

# THE ROAD BACK

**includes AA Service Section**

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**Summer's Here**

# Editorial

Welcome to the Summer edition of the Road Back. The days are much longer, the sun is shining (hopefully). There is a warmth in the air that we don't feel during the winter months. More and more people are being vaccinated. And our country has begun to open up again. Just like in AA, there is a new hope in our society. Hope is the one thing that gets us through the darkest of times.

Physical meetings are slowly appearing again everywhere, just as they have been for many years. All of these reopened meetings will need members to do Service, to welcome the newcomers, to make the teas and coffees and to act as Secretary. Don't be hesitant to put yourself forward if you would like to help. Many groups will be short on members to fulfil these roles. We will have quite a few members coming to physical meetings for the first time, even though they may be sober for 12 months, or more. It's up to the older members to show them what AA is really like. Online meetings have filled a void during this pandemic, and while they have a part to play in the future of the Fellowship, most members would probably agree that there is nothing quite like a physical AA meeting, one where you can shake someone's hand, drink a cup of tea or coffee, and literally feel the recovery in the room. If you are nervous or afraid to start going to physical meetings again, maybe talk to another member. It can be quite daunting to go back after such a long break. Or maybe check on those members who you may know who went to meetings before the pandemic, but you haven't seen for some time. They might appreciate a simple phone call much more than we realise. A simple 'hello' can make a huge difference to someone's life. We work better when we work together.

There is an old tale about parachute jumpers. They seldom pack their own parachutes. They have to rely on others to do that for them. They trust other people with their lives. It's similar in AA. We have to rely on others. We have to learn how to 'pack parachutes', because someone else's life may depend on it sometime. Someday, when we are in trouble, we often find that our parachute comes from that guy down the back of the room, who we can't stand. But somehow, we find that his parachute works perfectly in the situation that we find ourselves in. In every single meeting that we go to, there will always be multiple parachutes on offer. It's no harm to listen for them, and pack away as many as we can. If we don't need to use them, we might come across another member who really needs one of the parachutes we have.

Please let us know your stories. Pop them in an email, don't worry about formatting, we can look after all of that. This is your magazine and the more personal stories that we get from you, the more interesting it will be for all members. You can e-mail [roadback@alcoholicsanonymous.ie](mailto:roadback@alcoholicsanonymous.ie) with your stories.

We are reminded that the General Service Office is fully operational and that orders and queries are being dealt with promptly. While restrictions prevent visitors from popping into the office to collect orders, they are more than willing to have them shipped to you. The staff have been working relentlessly behind the scenes, working from home, yet providing a service that is seamless. On behalf of our readers we would like to express our gratitude to them.

Finally, did you notice that this is the first time we have incorporated the Road Back & News Sheet into one publication. Other than that, everything's the same. If you find it difficult to read this magazine online, why not ask somebody to print off a copy for you. If not, contact the General Service Office and they can do it for you.

Continue to keep safe, sober and well, and don't forget to keep in touch with somebody you haven't spoken to in a while.

The Road Back Editorial Team

# THE ROAD BACK

## A meeting in print

**A**lcoholics 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, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes.

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

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Up to date information on forthcoming Conventions and One Day Events can be viewed on our website at [www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie](http://www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie)

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Front Cover Image: Rocky Bay Beach, Ireland

# Step Six

## THE CHOICE

**B**ill W. points out in the chapter on Step Six in the “Twelve and Twelve”: “Some people, of course, may conclude that they are indeed ready to have all these defects taken from them. But even these people, if they construct a list of still milder defects, will be obliged to admit that they prefer to hang on to some of them.”

Several years ago, I had a vivid personal example of what he was talking about. At that time, I had a sponsor to whom I was devoted, one possible reason for which was that she and I shared some of the same characteristics or, as some would say, defects. One of them was a quick temper. Restraint of tongue and pen didn't come easily to either of us. One day, after a brisk altercation on the phone, she hung up on me. Indignation swelled up inside me. That was absolutely no way for a sponsor of many years' sobriety to behave! Indignation was followed by a delicious sense of grievance, of having been profoundly wronged.

For the next twenty-four hours I fed and watered that delightful sense of victimhood. I would not,

of course, have admitted for one moment to myself or anyone else how much I was enjoying it, or my discovery that being a victim was not far removed for (in the words of Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark) a consummation devoutly to be wished. In my own mind I replayed the incident on the phone over and over, brushing aside my recollection of what I might have said or done to bring on my sponsor's action. And each time her hanging up on me grew more heinous. I was innocent, and in a case like this, innocence is power.

