

THE ROAD BACK



includes Service News

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Editorial

Season's Greetings to all our Readers!

As we enter the festive holiday period, the evenings grow a good deal dimmer. The tell-tale signs of the season are all around us. The Christmas lights have started to decorate the neighbourhoods and thoroughfares, Christmas trees are appearing, there's a feeling of Ho! Ho! Ho! and Jingle Bells in the air. It won't be long until children begin their Christmas Holidays, and most of us start to take a break from our normal activities and wind down. Christmas can bring a whole variety of emotions for us to navigate.

We are all thinking of each other and wishing each other the very best for the coming year. We can celebrate another year of sobriety; we can celebrate our families and friends and their presence in our lives.

Whether this is a time of year for you to enjoy or dread, AA is always there at the end of a phone or an email; in person or online and of course, within the many helpful books available to help us work our Programme. However, you access AA, don't be alone at a time that can be tough for many.

Yes, we need to pause and think of those who find this time of year challenging. Is there somebody you've been meaning to call, somebody to drop in on, somebody that for some reason popped into your head? Somebody that might appreciate the idea that you are thinking of them, particularly at this time of year. Well, why wait, why not reach out to them now? It is nice to be one receiving that call, visit or text message. Let us remind ourselves that our AA recovery program speaks of 'constant thought of others' So let's stay connected during this festive season. Even over the holiday period there are meetings we can attend and now we have the wonders of online meetings. No matter where we are, we are no longer alone and, in our homes, we can see and speak to old friends and new ones we've never seen before. Let us be present for each other in fellowship and friendship as we journey on the road to recovery together.

Personally, this is a time of year about trying to rediscover myself, it's about being the best 'me' I can be each day, and finding my way back onto my spiritual path where I can find peace and serenity. No longer having to suppress emotions with alcohol, I need to have better tools to deal with the challenges that arise throughout my day and to honestly recognise the difference between my needs – and my wants.

For others Christmas and the new year can be an exciting adventure, we no longer have to feel isolated. We have found the AA Programme of recovery and fellowship.

As 2023 draws to a close, maybe our readers might consider writing a few paragraphs to contribute toward future issues of the Road Back. Your article can be on any aspect of your own experience, strength, and hope. Perhaps share your experience of the Christmas and the New Year for the next issue? The editorial team of the Road Back still strive to make this publication more about you and your stories. To do this we need your input. By sharing your experiences of sobriety in the Road Back, you just might help someone out there who has yet to find the sobriety that we have found in AA. You don't need to be an accomplished author. Spelling and grammar will all be amended - if necessary, by the editorial team. Email your stories, experiences, etc to us at roadback@alcoholicsanonymous.ie

On behalf of the Road Back team, have a wonderful, peaceful, sober, and spiritual season of goodwill – ready to face any pending challenges of 2024 with peace, love, and joy as we continue ... Our Personal Journey.

Road Back 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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UNDERSTANDING THE SERENITY PRAYER IN GREATER DETAIL

Many people do not understand the meanings of the Serenity Prayer, and as a consequence are left in limbo of constant confusion as they continue to battle the conditions of life.

Let us examine this marvellous Prayer of Supplication to the Higher Power, which speaks to all human beings from deep down within, which is why it works so beautifully, even its shortened version within the rooms of AA.

God... A name and concept of this Higher Power, which most folks erroneously conceive to be outside themselves, separate from and alien to themselves, a "Santa Claus" God which is supposed to fulfil their dreams, their wishes and wants, to "make" the conditions of Life comply with their desire and their idea of "religious correctness"...Sorry about that, it just doesn't happen that way...Our Big Book, on Page 55, establishes the conditions and locale of our relationship and understanding which we are to acquire of "Our" Higher Power.... or "We finally saw that faith in some king or God was a part of our make-up, just as much as the feeling we have for a friend.[But of a much greater friend, for in fact it is our own self, Our Own True Self.] Sometimes we had to search fearlessly, but He was there. He was as much a fact as we were. We found the Great Reality deep down within us. In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found. It was so with us."...We are never separate from God. Separation from God is only an illusion that we have created.

Grant...to assure (in its original meaning) a knowingness of the orderliness of God's eternity, a prized condition that we earn through our efforts of learning to apply the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous to our lives, not

an "undeserved gift" as we hear so many times around the tables of AA.

Me... the I Am, of self, the True Self, that portion of self which knows that it is, in all instances.

Serenity... Again, a word that is misunderstood, that most folks take to mean a quiet, unruffled, calm, undisturbed, tranquil condition in the circumstances of life about us. In truth what it really means is Presence of Mind in the Here and Now, viewing the Reality of whatever conditions and circumstances that may be illusions of how things should or should not be.

To Accept... to acknowledge the Truth of Reality, to take what is offered or given, to receive willingly...As we are given Life, one moment, one condition, one circumstance, one happening at a time...God's Life for God's Kids has to be a happening. It can't be any other way.

The things I cannot change..Reality, period... Reality cannot be changed. It simply is. And no amount of mind bending illusion creating will change it.

The Truth is the Truth and it needs no defence. The only thing we humans can do with Reality is change our point of view, our perspective. Reality itself will remain unchanged.

Courage...The ability to make the responsible decisions necessary and take action to do the things we already know need to be done in the face of unknown outcomes and consequences... Our Life is determined by the decisions and actions that we take and the thoughts that we hold, by no other forces. We must in all cases live with the consequences of our decisions or

lack of decision. Life cannot be lived any other way.

To change the things I can... The only thing that we can change is our perspective as we view reality, learning to make better responsible decisions, living our way to better thinking each moment.

And Wisdom, to Know the Difference...Wisdom, an acquired trait through the experience of life, a recognition and remembrance of the things which do or do not coincide with Reality, which do or do not work, of the things which are true, which are honest, for that is the meaning of

Truth, Rigorously Honest.

It has been said that a Wise Man's education toward understanding his own universe and reality (and to some extent yours) will embrace as much folly as he can afford. It is only to the degree that he can afford it, that he will be able to laugh at himself. If he embraces more folly than he can afford, he will cry.

John, Cape Town

**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**



BE KIND TO YOURSELF

For many of us, the Christmas and New Year period can be one of emotional highs and lows. Loneliness, anxiety, happiness and sadness are common feelings and the bad news is that holiday blues can trigger a relapse for people in recovery, but there are some tested ways of planning ahead that can minimise the feelings that can be associated with this time.

People experience feelings of melancholy, sadness and grief tied to holiday recollections. Many alcoholics in recovery associate the time with memories of overindulgence, perhaps of big benders that resulted in relationship problems or great personal losses.

Take care of yourself

Remember to slow down. Take some quiet time each day and work on an attitude of gratitude. Plan relaxation and meditation into your day, even for a few minutes, no matter how busy you are. Relax your standards and reduce overwhelming demands and responsibilities.

Don't overindulge

Go easy on the holiday sweets and follow a balanced diet. Monitor your intake of caffeine, nicotine and sugar. Exercise regularly to help maintain your energy level amid a busy schedule. Don't try to do too much. Get plenty of sleep. Fatigue is a stressor. Maintain some kind of schedule and plan ahead; don't wait until the last minute to purchase gifts or prepare to entertain.

Use your support system

Holidays are a good time to reach out more frequently to your support network, like a sponsor or home group. If you're in recovery, spend time with fellow recovering people. Let others help you realise your personal limits. Learn to say "no" in a way that is comfortable for you.

Find new ways to celebrate

Create some new symbols and rituals that will help redefine a joyful holiday season. You might host a holiday gathering for special recovering friends and/or attend celebrations in the rooms. Avoid isolation and spend time with people you like who are not active drinkers. Don't expose yourself to unnecessary temptations, such as gatherings where alcohol is the centre of entertainment. If there are people who have a negative influence on you, avoid them.

