

The Road Back

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Nov/Dec 2018 - Issue 419

Step Eight & More



Since defective relations with other human beings have nearly always been the immediate cause of our woes, including our alcoholism, no field of investigation could yield more satisfying and valuable rewards than this one. Calm, thoughtful reflection upon personal relations can deepen our insight. We can go far beyond those things which were superficially wrong with us, to see those flaws which were basic, flaws which sometimes were responsible for the whole pattern of our lives. Thoroughness, we have found, will pay - and pay handsomely.

(Twelve & Twelve page 80)

A word from the Editor

Step Eight doesn't necessarily mean that in mathematical terms we are two thirds of the way into our recovery programme!

For us AAs it is important that we don't suffer from notions of getting on in the spiritual program or moving towards our graduation. Recovery it should be remembered is a process as well as being an outcome.

We realise that the business of recovery is that we be freed from the burden and bondage of 'self'. We unlike our fellows, are 'bodily and mentally' different. Self obsession is central to the soul sickness we suffer from... "Selfishness, self-centredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles." (BB pg. 62). To pump ourselves up with spiritual smugness would, paradoxically, be the height of hypocrisy.

Peeling away layers to expose the heart within which doesn't need to grab and hold anything. Releasing the ballast allows the balloon to elevate. Truly spiritual people are not in the business of collecting trophies. Our age old axiom of 'let the butterfly land' is always worth remembering here. Make a fist and you kill it!

The 'grace of surrender' came with humiliation and then a new perspective of humility. Powerlessness dawned upon us when we got that moment of sanity, when we saw there was nothing in the booze for us anymore... that there had to be another way... and that way, happily for us, was the AA way.

With the advent of Christmas time we too need to make a list and check it twice no doubt! Spirituality is all about doing what needs to be done because it's the right thing to do. We need to remember that we harm people in many ways... physically, sexually, materially, financially, emotionally psychologically and also spiritually. Cleaning up one's mess is a universal law. In Step eight we continue that process.

Our steps towards reparation are threshold steps into a new horizon. On page 25 of our Big Book we have in cogent italicized form '*there is a solution*'...

"The central fact of our lives today is the absolute certainty that our Creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way which is indeed miraculous. He has commenced to accomplish those things for us which we could never do by ourselves.

If you are as seriously alcoholic as we were, we believe there is no middle-of-the-road solution. We were in a position where life was becoming impossible, and if we had passed into the region from which there is no return through human aid, we had but two alternatives: One was to go on to the bitter end, blotting out the consciousness of our intolerable situation as best we could; and the other, to accept spiritual help."

All we need is the God-given courage, the earnestness and the willingness to ready ourselves and go to it and make that list. The doing of this programme, the taking of the suggested steps is our great gift to ourselves.

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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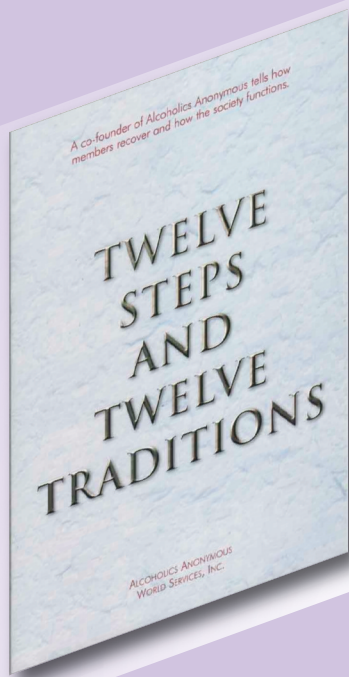
Step Eight

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The Twelve and Twelve Extracts

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Step Eight

“Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.”

*A paraphrasing of Step Eight in the Contents Page of the
Twelve and Twelve.*

This and the next two Steps are concerned with personal relations.

Learning to live with others is a fascinating adventure. Obstacles: reluctance to forgive; nonadmission of wrongs to others; purposeful forgetting. Necessity of exhaustive survey of past. Deepening insight results from thoroughness. Kinds of harm done to others. Avoiding extreme judgments. Taking the objective view.

Step Eight is the beginning of the end of isolation.

My Step Eight

"We made a list of all person we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all"

Step Eight is another Step in the experience of AA recovery. The word "we" in this Step, as in many others is a statement of the collective. It signifies fellowship, togetherness, and the oft misunderstood word "at-one-ment". This 'at-one-ment' is being at one with ourselves, the God of our understanding and our fellows. Like the symbol of the triangle enshrined by the circle of unity in our AA logo.

