

The Road Back

July/August 2018 - Issue 417

Step Six



*"Believe more deeply. Hold your face
up to the Light, even though for the
moment you do not see."*

Bill W.

A word from the Editor

Step Six

In our next step challenge we are confronted with the need for further acceptance and the word “entirely” - another extreme requirement faces us square on. Here again we see where ‘half measures avail us nothing’. If we have sincerely and earnestly done our fourth and fifth steps as thoroughly as we can we can face the surrender of ‘all’ of the baggage and obstacles to our spiritual growth as we progress through our AA programme of recovery. We are ready and willing to “Let Go, Let God”.

We have commenced the implementation of our decision in Step Three and have begun to surmount to a very large degree the obstacle of ‘the bondage of self’. Step Six is a further step in surrendering the power of the ego over our lives.

We have chosen “God, as we understand Him” and we renew that choice by imparting that trust in Him again to privilege us with the ‘grace of surrender’. ‘Willingness is the key’.

We need balance too. We need to see that we are not ‘horrible people’ trying to change to ‘models of perfection’ as an exercise in image management.

The purpose of Step Six is not about personal aggrandisement or saving our reputation. If we are honest and thorough in this Step the results will speak for themselves.

This essential exercise in humility further paves the way in progressing our spiritual growth. Earnestness and rigorous honesty are key. In spiritual matters, particularly with us ‘alkies’ we need to be extreme to make conscious contact with our Higher Power.

The first few lines of the Seventh Step prayer are in fact the great admission of readiness that Step Six calls for. “When the student is ready the Master appears”.

“My Creator I am now ready that you have all of me”

As we did in the first step - we humbly ask Him from our “innermost selves” to grace us with the readiness of letting go. If we wish to begin to grow towards adulthood- from the Latin ad ultimum (towards the ultimate), we need the grace of surrender again to let loose the ballast that keeps us stuck on the ground. Here it is important to be firm and disciplined, but we also need to be kind to ourselves in a wholesome and life-giving way.

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.

oooooooo

The Road Back

A meeting in print

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, 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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Photos courtesy of Ken O'S

& A.N. Other

The Views and opinions expressed in The Road Back are not necessarily the views and opinions of the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole.



From "How it Works"

extract from the Big Book

Chapter 5- page 75 - 76

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Chapter 6 - INTO ACTION

Returning home we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we have done (in Step Five). We thank God from the bottom of our heart that we know Him better. Taking this book down from our shelf we turn to the page which contains the Twelve Steps. Carefully reading the first five proposals we ask if we have omitted anything, for we are building an arch through which we shall walk a free man at last. Is our work solid so far? Are the stones properly in place? Have we skimped on the cement put into the foundation? Have we tried to make mortar without sand?

If we can answer to our satisfaction, we then look at Step Six. We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable. Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable? Can He now take them all - every one? If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.

∞∞∞∞

The Why and the Wherefore...

We are reminded on many fronts when taking the Steps of our AA Program that their purpose is to relieve us of the bondage of ourselves. They are not intended to render us 'white as snow' or to polish our image. We cannot see until we can see or hear until we can hear.

Looking closely at the Steps we see that they are about getting us out of the way of ourselves in order that we can better do His will. Step Five has been a major hurdle that we have now negotiated but we cannot rest on our laurels.

Our willingness to be free of the dirt on our windows allows for the sunlight of the Great Reality within to shine forth. But we must also be vigilant and avoid the pitfalls that complacency may create. AA allows us to share and be shared with... both students and teachers of the program. In sharing we take ownership of our learning.

Anon

Step Six

"Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character."

Extracted highlights from the Twelve & Twelve

"This is the Step that separates the men from the boys." So declares a well-loved clergyman who happens to be one of A.A.'s greatest friends. He goes on to explain that any person capable of enough willingness and honesty to try repeatedly Step Six on all his faults - *without any reservations whatever* - has indeed come a long way spiritually, and is therefore entitled to be called a man who is sincerely trying to grow in the image and likeness of his own Creator.

Of course, the often disputed question of whether God can - and will, under certain conditions - remove defects of character will be answered with a prompt affirmative by almost any A.A. member. To him, this proposition will be no theory at all; it will be just about the largest fact in his life. He will usually offer his proof in a statement like this: "Sure, I was beaten, absolutely licked. My own willpower just wouldn't work on alcohol. Change of scene, the best efforts of family, friends, doctors, and clergymen got no place with my alcoholism. I simply couldn't stop drinking, and no human being could seem to do the job for me. But when I became willing to clean house and then asked a Higher Power, God as I understood Him, to give me release, my obsession to drink vanished. It was lifted right out of me."

