups, they have been known to say damnably funny things. Often, it was being forced to take seriously the little and mean things of life that made them seek escape in a bottle. But when they have found their restoration, their sense of humour finds a blessed freedom and they are able to reach a godlike state where they can laugh at themselves - the very height of self-conquest. Go to the meetings and listen to the laughter. At what are they laughing? At ghoulis memories over which weaker souls would cringe in useless remorse. And that makes them wonderful people to be with by candlelight.

And they are possessed of a sense of universal Truth. That is often a new thing in their hearts. The fact that this at-oneness with God's universe had never been awakened in them is sometimes the reason they drank. The fact that it was at last awakened is almost always the reason that they were restored to the good and simple ways of life. Stand with them when the meeting is over and listen as they say the Lord's Prayer!

They have found a Power greater than themselves which they diligently serve. And that gives a charm that never was elsewhere on land and sea; it makes you know that God himself is really charming, because the AA people reflect his mercy and his forgiveness.

Anon

Did Anonymity Help Kill Jim?

I have been led to believe that anonymity is a fact of my life that is only for me and perhaps a few close friends to know - a well-guarded spiritual enigma.

After all, the group I belong to still prints only my first name and last initial in the monthly group bulletin. I never questioned this. They have been doing it for years. I assumed it was to keep our egos in line, to keep us from getting too "famous." In retrospect, I realise that we all know one another's last names fairly well. The New York Times is not waiting with bated breath to publish our names.

I have been sober seven years - not only sober, but happy and productive in all areas of my life. You can't ask for much more than that. I work for a large organisation. I began working for them after sobriety. They know me only as a sober man.

I had a co-worker named Jim. He drank to the point where it was obvious to all of us at work that he had a problem. I worked closely with Jim for two years. He had a part-time job as a bartender, and our company assumed that this was the reason for him coming to work late and smelling of whiskey.

I talked to Jim. I heard his resentments. I often knew what he was going to say before he did. I smiled. I kept my secret. I knew that eventually, when he asked, I would be able to help him.

I kept my anonymity. I felt he would appreciate this when he was ready. He would love us AAs for not being glory-seekers, though sober, simply sober people acting ordinary. I felt that he would really respond to this great humility. So, I kept the secret that, I thought, gave sparkle to my eyes, the secret that, I felt, gave me the most marvellous advantage over the civilian world. Yes sir! I have just come from Jim's funeral.

Something went wrong with my scheme. Jim drove through a red light on the way home from that night bartending job, the job he had held, not to make ends meet, but to be able to afford his habit. His widow is twenty-three. His two confused children were there, cute as buttons. I stared at them and wondered whether I could have helped. I certainly would not have hurt.

'I have been sober seven years - not only sober, but happy and productive in all areas of my life.'

I know I did not kill Jim. But I did waste two whole years of chances. All I might have had to do was tell him I was an AA member. That's all. I realise now that the Eleventh Tradition asks us to keep our anonymity only in newspapers and on TV and radio. It does not prohibit us from telling friends.

Now I have started to tell people I am in AA. I see the zealous guarding of my secret was a reservation on my part. I was afraid I would drink again, and they would all laugh at the Great Me. I lacked complete faith in our marvellous program. I lacked courage to speak up for the very thing I love most in life - AA.

No more. If a sadness like this ever happens again, it won't be because I did not love my fellowman enough to tell him about myself, to weather his temporary scorn, perhaps. And then ... well, who knows?

There will never be another Jim in my life. I understand anonymity now.

Anon

The Minister says the Password

My name is George, and I'm an alcoholic. That's the standard beginning for every AA talk I've ever heard. "I'm Joe and I'm an alcoholic. I'm Billy and I'm an alcoholic." We're all alcoholics. This admission is vital, for it keeps us honest and keeps us aware of who we are and what we must do.

But it's only part of the story. I am a sober alcoholic thanks to the gracious help of my Higher Power and the fellowship and support of AA. It is every bit as important to remind myself of that as it is to remember my disease.

For many of us, the admission that we were alcoholics was so difficult, painful, embarrassing, and shocking that we feel we arrived in the program just by finally saying the words "I'm an alcoholic." Some of us held back, afraid to let the words out. Some of us were defiant, obstinately refusing to be railroaded by eager beavers with the Big Book in hand. When the moment of admission finally came, it was a milestone of immeasurable importance.

I had my problems with it, even though the realisation that I was an alcoholic came easier for me than for some. I was incredibly blessed, for as a minister I had been invited to participate in the AI Anon program that met in my church. There, wives, husbands and friends or relatives of alcoholics shared their experience strength, and hope with me long before I had any notion, I need help for myself. I received a grounding in the subject that few "civilians" have.

The day of my last drink, I was suffering one of the few hangovers I ever had and wondering what was happening to me. I found myself praying, "Do you think my drinking is out of control, God?" Quickly I rejected the notion as ridiculous. But I was concerned enough that I asked him to give me a sign all the same.

I went on drinking the rest of that day, with little thought of my prayer, but when I woke the next morning, I had my answer. I heard these clear and unmistakable words: "George, George, you've gone too far!"

Looking back on it, I can place all kinds of interpretations on what happened that morning. Voice of God or voice of conscience? It doesn't really matter. I had been called to account for my drinking, and the diagnosis had been pronounced: I was an alcoholic. Though I am an ordained Presbyterian minister, though I was active as a citizen in my community, though I had never been arrested, never lost a job, never been locked out of the house, never been asked to leave anybody else's home because of my drunkenness, though I came to AA with job, family, and reputation all intact - I was an alcoholic and the fear, panic, helplessness, and self-loathing I felt could not have been worse if I had just discovered that I had leprosy.

I thought of friends I had let down. I thought of my church position and the possibility that I would be de-frocked. I thought of my AA friends and how I had to talk to somebody. "Boy, will this shock 'em!" I thought. And immediately I revised that idea. "Shock 'em, hell! They've probably known it all along." How could I face them? But I had to face the music. I was sick. I was an alcoholic. A quick inventory of the symptoms I had learned left me no doubts. I had an incurable disease, and I had to have help.