Let go of resentments

Resentment has been described as allowing a person you dislike to live in your head, rent-free. Resentments that gain steam during the holidays can be disastrous for anyone, especially recovering people. The Big Book of "Alcoholics Anonymous" refers to resentment as the No. 1 offender, or the most common factor in failed sobriety.

Holidays may also be a time to evaluate your spirituality and find a personal way to draw support from the spirit of the season. Return the holidays to a spiritual base, and stress the power of unselfish giving.

Recovery is serious work, but it is also important to have fun. Laugh a little and a little more. Start seeing the humour in those things that annoy you. Take from the holiday season what is important for you and leave the rest. It's not necessary to repeat the old patterns of Christmas past and it certainly isn't worthwhile to worry about the day to come.

Anon



JUST FOR TODAY

NO DRINK TODAY - life is possible and ONE DRINK – life or death is impossible.

ALCOHOLISM was with me or inside me from an early age. I see now that I had too many thoughts and feelings and couldn't cope with reality. Most of my energy went into trying to stop myself from going mad and getting into trouble at home and in school. I had no energy to time left to deal with the world and people. I began getting drunk and disorderly in my early teens. Maybe I sensed at times that there was something wrong or different about me. Occasionally, I felt a terrible loneliness and isolation and despair. I also sensed that people who felt as I did were 'put away' – locked up in mental institutions.

I somehow managed to hide my fears and lived through some kind of false persona. This became unbearable at times and I would go on the booze. I had to, I felt, to stop myself from going mad.

My personality could vary from grandiosity to self-hatred. I was a confused creature. In my efforts to escape from this hell I drank myself into homelessness. Yet it wasn't that simple. Part of me wanted to be homeless – to get away from people, from myself, from the torture inside me, the paranoia. I suppose I wanted to get away from life. I wanted to die but I didn't know how to die. I certainly didn't know how to live.

I stole and conned and conned myself. I landed in trouble with police and my family helped me. I think I resented their help even though I was grateful to be out of prison.

I went from bad to worse in spite of my best efforts to make a fresh start. I'd work for a while and try to get on with people – but the day always came when the pressure of trying to be someone I wasn't became too much for me. I'd run away, change my personality (how I don't know), use aliases and finish up in a homeless shelter, or sleeping in a hay-shed or whatever. It was a nightmare existence.

In Cork, I was 12 Stepped one evening by an AA member. After 18 months without ALCOHOL, I stopped going to meetings, and drank again. I managed (barely) to hold onto my flat. I asked for help and went to a psychiatric hospital. I was seeing people's heads coming out of the walls and ceiling. I was cracking up, going insane.

The 'Just for Today' card has been my constant companion through the ups and downs of sober (or day) living.

If I remember the first word of Step One: 'WE', I'm no longer alone. I must keep going back and not isolate ONE DAY AT A TIME. In fact, Just for Today: NO ALCOHOL.

Anon

A HAPPY CHRISTMAS IS A SOBER CHRISTMAS

A happy Christmas for us alcoholics means a sober Christmas. The ghosts of Christmases past when I was drinking can sometimes come to mind at this time of year; they bring fear with them, but above all, selfishness. We all admit that Christmas has become commercialised but, then, what hasn't in today's world? Gimmie, gimmie is the mark of Christmas now, we say rather self-righteously, with multiplied clink of collection boxes drowning the words of the carol singers. And I can object to that, too, even though the singers are performing for worthy causes. But nothing was so commercialised, so material, so self-centred as the Christmas I spent drinking. I was so self-centred that I had no thought for others. I was the very contradiction of the spirit of Christmas, which is a spirit of giving. This is true no matter what one's religion may be.

I associate Christmases past, then, with taking, not giving, self-centred rather than other-centred, with loneliness in a warm human circle of friends, with fear rather than any consolation of faith. My only solution was to hide myself away in a bottle, in the illusion of an imaginary solution to my problems of living.

It is not very surprising that this fear and this loneliness can continue into the early days of sobriety. I have found in my experience two solutions to the problem of Christmas. The first is in the meetings of AA groups, where I can talk out my fears and find an answer to my loneliness. Indeed, many groups make a

special effort for those who are beginners or who are isolated at this time of the year. After a few years of I feel that I owe it to these people and to AA to contribute to this giving within the fellowship of AA. The second solution is make a special effort to turn out towards others – our own families, our friends, at this time of year. If I have amends to make, let me begin at home.

The gift of sobriety is not meant to bloom only within AA, it is meant to teach me to reach out to give to others, remembering that charity begins at home. Provided that I make sure of attending my meetings, then I should receive strength from my Higher Power and from the Fellowship to share myself with others in giving.

My own memories of Christmases in sobriety are happy, and awareness of the happiness of children and the goodness of other people. There is surely something very close to the spirit of AA in the true spirit of Christmas, where I do not put self at the centre. In gratitude I try to give to the Fellowship, to share myself, and, overflowing from that, I try to give to others, not the material things that can spoil Christmas for me and for others, but what really matters, myself, my time, my interest and my love. What presents I offer are only valuable as tokens of that.

Pat O'

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



STORYTELLING

Storytelling is giving shape to the amorphous chaos of life.

When we put words to what has happened to us, we can begin to learn from our experience. We carry images within us that are the building blocks of our stories, but we only begin to make sense of them when we put them into words. Talking with a trusted friend, or speaking in a meeting, or telling a therapist about our experiences gives them a shape. The words give us a way to understand, and they build a bridge to others. We may feel deeply alone if we keep our memories and images to ourselves. When we begin to talk, as we tell our story, we learn from our own words, and they take us deeper into our truth

We don't tell our story only once. We do it over and over again. It brings relief from the traumas and releases us from the prison of our past. Each time we talk, even recounting the same events, we are somewhat different because we have grown, and we see our own story from a new perspective.

Listening to the stories of others and telling our own is one of the special tools for spiritual growth that we use on this recovery path.

Today, I will talk to someone about an experience or a feeling.

Marian, Wexford

HUMILITY MEANS BEING TEACHABLE

Step Seven suggests that we humbly ask God to help us with our shortcomings, not other people's. Perhaps we fail to see our shortcomings on many occasions, or, when we do see them, we self-righteously justify them. We have honed in on other people's shortcomings far more often. Nevertheless, we can discover our own if we begin tracking our inner feelings. They are excellent indicators of the behaviour(s) we need to change.

With God's help we can change or give up any behaviour that hinders our lives and

relationships. We don't have to yell in anger or pout over hurt feelings. Withholding our love or plotting revenge can be removed from our bank of reactions. We can ask God for freedom from any behaviour we no longer want. And if we are willing to be free of the behaviour, it will be removed - on God's timetable.

If I really want God's help in getting free of troubling behaviours, I simply have to ask. Help will come.

Marian, Wexford

ATTRACTION RATHER THAN PROMOTION

I just arrived home after the sixth convention at the Gazebo Hotel and what a fabulous weekend it was with the opportunity to spend time with old friends and make some new ones. I turned on the television and "60 Minutes" was showing an item about a motivational speaker chanting to the crowds (who paid lots for the experience) that they were not followers but leaders and then like a group of leaders, NOT, they all chanted back to him.

This made me think a bit about the differences I had experienced over the weekend. Firstly there was a committee who received recognition but were not the focus of attention. Their aim was to try and make everything run smoothly to enable everyone else to have a good time. I was given the opportunity to volunteer some service and looked after the registration desk prior to the oldtimers meeting.

The "stars" of that show started to arrive, people who were asked by the committee to share their experience, strength and hope. They did not arrive in limousines and walk down a red carpet nor were they ushered in secretly through a rear stage door. They stood in a short queue and waited their turn to register and pay the daily fee, the same as others such as Andy from Umina, Lisa from the Gold Coast or Karl from The Rocks, and anyone else who was registering at that time.