..... all A.A.'s have "become entirely ready" to have God remove the mania for alcohol from their lives. And God has proceeded to do exactly that.

.....When men and women pour so much alcohol into themselves that they destroy their lives, they commit a most unnatural act. Defying their instinctive desire for self-preservation, they seem bent upon self-destruction. They work against their own deepest instinct. As they are humbled by the terrific beating administered by alcohol, the grace of God can enter them and expel their obsession. Here their powerful instinct to live can cooperate fully with their Creator's desire to give them new life.

.....Since most of us are born with an abundance of natural desires, it isn't strange that we often let these far exceed their intended purpose. When they drive us blindly, or we wilfully demand that they supply us with more satisfactions or pleasures than are possible or due us, that is the point at which we depart from the degree of perfection that God wishes for us here on earth. That is the measure of our character defects, or, if you wish, of our sins.

So Step Six - "Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character" - is A.A.'s way of stating the best possible attitude one can take in order to make a beginning on this lifetime job. This does not mean that we expect all our character defects to be lifted out of us as the drive to drink was. A few of them may be, but with most of them we shall have to be content with patient improvement. The key words "entirely ready" underline the fact that we want to aim at the very best we know or can learn.

How many of us have this degree of readiness? In an absolute sense practically nobody has it. The best we can do, with all the honesty that we can summon, is to try to have it. Even then the best of us will discover to our dismay that there is always a sticking point, a point at which we say, "No, I can't give this up yet." And we shall often tread on even more dangerous ground when we cry, "This I will *never* give up!"

..... Not much spiritual effort is involved in avoiding excesses which will bring us punishment anyway. But when we face up to the less violent aspects of these very same defects, *then* where do we stand?

.... Isn't it true that we like to let greed masquerade as ambition? To think of *liking* lust seems impossible. But how many men and women speak love with their lips, and believe what they say, so that they can hide lust in a dark corner of their minds? And even while staying within conventional bounds, many people have to admit that their imaginary sex excursions are apt to be all dressed up as dreams of romance.

Self-righteous anger also can be very enjoyable. In a perverse way we can actually take satisfaction from the fact that many people annoy us, for it brings a comfortable feeling of superiority. Gossip barbed with our anger, a polite form of murder by character assassination, has its satisfactions for us, too. Here we are not trying to help those we criticize; we are trying to proclaim our own righteousness.

.....Else why would we consume such great amounts of time wishing for what we have not, rather than working for it, or angrily looking for attributes we shall never have, instead of adjusting to the fact, and accepting it?

.....Therefore, it seems plain that few of us can quickly or easily become ready to aim at spiritual and moral perfection; we want to settle for only as much perfection as will get us by in life, according, of course, to our various and sundry ideas of what will get us by. So the difference between "the boys and the men" is the difference between striving for a self-determined objective and for the perfect objective which is of God.

.....The only urgent thing is that we make a beginning, and keep trying.

..... Perhaps we shall be obliged in some cases still to say, This I cannot give up yet, " but we should not say to ourselves, "This I will *never* give up!"

.....Maybe I can postpone dealing with some of my problems indefinitely." Of course, this won't do. Such a bluffing of oneself will have to go the way of many another pleasant rationalization. At the very least, we shall have to come to grips with some of our worst character defects and take action toward their removal as quickly as we can.

The moment we say, "No, never!" our minds close against the grace of God. Delay is dangerous, and rebellion may be fatal. This is the exact point at which we abandon limited objectives, and move toward God's will for us.

Each day, somewhere in
the world, recovery begins
when one alcoholic talks with
another alcoholic, sharing
experience, strength and hope'

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...

The Horse and Mule

*The horse and mule live 30 years
and never knows of wines and beers.*

*The goat and sheep at 20 die
without a taste of scotch or rye.*

*The cow drinks water by the ton
and at 18 is mostly done.*

*The dog at 15 cashes in
without the aid of rum or gin.*

*The cat in milk and water soaks
and then in 12 short years it croaks.*

*The modest, sober, bone-dry hen
lays eggs for noggs and dies at 10.*

*All animals are strictly dry,
they sinless live and swiftly die.*

*But sinful, ginful, rum-soaked men
survive three-score years and 10.*

*And some of us...though mighty few
stay pickled 'til we're 92.*

Anon

(Submitted by Joe M, Abbey Group, Co. Galway.)