The next afternoon after being out of my apartment for several hours, I called my answering service to pick up messages. The young woman at the other end of the phone said, “Jean called to say she was sorry and would you please call her.”

You would think, wouldn't you, that now with my sense of grievance fully vindicated, I would be filled with joy and forgiveness? You would be wrong. My first feeling, and I remember it was dismay, followed quickly by a flattening sense of let-down.

I worried at the let-down for a full day before some glimmering of its real cause dawned on me. I knew that when I would call Jean, she'd repeat her apology and I would have to forgive her. And by forgiving her. I would yield up the sense of power of self-justification, that I had enjoyed so much.

It took me another several hours to define what my choice was: I could have my grievance, or I could have my friend. Not both. I had to choose. And I saw further that choice is one of the fruits of sobriety that by putting down the bottle I now had, not only about this, but about other aspects of my life and other defects of character. It was the first time I understood a defect for what it was: something out of character. It was the first time I understood a defect for what it was therefore not entirely willing to give up. Obviously, in this particular example by relinquishing the pleasure I would get something better – the restoration of friendship.

But sometimes the sense of gratification and of power that a grievance can bring is hard to yield up. I once heard a well know doctor, one of the first to recognise what AA could do, say: "Self-pity is followed by isolation is followed by a drink."

And I began, especially after the incident involving my sponsor, to understand why, when I first came into Alcoholics Anonymous, the most frequent warnings from some of the old-timers were against self-pity. All those sensations I'd been wallowing in with such enjoyment of being aggrieved, of being wronged, of being victimised, of being (for once!) in the right – added to the heady brew of self-pity. And I then comprehended fully why self-pity, leading to isolation (and wasn't I isolating myself from my sponsor?), was presented by that doctor and the old-timers as such a formidable enemy of sobriety.

P.S. I called Jean and we made up and the incident passed. But I still think about it a lot.

*(The best of Grapevine Vol.3 Page 201-203)*

Up to date information about Online meetings available on our website at [www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie](http://www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie)

# Learning to Handle Sobriety

The idea is not new. I first heard it a dozen years ago from a speaker who was then an old-timer in AA. But I've been given it a lot of thought recently because it is an important concept. I know it is not understood outside our fellowship, and I suspect it is not well recognised inside, either.

The Old-timer said, "AA does not teach us how to handle our drinking; it teaches us how to handle sobriety."

He went on to explain: "AA doesn't teach us how to handle our drinking. Most alcoholics know, long before they come through the doors of their first meeting, that the way to handle their drinking is to quit. People have told them so. And almost every alcoholic I know has stopped drinking at one time or another – maybe dozens of times! – when he went on the wagon, or took a pledge, or perhaps when he was hospitalised or jailed. So, it's no trick to stop drinking; the trick is to stay stopped.

"No, AA doesn't teach us how to handle our drinking. It teaches us how to handle sobriety – which is what none of us could handle in the first place, and that's why we drank."

What a simple idea! But what a marvellous expression of the way AA works! It has so many advantages and clears up is much misunderstanding about our Society and recovered drunks.

First of all, it explains the need for a continuing program of recovery. One of the most commonest questions we get from non-alcoholic friends is "You haven't had a drink in 'X' years, so why do you still have to go to meetings?" In my own case, it's true that I haven't had the slightest desire for a drink in many years. And the reason is that my continuing, regular attendance at AA meetings and my effort "to practice these principles" in all my affairs teach me how to live comfortably, productively, happily – without seeking these attributes in a bottle.

This concept also explains the puzzling and paradoxical fact that the halls of AA are crowded, not with shivering wrecks fighting off the craving for a belt of booze, but with healthy, clear-eyed, smiling people. On Twelfth Step calls, I've had prospects ask, "I've stopped drinking, so why should I go to AA."

I reply, "I have also stopped drinking – long ago- and so have other members of AA. We find it essential to attend meetings to improve ourselves, to improve our relations with other people,

and to learn to practice a better way of life. That's the only way we can be sure we won't slip into drinking again."