On top of the fear were the resentment and the anger. Why me? What did I do wrong? Just when everything was looking up ` why did this have to happen? It wasn't fair. And what would I tell my wife? How would she take the news? She didn't suspect anything yet - not really.

Oh, she had blown her top at me once for coming in plastered and passing out on her, but that was only once. This was different. This was an admission of guilt. And what's more, there was no going back no undoing it, no saying, "I'm sorry. I'll never let it happen again. Now let's hurry up and forget all about it." No, this time I was in for it, and I knew it.

I could not face the AAs in my hometown. What if people found out about me? Instead, I went to a nearby town to see a clergyman who, I had been told, knew something about alcoholism and AA. I told him my plight, hoping to hear the reprieve: "Oh George, you're not an alcoholic! You've just let your imagination run away with you". But the reprieve did not come. Instead, he said "I don't know if you are an alcoholic or not. I only know how I drank, and I can tell you that everything I did is what you've just through telling me you've done.

So, I went to my first AA meeting - not as an observer, and not in my own hometown, but in a neighbouring town. I was very much aware that I had an incurable disease, but that night, I didn't say, "I'm an alcoholic." I softened it a little and said, "If I'm not an alcoholic, I sure have a funny way of drinking."

That was the way I made my first public admission that I'm an alcoholic. To me, it was very shameful. But as the months went by, it became easier. After all, I was no different from anyone else in the room They all said, "I'm an alcoholic," so what was the big deal? It was almost like the password at a fraternal meeting. I even got over my embarrassment and joined my hometown group. Now, when I hear the password repeated again and again at our meetings, I want to object. Yes, we're alcoholics.

Yes, it was vitally important that we come to that awareness. Yes, we've got to be honest with ourselves and one another. But we're more than alcoholics. Much more.

We're alcoholics who are living sober lives! Alcoholics who have a choice whether or not to take that first drink. For the first time in our lives, we are really alive! Our message is good news, and we need to say so.

Some of us hint at this by saying, "I'm a recovered alcoholic," as if we had just been cured. Others say, "arrested alcoholic," which conjures up images of a policeman holding us captive in handcuffs! "Nonpracticing alcoholic," "dry alcoholic," you name it - we have a number of ways to indicate that we are more than just alcoholics. None of them tells the story very well, but all are better than the flat statement "I'm an alcoholic." There's nothing very remarkable about being an alcoholic. We're a dime a dozen. The good word is that we're sober alcoholics.



I'm an alcoholic, sober today, thanks to my Higher Power and the fellowship and support of AA. That's my good news for you. It's not a very fancy statement. There's a lot more that needs to be said - words about my Higher Power, about the incredible love AA people have for one another, about struggling with the Steps, about black battles with our own private demons. Yes, it's a whole new way of life we're talking about.

I know most of you will continue to start your AA talks with the words "I'm an alcoholic," But remember to add the good news: "I'm sober" That's what's worth talking about.

Anon

My Name Is Erin

My name is Erin, and I am an alcoholic. 12 years have gone by and I am basking in the joys that a clean and sober life has given me. I struggled for years when I was first sober, but I held on; now I do not know myself! I am who I have always wanted to be. I have what I have always wanted to have. I am not lying in bed in the weekends hung-over. I have a peace and love for life that I could not ever find in drinking, but have found through sobriety.

I have hard times, I have hard days, alcoholism pops up all over the place, in places, in moments, on occasions when I do not want it to, but I deal with it at the time - it may not be easy,

I might be sensitive or 'down' or feeling strange, but I get through and get to a meeting and nothing ever seems as bad as it is in my head. That's life, we all have our strange moments, but nothing could ever be as strange as drinking myself to blackout, to vomit, to destroy myself. Nothing, nothing could ever be as bad as that, and I hope I never forget that.

Today, I can look life in the eyes, I can see straight; I can reach out and be involved - with love, with friendship, as a mother, and as someone who respects themselves more now than ever before. I'm alive today.

Erin, Carter
(Mainstay NZ, Jan 2010)

Grateful For My New Life

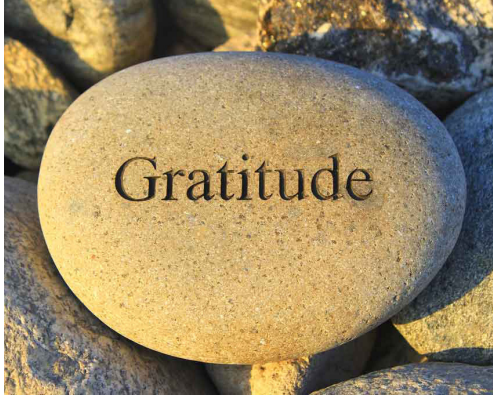
Towards the end of my drinking days, I was so full of bitterness. I blamed my ex for everything, for my unhappiness, for my not having a fulfilling life, and for my feelings of inadequacy and guilt. Moreover, I was convinced he was solely responsible for my desperate need to drink.

If it wasn't for his negative attitude, I could be happy; if he only helped out and supported my need to be more than a mother, I wouldn't feel so repressed and empty; if he stopped moaning at me, I wouldn't feel 'less than'; if he only let me drink as much as I wanted to, as much as I needed to, I wouldn't carry the daily weight of my secretive behaviour and the incessant lying. Hence it came as a shock to 'come to' from another blackout and find myself in the same stupefied state only a few days after my ex had moved out! "What's your excuse now?", my ex had said.

Those words resound still; I am so grateful for them. Those words rocked the foundations of my core belief that someone else was to blame. Still, it took some time for the fog of denial to truly lift. But a seed had been planted. I endured another month of pain and chaos before I was finally willing to admit that I had a problem I could not control. I still drank whenever I had the opportunity, and even when I didn't.

The compulsion to drink was so overwhelming that even a visit from the health visitor could not stop me from drinking prior to her arrival. And now I was the only adult in the house, I could do whatever I wanted. But I knew I wouldn't keep getting away with it. I knew I was close to losing everything I held most dear. A previous half-hearted attempt to end things a few months earlier had made me realise I wasn't capable of suicide.