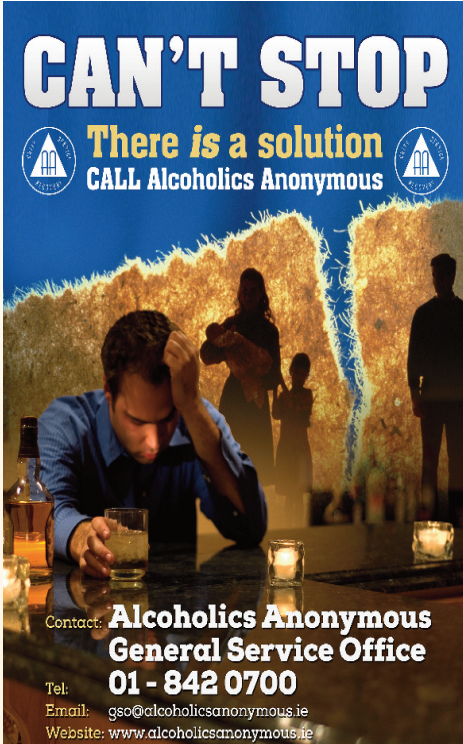
I must change myself

I was a revolutionary when I was young and my prayer to God was "Lord give me the energy to change the world." Later I realised that half my life had gone without my changing a single soul. I changed my prayer "Lord give me grace to change all those who come in contact with me – my wife, my family and friends and I will be satisfied." Nobody changed.

Now that I am in the evening of my prime my prayer is "Lord give me the grace to change myself." Now everything and everyone changes.

If I had prayed this from the start I would not have wasted so much time.

Vincent Raheny



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The Elimination of the Ego-Self

Just recently I had been studying again and these are thoughts that I have put together from my learnings to share with you. The thought train started as I was thinking about one of the happenings that occurred when I was new in the program and clawing my way back from the depths of the Hell I had been living.

My sponsor was trying to explain to me about the Steps, especially the 6th and 7th, and how I was going to have to learn to give up all my old ideas of how things should or should not be. Ideas that I had been holding onto in a desperate attempt to maintain an identity. I remarked at one point in our conversation, "Hell, you are trying to eliminate me!!" He very quietly replied, "If we could eliminate YOU, you would have it all!!" Of course, I didn't understand that at the time, but today I do. He was referring to "ego deflation at depth." The continued practice of the Steps has substantially accomplished this and eliminated the old clawing, clinging, scrapping, unloving and unloveable ME, and given me a loving I AM that is so much more than I could ever have imagined at the time.

From the beginning of life we have all been programmed to, as we say, "Look out for Number One." That is still the watch phrase even today in AA. "To Thine Ownself Be True." But what does this mean? It means that I must be diligently attuned to acquiring the teachings of AA, to incorporating the principles and ideals into my way of life, so that I can give away what I have learned, in order that I may keep it. In this respect, we selfishly seek out the lessons we need to learn, and as time

progresses we find we learn them best by teaching. This is the basis of the truism that "When the student is ready, the teacher appears, when the teacher is ready, the student appears." We are all learners and we are all teachers.

I know that for years as a drunk, I was constantly defending my ego-image of SELF...a very false image and I knew it, but I was scared shitless to let anyone else know. I had convinced myself that if they ever found out the truth about me, it was all over. It wasn't until I had been in AA for some time, practising the Steps to the best of my ability, that I began to realise that as my ego defence walls came down, life got a lot better, there were less and less warparties and emotional upsets. From this it came to me that the best defence in all situations was defencelessness...total elimination of the false ego-image of SELF, or as Bill wrote, ego deflation at depth.

Gradually, as I was moving past this old, selfish Number One, in the process of trying to apply the Steps, I found my self going back through a neutral equanimity, that is, my ego defence walls were coming down a brick, a block, a section at a time. And, finally, moving on in the direction toward zero selfish ego-defended image of SELF.

As each brick would work its way loose, the thought would occur "But isn't this a dangerous thing to do? What will happen to me?" We can almost hear our own protests welling up: "Give up myself to a mindless oblivion? Become a zero? No way! Not going to be a hole in a doughnut!" Reasonable objections. In theory, someone who just "lets go" might fall into a careless, unfeeling, zombie-like state, become an aimless

dropout, drifting with the prevailing winds and currents. And we do see that in AA on occasion. They are the moochers, there only to take, never to give, never to share, in abject fear of giving of themselves, afraid that they might lose something, they know not what.

But remember, no one engaged in diligent practice of the Steps of AA relinquishes either moral compass, anchor, or rudder. The early members of AA already have put in place the proven right-minded ethical code, the twelve-fold path of the Steps, proven by their own experiences in the path to recovery. Our Big Book has further grounded us in both the strong, family-based social ethic in the Chapters to Wives and The Family Afterwards and in the deep respect for the natural order of things. Moreover, another foundation for meditative training is the Eleventh Step, where we ask ourselves questions in meditation of how we have missed the mark with our character defects during the day and how we could do better. In the beginning it is hard work, but the fellowship of other members in meetings, live face-to-face, or on the phone or internet, provides a cohesive support group to help us continue on in life a day at a time.