(Best of the Grapevine Vol. 2 Page 85)

## FEAR AND FAITH

*The achievement of freedom from fear is a lifetime understanding, one that can never be wholly completed. When under heavy attack, acute illness, or in the other conditions of serious insecurity, we shall all react to this emotion – well or badly, as the case may be. Only the self-deceived will claim perfect freedom from fear.*

AS BILL SEES IT P. 263

Fear has caused suffering when I could have had more faith. There are times when fear suddenly tears me apart, just when I'm experiencing feelings of joy, happiness, and lightness of heart. Faith – and feeling of self-worth toward a Higher Power – helps me endure tragedy and ecstasy. When I choose to give all of my fears over to my Higher Power, I will be free.



# Dosage, Symptoms and Side Effects of attending AA

**M**isery, depression, despair, remorse, guilt, shame, physical, mental, and spiritual maladies a mental obsession and a physical allergy commonly known as alcoholism.

We do not recommend that you use AA unless you are capable of being honest and completely willing to give yourself to this simple program. AA is available for use by those who have a sincere desire to stop drinking.

**CAUTION:** AA will impair your ability to consume alcohol. If you are on any other medications such as alcohol or any other mind-altering substance, we suggest that you discontinue use immediately as this will cause a substantial reduction in the effect caused by AA.

Some of the most common side effects associated with AA are: Honesty, Hope, Faith, Courage, Integrity, Willingness, Humility, Brotherly love, Justice, Perseverance, Spirituality, and Service. A spiritual awakening and a psychic change have been reported in most cases.

If you are experiencing a resurrection lasting more than four hours, you needn't seek medical attention, as you may be experiencing the initial effects of AA.

AA has no negative side effects on pregnant women or women who are nursing.

To reduce your risk of chronic relapse, a lifestyle change maybe recommended. In 9 out of 10 cases practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics.

An increased risk of recovery and long-term spiritual affects have been associated with AA. Consult your sponsor immediately when changes do occur.

AA should be taken with plenty of open-mindedness and willingness. Do not take AA alone. Independent studies have shown that AA is most effective when working with others.

Always remember it is important

that you use AA only as prescribed:

1. Trust in God
2. Clean House
3. Help others

WARNING: Do not skip doses or discontinue use as severe reoccurrence of fatal allergy symptoms may occur.

AA is recommended for long term daily use. Prodigious results have been found in those who

continue long term use of AA. As with all allergy relief medications some results may vary, sometimes quickly sometimes slowly.

For more information and to learn more about the AA 12 step program of recovery and alcoholism we suggest you contact your local AA community directly, retain a sponsor, and read the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous.

*Source unidentified*

*Here is Ruth's Prayer in memory of a long-standing member of AA, may she rest in peace*

## Ruth's Prayer

Thank You, dear God, for another day,  
The chance to live in a decent way,

To feel again the joy of living  
and happiness that comes from giving.

Thank You for friends who can understand  
and the peace that flows from Your loving hand.

Help me to wake with the morning sun,  
With the prayer today, "Thy will be done."

For with Your help I will find the way.  
Thank You again, dear God, for AA.



# Step Nine

## A Benchmark in Sobriety

When I arrived at the Eight and Ninth Step. I found I had an unusual amend to make. I needed to make amends to the entire town I grew up in, for various acts of juvenile delinquency. There was no way of finding individual firemen, policemen, or citizens I may have involved or harmed twenty years before, but I wanted to make amends in some way.

I first tried writing a letter to the local newspaper, outlining my transgressions of the past, and declaring that I wanted to apologise to the town. The editor refused to publish my letter, saying that such a letter might actually encourage other young people to misbehave.

So, I turned the whole thing over to my Higher Power and went on about the business of living in sobriety.

One day after about a year on the program, I sat down on a park bench to rest. It occurred to me that someone ought to paint the bench, spruce it up. I thought about doing it myself, but I realised I would need a whole bagful of tools, besides the paint, to do a good job. It was too much for me to deal with. So, I turned it over to my Higher Power.

Another year gone by, and I sat on another bench in another park, and I thought, "Somebody ought to paint this bench!" I realised that over the preceding year I had acquired most of the tools I would need. All I needed to buy was some paint and some brushes.

I bought the needed supplies, assembled my tools, put them all in a large shopping bag, and I began to paint park benches. I took it one day at a time, painting one bench at a time.

Over a period of three years, I painted about thirty benches in three parks. Some of the benches were getting tough use and those I painted twice. I used a rasp to smooth out coarse edges and sandpaper to roughen the surface of the smooth, weathered boards so they would take the paint. I did a priming coat and another day a finishing coat. It took about four hours work altogether to do one bench.