And if I was to go on, I had to sort my life out. I couldn't endure this hell much longer. However, the numerous and varied attempts to control my drinking had not been successful. After that last blackout, I was forced to admit that I was the one with the problem, and that I could not tackle it on my own.



Surprisingly, no great final drama ended my drinking days, and how very grateful I am for that! I sat at my table with two cans of cider and knew they would be my last. I don't remember deciding to contact AA, but I found myself emailing and subsequently calling the helpline all the same. I didn't really know what AA was all about. But I suddenly had the urge to purge, to reveal the thing I had been so desperate to conceal from myself and others: I was an alcoholic. I didn't feel capable of lying anymore.

A lady called me within the hour and told me about her own drinking history. It was so amazing to know that I was not alone, and that a life without alcohol was possible. The same lady asked me to call her again the following evening, and on the subsequent night she met me at my first AA meeting, I have never felt so nervous, walking into a room full of alcoholic strangers.

What exactly was AA? Who were these people? The first thing I noticed was that everyone was nicely dressed (like normal people, not like alcoholics), and, moreover, they were smiling! When the main share started, I knew I was in the right place. It was almost shocking to hear people talk so candidly about how alcohol had affected their lives, and I could relate to it all.

I was left with more than a glimmer of hope that I would not be ruled forever by my addiction. I still didn't know how a life without alcohol was possible, but I had witnessed a room of people who managed to survive without drink. Furthermore, they genuinely seemed to be happy without drink!

That was five years ago. I can honestly say that I now live a full life. I have a busy social calendar, I have lots of adventures, I frequently laugh, I have good relationships with everyone around me, I am capable of loving and being loved, and I have overcome difficulties. I have done all of these things without a drink, but none of it did I do alone. None of it would have been possible without AA and its members.

For my recovery, I go through the Steps. I generally follow my sponsor's advice. I attend meetings, I phone other AA's. I do service. I pray (not as often as I should). I try to live an honest life, and I avoid collecting resentments and hurting others. This is what has and continues to work for me.

I will be eternally grateful to AA for my new life.

***Share,
March 2018***

Gratitudes and Rewards

My name is Daniel, and I am an alcoholic. I am in my 12th year of recovery, and I am now reaping some amazing rewards that my sober life has given me. Today I can say that I have a 5-year-old boy who has never seen me drink. That's what gratitude means to me! Since I have been sober my life has continually got better and better. I put this down to two things; I have more acceptance about my disease and of people, places and things and I have an increased reliance on a Higher Power which I choose to call God.

I found the doors of AA by accident after following my sister into a meeting one Friday evening, and I have never had a drink since. I didn't even know what an alcoholic was, and I certainly did not think I had a problem (everyone I knew drank like I did), I just had a few problems with the world, people, etc. etc. At that first meeting when I was asked to share, I identified as an alcoholic even though I didn't really feel this to be true; well certainly not a real alcoholic anyway!

I attended meetings every day for the first few months, and I did not take that first drink. AA was working, AA was easy, I was on a pink cloud. But God had different plans for me, God beat me. I had reached a turning point; I knew I couldn't live with alcohol or without alcohol - I was humbled. I felt worse now that I wasn't drinking! I was going mad! Boxing Day 1998 I was seriously contemplating committing suicide, but one thought came to me; maybe I was a real alcoholic, maybe those alcoholics are telling the truth.

I have never felt that way since, and God willing, I never will. I admitted I was powerless over alcohol, that my life had become unmanageable.

Today, I know that if I continue to do what I have done for the past years I will continue to get what I am getting, a life without alcohol and a life that is happy, joyous, and free. We all know that life on life's terms is not easy, but since that Boxing Day every day has been an improvement. Today, I have an increased understanding about the Traditions and the need for AA to keep the message pure and simple, the message that was handed me in pristine condition by some hard but very loving "old timers."

With treatment centres taking in newcomers and many of them coming into AA but identifying as 'other than', I feel the need more than ever for my group to stick to its primary purpose and to inform with love and tolerance the full meaning of our singleness of purpose, and how important these traditions are for our continued survival. If I was handed a different message I, would not be sober or alive today.

Thank you, AA.

***DM, New Zealand
The News March 2021***

**For further information on forthcoming AA Events please
visit the events section of our website on:
www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie/events**



In the Middle of What?



I used to wrinkle my nose every time I heard someone say, "Stay in the middle of the AA bed" because, as I looked around the rooms imagining everyone present fighting to be in the middle, my response was "No thanks". Several months later, I heard a message I loved: "Stay in the middle of the herd". It was explained in the context of the savannah desert plains where the wilder beast and gazelles are fleeing from the lions and cheetahs; the ones that get caught are those at the back or on the outer edge of the herd and those that become separated from the group.

I learnt to view alcohol as our hunter, cunningly waiting to catch us alone or when we are weak, lazy or distracted. It was suggested that service is one of the most important things I can do to stay in the middle and this is not limited to group service roles. I was taught to arrive early for meetings and be there to welcome new members and talk with my fellow alcoholics. I stick around after the meeting and make sure newcomers have some contact numbers and are encouraged to keep coming back. During meetings, my sponsor has persuaded me to share - all of these things have helped me to get connected and service means I am not alone anymore.

When I am weakened by life's challenges, I phone my sponsor for guidance, I speak to my closest AA friends. They give me strength support and hope as well as their vast experience of managing life.

They might carry me and nudge me along for a while and my service is to return this favour when they need help - we gain strength from each other. On the occasions that I don't feel like going to the meeting, holding a group service position gets me there, or the fact that it's my home group, or that I may have offered someone a lift, or that I have arranged to meet a sponsee there - service stops me being lazy.

Distraction could be one of the greatest disasters in my recovery if I begin to justify a lack of attendance at meetings, non-committal to group/intergroup service and avoidance of contact with others by saying "I'm too busy" and "my life is so hectic now that I'm sober". I've been taught that anything I put ahead of my sobriety, I will lose. I have seen it happen to others often enough that I believe it to be true. Service keeps me focused; it reminds me that I'm an alcoholic who needs to live in the solution not the problem. It keeps me coming back to AA and gives me a sense of belonging.