Then they chatted with other albies for a while before the meeting began and it was their turn to share – one alcoholic letting others know that this program works. After the meeting they drifted out with everyone else, and if they had a cuppa before leaving they most probably paid for it themselves also.

There are lots of motivational speakers available these days charging large fees telling people how they can improve their just okay lives, How can you explain unpaid motivational speakers that can change a derelict, extremely unwell life into something worth living a day at a time? The answer is two words – Alcoholics Anonymous.

Early in my sobriety I was told to try to take just one thing from a meeting and use it to improve my daily living. From this weekend's convention I heard many things but two of the most beautiful were firstly from an Alateen member at the opening meeting. He expressed the feeling that even though he did not know everyone, he felt he was in a room where that if he needed to talk to someone he could, and receive understanding and support – to me this is what I hope all A A meetings are like.

The other beautiful message involved a story by Bill about turning up at his home group and outside was Bruce with a new car. Bill asked: "Where did you get the new car?" Bruce replied; "My brother gave it to me". Bill's response: "I wish I had a brother like that". Len, an older sober member then arrived and asked Bruce where he got the new car and when he said his brother gave it to him, Len's reply was: "I wish I WAS a brother like that".

I am often aware of how much I still have to learn in this program but the best thing is that by attending meetings and listening I will generally be shown what I need to learn and how to learn it.

For this I am truly grateful.

Brian



COMING HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

It all seems so long ago and so far away, and only a few years have passed since the events I am about to describe.

After many years of trying to stop drinking to keep the peace both at home and at work, trying all sorts of ways including AA with no honest desire to stop, after a few months of a dry drunk when I almost drove everyone mad at home and caused havoc everywhere I went, I stole a large amount of money from my father and took off to England. There I met a lot of fair-weather friends who helped spend the money which ran out very quickly. My so-called friends disappeared at the end of the cash. I drifted from place to place, eventually ending up in Dover. What I had hoped to find there I don't know, except that I had vague hopes of getting to Germany, El Dorado, where I was going to make my fortune. But drink had such a grip on me that every penny that I made with odd jobs and the dole went very on my liquid diet.

I fell in with some drop-outs like myself. We went as far as begging on the streets for money or stealing booze from supermarkets. If any of them are still living. I wish them well and hope they find some of the peace I have found. But, for me, I had reached the end of the road, a rock bottom I don't ever want to reach again. Sleeping wherever we could find shelter, life had ceased to have any meaning. Drink was the only anaesthetic but the effects didn't last very long. The pain and the futility all too quickly returned. I knew my life was finished unless I got out. With this thought came more and more the idea of returning home. I knew my reception would more likely be rejection. Still the thought was welcoming rather than the way I was living.

So with only a week to Christmas, with only a few pounds I finally left Dover, and started

to hitch my way to Fishguard in the freezing cold and rain. A lot is compressed into the last sentence. After what seemed to be an endless journey I got within 25 miles of Fishguard. Standing on the roadside, feeling cold, wet, miserable and very lonely... After what seemed like hours I finally saw a car approach me. The car stopped; salvation, I thought, as the driver got out...

That was the last thing I remember until the rain brought me back to consciousness. I found that my "friendly driver" had taken everything I had, most of which was useless, mainly laundry to be washed, but he had also left me penniless. I finally made it to Fishguard, where I spent more miserable days and nights. Then a truck came very early in the day; the driver beckoned me over, and asked me how long I had been there. When I told him what had happened, he offered to take me to Dublin. He gave me his bunk in the back of the cab. We got to Dublin the next evening. I wasn't exactly a welcome sight when I got to the door of my family home. My reception was frosty, but also more welcoming than I had expected.

It took a long time before I was fully accepted. The girl I omitted to tell you about at the beginning of the story also took a long time to accept me back, understandably, for I had almost ruined her life as well before I left. But through her, our love, my family and AA, my life today is one of happiness and peace. That, I would have thought was impossible. We are now married and expecting our first child. This is the happiest Christmas of my life. Please God, there will be many more. The journey that began in Dover ended in a new hope. Today I can look back, and I can also look forward, for life has meaning and purpose today.

Dave
The Road Back 1985

THE THIRD STEP

In the beginning I came to AA like most folk after a severe encounter with John Barleycorn. My brain was fuddled, my entire life was shattered and above all I could not accept the concept of God. I had been reared in a Godly home and taught about a loving God who had my welfare at heart. During my entire life I had prayed for deliverance from one source of pain or another, especially during my drinking years and as I see it. "had stumbled from one calamity to another"

I became disappointed with God and while I still believed, was convinced He had little use for me. Besides how could a God of love and justice allow such terrible things to happen, like the Holocaust to His chosen people? So why were these people in AA asking me to

rely on a God and believe He would and could deliver me from pain and dilemmas. I found it impossible to surrender to and trust such a power.

That was June 16th 1975 and although I never stopped attending meetings, for the next thirty years I became a periodic drunk, with some extended periods of sobriety in which I built a reputation of being a speaker and bringing people to AA. I was living a lie and didn't know how to set myself free.

Then the God I didn't trust took a hand. After a period of three years dryness I took that first drink and it developed into the mother of all drunks. I wished to die but could not. Then a light shone and I knew if I wanted to live there were certain things I must do.

On my knees and weeping from the heart and along with another human being I repeated the third step prayer. I went back to meetings, I confessed my life and told the exact truth, baring my soul to all. I am practising my programme daily sharing at meetings and helping when I can and above all walking the road of self-honesty.

I have found a God I now trust but do not necessarily understand. He is the God of light – love and life had kept me safe, sane and sober these past twelve years.

I hope my experiences will be of some use or help to someone, somewhere.

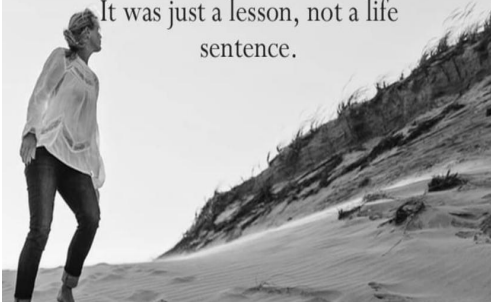
Stan G

3 things to remember to help you move forward :

The life in front of you is more important than the life behind you.

Ask yourself if what you are doing today is getting you closer to where you want to be tomorrow.

Don't be a prisoner of your past.
It was just a lesson, not a life sentence.



THE RATIONALIZER

With a belligerence unbelievable
In a blistering rash of the innane
He tried to defend his decision
To go out and drink again

He had more than a skinful
Eyes glazed and needing more
After years of not drinking
Now trying to change the score

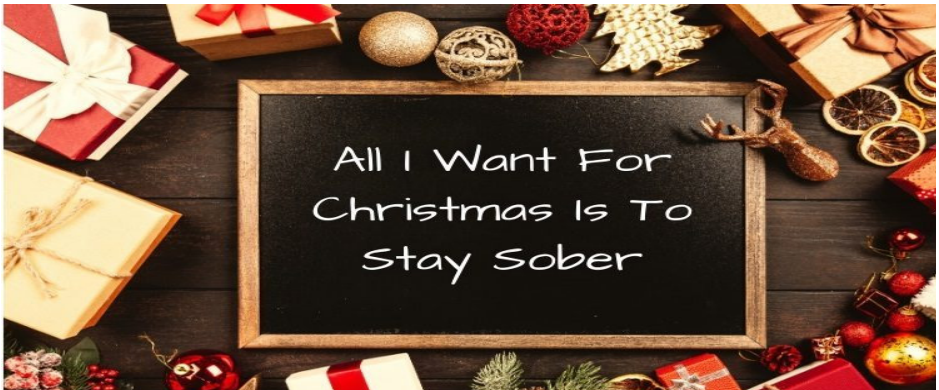
Had gone to his old haunts again
Met ghosts of drinkers past
Regaled the occupants of the bar
Just to get the laugh

Drawn to the same kind of characters
The kind with whom he drank before
Found himself in compromising places
In strange beds or on the floor

Somehow had to research the problem
Had to hit rock bottom once more
And experience again the powerlessness
Of unmanageability and being out of control

All of a sudden there was an awakening
Hope and freedom was still with the fold
His nightmare of drinking had finished
For suddenly from sleep he awoke.

Liam O'B



Heard at Meetings

You don't
have to
understand
the steps to
work them.

The more I
have on the
inside. The
less I need on
the outside.

We might
not have it
all together.
But together,
we have it
all.

The best
way to find
a friend in
recovery,
Is to be one.

You're right
where
you're
supposed to
be.

I may not have
gone where I
intended to go.
But I think I
have ended up
where I need to
be.

National Public Information

Our co-founder, Bill W wrote: "Public Information takes on many forms – the simple sign outside a meeting place that says 'AA Meeting tonight'; listings in local phone directories, distribution of AA literature; and radio and TV shows using sophisticated media techniques. Whatever the form it comes down to 'one drunk' carrying the message to another drunk". whether through personal contact or using third parties and the media.

The first Public Information (PI) project was done by Bill W. who, in 1939 co-wrote the book 'Alcoholics Anonymous'. In 1956 the first Public Information Committee of the General Service Board was formed.

What is Public Information in AA?

Public Information in AA means 'to help carry the AA message to the public legal profession, colleges, hospitals, and medics alongside various people and institutions involved with alcoholism, without compromising our Traditions.'

The AA program works when an active alcoholic wants help, and an AA is on hand to give that help. However, somewhere in the background, there has usually been the help of a health care professional, alcoholic treatment centre, relative, employer, police, or someone who knew about AA and where to find it.

The role of the National Public Information Subcommittee in AA Ireland:

A National Public Information subcommittee has just recently been established by the General Service Board of AA in Ireland.

The committee aims to explore how we, working in cooperation with AA groups, areas, and intergroups can effectively carry the AA message to the alcoholic who still suffers in the wider community.

The committee also intends to connect with community professionals at a national level. These will include first responders, health care professionals, media, and news professionals, along with community and voluntary organisations. This is to ensure that any third party can relay the AA message of recovery to those in need.

Another of our objectives is to improve the standard and professionalism of our public information service and how it is delivered. Public Information in AA also means keeping other AAs informed. We desire to support local groups and areas, that are currently running meetings and events and encourage more awareness of our recovery program amongst the public.

How AA Public Information is being developed to reach others:

GSBAA national public information subcommittee wishes to reach people struggling with problem drinking in local communities through traditional poster publicity in community hubs, meeting places, doctor surgeries, hospitals etc.

The National PI subcommittee is currently in the process of exploring new national poster designs complete with QR codes which will link to the AA website. These would be used as part of raising awareness of AA in Ireland. It is envisaged that the poster templates can be tailored to local contact points. It is hoped AA groups, area committees, and intergroups will be able to download and access these poster templates and use them as a tool in public information work at local and national levels.

We also hope to make available a discrete business card complete with the AA logo and contact details for those seeking help. In the past, these cards have proved a valuable resource for first responders (police, doctors,

paramedics) and other professionals who come in contact with person(s) who may have a drinking problem and who require help.

Developing Public Information support for Intergroups and local groups:

A PowerPoint branded template is also being developed for use by groups and areas relaying what PI is and how to go about setting up a PI committee in your area and intergroup.

Members of the National PI subcommittee will at the request of the intergroup, be willing to visit the four Intergroups to deliver this presentation (duration 1 hour) it will deal with any questions/queries related to public information work and offer any assistance required. We hope that Intergroup will also extend an invitation to their groups and any member who may be interested in getting involved in PI service to attend this short presentation.

There will also be a short, recommended PowerPoint presentation for use in delivering presentations to healthcare professionals, police trainees, and voluntary groups.

This presentation will focus on what AA is, what we do and do not do, how we recover daily from our illness and where to find us along with contact information. The presentation will also include segments of the Road Back DVD (available on the AA website) which include personal testimonies as to Alcoholics Anonymous's success, around recovery through the practice of the Twelve Steps.

This is an exciting time, and we would encourage members with an interest in carrying the message to get involved in their local PI activities, being mindful of our responsibility statement "I am Responsible, when anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible." The responsibility statement was written for the 1965 International Convention in Toronto, and it remains a core principle of AA service today.

If you would like to be informed of the upcoming

PI presentation, please send a brief email to munstertrustee@alcoholicsanonymous.ie

Conference 2024

Next year's Annual General Conference meeting will be held in early March. If your group has a motion for this Conference meeting, now is the time to start the process for submitting it. Remember that a motion to Conference must come from a Group. It should be brought to the local Area meeting by the group's GSRs. It then goes through the Structure and must be with the Board Secretary 6 weeks before the Conference meeting for inclusion on the agenda. However, this process can take time so please get your motion(s) in early. Conference is due to start on 9th March, so 6 weeks prior is 27th January. This cut-off must be adhered to as all motions need to be circulated to all Conference members by the Board Secretary at least 3 weeks prior to conference.

Conference 2023 Subcommittees

As was mentioned before, it was agreed to set up 2 subcommittees of Conference who will return to a full meeting of Conference with recommendations.

A. One subcommittee will look at the 'question' system used at Conference in GB to see if we should consider using a similar system in Ireland. Using this system, any member can submit a question to Conference recommending a change that they would like to see in the Fellowship. A subcommittee of Conference in GB then compiles these questions and sends them out to all of the groups months in advance of Conference. Using that system, every group would get an opportunity to express their views on any proposed changes in the Fellowship.

B. The second subcommittee will look more closely at two separate, but similar, motions received by Conference. This subcommittee will examine questions such as

Should we be a charity?

Should members of Conference be obliged to be members of the company?

Is there a conflict of interest by Conference members also being company members? Do we need to change the company constitution?

If you have views on any of the above topics, please discuss them at your group conscience meeting. And be sure to send someone to your next local area meeting. This is how your voice will get heard when decisions are being taken. Decisions are made by those who show up. So, if you want your voice to be heard, please make sure that you, or someone from your group makes it to the area meeting.

Group Officers

Each Group decides how its services are carried out. Being autonomous, the Group selects the officers it feels are necessary for the smooth running of the Group. Group officers usually serve three months, six months or one year or as Group Conscience may decide. Each nominee is usually approached by other members of the Group, and if the person agrees, the name is put forward at the Group Conscience meeting, so letting the Group Conscience decide his/her election. For example, a Group ought to have chairperson, secretary, treasurer, literature secretary and two Group Service Representatives (GSRs). Importance of Rotation, traditionally, rotation keeps AA volunteers from becoming fixed in their offices. Jobs, like almost everything else in AA, get passed around for all to share. After one term in any office, most members move on to other kinds of AA service. This way, problems based on personalities are prevented; no power or prestige gets built up; no individual gets taken advantage of or imposed upon; and the benefits of giving service are shared by more and more members. Qualifications 1. The Group's welfare is of primary concern in choosing officers, and a review of Traditions 1 and 2 is helpful at election times. When an officers term is completed a Group Conscience should be held and new officers elected.

Chairperson

In larger Groups the Chairperson/General Secretary serves for a stated period.

Duties and Responsibilities;

1. Chairpersons/General Secretaries are generally responsible for maintaining good relations between the Group and the landlord. He/she in conjunction with the Group Treasurer ensures rent is paid.