I want to say right off that I enjoyed the work, it wasn't drudgery for me. I was outdoors, in the parks, out in the sun and the wind. Listening to the birds and watching the squirrels, and sometimes interacting with people in the park.

I never told anyone, outside of AA, that I was doing this to make amends. I just said that it needed doing and I enjoyed doing it. Some people asked if this was a required court-ordered community service, and I said, "No, I'm just a volunteer."

Then came a day, after about three years, when it occurred to me that I was done. I had made my amends to the town. I didn't have to do it anymore.

Several years have passed. I still use those park benches as a place to sit and rest. Occasionally I see a bench that needs painting and I remember the work I did. But I don't do it anymore. Now the town does it.

If you can't figure out how to make amends, just turn it over to your Higher Power. In time, there will be an answer, there will be a way.

(Grapevine Vo. 3 pages 214 to 216)

## A GLORIOUS RELEASE

*"The minute I stopped arguing, I could begin to see and feel. Right there. Step Two gently and very gradually began to infiltrate my life. I can't say upon what occasion or upon what day I came to believe in a Power greater than myself, but I certainly have that believe now. To acquire it, I had only to stop fighting and practice ant rest of A.A.'s program as enthusiastically as I could."*

AS BILL SEES IT p. 61

### TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS

After years of indulging in a "self-will run riot," Step Two became for me a glorious release from being all alone. Nothing is so painful as insurmountable in my journey now. Someone is always there to share life's burdens with me. Step Two became a reinforcement with God, and I now realise that my insanity and ego were curiously linked. To rid myself of the former, I must give up the latter to one with far broader shoulders than my own.



# AA Service Section

MAY / JUNE 2021

## Suggested Guidelines for Personal Conduct and Appropriate Behaviour for AA members

Many newcomers to AA are not aware of what behaviours are appropriate at meetings and what is not acceptable. Any behaviour that disrupts the ability of the group to conduct its meetings appropriately is not acceptable. Such behaviour threatens the group's unity and therefore the chance for the members present to recover.

“Each member of AA is but a small part of a greater whole. AA must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows closely afterwards.”

**(Long form of Tradition One).**

Aggressive or coercive behaviour of any kind, including all forms of harassment whether ethnic, sexual, or personal whether at meetings or online, is inappropriate and completely unacceptable. Each member attending a meeting has the right to feel that they are in a secure, safe, protective and welcoming environment. This applies equally to any member who is going about AA business in a service role. It is the responsibility of individual group committees, officers and members to ensure that no-one attending the group's meetings or other activities is subjected to bullying in any form, to harassment or any offensive behaviour no matter what form this behaviour takes. Such behaviour is unacceptable to the AA traditions and is in conflict with the AA way of life in recovery.

Group officers must be reasonable and measured in their response to such disruptive behaviours. No member should place themselves in physical danger or allow themselves to get into situations that might leave them open to legal repercussions. Where a situation becomes serious and cannot be handled within the group, then it is appropriate to seek advice and assistance from outside the group, whether from Area, Intergroup or, if the situation is grave, from Conference. Appropriate authorities such as the Gardai or PSNI ought to be contacted where the situation is considered, by the Group Committee, to warrant this intervention. A member should not make such a decision alone but only in consultation with the group's steering committee.

A properly convened and well-informed Group Conscience may consider it necessary to temporarily exclude a disruptive member from the group. The decision to permit the offending member to return equally rests with such a Group Conscience decision. Should they wish, groups may display a “clear and unambiguous statement” concerning behaviour at meetings. Group officers and members ought to be well informed about how to deal with different types of inappropriate behaviour and have the full support of the group. It is the group's

responsibility to care for newcomers and to ensure that they feel welcome and safe at all times.

### **Suggestions:**

Members who engage in sexually explicit comments or regularly use offensive language may be taken aside after the meeting, where the committee can explain what is and what is not acceptable. If disruption continues then the secretary should consult with colleagues to decide what action to take. The common welfare of the group must come before any individual. Meetings cannot revolve around one person.

*Approved by General Service Conference 05/2019*

### **Newcomer to AA? Confused about the types of AA meetings?**

There are two kinds of AA Meetings. Open Meetings and Closed Meetings.