Thank you to the man who gave me this concept. Today I'm a happy, joyous and free gazelle with my eyes open in the middle of the herd. If you prefer the bed, the boat or the carousel, go ahead, it can be a safety net of our own understanding, just get in the middle!

Anon
The News
Oct.2019



Stop it now please
You're just adding to suffering
Banging your head
It's yourself you are torturing

See the insanity
There is nothing to prove
Life simply goes on
It's only self bondage you lose

Stop holding on
Please trust and let go
Let the Higher Power
Now run the show

Begin cutting the ballast
Of memory and thought
See that there's no answer
While in addiction you're caught

Now see the balloon rise
As those weights you let go
And delight in the new views
As on air you now flow

Liam Ó B

Heard at Meetings

Definition of forgiveness:
giving up
hope for a
better past.

I know I'm
getting better. I
try to save my
best arguments
for when
someone else is
in the room.

There are no
losers in AA,
just slow
winners.

A sponsor
is somebody
who sees
through you
and still sees
you through.

At first I
thought the
God thing
was a crutch.
Turns out to
be stilts

There's no harm
in having
nothing to say.
Just try not to
say it out loud

AA News Sheet

JAN - MAR 2023

Printed AA Directories

As we all know, in March 2020, all AA meetings closed in their physical format. Fast forward three years, and almost 550 groups have notified us that they are open again and are available on our website. However, there is a desire amongst some members to have a printed version of the meeting booklet available and we are delighted to report that we are currently reviewing and collating information from our AA group database and hope to have printed version available before the summer.

The new print will be refreshed and will include online meetings for the first time. This is intended as a one-off print run, so we are depending on the groups to inform us of up-to-date information without any delay. It's as simple as checking the website to see if your group is listed, and that the details are correct and up-to-date. If your meeting isn't on the AA website, www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie, then it can't be in the printed in the new directory, you need to complete a GIS.

To do this you can check under the members section of the website, there is now an online GIS that should be simpler to complete. It can be completed by the Group Secretary. It is now possible to update only the sections need to be changed without having to complete all sections on the form. This form is also mobile friendly, so we hope it will be more useful to you.

It is worth noting that group contact information is also needed, not only the group's meeting information. Remember, group contact information is important to assist with 12th step calls (be assured that member's contact details will never be made available on the website). It is important to note that all the information supplied to us on the updated Group Information

Sheet replaces the last information received by your group so it's important that you include ALL the relevant information i.e., include all meeting days and times, even if only one meeting day or time is changing. GSO has no way of predicting groups changes, we depend on the group to supply accurate information.

Softcopy versions of the GIS can be emailed to aagroupinfo@alcoholicsanonymous.ie. If you prefer to complete a hardcopy (paper) version, you can post your completed form to the General Service Office.

Did you know that all groups registered with GSO are allocated their own group number? This number is specific to your group i.e., L123, M456, C789, U147. Some groups may share the same group name but never the same group number. Your Group Number is important when making enquiries or completing a Group Information Sheet. If you're unsure of your group number or any part of the process, simply contact GSO for guidance, the team there are happy to assist you.

Please note, if your group is new, you will need to register through the AA Structure and not direct with GSO.

All Ireland Convention 2023

We would like to remind you that the 66th All Ireland Convention will be held in Monaghan from Thursday 27th – Sunday 30th April 2023 in the Hillgrove Hotel & Spa in Monaghan. The theme this year is There is a Solution. All members are very welcome. There's no need to book in advance, you can simply register when you arrive. We recommend that if you plan on staying overnight, you have your accommodation arranged in advance. The full program for the weekend is now available at www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie



AA News Sheet

JAN - MAR 2023

Annual General Meeting of Conference 2023

The weekend of 10th to 12th March, saw all Conference Members (General Service Conference Delegates, Intergroup Secretaries, World Service Delegates and GSBAA board members) meet in Tullamore for the Annual General Meeting of Conference. There was a large increase in the number of motions that came through the structure.

In the next edition, we will have a more comprehensive summary of what changes were agreed.

Motions to Conference? How? What's the process?

Normally, if a group would like to see a change in AA, it discusses what the change might be at its group conscience.

What kind of change you might ask? In general, "A major subject or subjects of topical importance affecting the Fellowship in the widest possible way".

After discussion, it is normally transformed into a written proposal. The proposal should have any relevant supporting information included. This part is vital for discussions among members that are not familiar with the motion or reasoning. Once the group conscience agrees with this proposal, or motion, and concludes that it is worthwhile and for the better interest of the fellowship, it is then sent from the Group Secretary to the Area Secretary to be added to the Area Meeting agenda for discussion.

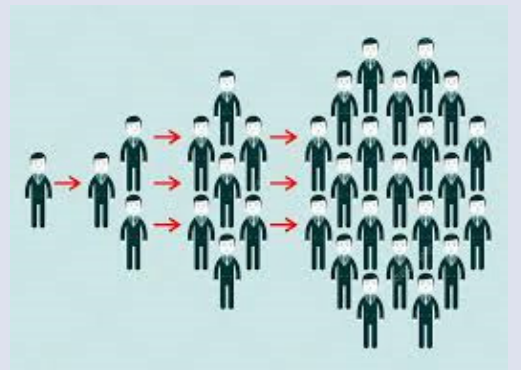
Again, if the Area group conscience agrees that the motion is worthwhile and for the better of AA and is written in a way where it is clear and concise and self-explanatory, it is then sent to the Intergroup Secretary for discussion at

Intergroup. It may also be helpful information to let the Intergroup know how many groups supported the idea when submitting. Once again at the Intergroup meeting, the motion is discussed and if the Intergroup agrees once again, it is then sent to the Board Secretary to be added to the motions at conference. Quite often, the Group, Area or Intergroup will question the motion, seek clarification, or highlight issues that they may see in it.

It often iterates through the structure until it is ready to be presented to Conference for discussion. Rarely will a motion make it through all the stages on its first attempt. It's often better to start early so that enough time is left for review.

While it may seem obvious, any changes must comply with legal regulations and within the law.