2. Coordinates Group activities, preventing confusions or other misunderstandings in Group affairs.

3. Chairs Group Conscience/Steering Committee meetings.

4. Receives the Group's correspondence, including Area, Intergroup and Conference Minutes, and is responsible for reading them to the Group, and conveys any relevant information from Conference to the Group.

5. Conference recommends that in order to provide accurate group information, all Groups should complete a Group Information Sheet at least once a year and return it to the General Service Office (GSO) through the agreed procedure.

6. Send Group Information Sheets direct to GSO or complete the online version in the Members area of the official website.

7. Many Groups have no Chairperson because the Group Secretary serves in this capacity. In practice, it doesn't seem to matter which Group officer does which job so long as they all get done without confusion or conflict. It is important that all officers understand their roles.

8. Check the Group's official AA mailbox regularly for emails and correspondence from GSO and from other levels of AA Structure e.g., Groups, Area, Intergroup etc.

Qualifications

He/she should preferably have 2 years current, continuous sobriety in AA and have had other Group service experience.

Meeting Secretaries

Duties and Responsibilities

1. Arrive some time before a meeting is due to start, in order to arrange the room, usually with the help of other members, or the refreshment helpers.
2. Have speakers/readers organised and start the meeting punctually.
3. Usually make any AA announcements at the end of the meeting (e.g. news of conventions, new meetings, new literature, etc.).
4. Stress the seventh and twelfth Traditions and close the meeting with the Serenity Prayer.
5. He/she should have a confidential list of those members willing to do 12th Step work and pass on any calls for help.
6. Help the Treasurer to count table-top contributions and record these in AA Group Financial Guidelines and Record Book.
7. Provide safe storage for all Group data. The Meeting Secretary, as well as other Group Officers, has a special responsibility for seeing that newcomers get help and are made welcome on arrival. In some Groups certain members are specifically asked to do this.

Qualifications

A minimum 12 months current, continuous sobriety is preferred for this position.

Treasurer

Duties and responsibilities

Money contributed at AA meetings belongs to the Fellowship as a whole and is not the property of the Group. The Treasurer has overall responsibility for all Group monies. He/she pays the Group's bills and transfers surplus funds to Area committee, as agreed by the Group Conscience. A Group ought to maintain a prudent reserve to cover ongoing running costs. There is no pre-determined amount for such a reserve, but most Groups try to put aside enough money to cover at least 1 – 3 months' operating expenses as agreed by their Group Conscience. Treasurers record the Group's financial activities in the 'AA Group Financial Guidelines and Record Book' available

free from GSO. Treasurers ought to give a comprehensive financial report to each Group Conscience meeting, supported by all relevant documentation such as bank statements, Financial Record Book, etc. Problems can be avoided by keeping Group funds in a separate bank account which requires two signatures for all transactions. The Treasurer, in conjunction with the Group Conscience, is responsible for making sure that there is a current Group Insurance policy in place and that this is paid on time to prevent lapse in cover.

Qualifications

A minimum of 12 months current, continuous sobriety is preferred for this position.

Literature Secretary

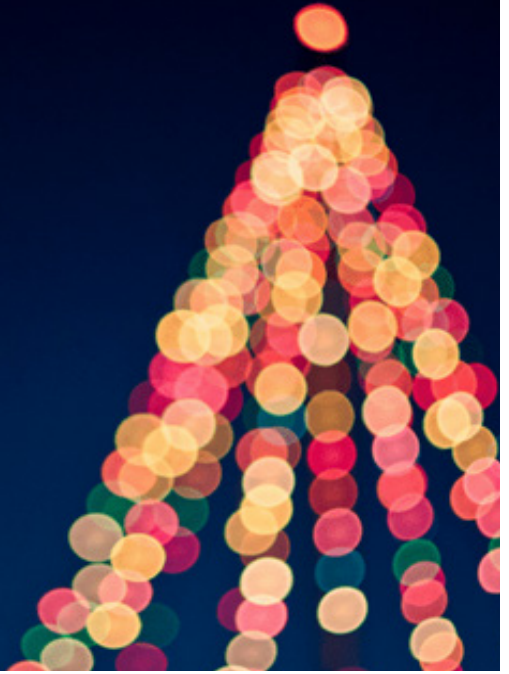
Duties and responsibilities

1. Make sure the Group has its own copy of the Big Book (Alcoholics Anonymous) and Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.
2. Ensure the Group has a supply of approved AA literature for sale
3. Make sure these are on display and available for purchase by members.
4. Have the current edition of the AA Service Handbook for Ireland available, especially at Group Conscience and business meetings.

Note: Literature may not be given out for free, but sponsors may purchase literature for those they sponsor. Service Materials and Literature Only literature approved by General Service Conference of Ireland should be used by Groups. No individual or Group may produce or introduce any magazine, pamphlet or other literature in connection with AA without the prior written consent of the General Service Conference of Ireland.

The only official Alcoholics Anonymous Website www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie will be operated by General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous on behalf of General Service Conference of Ireland.

10 Tips For Surviving Your First Sober Christmas



1. If you are unsure if non-alcoholic beverages will be available, bring your own. Don't even think about trying the non-alcoholic beer and yes, the Egg Nog IS spiked!
2. Stay away from the bar area.
3. If offered a drink, just say, "no thank you". You don't have to explain.
4. If there is food available, be sure to eat so you are not hungry.
5. If you feel you are becoming tempted to drink, leave early.
6. Stay busy. Talk to others, dance, etc. Don't give yourself time to think about the fact that you are not drinking.
7. Dont drink no matter what.
8. If others at the event are drinking, chances are they will never know that you only have a non-alcoholic beverage in your glass.
9. If you are new to sobriety and are concerned about attending an event where alcohol will be served, arrive late and leave early. Take a sober friend, or at least their phone number.
10. You are probably not the only one at the party who is clean and sober. Find the winners and hang out with them.



TOMORROW

Our Co-founder sums up after twenty five years of A.A. and looks into the future we are now living.

(The following excerpts are reprinted with permission from the book, A.A. Today published by The A.A. Grapevine, 1960,).

"We have some wonderful glimpses of the programme of A.A. at work in the twenty-fifth year of its founding.

Now comes the question: Where do we go from here and what is our responsibility for today and for tomorrow?

Clearly our first duty to A.A.'s future is to maintain in full strength what we now have. Only the most vigilant caretaking can assure this. Never should we be lulled into complacent self-satisfaction by the wide acclaim and success. This is the subtle temptation which could stagnate us today, perchance disintegrate us tomorrow. We have always rallied to meet and transcend failure and crisis. Problems have been our stimulants. How well, though, shall we be able to meet the problems of success?

During the last twenty-five years, it is quite certain that twenty-five million men and women throughout the world have suffered from alcoholism, Nearly all of these are now sick, and, or dead. A.A. has brought recovery to something like two hundred and fifty thousand (in 1960).

The rest are still out of reach or else gone beyond recall. An even larger generation of drunks is right now in the making. Facing the enormity of this situation, shall any of us sit comfortable and say, "Well, people here we are. We hope you hear about us and come around. Then maybe we can give you a hand?" Of course, we shall do nothing of the sort. We

know that we are going to open wider and wider, every conceivable means and channel through which these kinfolk of ours may be reached. We shall remember Dr. Bob and his marvellous co-worker, Sister Ignatia - how they worked at Akron. We shall remember the many years of Dr. Silkworth's unstinted labour for us. Ten thousand A.A.'s still around will remember how they literally owe their lives to these three people. Each of us will remember his own sponsor, the one who cared enough. As the inheritors of such a Tradition of service, how many could even say, "Let George do that Twelfth Step job, he likes to work with drunks anyhow. Besides, I'm busy. Surely there could not be many?" Complacency would be impossible.

Our next great area of the future responsibility may be this one: I'm thinking about the total problem of alcohol and about those who still suffer the appalling consequences of alcoholism. Their number is astronomical.

While we appreciate that A.A. itself cannot very well get into alcohol education or into any of the related activities that touch the total problem, we do know that, as peculiarly well-informed citizens, there is plenty we can and should do in these fields.

Enterprises of this sort - governmental, state and private - have been springing up everywhere in recognition of the fact that alcoholism is a top-priority problem of health.

Nevertheless, I gather the impression that many of us are so intent on their few errors, especially the errors of those A.A.'s (two-hatters) associated with them, that we often fail to give these dedicated people the encouragement they most need. Now that we A.A.'s have so amazingly unified around our single purpose and the Twelve Traditions, the



risk that we could be much hurt by anything done in these outside ventures is virtually non-existent.

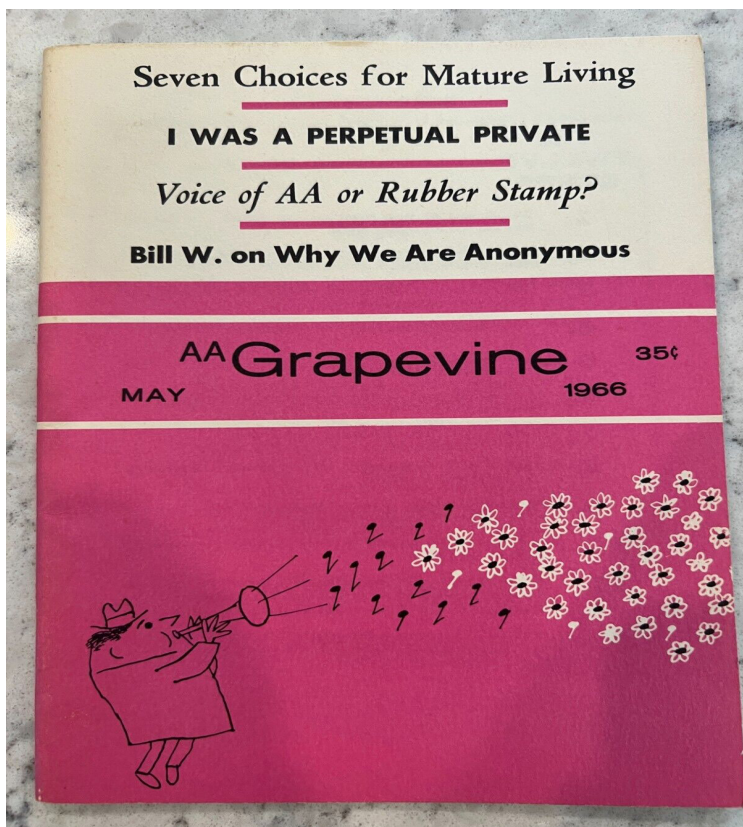
Could not still more friendly and widespread co-operations with outside agencies finally lead us to countless alcoholics who will otherwise be lost? Maybe we are beginning to stand in our own light. Perhaps we are blocking a communication that has a tremendous potential. Shouldn't we therefore have a fresh look at this?

Nearly all of us, when we think about it, agree that we are a long, long way from being anywhere from grown up, from almost any point of view. We can clearly see that our job as individuals and as a Fellowship is to keep right on growing by the constant use of our

Twelve Steps.

Our Fellowship has been permitted to achieve - though still in miniature - the "one world" dream of philosophers. Ours is a world in which we can hotly differ, yet never think of schism or conflict as a solution. For so long as we remain sure that our "one world" of A.A.'s is God's gift, rather than any virtue earned or created by ourselves; and for so long as our "one world" continues to be ever more inclusive of those in need: and for so long as we speak and try to perfect the language of love - for just so long may we count upon making whatever rendezvous with destiny that God would have us make."

**Bill W, Co Founder of AA
The AA Grapevine 1960**



HOW I GOT INVOLVED IN AA

As we celebrate The Golden Jubilee of this wonderful organisation, I look back with humility and gratitude that I was privileged to be associated even in a small way, with its beginnings in Ireland.

I was living in the Abbotsford Hotel, Harcourt St., Dublin in 1946, as it was usual in those times for the smaller hotels to keep residents in the winter months and as I was a teacher, it was ideal as I was away at the peak season.

Late one evening in November, I was saying good night to a friend on the steps, when an American whom I had seen in the hotel, seemed to have difficulty in opening the hall door so I used my key and let him in. As he had seemed to stumble, I quickly concluded that he must have been drinking too much. In fact, I send to my friend, also an American, "There's a compatriot of yours but I think he's under the weather".

To my surprise, early next morning, he was breakfasting with a friend when I went into the dining room. I greeted him, said that I hoped he was feeling better. He wanted to know what I meant so I explained that I thought he had too much to drink the night before. To which he relied "If I had a drink last night, I wouldn't be here now". Then he told me that he hadn't had a drink for three years; that he was an alcoholic and was hoping to start Alcoholics Anonymous in Dublin. He was Conor F.

I was immediately interested as I had a close relative with a drink problem, which we couldn't understand. Of course I knew several with similar problems so I sat at his table and during breakfast, he gave me more details of A.A. and he discussed the problems he was having introducing A.A. to Ireland. Finally, I accepted an invitation to go with him

to an Open Meeting in the Country Shop the following Monday, 26th November 1946.

I well remember that first meeting. There I met Richard, who was a patient in St. Patrick's Hospital and was allowed out under escort by Dr. Moore. Also present were Jimmie R., Matt S. and one or two others, about 6 or 7 men very apprehensive but very courageous. I thought they were wonderful as I had some idea of the immense struggle ahead. Conor explained the A.A. programme and how it worked and indeed, he himself was an example of its success. I promised my whole hearted support and encouragement in their "Climbing of Mount Everest". I suppose as I was an 'outsider', I represented approval and, not being anonymous, I was free to tell everyone the good news.

After that Richard constantly visited Conor and I at Abbotsford to plot strategy and on Richard, the first AA group in Europe was built.

The early days of any organisation are very challenging and exciting. We were full of energy and enthusiasm and all became close friends. Conor and his faithful wife, Margaret remained until after Christmas. I still remember the great send off they got from Heuston Station. Everyone turned up but as it was January 1947 few had transport. That is why Conor's cousin, Eddie Garvey made a great contribution. Eddie was then a Garda Inspector, later Commissioner and his support and help were invaluable. The Dublin First Group owe him a big debt of gratitude. He was one of the few with a car in those days.

Progress was slow until Sackville joined in April 1947. Sackville and Richard made a splendid team. They complimented one and other. Sackville, a former Major in the British

army, was a superb organiser and master letter writer. But shy and abrupt in manner, at first. Richard on the other hand, had a charming presence, spoke very well, drove a car and was the general P.R.O. They travelled up and down the country to meetings promoting AA and giving talks to schools and colleges and meeting leading people to interest them in the programme.

The great success of AA in Ireland with branches now all over the country owes

everything to those great founder men, Conor F. Richard and Sackville.

It was indeed a happy coincidence and an immense privilege for me to contribute a little to this mighty Fellowship, which has revolutionised so many lives and turned ordinary men and women into new 'Saints'.

Eva Jennings, Road Back 2016

MISSED AT THE MEETING

A program member suddenly stopped going to meetings. After a few weeks, her Sponsor decided to visit her. It was a chilly evening and the Sponsor found the Sponsee at home alone, sitting before a blazing fire.

Guessing the reason for the Sponsors visit, the Sponsee welcomed her, led her to a big chair near the fireplace, and waited. Her Sponsor made herself comfortable but said nothing.