#### **Open Meetings**

These meetings seek to reach the suffering alcoholic through a third party and will very often be attended by a group of Doctors, Nurses, Social Workers, Teachers, Prison Officers, Gardai/Police, Public Media etc. These people in their daily work are frequently in contact with the suffering alcoholic and by their very presence at our meeting have shown their concern and willingness to help from the earliest beginnings of AA when Henrietta Sieberling introduced Dr. Bob to Bill W. Many thousands of alcoholics who found sobriety in AA, were first put in contact with AA by a non-alcoholic third party, be it a concerned Doctor, Policeman, Social Worker etc. These good friends of AA knew AA existed, where it could be found and what help AA offered to the problem drinker.

#### **Closed Meetings**

These meetings are strictly for those who have a drink problem or think they have a drink problem.

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

- BB: This stands for 'Big Book' which is 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 the means by which 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.

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.

**Simply visit our website [www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie](http://www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie) for details of AA meetings.**

# A Selfish Program?

**H**OW MANY TIMES HAVE WE HEARD this expression and perhaps wondered how anything selfish can be food for us? How can we acquire humility, gain sincerity, overcome resentments, be strictly honest with ourselves and others, and be selfish?

I believe we associate selfishness with meanness, thinking of oneself in terms of material advantages, and living for one's own comfort and desires. Also, we have abused ourselves so much during our drinking careers that to give ourselves some real earnest thought, and attention is hard to comprehend at first.

Actually, being selfish in the AA sense is an entirely different matter, and here is the writer's opinion of it, after being sober long enough to think things through and able to remember enough not to take that first drink. There is an old saying, "Self-preservation is the first law of Nature." To paraphrase this, I should say, "To be selfish about our AA program is life itself" for us. If we preserve ourselves, we are not being selfish at all. Everyone associated with us, our family, friends, employer, employees, the community as a whole benefits accordingly, and we regain our rightful place in society. We

are thoughtful of others, take care of our obligations assume our proper responsibilities, and become respectable human beings instead of walking zombies or vegetables, as we were when we drank.

Yes, this is a selfish program, because it brings us back to "First Things First" one-day-at-a-time living, so fundamental to happiness.

I need to remind myself that I was always equivocating and procrastinating when I drank, about what I was going to do tomorrow, next week, or next year. I was a world -beater at a bar or over a bottle, but I know now I actually did very little about today, or any other day for that matter.

Being selfish about AA for ourselves restores our dignity as individuals. It makes many of us; realise that in being married or in trying to give to a family, job, or community, we many times subjugated our own personalities to meet the requirements of these social and worldly obligations<sup>7</sup>. Too often we tried to fortify ourselves with alcohol to overcome our feelings; of inferiority or inadequacy, but the result in time was just the reverse, and we became in effect more

inadequate and definitely inferior.

Being selfish in AA means using our normal minds to think objectively and constructively about the things around us, something we could never do with our brains paralyzed by liquor.

Being selfish in AA further helps us to be big enough to overcome resentments, humble enough to overlook fancied slights and wrongs, honest enough to evaluate things in their true perspective, seen enough to accept the things we cannot change, and sensible enough to judge what the finer things of life really are, instead of chasing myth and material things.

Being selfish in AA also means taking a look at our environment

and the people we associate with. We no longer want to be argumentative and full of self-pity. Somehow, we slowly but surely cut loose from this sort of thing. It is time-consuming, it is destructive, it could lead to "stinking thinking." It is not the way we want to live anymore, and we do something constructive about it.

Gone are the fears, the tensions, the self-pity, the apprehensions. We become imbued each new day with vigour and hope, a clear conscience, a renewed strength of both body and spirit, and last and most important, we receive the greatest gift of all, peace of mind.

It is simple, it is selfish, it is AA, and it works wonders.

*(Grapevine vol. 1 Page 153-155)*

## FREEDOM FROM GUILT

*Where other people were concerned, we had to drop the word "blame" from our speech and thought.*

TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS p.47

When I become willing to accept my own powerlessness, I begin to realise that blaming myself for all the trouble in my life can be an ego trip back into hopelessness. Asking for help and listening deeply to the message inherent in the Steps and Traditions of the program make it possible to change those attitudes which delay my recovery. Before joining A.A. I had such a desire for approval from people in powerful positions that I was willing to sacrifice myself, and others, to gain a foothold in the world. I invariably came to grief. In the program I find true friends who love, understand, and care to help me learn the truth about myself. With the help of the Twelve Steps, I am able to build a better life, free of guilt and the need for self-justification.



# Don't Leave Before the Miracle Happens

My name's Pat and I'm an alcoholic. I came from a respectable family in North Dublin and started drinking around seventeen or eighteen. I was hooked on alcohol the first time I got drunk and went to the school disco in Saint Paul's, Raheny. The difference between when I had gone there sober to when I'd gone there drunk was the difference between day and night - from wall flower to John Travolta in sixty seconds.