"That One is God ... may we find Him now". (BB Chapter 5)

For me it is important to reiterate what is stated in the preface of the 12 & 12 i.e.

"AA's Twelve Steps are a group of principles, spiritual in their nature, which, if practiced as a way of life, can expel the obsession to drink and enable the sufferer to become happily and usefully whole."

Repetition forms a major part of my recovery. Our programme is worked "One Day at a Time" and I can have perfection in that I remain sober however clumsily and falteringly I do it each day. In many of our songs we have a refrain or a chorus. It is the part we remember. Similarly I need to revisit what has been 'hammered out on the anvil of experience'. ... 'the easier softer way'.

Taking a daily prescription may be boringly routine but there is nothing 'routine' about the experience of 'good health'. Complacency I know can be a killer. Repetition is not about 'brain-washing' albeit my brain did

require a fair good scrubbing. I do need to engage in re-programming as part of my psychic/personality change. And for most of us, as with this alcoholic, the latter takes the educational variety form and happens over time.

I like to compare it to redecorating the inside of my head with new wallpaper. How to do that? There are, as the Big Book states, numerous suitable prayers available that will readily throw themselves into our path if we are earnest in our search. I have my stock of AA prayers, most of which are borrowed from spiritual and religious sources. I find what suits this alcoholic. There are songs and poems that touch our inner selves and resonate with our true being-ness also. I have committed these to memory and recite them regularly.

To recover from the soul sickness, the spiritual malady that is alcoholism I have a programme of recovery - outlined for me by the early members in the Fellowship in their sharing of how and what they did. "Here are the steps we took" it states in Chapter 5. It doesn't ask for special feelings, albeit a good sprinkling of humility never went astray. It doesn't ask for a drum roll, an analysis by paralysis as we AAs say. To delete something on one's computer one simply presses delete. The consequence is a deletion whether one deletes with feeling or not. The act of deleting is a conscious decision. Similarly with the Steps of my programme, I do what is suggested. I take the necessary medicine that is prescribed for my own good. I now take direction, as difficult as that is betimes for this rebellious alcoholic. I fully realise the merit of the words "this is the easier softer way". I have learned to trust those sharing with me at group level and on a 'one to one' basis. They have no reason to put me in harms way or send me on a merry dance.

Their joy is in my recovery from this insidious disease, the disease that keeps telling me “you’re alright now”; “you’re not really alcoholic”.

Moving on in this step I made a list. Making a list, committing something to writing gave focus and importance to the task in hand. I noticed that it is “persons” we are asked to list, not institutions or the like. Revisiting my Step Four I could quickly identify those I had harmed through my alcoholism.

The ravages of active alcoholism wrought significant harm to myself also. It has taken time to identify the kinds of subtle harm done and it has taken time to repair and recover from the effects of the damage both consciously and unconsciously. My sense of self worth objected to me listing myself among those harmed until I was reminded by my sponsor of the Scripture “love thy neighbour as thyself”. It follows that if I don’t love myself I cannot truly love my neighbour.

Writing down opposite my list of names I looked at the ways in which I had harmed them i.e. physically, financially, sexually, materially, emotionally and spiritually.

Emmet Fox author of such works as “The Ten Commandments”, “The Sermon on the Mount” “Diagrams for Living” etc. was, we are told, a key influence on the Big Book. Fox suggest that when we think of the ‘Golden Rule’ it is not enough to “do unto others as you would have them do unto you” but rather that we need to “think about others as we would have them think about us”. This is where I most need to practise ‘the constant vigilance’ oft cited at meetings.

Fox says we can harm other people spiritually. Holding a grudge or having a

resentment against another is the double edged sword that not alone harms the other but ourselves also and resentment is the number one offender for us alcoholics. A resentment he describes as akin to a warden and his prisoner. Each are really a prisoner of the other. Such it is with resentments. Having a resentment to an individual one not alone damages oneself by a form of spiritual entrapment but we also affect the other’s spiritual development. Albeit we hear in the rooms that resentment is akin to drinking the poison in order to kill the one we have the resentment against. With such an understanding I began to heal and see others differently. We all work out of our own programming and our conditioned ‘models of perfection’. I left myself down there, I could have been better, how come I just couldn’t get it together? I failed to be the right and perfect person I should be! I need to affirm that I fail but I’m not a failure. Always perfect even in my imperfection. I know, therefore that I free myself spiritually and also the other person when I use the suggested treatment for resentments as suggested and make amends wherever possible.