The Service Handbook states that motions need to be with the Board Secretary at least 6 weeks prior to conference, but there is no need to wait, motions will of course be accepted throughout the year. Normally, at the latest, it is best to make sure that the motion has been agreed at the last Intergroup meeting towards the end of the year.



AA News Sheet

JAN - MAR 2023

Does everybody at Conference need to agree with a motion?

The decision of Conference resulting from any vote, or any motion shall have the following effects:

- All items or motions passed unanimously become Conference policy immediately and are recommended in trust to all Groups, Area Committees, Intergroups, Conference and Board.
- All items or motions passed by a two-thirds majority are recommended and unless rescinded by notice of motion, become Conference policy after the expiry of one year.
- All items or motions receiving only a simple majority are recommendations and shall be further debated at the next General Meeting of Conference.

This year at Conference a subcommittee to develop further guidance to help groups with motions was appointed.

How to have a Poster or Event published on the AA website.

A common query we have is what's the process for having an event or poster published on the AA website, whether it is for a public meeting, a day of gratitude or another AA event.

All AA events need to come through the structure, so a Group needs to notify its Area, and the Area needs to notify Intergroup. The Intergroup Secretary will then notify GSO who will publish the information provided it includes some important information, for example does the poster include:

- AA Website – www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie

• The AA patent logo – See page 41 of the Service Handbook for further information.

- A relevant AA email address or telephone number so anyone interested in the event has a point of contact to follow up with, this should not be GSO.

It should also be provided in a suitable file format i.e., PDF and legible.

Remember this information will be available for the public to see, not just our members so don't use individual names or other information that may identify people.

Unfortunately, if the request doesn't go through the structure, it will cause unnecessary delays in publishing, and possibly miss the Event date. Always try to plan early.

New to AA meetings? Confused about the types of AA meetings?

The main AA Meeting types are, Open Meetings and Closed Meetings. You may think that an Open meeting is one that is active, and a Closed meeting is one that has ceased to operate, but in the world of AA, nothing could be further from the truth!

In simple terms, an Open Meeting does not assume that attendees are alcoholics, and a Closed Meetings assumes that attendees are, or at least have a desire to stop drinking.

Open Meetings

As the term suggests, meetings of this type are open to alcoholics, their families and to anyone interested in solving a personal drinking problem or helping someone else to solve such a problem.

AA News Sheet

JAN - MAR 2023

Open Public Meetings

Most Open Public Meetings follow a suggested pattern. A chairperson describes the AA program briefly for the benefit of any newcomers to AA who may be in the meeting. Then one to three speakers are introduced. These speakers may be a mix of an AA Member, maybe a Doctor, Nurse, Social Worker, Teacher, Prison Officer, or member of the Gardai/Police. They may give their personal interpretation of AA.



Closed Meetings

These meetings are limited to alcoholics and those who think or know they have a problem with alcohol. They provide an opportunity for members to relate their experiences with one another on problems related to drinking patterns and attempts to achieve stable sobriety. They also permit detailed discussion of various elements in the recovery program.

Closed Meetings are "Sharing Meetings", where members talk about their drinking, how they came to AA and how AA has helped them to stay sober. There is a 12 Step programme for recovery within AA to help members stay sober, but you will find out more about this in time. It is important to remember that AA members will understand what you are going through are available to help.

You may see letters after the times on some Closed Meetings, these indicate a 'theme' or 'topic' for the meeting, these are explained below:

Meeting Types:

BB: This stands for 'Big Book' which is the story of Alcoholics Anonymous and how it works.

S: This stands for 'Steps' which is the 12 Steps of the AA Recovery Programme.

T: This stands for 'Traditions' which is the 12 Traditions of AA which apply to the Fellowship. They outline how AA maintains its unity and relates itself to the world about it.

B: This stands for 'Beginners', while everyone at any stage of their recovery can attend AA meetings, a newcomer may be more comfortable attending this type of meeting.

Meeting Descriptions:

P: Physical – these are in person AA meetings.

OL: Online – these are online AA meetings. It is necessary to email the group to obtain the relevant login and password to join the meeting. The email address can be found on the website alongside the meeting information.



Awakenings



I was most probably weeks or just days even away from becoming another dead victim of this disease of alcoholism, when I had, as we recognise in AA, a spiritual experience or awakening.

I have witnessed so many awakenings in the rooms over the past sixteen or so years in sobriety, even though the participants of these awakenings may have been unaware of them themselves. Don't ever doubt that they are in existence.

They are the very core of the Fellowship, the keys to lasting sobriety and a happy peaceful life. They are the very personal part of the AA programme and hard to share as they are almost impossible to explain – especially by a fully paid up former heathen like me.

Prior to my very own spiritual awakening, I had reached my final rock bottom. My family and friends had all turned their backs on me; I had been homeless for two years; and I was using a disused warehouse as my home. Was I an alcoholic? Most definitely.

For thirty two years of my life, my past had become the whip that drove me to near self-destruction.

Can I explain my spiritual awakening? No, not really. For me it was like a trap door being open slowly at the far end of a long, long corridor. I had felt a great peace come over me, but can I explain it? 'No'. I accept that.

I sought help and the rest is sixteen years of solid sobriety. That is a miracle, and I have witnessed so many such miracles take place in the rooms. I am not a religious man in any sense of the word, but my belief in a Higher Power is the force that keeps me sober and grateful for what I have today. My belief is total.

I remember well during my early years in the rooms an old timer kept repeating to me after every meeting, 'just keep on moving towards the light'. That is all he ever said to everyone. God bless him. Now I understood.

John, UK

My Name Is Reece

I have been sober for 56 weeks and 5 days. I am very grateful to the program of AA and to the Fellowship. Recently, my wife and our family have suffered a family loss. My Stepson, my wife's eldest son, took his life. It turned our whole world upside down. This was one of the first times I have used all my tools I have learned in AA so far.

The support I got from my new-found friends was unbelievable. My sponsor put his life on hold just to be there for my wife and I. He was my Rock. I have learned it is OK to ask for help; it is OK to cry and show my emotions.