I was hooked on alcohol from the start. Attending the school disco sober had been so awful, I vowed never to go to another club, concert or disco sober again - and for twenty years I never did. I had blackouts early on although I could usually shrug off the hangovers with a litre of milk and a good workout on the bike when I was younger.

I embarked on a career of geographicals. Alcohol gave me the courage to approach women, and I soon launched on my career of pursuing alcohol and women which took me to Scotland and France before I settled with a college friend in Manchester, England. I drank into functional blackouts and started

to lose my temper when I was drinking and lash out at property to begin with, and later, people, acting out my frustrations in alcohol.

I met my live-in girlfriend during a blackout and lived with her on and off for seven years. I periodically left on geographical cures as I was afraid my drinking could escalate into more serious harm. On many occasions, I drank into blackout, played loud music into the small hours, wrecking the house and waking the neighbours; incidents I'm ashamed to recall today. Eventually I felt that I had to leave the relationship for fear of what I might do.

Around this time, I started to think that maybe I had a problem with alcohol and began to stay off it for longer periods of time. I attended an alcohol counsellor and went off it entirely for six months. Nevertheless, I returned to drinking when that finished even though I knew it was causing me harm. I suffered from terrible hangovers as I seldom took the morning cure. I did another geographical as a student to Denmark and drank alcoholically there.

In spite of the counselling and therapy, I continued to drink periodically because I had no plan B for dealing with life without alcohol. I'd learned to drink when I was seventeen and now that I was trying to stop, I didn't have anything to replace the alcohol with. My character defects, resentment fear and self-pity, would pile up until it became intolerable for me to live with the noise in my head and I'd drink again.

I spoke to a Samaritan on the phone who mentioned AA and suggested I go to a meeting. I went to my first AA meeting in central Manchester in 1997. At the time I had a job and was doing fairly well, I thought. I was doing ok with alcohol and staying off it successfully. AA was okay for you people, you obviously had a serious problem, but I was okay, thank you very much, so I continued on my unhappy way for a few more years.

However, my drinking soon caught up with me and it was a bender in Bolton during Saint Patrick's Day week that brought me back into AA again. This time I stuck around for a year until I took a resentment against a meeting on behalf of another member. I said to myself, "I'll show you I can't take the first drink!" and began to experiment with having one drink in pubs which was a waste of time for a drinker of my type. As they say in AA, I never had one of anything.

I passed my driving test at this time and drove off alone around the North of England, calling into pubs for an orange juice and to read the newspaper but I felt lonely. Part of me realised I was vulnerable and that I needed to be with my people of my type so I started going back to the meetings in the Manchester area. This time I stayed. I got into the middle of AA.

After about four or five years, I began to hear people sharing who were really working the steps, so I got a sponsor and started doing the steps with him and that really launched me on my recovery. I went to a lot of meetings in the early days. I had nowhere else to go. One or two meetings a day during the week and at weekends, two or even three on Saturday when they had the night owls meeting which I enjoyed. At the same time, I'd dropped out of work and was attending a mental health centre. I went to University and started to get part-time work teaching, then I got back into employment working for Sainsbury's supermarket.

In 2011, I transferred back to Northern Ireland and worked for Sainsbury's for another six years. In the meantime, I was working on my recovery and I joined other fellowships after my father died. My experience in AA was that I had addiction problems in other areas and it was necessary

for me to join other fellowships to help me. I found that AA wasn't enough to help me deal with the other addictions, which is why there are two hundred plus fellowships who use the twelve steps to overcome their issues.

I moved back to Southern Ireland four years ago. I live in my own place in the country. I had my twentieth-year sobriety birthday in April. I haven't taken an alcoholic drink in that time. Just for today, I'm sober and abstinent in four other twelve step programmes. I do service and attend local as well as Area meetings. I'm currently looking for employment and did a great interview two weeks ago for a job I'm waiting to hear about.

I wouldn't be alive without AA today or I'd be in a really bad way. I was heading for homelessness and am not sure I'd have survived. In sobriety, I was able to reconcile with my parents before they passed away. I've made amends to everyone I've needed to from the past and am willing to make amends to them all.

I'm grateful to my Higher Power who keeps me sober. I'm grateful I'm alive and for my physical and mental health and many other blessings, spiritual and material, that I've received as a result of joining this God-given programme twenty years ago.