In the grave silence, she contemplated the play of the flames around the burning logs. After some minutes, the Sponsor took the fire tongs, carefully picked up a brightly burning ember, and placed it to one side of the hearth all alone. Then she sat back in her chair, still silent.

The Sponsee watched all this in quiet fascination, the one lone embers flame diminished, there was a momentary glow and then its fire was no more. Soon it was cold and dead as a doornail.

Not a word had been spoken since the initial greeting.

Just before the Sponsor was ready to leave, she picked up the cold, dead ember and placed it back in the middle of the fire. Immediately it

began to glow once more with the light and the warmth of the burning coals around it.

As the Sponsor reached the door to leave, the Sponsee said, Thank you so much for your visit and thanks especially for the fiery sermon. I'll see you at the meeting in the morning.

Anon



NO LONGER ALONE

In a dimly lit and crowded basement room in New York City, I raised my hand and said for the first time, "My name is Julie and I am an alcoholic". A great sense of relief came over me as I felt joined together with the recovering alcoholics who sat around me.

During my active drinking years, I'd suffered from a few major depressions that had required hospitalisations and shock treatments. In 1979, a psychiatrist diagnosed me as having bi-polar affective disorder, more commonly known as manic-depressive illness. I had been prescribed lithium at that time, but I would discard it and drink instead.

At age twenty-five, I was a devastated alcoholic. Over a period of twelve years, I'd become a daily drunk. My life was in a shambles when I arrived at AA and surrendered myself to God and the First Step. "Don't drink and go to meetings," I was told by my fellow AA's. I quickly found two solid sponsors who are with me to this day. I shared. I cried. I laughed and I complained, but through the grace of God and AA. I found sobriety. I thought to myself, I'm not crazy, I'm an alcoholic, and I just want to get well.

In the second month of my sobriety, I was referred to an internist who worked with many alcoholics. He told me that I had alcoholic hepatitis and that my liver was enlarged due to my abusive drinking. He said, "you're a very sick woman, but you can recover if you don't drink."

As the early days of my sobriety passed, I found myself sleepless at night, full of creative thoughts, ideas and plans. I collected phone numbers at meetings and called people at odd hours of the night. I began eating less, talking

more, and becoming over elated, euphoric, and erratic in my behaviour. After about sixty days of fragile sobriety and regular attendance at AA, I got the notion that I should travel to Spain and trace my ancestral roots. I was financially bankrupt but talked incessantly about travelling to Spain. On a follow up visit to my doctor, he noticed an elevated and excitable mood, coupled with irrational thinking. He insisted that I go to a rehabilitation centre for alcoholics which was located in Pennsylvania. I was resistant at first until he said he would no longer treat me if I didn't go. I trusted and respected this man's judgement, so I took his advice and travelled by train to the rehab. I was at the facility for only two days when the staff noticed my rapid mood changes and irreverent outspokenness. I was then isolated from the others in an intensive care room, where I was notified that I was being transferred the next morning to a psychiatric institute nearby.

The psychiatric institute was set in a lovely, wooded area with Victorian styled houses for the patients. I stayed there for six weeks, celebrating my ninety days sobriety by calling friends in AA in New York. After discharge, it was necessary for me to live with my parents as I was unemployable for over a year due to my health. With two dollars and two tokens for the subway given to me by my mother, I travelled to the suburb of Queens into Midtown mid-town Manhattan to attend my home group. Eventually I met people in AA near my house and settled into local groups. I still make it a point to take in a meeting at my first home group at least once a year.

Due to my psychiatric disorder, it was necessary for me to be under the care of a psychiatrist. I needed to take prescribed medication to control my mood swings and still do. Each day I take

prescribed medication for my illness just as I make a daily AA meeting for my alcoholism.

I'd like very much to say that all has been well since I got sober and entered treatment, but that's not the case. I have experienced setbacks from time to time – severe manic episodes and crashing depressions. More time than I care to remember I've wanted to drink because of those setbacks. But because of my continued involvement in AA, I've been able to stay sober.

I discovered that I can apply the Twelve Steps suggested in AA to my recovery from manic depression. In the rooms of AA, I've found the comfort, love, and support I need to pick up the pieces and try again after my setbacks. And I'm not alone in my journey. Over the

years I've met and shared with many other recovering alcoholics who also have to grapple with a psychiatric disorder.

With the grace of God and the help of AA, as I write this, I am approaching my eighth sober anniversary. While disabled for a few years by my manic-depressive illness, I managed to return and finish college with honours. Both of my sponsors, along with my family, will be attending my commencement in June. I decided to write this article to say to the many recovering alcoholics with a psychiatric illness: you can recover a day at a time and live a happy and useful life. I know because I've done it.

Julia, Flushing, New York

"Christmas is just another day. Like every other day I must not pick up a drink - one day at a time."

WHAT TO DO THIS CHRISTMAS

This Christmas, mend a quarrel... Seek out a forgotten friend... Dismiss a suspicion, and replace it with trust... Write a letter... Share some treasure... Give a soft answer... Manifest your loyalty... Encourage youth... Keep a promise... Find the time... Forego a grudge... Forgive an enemy... Listen... Apologise if you were wrong... Try to understand... Examine your demands on others... Think first of someone else... Appreciate others... Be kind; be gentle... Laugh a little... Deserve confidence... Take up arms against malice... Decry complacency... Express your gratitude... Go to church... Welcome a stranger... Gladden the heart of a child... Take pleasure in the beauty and wonder of the earth... Speak your love... Speak it again and still once again... Christmas is celebration, and there is no celebration that compares with the realisation of it's true meaning, with the sudden stirring of the heart that has extended itself toward the core of life... Then, only then, is it possible to grasp the significance of that first Christmas... To savour in the inward ear the sweet music of the angel choir, to envision the star-struck sky and glimpse behind the eyelids the ray of light that fell across a darkened path... and changed the world.

Anon



ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
**67th All Ireland
Convention**
SERVICE WITH A SMILE 😊

19th – 21st April 2024

**In the
Tullamore Court Hotel**

For hotel accommodation contact
Tullamore Court Hotel,
O'Moore Street, Tullamore,
Co. Offaly, R35 D406, Ireland.
Tel: +353 (57) 934 66 66
Email: hello@tullamorecourthotel.ie

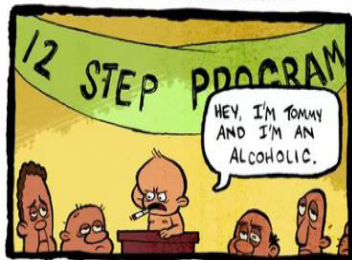
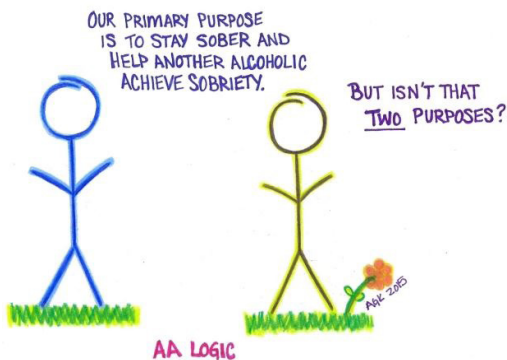


For more information, please email:
allirelandconvention@alcoholicsanonymous.ie
Updates will be made available on
www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie nearer the event
Hosted by Leinster Intergroup on behalf of the General Service Conference of AA in Ireland

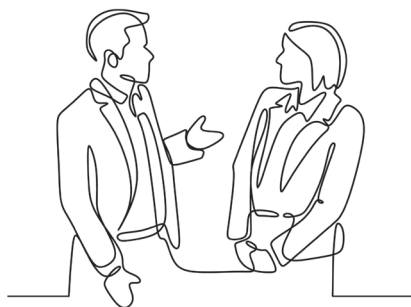


Humour

**If I drink Alcohol
I am Alcoholic
but if I drink
Fanta
does that make me
FANTASTIC?**



CHRIS ALLISON
TOONMOUSE.COM



"what if I took half a Viagra?"
"well you should know from attending your meetings that half measures avail us nothing!"