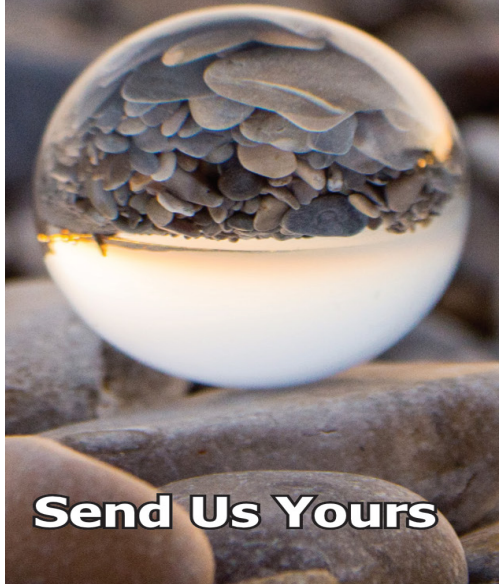
Normally, it would have been an ideal time to get drunk. The last thing I wanted to do was drink. I walked the whole thing through in my head. The first drink, the last drink, the memory loss, the fights afterward, the guilt and the shame. That whole week was so busy. I went to an AA meeting every night.

I had been described by other members as being a strong and powerful man. AA gave that to me. I was there side-by-side with my wife, as a man, as her rock, as her husband. My one day at a time turned to 5 minutes at a time. This AA program works, but I do need to work hard to keep my program working for me. Keep it simple. Easy does it. I understand what these sayings mean now.

I thank my sponsor and AA for being there for me. God Bless all in AA.

**Reece, Dunedin
(Mainstay NZ, January 2019)**

The Road Back loves a good photo



Send Us Yours

Pictures that capture the attention of the alcoholic are great!

Quirky is good

Funny is good

roadback@alcoholicsanonymous.ie

The Other Side of Support

"Don't worry about paying the rent; we're just happy to have an AA group in our church Hall. The two AAs however, immediately declined the clergyman's generous offer. "Thank you, Reverend, but our Traditions tell us that our group ought to be fully self-supporting. We're grateful for your kindness, but we must pay our own way." And so began a verbal contract with my husband, who was the clergyman, and the founder of what was to become my home group, which met at my church for many, many years.

As time went on, I became more conscious of the full meaning of Tradition Seven, which tells us that every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

From the beginning, my group declined outside contributions by insisting on paying a fee for the use of the hall, despite the tempting offer of a free ride. The two AAs might have rationalised: "Maybe we should let the church support us. After all, it may be rough getting this group off the ground. We may not be able to afford the fee." But they didn't.

It pleases me to know that my group didn't let the church support them in the beginning and this impressed the church. What many of us AAs do not realise, including me (until I "married into the church") is that many of our AA meeting halls are the property of poor, small parishes who struggle to stay open. When my church offered free rent to AA, they were offering the tremendous maintenance costs that a small working-class parish must pay. Like most endowed churches, we exist from month to month waiting for the pledges to come in. The weekly ten-dollar pledge from a church member is vital for paying the clergyman's salary, mortgages, utilities, water, janitor services, paper towels, light

bulbs ... well, you get the picture. The word "fully self-supporting" have a new meaning for me, examined from both sides. I've been in some groups in the past in which it seemed reasonable to offer a "donation" instead of rent to a church. A charitable and well-intended pastor would suggest a token payment and the group would readily accept the offer. We believed that we were observing the Seventh Tradition. But a token is not rent; a token is a partial payment. I've seen more than one AA group which paid token rents be asked to leave a facility; the group had become a financial liability. Other reasons to ask a group to leave might have been superseded if the group had been fully self-supporting.

'Tradition Seven, which tells us that every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.'

I've heard it said at a business meeting that "we don't need to raise the amount of our donations towards the rent (after five years) because the church hasn't asked for more." Now is that the spirit of Tradition Seven? If we are fully self-supporting through our own contributions, as our Preamble reinforces, then should we put the church in the position of begging money from us? Or should we spare them the indignity and offer rent increases on a regular basis?

Long ago, Bill W. observed in the groups and in himself, the peculiar phenomenon of our tight-fisted approach when we pass the hat. Way back in the fifties, some groups would say, "Please if you have it, dig in. the group needs the money to pay the rent.

We don't want to hear any noise from loose change, so we won't object to any folding money you choose to drop in!"

Well, all of these new perspectives of the meaning of our Twelve Traditions have come from two sources: my life as a clergyman's wife and my Step and Traditions meetings. My eyes are opening to these inspired and brilliant plans for living. The Steps ensure the mental and spiritual growth of the individual; the Traditions ensure the mental and spiritual growth of the group.

I have learned another lesson about being a good AA tenant from my experience "on the other side." I learned what a nasty job it is to pick up discarded cigarette butts from lawns and walks, because I am a groundskeeper at my church. Guess who spent many years tossing away butts as I approached the church, a meeting hall, a movie theatre? It never mattered that someone would have to pick up after me. Now that someone is me. Yes. It's been a valuable lesson being on the other side.

Anon,
Oxford, Massachusetts

Step 2

I started kicking against this because I knew the word God was coming up soon and I detested the word, but the prison sponsors told me, "There's no mention of God in this Step. Just take a look at that word 'Could'". They said "Could you accept a one in a 10 million chance that you may be wrong and there could be something up there that could help you". So I said "Yes, I'm a rational person, I can accept a one in ten million chance, I don't think it's very probable that's all". And they said "Ok, you've got enough to do Step 2". I felt that I was living inside a suit of armour and once a tiny ray of light got in, the process couldn't be stopped and the suit of armour began to fill up with light until it dissolved and I didn't need its protection anymore.

To do Step 2 properly I have to accept that I was crazy. How else can I be restored to sanity unless I admit I'm crazy first? The oldtimers used to tell us that if you don't like the word God, throw another 'o' in there and call it good. A Power greater than myself could be Electricity or Sunshine or Love, or G.O.D. could stand for 'Group Of Drunks'.