PO

## THE BONDAGE OF RESENTMENTS

*..... harbouring resentment is infinitely grave. For then we shut ourselves off from the sunlight of the spirit.*

AS BILL SEES IT p. 5

It has been said, "Anger is a luxury I cannot afford." Does this suggest I ignore this human emotion? I believe not. Before I learned of the AA program, I was a slave to the behaviour patterns of alcoholism. I was chained to negativity with no hope of cutting loose.

The Steps offered me an alternative. Step Four was the beginning of the end of my bondage. The process of "letting go" started with an inventory. I needed not be frightened, for the previous Steps assured me I was not alone. My Higher Power led me to this door and gave me the gift of choice. Today I can choose to open the door to freedom and rejoice in the sunlight of the Steps, as they cleanse the spirit within me.

# Heard at Meetings

“ A group is only as strong as its weakest member. ”

“ Anger is just a cover for being afraid. ”

“ I only drank on the days that end in ‘y’. ”

“ There was never a glass big enough for just one drink. ”

“ The Big Book means something new every time its read. ”

“ Life begins when you are ready to step out of your comfort zone. ”

“ Just focus on taking one day at a time. ”

“ Pick up the phone before you pick up a drink. ”

“ Quitting is easy. It’s staying on the path that’s hard. ”

# Upgrade Required

I was born into a large family, eight boys and five girls. I am the twelfth child, the youngest is my sister. My parents were vastly different people. My father a mild-mannered man with a quiet personality, my mother a driven woman fierce in everything – her temper, her religious adherence, her control, her love - fierce in all. It was a busy and chaotic household. My parents were not lovingly expressive or adoring but loving in the practical sense, food, clothing, education, medical care etc, these things were never neglected. My mother's dominant personality, set the climate of the household and her mood became the weather.

As a child, I never knew what category hurricane was coming until my mother would burst through the door. A heightened state of tension and uncertainty formed my earliest memories. Fear. I feared everything. Feeling an outsider, I never felt a part of, always I felt apart from. I could disappear in a room full of people and hide in plain sight. In my mind I could escape this overwhelming sense of separateness. I learned to escape, as early as possible, through fantasy. Fantasizing being somebody else, somewhere else – anywhere really, where I wasn't so afraid. Building things with Lego bricks became another

escape as a child progressing to model aircraft and ships, then, as I got older, books. My seven older brothers were bigger and, in my mind, better at everything and wanted little to do with me. None of them were swimmers so I took up swimming and really enjoyed the physical freedom the water provided. From this alloy of confused fantasy, model making, books and swimming, my pattern of solitary pursuits emerged - I would and could do it on my own. I know now I was an alcoholic in embryo - just add booze.

I experimented with alcohol in my teens and although I didn't like the taste I did like the effect. In my early 20's I moved to the US. Working and earning in a country that promotes itself as the land of opportunity I managed to hone my chameleon abilities to best suit whatever I perceived the situation required. I worked and earned and felt totally justified having a few hard-earned drinks at the end of a busy day. Who didn't! It wasn't long before I decided every day was busy enough to warrant drinking. Externally my life would have looked good to any casual observer. However, that would not hold up under even the mildest scrutiny.

## Behind the façade I was frightened and alone, confused, and hopeless, drinking only for effect

Behind the façade I was frightened and alone, confused, and hopeless, drinking only for effect, trying to capture and sustain the euphoric calm of those first few drinks. My mind desperately needed the relief alcohol brought but drinking was always followed by a dark depression. Darkness became a constant companion and suicide an occasional visitor. I sought help from psychiatrists, psychologists, therapist of one kind or another, all the while

lying, or at least minimizing my drinking. Desperate for a magic bullet to fix me I had to exhaust all the options I could think of, repeatedly. Again, and again, I tried the old game - the insanity of the first drink. Again, and again, I failed - sinking further still. The program of recovery as outlined by Alcoholics Anonymous in the Twelve Steps is, for me, the only solution to my hopeless condition. Gently and accurately AA has given me a program for living that works - the software upgrade my mind and, more importantly, my soul has always unknowingly sought. One day at a time I am at peace with myself and with others and with God.

*LMH  
Kildare*

## AA Humour

**Why do we tell actors to 'break a leg'?**

Because every play has a cast

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**What do you call a boomerang that doesn't come back?**

A stick

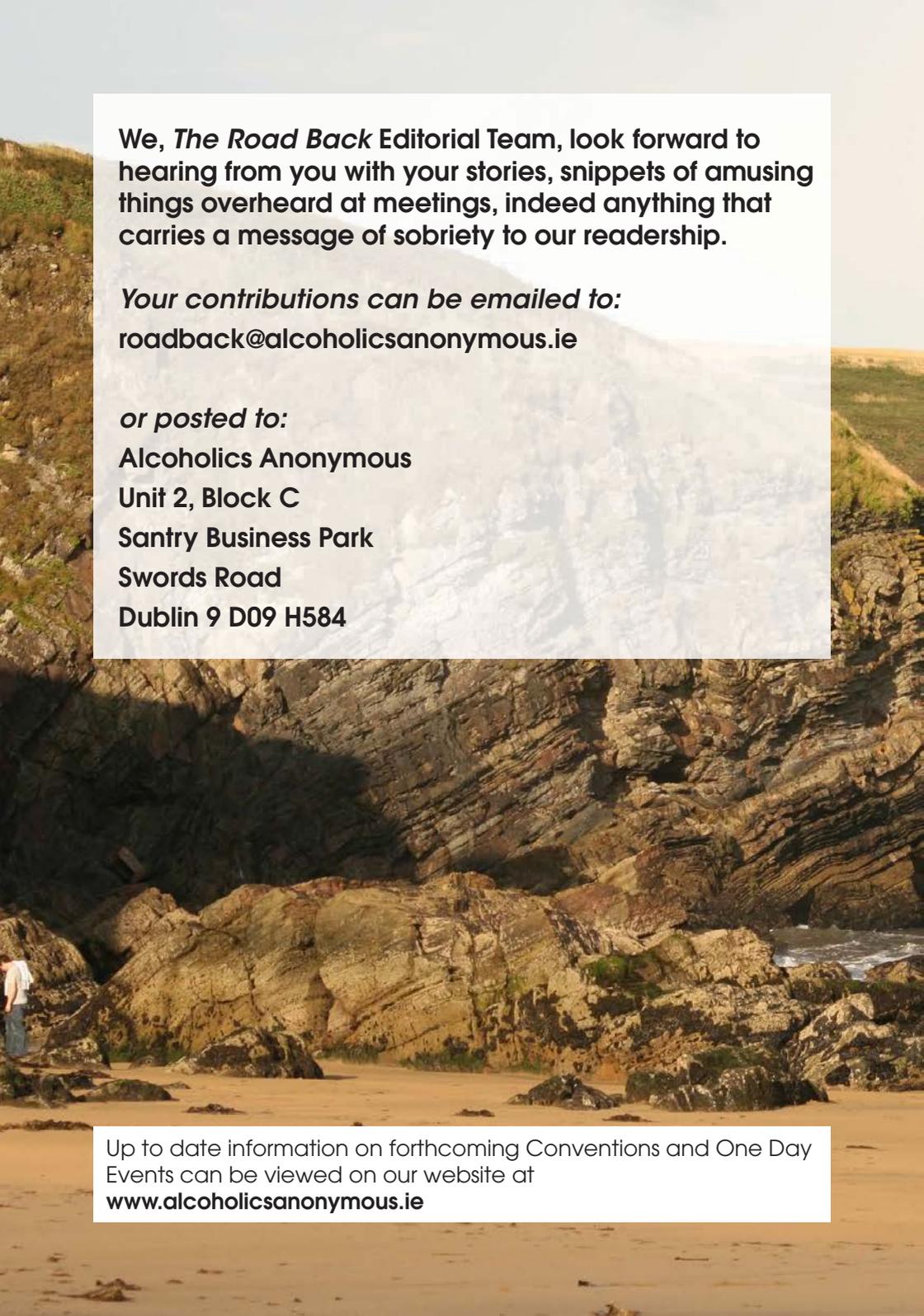
**“Few people benefit from a good talking to;  
Everybody benefits from a good listening to”**

# 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 practice these principles in all our affairs.

# 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 centres may employ special workers.
9. A.A., as such, ought never be organised; 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.



**We, *The Road Back* Editorial Team, look forward to hearing from you with your stories, snippets of amusing things overheard at meetings, indeed anything that carries a message of sobriety to our readership.**

***Your contributions can be emailed to:***  
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***or posted to:***  
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**Santry Business Park**  
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Up to date information on forthcoming Conventions and One Day Events can be viewed on our website at  
**[www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie](http://www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie)**