An extremely inebriated gentleman staggers through the front door of a bar and orders a drink. The barman refuses to serve him and asks him to leave, which he does, only to back in through the side door. Again, the barman says "you're too drunk to serve, you'll have to leave". This time he comes back into the bar via the back door only to meet with the same result to which he says "Maaan! How many bars in this town do you work at?"

A DECLARATION OF UNITY

In July, 1970, eleven thousand members of Alcoholics Anonymous meeting in Miami Beach, Florida, made the following pledge in eleven different languages:

*A Declaration of Unity
This we owe to A.A.'s future:
To place our common welfare first;
To keep our fellowship united.
For on A.A. unity depend our lives;
And the lives of those to come.*

The acceptance of this declaration at the 1970 International Convention of A.A. put a final seal of approval on a decades-long campaign by co-founder Bill W. to establish the preservation of unity as a priority to assure A.A.'s future. Twenty years earlier, at the first

International Convention, in Cleveland, several thousand members had voted to accept the Twelve Traditions, which Bill had written and advanced for the express purpose of assuring that A.A. would survive as a society. The formal Declaration of Unity at the Miami Convention gave this added force.

Why was such a statement necessary? Almost from the very beginning of A.A., Bill had focused on the importance of maintaining Unity in the Fellowship. By working together, we could achieve and maintain sobriety that had eluded us when we were alone. Even when A.A. had less than a hundred members, most of them concentrated in New York and Akron, Bill and Dr. Bob had a vision of a unified fellowship that could reach out to alcoholics throughout North America and even the world. In Bill's own talks and writings, he always emphasized the need to preserve unity in order to maintain sobriety for ourselves

and preserve A.A. for "the millions who still do not know." In introducing the Traditions, Bill had written, "So long as the ties which bind us

together prove far stronger than those forces which would divide us if they could, all will be well.... We shall be secure as a movement; our essential unity will remain a certainty."

What were the forces that could divide A.A.? Bill often mentioned such issues as the struggle for property, power and prestige.

He felt it absolutely necessary that A.A. as a society should avoid controversies over politics and religion. He believed anonymity was also a factor in maintaining unity, and that A.A.'s assistance should be available to everybody without favor or prejudice. Bill had first described the Twelve Traditions as "Twelve points to assure our future." He viewed these as being essential for the preservation of the society, just as the Twelve Steps are essential for the recovery of the individual member. A.A.'s most challenging concern, he had written, "was to preserve among A.A.'s such a powerful unity that neither weakness of persons nor the strife and strain of these troubled times can harm our common cause.

We know that Alcoholics Anonymous must continue to live. Else, save few exceptions, we and our brother alcoholics throughout the world will surely resume the hopeless journey to oblivion." Bill was ailing and had less than a year to live when the formal Declaration of Unity was adopted. Though attending the Convention in a wheelchair and appearing briefly on the platform, he was unable to make a major address as he had at past Conventions. But it surely must have given him a surge of pride to have this declaration endorsed by the Convention; just as the 1965 International Convention in Toronto had formally issued the Declaration of Responsibility.

According to information in the A.A. Archives, the declaration was probably authored by Al S., the same A.A. member and consultant who

had composed the Responsibility Declaration. It also reflects the efforts

of the committee that worked on the 1970 International Convention (which was A.A.'s 35th Anniversary). The theme for the Convention was, appropriately, "Unity Within Our Fellowship." At the Convention's Saturday night ceremony, Bob H. (who was G.S.O. general manager at the time) summoned several ex-delegates and overseas members to be on stage to participate in adopting the declaration.

"A.A. unity is the special quality that makes our Fellowship unique," Bob said. "It is the cement that holds our society together, the platform which makes A.A. 'Service' possible. It is more than an agreement on basic principles, more than freedom from destructive strife. It is a bond fashioned of shared experience, such as

this one we share tonight. Unity is our most precious possession, our best guarantee of A.A.'s future. May we all value and preserve it, today and all the tomorrows to come." Bob H. then asked all participants on stage to recite the Unity Declaration, which was led by Dr. Jack Norris, the nonalcoholic trustee and chairman of the General Service Board. Bill's deteriorating health kept him from attending the Saturday night meeting, but he made it to the stage the next morning for a four-minute talk that brought a standing ovation. This, in Bill's final months, was poignantly reminiscent of Dr. Bob's brief talk at the 1950 Cleveland Convention, when he urged us to remember that the Twelve Steps resolve themselves into love and service, his last message before he died that fall.

**USA General Service Office of A.A. News
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MY NAME IS PAT

I am on my 17th year. I was 30 years out there. I let myself go to the last before I gave in. I told the doctor my appetite was gone, could he get me in to Merlin Park Hospital. He said "what will I put on the letter", I said I don't know. He said "look here now, there is a great unit in Ballinasloe, the best in Ireland but would you go"? He knew me well, I agreed to go. He wrote a letter and I went up town.

At that stage of my drinking I got it hard to get it down at the start but I stayed all day until I got going. I finished up in the local and I was hassling the teller and telling them I was going on my holidays. Some did not believe me, they said was I going far and I said "No". Then I told them where I was going. Some could not believe me. A young girl that worked there said "I believe you Pat and don't change your mind".

I never forgot that because her Father was very bad with drink at that time, he died since. My Son drove me to Hospital the next day. I

felt so bad, I was afraid they would tell me they had no bed. A while later, I asked the Doctor would she tune me up so I would only drink 4 pints. She then told me I had a lot of liver damage and my kidneys were doing three times what they should be doing.

I thought she was trying to frighten me, I got back to the ward and I met an old nurse I knew. I told her my story, she said she had seen my reading and I would never be able to drink again.

I got home after a few weeks and I started going to Meetings. I had counselling for two years. I found the Meetings were the best for my sobriety. I share it a lot. This program saved my life and gave me a new life. Any program that can do that has to be a good one.

Pat, Road Back Nov 2016



Wed Nov 16th Nov 2016



"Drummer" Jim
Rose St Monday Morning Group
Glasgow



My name is Jim

I'm an alcoholic and a grateful member of Rose St Mon morning group in Glasgow. I'm also a very grateful member of The Loners International 1st meeting and LIM Australia

I was handed a copy of "The Road Back" dated March/April 2013 and read it on the bus back home. I thank God for that wee bonus. We had a thousand bonuses since getting sober 23 years ago all because of this amazing Fellowship of ours.

My journey so far has been a joyous one and my sponsor tells me that my best day has yet to come! What a place to be!!

Hand on heart I have to say that LIM has been the anchor of my sobriety for 20 years for many different reasons. I'm a Loner Sponsor and I share the group experience with people who can't get to meetings and I do that by writing letters to fellows LIM's all over the world. Not I may add via a computer but by long hand. I'm "Drummer" Jim and I write letters! That's what I do. Last year I received a letter for just outside of Moscow addressed to "DRUMMER" JIM CUMBERNAULD ---- and I got it! That's the power of this Fellowship. I'm in awe of the power of AA, it really is quite amazing and I'm glad to be a member.

I have to thank all the people who were in place when I came through the doors because I wouldn't be sober if it were not for them. I thank them for being Happy, Joyous and Free as I am now.

I hope all your team go from strength to strength and you keep doing what you're doing

Bye for now take care and may your God go with you.

Yours in love, friendship & Fellowship

"Drummer"

Jim

P.S. If published any chance of copy?

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