I was told there's more people in the group than there is of you so they just know more about alcoholism than you do. That seemed to make sense so I accepted the AA group as my first Higher Power. I was to learn the limitations of this as the AA group isn't there in the middle of the night when I have a problem, but still it was a good place to start as it was the best I could manage but I resolved that I wanted to develop a better Higher Power that would be there in the middle of the night when I had a problem.

Glad to say I'm sober now since 1980 and have the most wonderful loving Higher Power who is with me all the time. It came bit by bit as the head gradually cleared and I expect the same will happen to you. Easy Does It. Don't try to be a saint by Tuesday. Rome wasn't built in a day. This is a simple programme for complicated people.

Chris,
Listowel

The Jewel in the Crown

At the time of writing this I am a patient in an Orthopaedic Hospital when it came into my mind. It's about time I put pen to paper and write my story to the Road Back.

I drank for 30 years. The first drink was to celebrate the birth of my first son. I will never know why I took that first drink and I will never forget the feeling it gave me, I never experienced before. My God, it was magic. I had everything and went on to drink for years of merriment. Both my wife and I went on to have three more children, in total 2 boys and 2 girls.

I had my job and always seemed to have money for drink. Today I know different, I drank too much of the wages which put my wife under terrible strain and worry and I am sure many sleepless nights. I am also sure my children could have better clothes and not to be embarrassed by their Father.

Still strange on many occasions we had a lot of happiness, more so at Christmas where I would get a bonus and saved a few bob all year through a "diddle club". But after Christmas, we had nothing. Then I started to get black outs and my personality changed for the worse. Progression had arrived, never to leave me again. I sunk to new lows, borrowing, thieving one way or the other. My health was taking a battering and worse of all was my MIND.

Something had to happen. Here I was wanting to stop, tried so many times but could not stop. Never really thought of being alcoholic and really in the middle of this disease, cunning, baffling, powerful. Today I can see so clearly being sober how much I was caught up with this terrible illness.

Anyway I had to be told what the matter was and I was so relieved, I really thought I was going mad, which of course I was.

I got a chance and I took it with both hands and thank God I did not have to take another drink, a day at a time. I am so grateful to AA and the people who directed me in the right path. Life today is great, with its ups and downs, I can live again and have travelled with my wife. I love it and I have the love of my family back again. I do hope that I have helped someone out there who may be having a tough time of it. One Day at a Time. If I can make it, so can you.

I have my God back in my life again. A God of Love, Understanding and PATIENCE. In Step 3 I turn my life to the care of God of my understanding who I try to rely and trust him more every day of my life, always HIS will. Then I found AA, The "Jewel in the Crown" and my life has turned around because of the love I found in AA. To help someone is so special, to see someone getting better. All I need is to attend regular AA meetings and to live by spiritual means. The love of my wife and family are back in my life. I don't believe that I deserve the love I have received in AA.

I hope that this letter will help someone and give them the joy and happiness and peace of mind and serenity. Thank God for AA and all its members.

Yours in Sobriety and Gratitude

**Joe H.,
Waterford**



What does an Alcoholic look like?



Certainly not me. From the limited knowledge I had before this Fellowship, alcoholics were those in the public eye with more money than sense, or skid row bums.

I had a job, I had friends, I had a roof over my head. Surely, a success on paper. Yet I had nothing – an emptiness in my heart that no amount of money, sex, accolades or alcohol could fill. When I came to AA, the lingering notion was, “it wasn’t as bad as I think”. And I was 100% correct in that statement. Because it was much, much worse.

My sole aim was to drink to be desired, to be powerful, to play God. The Big Book speaks of a life run on self will could hardly be called a success. All the external never filled the hole in my soul. I had no awareness of anyone else in my universe, for alcohol had blocked it out. I drank as a child, as a teenager and now as an adult.

Not every day but every time from that first drink the ice-cold loneliness, barren of love, fuelled a depression in my heart.

It took 18 months of AA meetings until I asked for help through sponsorship. Humility is the underlying factor of each of the principles – when I asked for help through this fellowship, help with unconditional love came.

I asked a sponsor, who has what I want to show me how they had done it. It’s not will power that keeps me sober; it’s willingness to grow upon spiritual lines, a daily reprieve that makes this work.

The steps themselves are the means to access these principles; the tools are the handrail and the traditions are the carpet to ensure I don’t trip up!

I cannot single out the gifts sobriety and AA have brought. But what I’d like to share is that within sobriety I have gone through a pandemic, the loss of my health, career and parental illness. A drink would not have solved any of those problems; but a higher power could bring me through each second, with love not self destruction. In AA, the promise isn’t to be void of problems, the promise is that there is a solution through a loving Higher Power and we will stand by you. Only together do we get better.

Alex
Share March 2022

Humour



"No Bill's the secretary, I'm the Chairman."



"... and with no human contact,
I hope they take the hint and depart"

Question:
Whats the last thing
a drunk says before
he's hospitalised?
Answer:
"Watch This!"

How come if alcohol kills millions of brain cells, it never
kills the ones that made me want to drink?

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS



66th

ALL IRELAND CONVENTION 2023

HILLGROVE HOTEL & SPA
MONAGHAN, Co MONAGHAN

28th 29th 30th April 2023

Theme
THERE IS A SOLUTION



Hillgrove Hotel & Spa Monaghan,
Co Monaghan, telephone 003534781288



For further information contact

General Service Office, Santry Business Park, Swords Road, Dublin 9

Tel: 003531 8420700 Web: www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie Email: gso@alcoholicsanonymous.ie
Central Service office, North City Business Centre, Unit 11 Duncairn Gardens, Belfast, BT15 2GG

Tel: 004428 90351222 Email: cso@alcoholicsanonymous.ie





ALL IRELAND CONVENTION

THURSDAY 27TH APRIL 2023

Early Bird Meeting 8pm

FRIDAY 28th APRIL 2023

Early Bird Meeting 3.00pm
Opening of Convention 8.00pm
Marathon Meetings 10.00pm-1.00am

SATURDAY 29th APRIL 2023

Marathon Meeting 10.00am
International Forum 11.00am
Marathon Meetings 12am-3pm
Carrying the Message 3pm
Meet the Board 5pm
Marathon Meetings 6pm-8pm
Open Public Information Meeting 8.00pm
Dance 10.30pm