So where I have spoken of the direction toward "zero" it has been as a very temporary and imperfect metaphor. In this context, it always stands for losing only the unfruitful part of the self, our defects of character, not for a totally vacuous personality. The diligent practice of the Steps does not wipe out all personality structure, to leave only a nobody. It spares the

pragmatic ego in the original God - given sense. It leaves intact all those vital functions that help us manage situations in real life. Indeed, this maturing ego grows increasingly flexible and practical, finding new ways to navigate both life's vicissitudes and the rigours of the Step by Step training process.

Who, then, are the best candidates for this Step by Step training process? Not zeros, as we may perceive ourselves to be when we come to AA, but in reality, persons already tough-minded to begin with. Survivors in the face of total catastrophe and defeat, rebels who will not accept the status quo. In view of what it is that we are setting out to attain by the ego deflation at depth that the process of applying the Steps requires, the psychologist Engler aptly notes: "You have to be somebody before you can be nobody."

Consistent application of the Steps, and in particular the daily review of the 10th Step and the meditation of the 11th Step, is a marvelous agency of personal change. It contributes a distinctive, fourfold, creative encounter that shapes the process of change.

First, it provides a setting of rigorous honesty that soon exposes how much we have been distorted by the I-Me-Mine complex.

Second, in our quiet place, open and free of distractions, as we review each day in meditation, our own insights then disclose how insubstantial and lacking in continuity these distortions really are.

Third, as we interact with our Sponsor and other members it provides ways to

work off these dysfunctions in daily life practice.

And fourth, it provides a setting amongst our fellows that is intrinsically so much more appealing than the life we had been leading, that the seeker of sobriety tends to stay the course, no matter what happens.

In such dynamic ways, do persistent practice and rare insights help shrink the once almighty I, the vulnerable Me, and the intrusive Mine. Not gone entirely. Just reduced to manageable proportions. Just i-me-mine.

Something more considerate of the you, the we, the ours, and the rest of the biosphere. Being diminutive, this new i-me-mine carries a very low profile. Smaller and streamlined, it no longer sticks up high to trip the positive functions of the maturing ego. Neither is it windblown by every shifting, hot or cold breeze from the old instinctual, reactive, ego-driven self. Nor will it be overloaded by any attempted distortions imposed by others' guilt-ridden consciences.

In fact, some of its shrinking is only apparent. Look beneath the i-me-mine. There, at its base, we find that its many positive attributes have substantially expanded. Especially does its living taproot, that part of our Higher Power we find deep within ourselves, which is always spared, now probe deeper, grounded in ways that perceive life's deeper rhythms. Now we recall, from the A-B-C's on page 60, that its lower-case letters stand for the a-b-c's of someone revitalised, whose Spirit has been awakened, more actualised, buoyant, and compassionate. Where did the hitherto partisan self of the Me generation go? Into a simpler generic

member who belongs to the We generation. To this person, it will seem only natural to celebrate Earth Day every day. Delusional? It hardly feels that way. It seems like a return toward one's original state in the eternal scheme of things.

Still, any member's progress is uneven at best. Backsliding into old reactive habit patterns occurs. Let strong passions arise, and the old italics and capital letters rear back up. We re-learn during every such sobering reencounter why so few persons have ever become perfectly evolved, selfless beings. Yet, endured year by patient year, the unfruitful parts of the complex grow smaller, their wasted energies subside sooner, to be put to better use. Each working of the Steps deepens our understanding, leaving us less protruding. We are peeling the onion, so to speak.

.....The beginning member, it turns out, is first simply learning how to unlearn. Then the receptive process of relearning opens up. As it unfolds on its own, it seems to reconnect the person with what are now new and vital relationships. Yet, they are the ones that have always been there. We are life's ageless, immanent, everyday miracles. We are "The Beloved!!" We are the One we have been waiting for!!

Love and Peace, Barefoot

(Just keep coming back and your life will get better!)

And we have ceased fighting anything or anyone - even alcohol. For by this time sanity will have returned. We will seldom be interested in liquor. If tempted, we recoil from it as from a hot flame. We react sanely and normally, and we will find that this has happened automatically. We will see that our new attitude toward liquor has been given us without any thought or effort on our part. It just comes! That is the miracle of it. We are not fighting it, neither are we avoiding temptation. We feel as though we had been placed in a position of neutrality - safe and protected. We have not even sworn off. Instead, the problem has been removed. It does not exist for us. We are neither cocky nor are we afraid. That is our experience. That is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition.

(Page 84 and 85, Fourth Edition, 2001, The Big Book)

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THE 12 STEPS



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The Road Back

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How did I end up here?

I have been coming to AA for about 12 months and still feel very new into my journey of recovery and the 12 Steps. I like many, never saw myself as an alcoholic. At first resenting my attendance of AA meetings as part of my detox. You see, I had worked in mental health and drug and alcohol addiction for 35 years. I could accept having mental health issues but I seemed to have some denial thing going on with alcohol. I never really drank until my 30's. First off I spent five years training to be a catholic priest from the age of 18. I left because I found the celibate side a high price. Subsequently I married and was blessed with four beautiful children. I never drank in those days, my family faith were enough for me. But the end of the marriage after ten years left me on my own to be father and mother and started me on a road that could be plucked at any point of the BIG BOOK. I got angry with God, resentful to others and started drinking to numb it all. I functioned well in my role of parent and mental health worker for a long time. But I now see that "Alcohol now becomes the rapacious creditor" (12 & 12 P21.) It was giving me credit on a loan that ultimately I would not be able to repay. It became the loan shark from hell. Nobody told me the interest rate. For the most of it I was happy drunk, alcohol calmed, soothed, and gave me popularity. I denied the hangovers and the longing for the next drink which slowly but surely increased in amount. My behaviour and moral compass had started to erode. I had given up on God long ago and was now running on self-will and fear. My first plunge into total uncontrolled drunkenness was pretty

dramatic, I see now that all my defects of character came out to play. My resentment came off its leash and bit those closest to me. I had married again and seemed to have it all, but my alcoholism called in the debt. I became pathetic, my life unmanageable, I was powerless. But still I refused to accept the title of alcoholic. I had a community detox, got back to work and got myself a psychiatrist. I carried on my role in life. Still no higher power though, just me and knowing resentment of it all. I was inside a troubled soul, building up new defects of character and polishing up the old ones. As in one of the BIG BOOK stories after a successful career, family all grown up I got the chance to retire at 55 years of age. Sat back on the porch of life and surveyed what I thought was my mine. Surely now was the time to take it easy, I convinced myself I could now drink again in moderation, with impunity. Changed the type of drink from wine to beer, yes that will do it, sorted. What followed was two years of drinking every day, sitting on my back door step, can after can.

There were many arguments and pleading, I defended an indefensible case. I thought that was all right, not harming anyone etc. Then came the day, when just after New Year's Day 2016 my wife walked past me with a suitcase, telling me she could not stay and watch me die. She and my children told me this time was the worst because I was no longer trying, I had given up. In truth I had given up with that first drink three years ago.

It has taken attending AA and doing the 12 Steps to give me back my life. The BIG BOOK, finding a sponsor and working the Twelve Steps has brought me to whole new way of living. I found

religion! I cannot do this on my own, but realise I don't have to. I accept I am an alcoholic and that is the way of it. I am grateful for my life now, it is not easy street, but it is a pathway to peace. There are no rose tinted glasses but there are no beer goggle spectacles either. I have recently become a Granddad and all of this would not have come to me if not for AA and the people in it.

Maurice, Birmingham

(with acknowledgement to Share Magazine)

The Spiritual Malady (As I See It)

My understanding of the illness of alcoholism is that I have a physical allergy, a mental obsession and a spiritual malady. The allergy means that when I drink alcohol it sets off a craving in my body for more alcohol. I have an abnormal reaction to alcohol: abnormal in the sense that someone who does not have the illness of alcoholism does not have this reaction - they do not have a physical craving for more drink when they drink. If I don't lift the first drink it's impossible for me to get drunk. The mental obsession means that when I am off the drink and completely sober, the idea of a drink will come into my head and that idea will overrule any rational thinking which would argue that since I've got an abnormal reaction to drink, taking a drink is definitely not a good idea. I've got a body that can't handle drink and a head that is convinced, despite lots of strong evidence to the contrary, that it can. So although it is absolutely true that if I don't lift the first drink I won't get drunk, my best reasoning and my willpower are not enough to stop me taking the first drink.

Looking back at my experience when drinking I can see that this is the case for me. So far so straightforward: I have no control over the craving for more drink when I start drinking and I have no control over my head when it tells me to drink. I'm powerless over alcohol. Understanding the spiritual malady was not so straightforward for me. I would hear at meetings 'untreated alcoholism', 'dry drunk', 'internal unmanageability', 'the ism'. Did these words apply to me? Was it the spiritual malady they were talking about? I wasn't drinking. Was my alcoholism untreated, waiting patiently to grab me and catapult me into death or insanity or to sentence me to a long drawn-out grim suicide by instalments? Was my behaviour just like when I was drinking but without the drink? Was my thinking and the way I felt unmanageable? Was I restless, irritable and discontent, not drinking but not happy? 'Yes' was the short answer to all that.

So what is this internal condition that I have and what can I do about it? My stinking thinking, feeling bad about myself, feeling hard done by and not grateful, waking up anxious and/or not looking forward to the day with any enthusiasm, not caring about others, being critical and judgemental of myself and others, all this and more is how my spiritual malady shows itself in me. These are manifestations of my malady but the actual nature of my spiritual malady, as I understand it, is that I'm disconnected and separate from my inner inherent goodness. I've heard others say that for them the spiritual malady is being separate from God as they understand it. Being disconnected and separate from means I feel the way I've described, treat people badly and have no peace of mind. How then do I reconnect

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.*

with my inner goodness? I do so by living

AA's Twelve Step Programme in my life and in particular by continuing to do Steps 10, 11 and 12. By doing a Step Four inventory I found out about my fears and resentments. By looking at the harms I did to others I could address the guilt I felt. I could look closely at the exact nature of my wrongs and character defects. All of that was blocking me off from and keeping me separate from my goodness. If I'm consumed by fear, resentment or guilt there's no room for goodness in my heart and my head will be like a washing machine on spin cycle that might pause for a little while I sleep but will start up again as soon as I wake up. By letting go of my fears and resentments and by working on my shortcomings, I can get back to the goodness that was always there in me. If I don't know what my spiritual malady is and if I don't do something about it, it will take me back to drinking. Just because I've stopped drinking doesn't mean that my spiritual malady has gone away. If anything, it's more obvious without the dark curtain of active alcoholism to hide behind. I can no longer blame the way I felt or what I did on drink. If I don't reconnect and stay reconnected one day at a time, the manifestations I spoke about earlier will rear their heads as my selfishness and self-centredness run riot. It's then just a short

distance from that to the mental obsession kicking in, telling me that a drink's a good idea and then I'll lift the first drink, the allergy will be activated and be off and running once again. Living life on life's terms, not drinking no matter what is happening round about me involves, for me, dealing with the symptoms of my spiritual malady by staying connected and not separate from what keeps me well. I like that EGO can stand for 'Easing God Out' (or in my case goodness).

Over the years I've used various things to try and treat my spiritual malady and before AA got me sober I was using alcohol to treat my alcoholism. Only the Programme actually worked for me. Everything else I tried, after an initial short-lived easing of the emotional pain, only made it worse. If I remove whatever I happen to be using to treat the symptoms of my spiritual malady I will, without the Programme, find something else that's not good for me to take the edge off how I'm feeling. AA's Programme of Recovery, as long as I continue to work it in my life, will keep me connected and in so doing will give me the sense of ease and comfort I was always looking for.

Liz, Glasgow

*(with kind permission of The Scottish AA
Roundabout Magazine)*

Responsibility Declaration

**I am responsible.
When anyone, anywhere,
reaches out for help,
I want the hand of AA always to be there.
And for that: I am responsible.**

Heard at Meetings

It always amazes me how members can
be attending AA meetings for years
and remain totally unaffected by the
program!

∞∞

One meeting a week would hardly
keep you off lemonade!

∞∞

Many meetings- many chances

Few meetings - few chances

No meetings - no chance

∞∞

I go to meetings to hear what happens
to those who don't go to meetings.

∞∞

Meeting makers make it.

∞∞

We are not saints!

∞∞

"If you feel like you don't belong,
volunteer to help."

∞∞

The pilot light is always on!

∞∞



I was blessed with
the want to want it.

∞∞

If the God notion drives you out again,
you may be lucky that alcoholism will
drive you back in!

∞∞

This disease (alcoholism) will attack
you in your sleep.

∞∞

I was blessed with the grace of
surrender.

∞∞

"He was beaming with insanity"
(After he fell off the wagon.)

∞∞

I always say the Serenity Prayer before I
place the key in my door.

∞∞

This disease is outside doing press ups
waiting for us.

∞∞

**"Please, Lord, teach us to
laugh again; but God don't let
us forget that we cried."**

I've started a business building yachts in my attic. Sails are going
through the roof.

...

I applied for a job making sandwiches, but the roll had been filled.

...

Did you hear about the recent explosion in the local cheese factory?
There was de brie everywhere.

...

Tried to make myself a Hawaiian pizza last night but burnt the whole
thing, should have put the oven on aloha setting.

...

Two peanuts were walking down the street. One was a salted.

...

I hate perforated lines, they're tearable.

...

Why can't you hear a pterodactyl using the bathroom?

Because the P is silent.

...

Did you know that owls can't breed in the rain? It's too wet to woo.

...

What do you call an elephant that doesn't matter? An irrelephant.

...

Yesterday a clown held a door open for me.

I thought it was a nice jester.

Text Service for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

A text-messaging service for the Deaf and

Hard of Hearing is now available at GSO.

Contact, by text only,

087 1460387

Some A.A. Acronyms

YET = You'll End Up There

PHD = Pretty Heavy Drinker

RID = Restless, Irritable and
Discontented

PMS = Pour More Scotch

KISS = Keeping It Simple, Spiritually

LET GO = Leave Everything To
God, Okay?

ISM = I Sabotage Myself

HELP = His Ever Loving Presence

Let nothing perturb you

Let nothing perturb you

Let nothing frighten you

All things pass

God never changes

Patience endures

Whoever has God lacks nothing

For He alone suffices.

(with acknowledgement to the Great Mystic,

St Teresa of Avila)

Our Singleness of Purpose

This is a closed meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. In support of A.A.'s singleness of purpose, attendance at closed meetings is limited to persons who have a desire to stop drinking. If you think you have a problem with alcohol, you are welcome to attend this meeting. We ask that when discussing our problems, we confine ourselves to those problems as they relate to alcoholism.



APPROVED FORTHCOMING MINI CONVENTIONS AND ONE DAY EVENTS



ALL IRELAND CONVENTION 2019

26th-28th April 2019	62nd All Ireland Convention	The Great Northern Hotel, Bundoran, Co. Donegal. Theme: The 12 Steps
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FORTHCOMING MINI CONVENTIONS IN IRELAND

DATES	AREA	VENUE/THEME
31st August - 2nd September 2018	Tipperary Area Convention	The Clonmel Park Hotel, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary. Theme: I Am Responsible
12th-14th October 2018	Donegal Area Convention	Mount Errigal Hotel, Ramelton Road, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. Phone: 074 22700. Website: www.mounterrigan.com
18th-21st October 2018	Clare Area Convention	The Auburn Lodge Hotel, Ennis, Co. Clare. Theme: One Day At A Time
9th-11th November 2018	Kerry Area 53rd AA Convention	The Brandon Hotel, Tralee, Co. Kerry. Theme: "Just For Today"
8th-10 March 2019	Sligo/North Leitrim Area Convention	The Clayton Hotel, Clarion Road, Ballytivnan, Sligo, F91 N8EF. Theme: I am Responsible

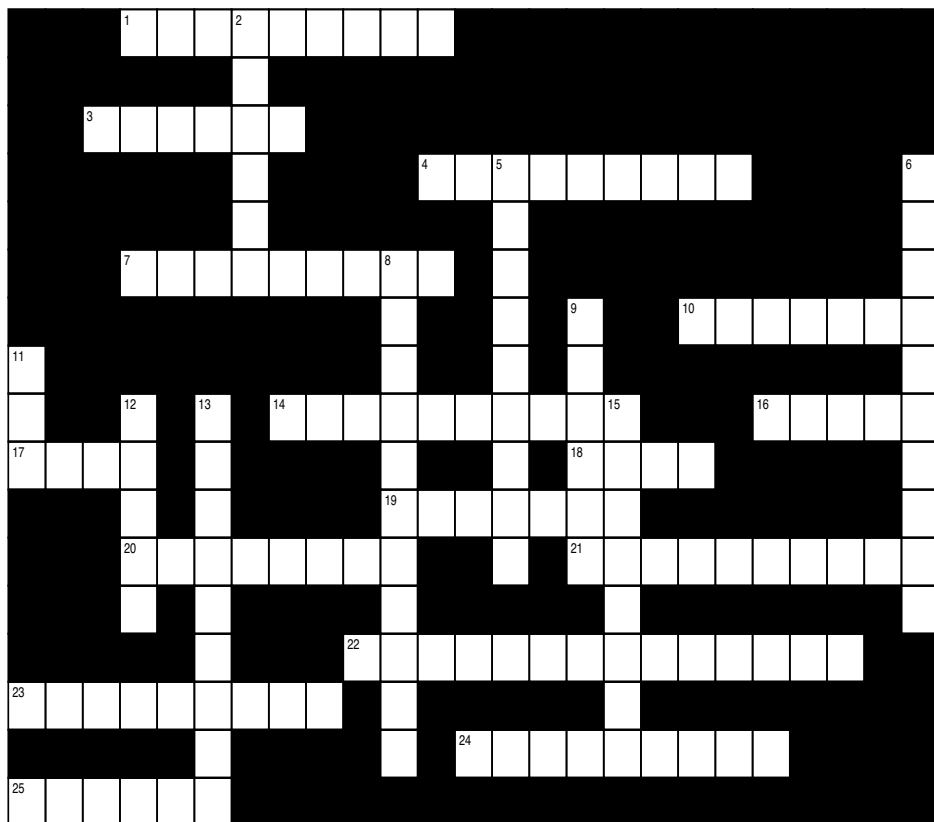
ONE DAY EVENTS IN IRELAND

DATES	AREA	VENUE/THEME
18th November 2018	Belfast Area Day of Gratitude	Ramada Encore, 20 Talbot Street, Belfast, Co. Antrim, BT1 2LD. Theme: "Keep it in the Day"

FORTHCOMING CONVENTIONS ABROAD

DATES	COUNTRY	VENUE/THEME
11th-14th October 2018	K.I.S.S. English Speaking AA Convention in Greece	Pandrossos Hotel, Parikia, Paros Island, Greece
12th-14th October 2018	2nd Biarritz AA Convention in France	Radisson Blu Hotel, Cote des Basques, 64200 Biarritz, France. Theme: A Vision For You
17th-21st October 2018	Costa Brava AA Convention	Golden Bahia Hotel & Spa, Tossa de Mar (Girona), Catalonia, Spain. Theme: Love and Service
16th-18th November 2018	Costa del Sol Convention 2018 in Spain	IPV Palace Hotel, Fuengirola, Spain

The Big Challenge Crossword 417



Across

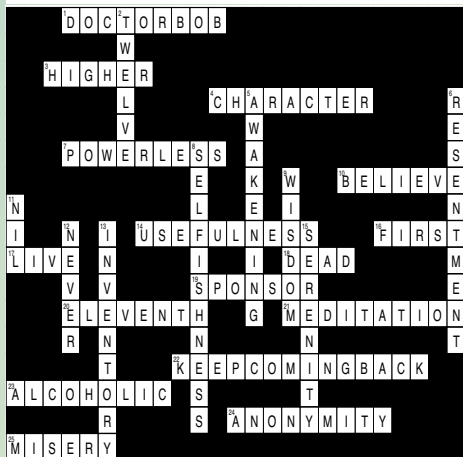
1. AA co-founder (two words)
3. _____ Power
4. Sixth Step refers to defects of _____
7. First Step Admission
10. Came to _____
14. Cheerfulness and laughter make for _____
16. First Things _____
17. Live and Let _____
18. "Faith without works is _____"
19. Program mentor
20. Step requiring prayer and meditation
21. Sitting in Silence
22. Three words used at end of most meetings
23. AA member
24. Foundation of all our traditions
25. Avoid manufacturing this

Down

2. Number of Steps
5. Spiritual _____
6. "Number One" offender
8. Self-will run riot
9. Third Serenity Prayer request
11. Result until we let go absolutely
12. When to give advice
13. Fourth Step
15. _____ Prayer

Crossword solution on page 22

Answers to Crossword 417 on page 22



Slow Me Down

Slow me down

Ease the pounding of my heart
by the quieting of my mind.

Steady my hurried pace
with a vision of the eternal reach of time.
Give me amid the confusion of the day,
the calmness of the everlasting hills.

Break the tension of my nerves and muscles
with the soothing music of the singing streams
that live in my memory.

Help me to know again the magical restoring power of sleep.

Teach me the art of taking MINUTE vacations,
Of slowing down to look at a flower,
to chat with a friend,
to pat a dog,
to read a few lines from a good book.

Slow me down
and let me be inspired to send my roots
deep into the soil of life's enduring values
that I may grow toward the stars of my greater destiny.
Anon (modified version)



The AA Promises

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through . . .

1. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.
2. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.
3. We will comprehend the word serenity.
4. We will know peace.
5. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.
6. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.
7. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows.
8. Self-seeking will slip away.
9. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.
10. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us.
11. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.
12. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us - sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

*Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th edition, pp. 83-84,
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THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

- 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.

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THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

- 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 nonprofessional, 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.

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Next issue:

Step Seven

September - October 2018 – Issue 418



Your invitation to share at our meeting between meetings.

Just like membership of our Fellowship, you don't have to be a special type of alcoholic to write for The Road Back. Whether you are a newcomer or an old timer we need to hear your experience strength and hope.

Putting pen to paper (or by email) can enhance your sobriety and that of the whole Fellowship. You don't need to be a polished writer either, spelling and grammar can be amended if necessary. You can write a few lines or a few pages.

Remember The Road Back is your magazine.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Please share your experience strength and hope with us on the following topics:

Step Seven

September/October 2018

Articles should be submitted by August 3rd 2018 for issue 418

Step Eight

November/December 2018

Articles should be submitted by October 5th. 2018 for issue 419

Please mark your mail with the relevant Issue and email to –

roadback@alcoholicsanonymous.ie

or post to:

Alcoholics Anonymous

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