Finally I looked (and continue to look) within to the ‘Great Reality’ for the willingness to make amends to ‘them all’. This quiet reflective time is a further act of surrender of the ego in order to allow the grace of God, as I understand Him, or the Higher Power to gift me with the key of willingness to make amends to them all. Here again I see the implementation of my decision in Step Three to be relieved of the ‘bondage of self’ revisited.

yours in fellowship

“How can AA help”

If one were to lose one's sight at say aged 21 years it would not profit one much to dwell on why one had lost one's sight. Difficult as it would be acceptance of this fact is the key to coping with such a monumental change to one's life. Interestingly acceptance is defined in the dictionary as “surrendering without conflict” and serenity a prayer close to the hearts of many AAs is defined in the dictionary as “a state of acceptance without conflict”. The need to cope without sight becomes of the utmost importance. Contact with help groups focuses one's attention on aids for living available to make life easier, Braille, guide dogs, adapted telephones etc. So too with AA it is suggested that sobriety becomes the most important thing in one's life.

In many respects the programme of recovery in AA adopts a similar approach. Knowing why one became an alcoholic does not make living with the illness any easier. In fact it can make it much more difficult because it fills one full of resentment and in many cases focuses one to “blame others”. If one could not swim and one fell into a deep pond which had an overhanging branch it would not make much sense to start analysing the length and thickness of the branch and what weight it could bear and then to say to oneself ah well, I weigh 12 stone and it could only sustain a weight of 11 stone 7 pounds so I will not grab it. Sadly AA newcomers fall into this way of thinking This alcoholic when he first came to AA was most impressed by the old timer who shared that he had not had an alcoholic drink in

over 10,000 days, that he spent his time at the meeting dividing 10,000 by 365 to find out how long he was sober and then leaving the meeting much confused because he did not know how many days to add on for leap years because he never shared what year he had had his last drink! It never seemed to occur to me to listen to find out how he got sober. Similarly acknowledging the fact that I could pronounce anonymity never mind pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization whereas many of the old timers could not assist me in any way from staying away from that first drink. On the contrary ego massaged, glass in hand I now thought with the knowledge gained at those meetings I could drink successfully.

In AA we speak of “yesterday being history, tomorrow a mystery and today a gift from God that we call the present”. The focus of living is in the “here and now.” I just cannot take a drink now as opposed to I cannot drink in the future. The latter thinking encourages a belief in a sacrifice we have made invariably to please others and at the first sign of lack of gratitude on their part “we take that first drink!” Simply put the future has not been promised to us.

Living in the now enjoins us to savour the moment - *carpe diem*. A re-examination of yesterday's happenings, usually morbid, deprives one of the present moment. Projections into tomorrow, invariably fearful, also deflect one from enjoying the moment. Just as the blind person is taught how to read through the use of his sense of touch so too in AA we are taught how to think in ways that do not cause us to feel irritable,

restless or discontented. It is pointed out to us, sometimes quite forcibly, that we are powerless over how people see, feel or think about us. We cannot make people like us and energy expended on such exercises is wasteful. Relationships, we are told, are best developed through "adding to rather than taking from". "Be a servant" we are told. We are strongly advised to eat, get a good night's sleep, avoid becoming angry, lower our voice by 10 decibels, count to 10 before saying anything and avoid resentment like the plague.

For AA's the Fellowship is like the dog provided to the blind person. We are led along a path of contented living through suggestions and example. The journey it is suggested is much more pleasant if we "get into the middle of the AA bed" as there is less chance of us falling out!

Martin R

When I came to making my list it was suggested that I do it in columns

- The first for the person I'd harmed.
- The second for what I'd done.
- The third for how I'd feel if someone had done that to me.
- The fourth for how I should make amends.

(I have to add that when I do this with sponsees now I add a column for the date for the amend. Then there's no wriggling out and a column for what I should have done instead which they invariably know

the answer to as I in fact did).

I put myself first on that list. I didn't know at that stage how controversial it was but for me it was illuminating. That third column always revealed something that I had never considered and when I looked at the harm I had done myself with alcohol, food, relationships and work I realized that I would never treat my worst enemy as badly as I had treated myself.

As had happened with the columns in my Step Four, the structure stopped me reliving events, stopped the frothy emotionalism and the drama because I spent my time calmly wondering how I could be honest and concise about what had gone on. A very clever trick of my sponsor's!

The amends were the Steps I wasn't willing to make. I was happy discussing my Step Five with a woman who loved me in the comfort of her home. I wasn't happy about going out into the world and admitting I'd done anything wrong. After all I'd spent most of my life trying to cover over my mistakes and blaming others. Shortly after doing my Fifth Step I was asked to share at a meeting on Step Eight. There I said "I will never make amends to my mother". An old timer shared back "you have another three Steps to do before you have to!" And he was right. By the time I'd done my list and chatted it through with my sponsor I was practically running to get on the train to see Mum!

CAROL, Norfolk

(with our thanks to Share magazine,

AA, UK)

Step Eight: The years that the locusts hath eaten

(from the August 1997 Grapevine)

Neither our literature nor the most enlightened of old-timers can fully explain or define the meaning of "forgiveness," the powerful concept at the heart of the Eighth Step. Like everything else in our spiritual program of Alcoholics Anonymous, forgiveness has entered my life through my heart and not through my mind. In my first year of sobriety, I listened with a kind of puzzled yearning at meetings where it was being discussed. To this day, I find Eighth Step meetings particularly poignant. The men and women in my regular Friday night Step meeting are so simple and direct when they speak of how they have hurt others and how, in almost all cases, relationships have healed. There's no room for posturing as we speak up about our recklessness, self-centeredness, dishonesty, lost or soured marriages and families, and violence of various kinds. More than a mere chronicle of bottles and blackouts, these stories of "twisted and tangled relations" with other people bring home the lonely tragedy of alcoholism and the miracle of our all sitting peaceably there on folding chairs with the Twelve Step shades on the wall above our heads. Sometimes as I sit listening to these tales told in the language of the heart, I remember a quotation from the Book of Joel: "And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten." Individual pain and guilt has been alchemized into something very grand that makes us collectively well. As a group, we are at our most human in those Eighth Step

evenings. And we seem to be held most closely by our Higher Power.

My own drinking days were all mixed in with my marriage to a man who, when I met him, was only recently married to another of his several wives. I was young, scared, and thirsty; I can see now that I never would have fallen for him if I hadn't been an alcoholic and if I hadn't liked the way he fixed my glass of scotch. The wife before me was a very nice person who worked in the same office as I did. As I got involved with her husband, I didn't stop to think about the pain I was causing her. I ducked into a doorway if I saw her coming down the hall. I had the worm of conscience, I'm sure of it, but I stilled it with another drink. After he and I had lived and drunk together for some years, he left me in turn for someone else. In a karmic way, I felt just how the wife before me had suffered because now I suffered the same myself. She wasn't alcoholic; in the years of my own marriage, she had absorbed the blow and moved on with her life. But for years and years after I was alone again, I got stuck in whiskey-soaked self-pity, tormented by an obsessive hatred of that man. This almost killed me; it made me hit my bottom, and I am eternally grateful to him for that.

-- K.F.

New York, New York

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 Twelve and Twelve on Happiness.. some extracts

“Our admissions of personal powerlessness finally turn out to be firm bedrock upon which happy and purposeful lives may be built.

We know that little good can come to any alcoholic who joins A.A. unless he has first accepted his devastating weakness and all its consequences. Until he so humbles himself, his sobriety-if any-will be precarious. Of real happiness he will find none at all. Proved beyond doubt by an immense experience, this is one of the facts of A.A. life.” p 21

“These people often throw to the winds every chance for legitimate security and a happy family life. Whenever a human being becomes a battleground for the instincts, there can be no peace.” p 44

“Indeed, the attainment of greater humility is the foundation principle of each of A.A.'s Twelve Steps. For without some degree of humility, no alcoholic can stay sober at all. Nearly all A.A.'s have found, too, that unless they develop much more of this precious quality than may be required just for sobriety, they still haven't much chance of becoming truly happy. Without it, they cannot live to much useful purpose, or, in adversity, be able to summon the faith that can meet any emergency.” p 70

“Our answer is in still more spiritual development. Only by this means can we improve our chances for really happy and useful living. And as we grow spiritually, we find that our old attitudes toward our instincts need to undergo drastic

revisions. Our desires for emotional security and wealth, for personal prestige and power, for romance, and for family satisfactions - all these have to be tempered and redirected. We have learned that the satisfaction of instincts cannot be the sole end and aim of our lives. If we place instincts first, we have got the cart before the horse; we shall be pulled backward into disillusionment.

But when we are willing to place spiritual growth first-then and only then do we have a real chance.” p 114

“Still more wonderful is the feeling that we do not have to be specially distinguished among our fellows in order to be useful and profoundly happy. Not many of us can be leaders of prominence, nor do we wish to be. Service, gladly rendered, obligations squarely met, troubles well accepted or solved with God's help, the knowledge that at home or in the world outside we are partners in a common effort, the well-understood fact that in God's sight all human beings are important, the proof that love freely given surely brings a full return, the certainty that we are no longer isolated and alone in self-constructed prisons, the surety that we need no longer be square pegs in round holes but can fit and belong in God's scheme of things-these are the permanent and legitimate satisfactions of right living for which no amount of pomp and circumstance, no heap of material possessions, could possibly be substitutes. True ambition is not what we thought it was. True ambition is the deep desire to live usefully and walk humbly under the grace of God.” p 124

∞∞∞∞∞

Open The Door

Open the door to a possible you
Leave behind the stress and woe
Be sure to invite the wonder in
And let the worries go.

Think of each day as a treasured gift
And give that gift to yourself
Accomplish those things that are within your reach
Don't worry about the rest.

Do a world of good in a world that needs
All the good it can get
In the course of a day, in every way
Coming closer to goals and challenges set.

Take or make the time to do
Those things you've always wanted to
Choose the path that will make your heart glad
And live the life you want to have.

So hold on to your dreams, your hopes to achieve,
All the joys in life you have yet to receive.
Keep the spirit that says: "I can and I will"
And know that "I am, and I'll do it until...."

The road ahead may seem always uphill
And that's the direction your dreams to fulfil
Anything really is possible
When who you are is "yes I will".

Unknown

This is the substance of a revealing letter which Bill Wilson wrote several years ago to a close friend who also had troubles with depression.

The letter appeared in the "Grapevine" January, 1953.

EMOTIONAL SOBRIETY

"I think that many oldsters who have put our AA "booze cure" to severe but successful tests still find they often lack emotional sobriety. Perhaps they will be the spearhead for the next major development in AA, the development of much more real maturity and balance (which is to say, humility) in our relations with ourselves, with our fellows, and with God.



Those adolescent urges that so many of us have for top approval, perfect security, and perfect romance, urges quite appropriate to age seventeen, prove to be an impossible way of life when we are at age forty-seven and fifty-seven.

Since AA began, I've taken immense wallops in all these areas because of my failure to grow up emotionally and spiritually. My God, how painful it is to keep demanding the impossible, and how very painful to discover, finally, that all along we have had the cart before the horse. Then comes the final agony of seeing how awfully wrong we have been, but still finding ourselves unable to get off the emotional merry-go-round.

How to translate a right mental conviction into a right emotional result, and so into easy, happy and good living. Well, that's not only the neurotic's problem, it's the problem of life itself for all of us who have got to the point of real willingness to hew to right principles in all of our affairs.

Even then, as we hew away, peace and joy may still elude us. That's the place so many of us AA oldsters have come to. And it's a hell of a spot, literally. How shall our unconscious, from which so many of our fears, compulsions and phony aspirations still stream, be brought into line with what we actually believe, know and want! How to convince our dumb, raging and hidden 'Mr. Hyde' becomes our main task.

I've recently come to believe that this can be achieved. I believe so because I begin to see many benighted ones, folks like you and me, commencing to get results. Last autumn, depression, having no really rational cause at all, almost took me to the cleaners. I began to be scared that I was in for another long chronic spell. Considering the grief I've had with depressions, it wasn't a bright prospect.

I kept asking myself "Why can't the twelve steps work to release depression?" By the hour, I stared at the St. Francis Prayer ... "it's better to comfort than to be comforted." Here was the formula, all right, but why didn't it work?

Suddenly, I realised what the matter was. My basic flaw had always been dependence, almost absolute dependence, on people or circumstances to supply me with prestige, security, and the like. Failing to get these things according to my perfectionist dreams and specifications, I had fought for them. And when defeat came, so did my depression.

There wasn't a chance of making the outgoing love of St. Francis a workable and joyous way of life until these fatal and almost absolute dependencies were cut away.

Because I had over the years undergone a little spiritual development, the absolute quality of these frightful dependencies had never before been so starkly revealed. Reinforced by what grace I could secure in prayer, I found I had to exert every ounce of will and action to cut off these faulty emotional dependencies upon people, upon AA, indeed upon any act of circumstance whatsoever.

Then only could I be free to love as Francis did. Emotional and instinctual satisfactions, I saw, were really the extra dividends of having love, offering love, and expressing love appropriate to each relation of life.

Plainly, I could not avail myself to God's love until I was able to offer it back to Him by loving others as He would have me. And I couldn't possibly do that so long as I was victimized by false dependencies.

For my dependence meant demand, a demand for the possession and control of the people and the conditions surrounding me.

While those words "absolute dependence" may look like a gimmick, they were the ones that helped to trigger my release into my present degree of stability and quietness of mind, qualities which I am now trying to consolidate by offering love to others regardless of the return to me.

This seems to be the primary healing circuit: an outgoing love of God's creation and His people, by means of which we avail ourselves of His love for us. It is most clear that the real current can't flow until our paralyzing dependencies are broken, and broken at depth. Only then can we possibly have a glimmer of what adult love really is.

If we examine every disturbance we have, great or small, we will find at the root of it some unhealthy dependence and its consequent demand. Let us, with God's help, continually surrender these hobbling demands. Then we can be set free to live and love: we may then be able to gain emotional sobriety.

Of course, I haven't offered you a really new idea --- only a gimmick that has started to unhook several of my own hexes' at depth. Nowadays, my brain no longer races compulsively in either elation, grandiosity or depression. I have been given a quiet place in bright sunshine."

Bill Wilson

"Through my years of darkness, some spark of spirit remained in me, helped me survive until I found my way into A.A. Then, nurtured by the program, that inner spirit grew, deepened, until it filled the emptiness I had so long felt inside. Step by step I moved to a spiritual awakening. Step by step I cleared up the past and got on with the present."

— *Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th Edition* —

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ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

62nd All Ireland Convention



Great Northern Hotel
Bundoran, Co. Donegal

26th - 28th April 2019



- Theme -

THE 12 STEPS



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For further information contact:

Central Service Office, North City Business Centre, Unit 11, 2 Duncairn Gardens, Belfast BT15 2GG
Tel: 028 90351222 (ND) / 048-90351222 (MOBI)

Web: www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie Email: csocfaa@btconnect.com

General Service Office, Unit 2, Block C, Sanny Business Park, Swords Road, Dublin 9, D09 H584
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Heard at Meetings

My alcoholism was like expandable foam... it went into every part of my life.

∞∞∞∞∞

I need to come to meetings so that I can see my alcoholism out there in front of me.

∞∞∞∞∞

A group is only as strong as its weakest member.

∞∞∞∞∞

Anger is just a cover up for being afraid.

∞∞∞∞∞

I drank to forget and instead became haunted. I drank because I thought I had the right, and yet everything turned out wrong.

∞∞∞∞∞

“It says in The Promises that the fear of financial insecurity will leave us - not necessarily the financial insecurity itself”

∞∞∞∞∞

It's the first drink that does the damage. If you're hit by a train it's the engine that kills you - not the 6th or 25th carriage!

∞∞∞∞∞

There is nothing more profound than simplicity itself - so Keep It Simple!

∞∞∞∞∞

God does for me what I cannot do for myself. (12th Promise)

∞∞∞∞∞

To measure how sober I am I again ask myself the 20 questions that helped diagnose me in the first place!

∞∞∞∞∞

I have to watch for symptoms of untreated alcoholism in me.

∞∞∞∞∞

Praying ONLY for knowledge of His will for us.

∞∞∞∞∞

One Program- One Higher Power- One AA

∞∞∞∞∞

We cannot hear until we can hear and we cannot see until we can see.

∞∞∞∞∞

Let's stick to our knitting.
(our primary purpose)



Step Eight

“Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all”

Step Eight asks me to be willing to forgive the harms done to me and to look squarely at my part in harming others.

The fear of face-to-face admissions had stopped me until I was shown that Step Eight only required a list, and that some of the amends in Step Nine could not and should not be made.

The Step was basically an exercise in honesty with myself; in making a list of what I had said and done which had hurt others and left me defiant and guilty. It was an exercise in self knowledge, greatly helped by the insights I had gained in the previous Steps, especially Four and Five.

I was asked by my sponsor not to project too far ahead. It was explained to me that what I would do with the list would be subject to the norms of common sense. These would show whether making amends would be effective and useful, or make the situation worse.

My natural inclination (sometimes unconscious) was to cover up or minimize the seriousness of some of the harm I had caused. I was asked to look at my destructive patterns of behaviour, both drinking and in sobriety. Some of these patterns had remained unchecked for years.

I learned something of the damage and harm that my instinctual and unconscious needs for power, prestige and security had caused my family, friends and work colleagues.

Out of this I was able to take comfort from the truth pointed out by my sponsor that the Steps are retrospective. There was only

a certain amount of knowledge I could achieve in the Eight Step until I moved into the Eleventh Step and practiced that for a while. As I accomplished each additional Step the healing was permeating right back to the other Steps at a deeper level. It was important that I kept going.

Bill Wilson wrote that “in the investigation of our relationships with others we can go far beyond those things that were superficially wrong with us, to see those flaws that were basic, flaws which were sometimes responsible for the whole pattern of our lives.” For me these patterns involved exaggerated and unreasonable demands for prestige, security and control. The pursuit of these ego-driven demands was one of the underlying causes for a lot of the harm I had caused.

The phrase “grandiose and exaggerated behaviour” written on a wall in a hospital treatment centre was my first realization of how my alcoholism manifested itself outwardly, even when not drinking. It was the beginning of my journey into recovery and a belief in a loving and nurturing Higher Power.

That source of healing energy, when I connect with it, gives me guidance and direction every day, (through the Steps) to be a more compassionate and considerate human being.

John Mc M., Sherrard St. Group, Dublin

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.**

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

What do you call a person in a tree with a briefcase?
A branch manager...

...

What do you call a fake noodle?
An impasta.

...

Furniture store keeps calling me.
But all I wanted was one night stand.

...

I told my friend she drew her eyebrows too high.
She seemed surprised.

...

Why did the Clydesdale give the pony a glass of water?
Because he was a little horse.

...

If you want a job in the moisturizer industry, the best advice
I can give is to apply daily.

...

I had a dream that I was a muffler last night.
I woke up exhausted.

...

I used to have a job at a calendar factory.
I got the sack because I took a couple of days off.

...

What do you call a sleepwalking Nun?
A Roamin' Catholic.

"We made a list of people I had hurt or toward whom I felt resentment. I expressed my entire willingness to approach these individuals, admitting my wrong. Never was I to be critical of them. I was to right all such matters to the utmost of my ability."

(Bill's Story, B.B.)

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

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

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.

Some A.A. Acronyms

FAITH = For An Instant Trust Him
DEAD = Drinking Ends All Dreams
FEAR = Failure Expected And Received
GOD = Group Of Drunks
HALT = Hope, Acceptance, Love and Tolerance
HOPE = Happy Our Program Exists
RELAPSE = Recovery Exits Life And Program Seem Empty



APPROVED FORTHCOMING MINI CONVENTIONS AND ONE DAY EVENTS



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
4th-6th January 2019	Galway West Area Convention	Galway Bay Hotel, Salthill, Galway. Theme "You Are Not Alone"
25th-27th January 2019	Waterford Area Convention 2019	Woodland Hotel, Waterford City. Theme: "Just for Today, The Gift of Living"
8th-10th February 2019	Wexford Area 14 AA Convention	Clayton Whites Hotel, Wexford. Theme: Keep it Simple
22nd-24th February 2019	Limerick Areas Annual Convention 2019	The Castletroy Park Hotel, Limerick. Theme: 'Unity'
8th-10 March 2019	Sligo/North Leitrim Area Convention	The Clayton Hotel, Clarion Road, Ballytivnan, Sligo, F91 N8EF. Theme: I am Responsible
8th-10 March 2019	Cork City Area Convention	The Blarney Woollen Mills Hotel, Blarney, Co. Cork. Theme: Pass It On

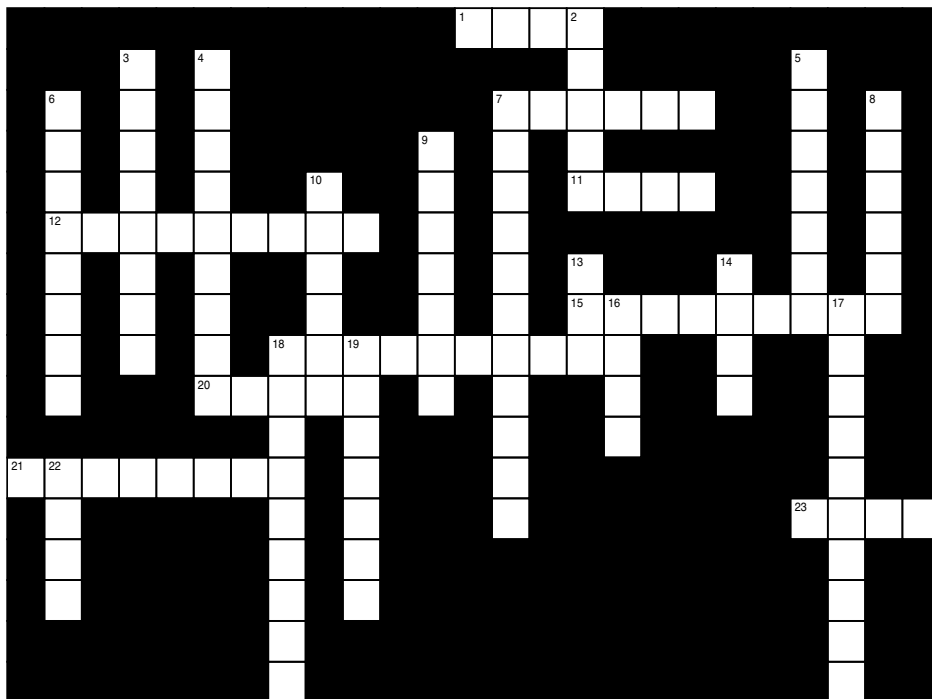
ONE DAY EVENTS IN IRELAND

DATES	AREA	VENUE/THEME
19th January 2019	Tyrone Area Day of Gratitude	Silverbirch Hotel, Omagh, Co. Tyrone. Registration from 10.30am. Event starts at 11.30am

FORTHCOMING CONVENTIONS ABROAD

DATES	COUNTRY	VENUE/THEME
25th-27th January 2019	Lanzarote & Fuerteventura 10th International AA Convention	Occidental Lanzarote Mar Hotel, Avenida del Mar 5, Costa Tegui 35508, Lanzarote, Canary Islands, Spain
22nd-24th March 2019	AA Highland Gathering in Scotland	Jury's Inn Hotel, Inverness, Scotland. Theme: Acceptance is the Key
26th-28th April 2019	7th Int. Convention in El Albir, Alicante, Spain	Hotel Kaktus, Albir Beach, Costa Blanca, Spain

The Big Challenge Crossword 419



Across

1. A simple name for an inventory
7. The AA member who first started AA in Ireland
11. Experience, Strength and
12. The oldest AA magazine in the world (one word)
15. "Dr Bob and the Good"
18. Number of years AA will be in Ireland in November 2018
20. Name of the UK AA Magazine
21. The second oldest AA magazine in the world (2 word)
23. Sister Ignatia, a pioneering helper of AA, hailed from what Irish county.

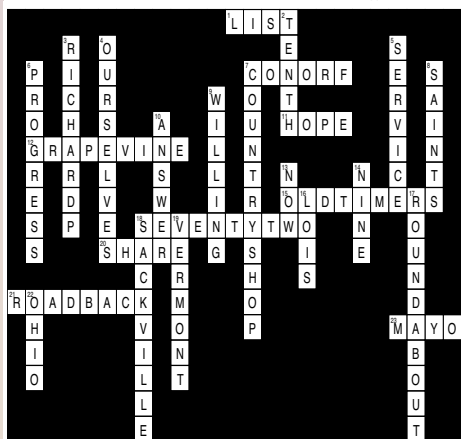
Down

2. What date in June is Founders' Day?
3. First AA member to get sober in Ireland
4. "Our problems arise out of....." (Chapter Five)
5. Unity, Recovery and
6. "We claim spiritual not spiritual perfection."
7. Earliest meeting place for Dublin AA Group (two words)
8. We are not The point is, that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines.
9. "And became to make amends to them all"
10. "And acceptance is the"
13. "May you find Him" (Chapter Five)
14. The number of AA slogans
16. Bill W's wife's first name
17. Name of the AA Scottish Magazine
18. Longtime editor of The Road Back
19. Both Bill W and Dr Bob were from here?
22. Akron, the birthplace of AA, is in what state?

See the newly launched AA website:
www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie
(also a useful aid for some crossword solutions)

Crossword solution on page 22

Answers to Crossword 419 on page 21



**Resentment turns
to gratitude
when I see
your offence has
brought me grace.**

Vincent, Raheny

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 Twelve Rewards

Hope instead of desperation.

Faith instead of despair.

Courage instead of fear.

Peace of mind instead of confusion.

Self-respect instead of self-contempt.

Self-confidence instead of
helplessness.

The respect of others instead of their
pity and contempt.

A clean conscience instead of a sense
of guilt.

Real friendships instead of loneliness.

A clean pattern of life instead of a
purposeless existence.

The love and understanding of our
families instead of their doubts and
fears.

The freedom of a happy life instead of
the bondage of an alcoholic obsession

*Originally by Ann C. (sober April 1, 1948) of Niles, Ohio
and presented at the 1985 International Convention in*

Montreal, Canada



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 Nine

January - February 2019 – Issue 420



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, your meeting in print.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

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

Step Nine

January/February 2019

Articles should be submitted by December 7th 2018 for issue 420

All-Ireland Special Edition

March/April 2019

Articles should be submitted by February 8th 2019 for issue 421

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

roadback@alcoholicsanonymous.ie

or post to:

Alcoholics Anonymous

Unit 2, Block C

Santry Business Park

Swords Road

Dublin 9

IRELAND