SUNDAY 30th APRIL 2023

Marathon Meeting 10.00am
Around Ireland Meeting 11.00am
Closing Meeting 12.30pm



MARATHON MEETINGS

FRIDAY 28th APRIL 2023

10.00pm There is a solution
11.00pm Unity, Service, Recovery
12.00pm When we retire

SATURDAY 29th APRIL 2023

10.00am Upon awakening
12.00pm Steps 1, 2, 3
1.00pm Steps 4 and 5
2.00pm Steps 6 and 7
3.00pm Carrying the message
4.00pm Steps 8 and 9
6.00pm Steps 10, 11 and 12
7.00pm Young in AA
10.00pm AA Comes of Age
11.00pm As Bill sees it

SUNDAY 30th APRIL 2023

10.00.am Spiritual awakening

No Longer Different but a Part of Lifes Rich Tapestry

From the moment I picked up my first drink I felt a sense of connection to the world and my fellows in a way I have never felt before. I was eighteen years old, a few months away from my nineteenth birthday. I was celebrating the end of my A levels and the prospect of going to university like the other girls in the room. At the beginning I sat quietly in the corner with the other 'good' girls quietly observing the laughter at a distance, feeling as always that I could not join in. I always found I felt different in every situation where I was. At that I felt most of my feeling of difference were because I was black and surrounded 99 per cent of the time by white people.

When I went to university I was surrounded by people of all colours and found that I felt different amongst black people. I felt most of them judged me for not being 'black' enough. I found comfort amongst Asians and enjoyed their culture – eventually I felt different amongst them. That feeling of difference and discomfort was always a precursor to picking up a drink and it made me feel ok and accepted.

When I drank, my personality changed dramatically and in the beginning I did not really stand out that much as there was a big drink culture at university. With hindsight I can see that even then my drinking was marked by profound consequences that meant I lost things, fought with bouncers or plain made a fool of myself.

I was able to get away with it for that time until I entered the great big ugly world of work and found that there were fewer and fewer people who thought my drinking was amusing. I felt isolated and alone and needed to drink more and more to feel 'a part of'.

It was difficult to juggle the constant tension of trying to be normal and productive and the ever present desire to drink on every occasion.

I found myself drinking and making a bigger fool of myself at the very occasion where I should have been at my best behaviour. The last straw was when I turned up blind drunk to conduct an important interview with someone who had come from America. I was so ashamed and hid under a desk and let someone else do the interview. The next day I was told I would not be eligible for the corporate bonus that everyone was receiving. I was unable to see that I was the problem and responded by moving to a new job.

For a time I was relieved that there was no 'drinking culture' at my new job and the fact that I had to commute to Slough from London meant the temptation to drink was removed. Cunning, baffling and powerful – I found my illness found a new outlet and I started to drink alone instead. I couldn't perform very well at work as my working week became shorter and shorter. Disciplinary action, visits to HR, psychotherapists and the like became part of my existence. Eventually I was on long term sick and drank daily – in fact the only reason I got out of bed was to go to the off licence to get anything I could. My bedroom floor was covered in cans of beer, empty bottles of vodka and wine and I wanted to die.

AA came to my rescue at the end of 2001, at the age of thirty two and after thirteen years of continuous drinking. I was fearful of the things that I had done, the consequences of not paying bills and waking up with strangers in the morning. How would I or could I change? Thankfully when I reached that place of desperation the grace of God came into play and I wanted everything that AA had to offer.

I was told of the Steps and how that would be my gateway to recovery. I was told I needed to get into the centre of the lifeboat and get involved. I was told of the promises and told many times that 'more would be revealed'.

I have constantly found that more is indeed revealed and by staying true to the principles of AA I am becoming more and more of the person I was meant to be. Being involved in AA especially doing service of all kinds has been crucial in helping to build my 'character'. Like many alcoholics I felt 'less than' and wondered how people did this life business.

I now realise that people who I admire in one way or another (inside or outside of AA) are constantly giving of themselves in one way or another.

They don't sit back and wait for things to come to them. I too have learned the importance of putting in the action at work and in my community. All of the traits of good character I have learnt today are from AA.

It wasn't that my parents or my teachers didn't teach me; it's just that I am an alcoholic and my chief characteristic is defiance and to act like I know better.

My life is no longer dominated by an overwhelming need to belong because I know that God did not make a mistake when he made me.

My life is more authentic than ever and AA has slowly given me the joy, peace and comfort that I sought in alcohol.

Rachel H



Some danger signals that could lead to a relapse

Be aware of the ones that resonate with you...

1. If we forget that we are alcoholics.
2. If we put conditions on our sobriety (I cannot stay sober unless...).
3. If complacency lowers our guard.
4. If resentment, wishful thinking or self-pity creep back.
5. If we allow success to lull us into delusions that we are ok.
I have a disease that keeps telling me I don't have a disease
6. If we become cocky, think we can find a better or an easier way.
7. If we don't work on self-honesty.
8. If we stop asking for help.
9. If we don't communicate, share our feelings.
10. If we lack interest in new members, feel it inconvenient to help them, think ourselves virtuous for helping them.
11. If we think we are the cause of someone else getting sober or lapsing.
12. If we don't structure our lives, maintain balance - physically and mentally
13. If we don't "Keep it Simple".
14. If we expect praise for our sobriety.
15. If we don't feel gratitude.
16. If boredom makes an appearance.
17. If we don't read and use the Big Book (Suggestion: Read How it Works daily)
18. If we start missing AA meetings.
19. If we lose an open mind, the willingness to try.
20. Remember not everyone makes it back.



Anon, Dublin

The Twelve Traditions

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities

The Twelve Steps

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.



The Road Back Editorial Team would love to hear your stories, snippets of AA humour, amusing anecdotes overheard at meetings, maybe you have some AA cartoons.

Email articles to roadback@alcoholicsanonymous.ie or post to the General Service Office.



Up to date information on forthcoming AA Events can be viewed on our website www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie