



THE ROAD BACK

includes AA News Sheet

APRIL - JUNE 2022
Issue No. 438

Spring is here

Editorial

Spring is Here, and welcome once again to the latest instalment of the Road Back. The daffodils have pushed through, the hedges are filling out and the Cherry blossoms have arrived in some places already. There's a little less rain, there's more daylight each day and maybe you've noticed a slight increase in the temperature. Who knows, we may even have a little more sunshine as the months pass. It's a reminder of growth, and with that, a new energy that nature is bringing upon us. It can also be a good time for us to reflect on how we are, dust off the cobwebs, and check that we are doing all of the things that we need to do. It's very easy in the darker months to get a little lazy and put off things that we should do today, but we leave till tomorrow. Don't forget to get back to those things because spending a little time on those things now, will have huge returns in the not too distant future.

Is there somebody you've been meaning to call, somebody to drop in to, somebody that for some reason popped into your head? Somebody that might appreciate the idea that you are thinking of them? Why wait, reach out to them. How nice is it to be on the receiving end of one of those calls? How about somebody new that you saw at a meeting? Did you check to see that they are ok? A family member, a friend?

We've been hearing from readers different stories about physical meetings, about online meetings, about difficulties in switching from one to the other. Isn't it odd how online meetings were unusual to us not too long ago, and now for some, physical meetings are unusual. We are in the middle of yet another adjustment period, and like most things, when we pause, and think, Just for Today, everything becomes far more manageable. What we keep repeating will become our new normal. We could do worse than remember that often it is in our own interest to be Open to Change.

How did you adjust? What has become normal for you? What hints can you share with other readers? How did you do it? We know our readers would love to hear your story and how you overcame some of the daily challenges. Your hints may seem obvious to you but they may be a great help to somebody else. Please let us know. Put a few words down in an email, write a few paragraphs and send them to us. 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 email us at roadback@alcoholicsanonymous.ie.

Finally, 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.

Until the next time, continue to keep safe, sober and well,

The Road Back Team



UNITY | SERVICE | RECOVERY

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Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, 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.

The Road Back is published by The General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous of Ireland. Unit 2, Block C, Santry Business Park, Swords Road, Dublin 9, D09 H584 Ireland. Telephone: (01) 842 0700



Step One

I was neither “powerless” or “unmanageable” just a heavy social drinker. One barman friend suggested jokingly I was an alcoholic and I nearly pulled him over the bar. Me, an angry alcoholic? Never! I was in complete and utter denial. Also, about my unmanageability, I had the husband, the flat, the car, the job and paid all my bills. I didn’t realise at the time that it was all show, and my world was about to come tumbling down. It was my head that was unmanageable: denial, my addict head drowning out any ‘sober’ thoughts. Dark, soulless and not somewhere I ever wanted to go. It had the yellow and black police tape around it because it was such a dangerous place to go even with somebody. After years of progressive drinking, my husband made good his promise to leave me, and I came into rehab and AA a week later.

At first, I looked at the Steps and decided I would do them in the order I wanted to do them in and which ones I would leave out.

As I said, I still found the whole powerless and unmanageability idea difficult to get my head around and I was still full of self will. Step Four was irrelevant as I didn’t have any ‘character defects,’ it was all someone else’s fault.

Steps Eight and Nine, well, I had said sorry every time I messed up so that wasn’t needed. My denial believed that and forgot that after saying sorry I would repeat the same wrongdoing again and again. I loved Step Eleven because I read ‘medication’ not meditation and thought I would definitely have a bit of that, and Step Twelve sounded pretty good as well

‘Having had a spiritual awakening’. I missed the part about ‘as a result of these Steps’ meaning I had to work my way through them to have any chance of a ‘spiritual awakening’.

The first drink gets you drunk. I couldn’t understand this at first. I believed it was the tenth or twelfth drink that got you drunk. But I now understand, after working Step One, that it is indeed the first drink that I have to avoid, because not having the first one, I can’t get to number 10 or 12.

It wasn't until I found a sponsor and she lovingly explained that the Steps are written in that order for a reason and that Step One is the most important to understand because without a rock-solid foundation the rest of my 'Step house' would fall and crumble. First, I had to lose my wilfulness and denial which took a while and I'm still having to keep asking the God of my understanding to remove these character defects to this day even after a few years in. After numerous chats with my sponsor, becoming willing to listen and reading 'The Doctor's opinion' (page xxv), and remembering that in my experience, once I had taken a drink, I was unable to stop.

That I would make promises to my husband that I would/could never keep, I realised that 'the action of alcohol on these chronic alcoholics is the manifestation of an allergy;' (BB p. xxviii). That then creates a craving phenomenon that I am a slave to once I have put that first drink in my body. Once I start drinking, I'm completely unable not to take the next drink and the one after that. I had absolutely no control over it and am therefore 'powerless'.

I heard in meetings that the first drink gets you drunk. I couldn't understand this at first. I believed it was the tenth or twelfth drink that got you drunk. But I now understand, after working Step

One, that it is indeed the first drink that I have to avoid, because not having the first one, I can't get to number 10 or 12.

The unmanageability part was harder to understand until, as I said before, I realised that I was very blessed by the God of my understanding as my husband came back to me while I was in rehab, my job was still there and my flat and I was able to rebuild my life. Others are not so lucky, and I have heard how some people have to lose everything before they were able to 'get' Step One or even die trying to understand and feel this Step. I believe now that you have to live and breathe this Step every day to stay sober.

Today I pray to the God of my understanding every day to make me 'manageable' to the best of my abilities and remember that I am definitely powerless over alcohol. I have a 'manageable' to do list and complete each item before moving onto the next one. With a rock-solid foundation, I was able to go through the rest of the Steps and have 'a life beyond my wildest dreams' today. I always try to remember that the first word in Step One is 'We'. I can't do this alone, but I can with the love and fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous and I never have to drink again.

*Share Magazine
January 2020*

Fear

Be still and face the fear Watch it being dissolved
As ice melts to water
And so our problem solved
Face the fear Now
And repair to being well
Desist from fleeing from oneself Know His Holy Will
When soberly conf ranted
It has nowhere to go
And its fear-filled anaesthetic Loses its vicarious control
Deadly infectious
Its varied strains
Virally pungent in
Its toxic game
A captivating illusion
Though real to the feel
From the pit of the stomach To all things cerebral
Its controlling conditioning Over the longest time
Has etched its way deeply Into the psyche of the mind
Multifarious guises Insidiously assumed Underestimate it at one's
peril And it will one's disposition ruin
It's egoic in nature
Depresses the spirit
A malady of the soul Unrelenting its mission
Tears down relationships Eroding trust over time
Sells the belief to us
To death we be resigned
Its grip has held sway
In its meddlings with the mind Inculcating the brainwash
You're a prisoner of time
Through vigilance and inquiry
We come to fully apperceive
What we are is the fearlessness
And through gratitude we heal
Our nature is pure love
No alienation can live there
Fear cannot be whilst
Invoking Oneness in prayer

*Liam OB.
(Attributed to the Impersonal Consciousness)*

Heard at Meetings

“ When I got to AA, the people in my life were through with me. My girlfriend said “Don’t come back.” My employer said, “Don’t come back.” My landlord said, “Don’t come back.” And then I walked into an AA meeting and all of you said, “Keep coming back.”

“ Use the past as a reference not a residence.

“ AA is not a very good place to learn theology... but it’s a great place to get inspired.

The Doctors Opinion

○ On the 25th of May 1981 I phoned M and asked for help. The guy who answered said to me, "Do you want to stop drinking?" I replied "Yes." He then said, "Do you want to stop now?" I replied, "Yes." He then told me where there was a meeting that evening. When I reflected back, during my recovery, on that short and to the point exchange it occurred to me that he wasn't asking me if I wanted to control my drinking or cut it down, he was asking me if I wanted to cut it out. I also realised that had I not replied 'yes' to the first question he wouldn't have asked me the second one. (Such simple language).

That evening I went to the meeting that he had told me about and introduced myself by saying, "My name is Kevin, and I am an alcoholic." (More simple language). At the meeting a guy said to me, "The life that you have been living doesn't have to be the life that you continue to live when you leave here this evening." (More simple language). He was absolutely right because I haven't taken another drink of alcohol since. I didn't get a sponsor straight away but did get to as many meetings as I could, often by bus and train as there were not

so many local meetings back then. There were also no mobile phones, computers or social media. In October 1981 I went to the Southern Convention at Brighton where I met a guy who I asked to be my sponsor. He said to me, "Kevin, the person you are drinks, the person you will drink again and therefore it is paramount that you change." (More simple language).

**The life that you have
been living doesn't
have to be the life that
you continue to live**

At our first meeting together, he suggested that I read, 'The Doctor's Opinion' in the Big Book myself in what he had to say. Well, slowly and by degrees I did see myself in what Dr. Silkworth said and I soon realised why I could never stop after taking the first drink. When my sponsor saw that I had grasped the 'physical craving' that the first drink always set in motion he then suggested that I read Chapter Three in the Big Book (More About Alcoholism). On page 30 it says: "We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step in recovery. The delusion

that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed". (Simple but strong language). It is worth noting that it says, "The delusion that were like other drinkers. Not that we are like other drinkers.

When I understood what these two chapters were saying about the nature of alcoholism, my sponsor then told me that unless I fully conceded to my innermost self that I 'am an alcoholic of this type then I would always have a 'lurking notion' around alcohol. Now, in my 39th year of unbroken sobriety, I remain convinced that

the 'physical allergy' lays dormant within me and that just one drink of alcohol will activate it.

The second part of Step One asks me to admit that my life had become unmanageable. It was by proceeding with the Programme that I discovered that the reason that my life was unmanageable was because it had been run by someone who was mentally and emotionally unstable and that this instability must be dealt with.

Lisa

Share Magazine January 2020

STARTING TODAY

Starting today If resisting was an easy task, who would be a slave?

Who would part with a piece of themselves for the chance at an early grave?

Willpower alone is enough to put you in hell but not enough to pull you out.

You'll never have a chance at getting well until you accept living by a different route.

If change is what you want, you'll have to change much about you.

You'll have to learn to become humble and do what trusted advisers tell you to do.

The road is long and hard but worth every step of the way because you have the opportunity to be free again starting today.

Poem Written by Justin F.



Three Years

Love, warmth, laughter and joy have overwhelmed my day, because today was my AA anniversary. I have come to the end of my day, and I'm writing this sitting up in a lovely & warm, cosy, dry bed feeling truly grateful and blessed for the wonderful day I have just experienced.

Sobriety and recovery have given me a whole new chapter to my life story, whereas I had previously thought I had no life, nor did I have a life worth living. I had become a very isolated, lonely, selfish lone drinker, unable to get off the ever revolving, hamster wheel of alcoholism. I drank every evening - wine, wine and more wine. I was totally enslaved to it in the end, ever repeating the same scenario every night & could not understand or comprehend that I was, and am, an Alcoholic. But that was three years ago....

I started off in a treatment centre in Dublin. They were incredible there. In there, I believe I had my spiritual experience. A beautiful woman did a chair on a Sunday morning, and that was the moment.... I left that meeting and there was only one thing on my mind - I wanted what she had just described ... a beautiful, sober, contented life, a happy home, family love all around her and a freedom from alcohol.

She had had it for the last three years....

I reached one year sober before Covid hit us. In that year, I managed to find a home group, attend 4/5 meetings a week, and became secretary at that homegroup one night a week. I did nothing else - worked no steps, nothing. Once Covid arrived and put us all in lockdown, that was when my real recovery took off. Zoom and daily meetings were creeping into my life, then a Joe and Charlie group manifested and I joined it and before I knew it, I had started to understand and work the steps. I found a sponsor, did the dreaded steps 5, 8 & 9 and kept going. Twice daily meetings became the norm and zoom secretary service became my new style date nights!!

I started to get my education within the rooms (albeit virtual ones). I gained a knowledge and understanding of my drinking, my drinking behaviours and MY disease of alcoholism. My life started to change around me, sometimes without my even realising it. I started to change. I became interested in me again and gained a new respect for myself, one that had long since disappeared. I found my higher power and realised how my God was everywhere and in everything around me. I

started to focus on my health again, my mental, physical and spiritual health. I started walking, eating a bit better, lost weight, and my physical appearance became better over time. The walking helping every aspect of my life – my mental health improved dramatically and I started to appreciate the beauty of God’s nature in my garden, in my community and in my little world around me. Walking also gave me space and time alone where I did some daily prayer and meditation.

New friendships started to develop, starting off online through Zoom AA meetings which then evolved into actual friendships into the real world. Fellowship coffees & fellowships lunches and dinners became the norm. My sponsor became a dear and trusted friend. I started a new relationship, which was a huge step, having separated from my husband almost 6 years earlier.

My relationship with my children was the relationship which suffered the most. I hurt them hugely during the time of my rock bottom, but they forgave me initially. Within a few months of leaving the treatment centre, my relationship with my eldest child broke down and she stopped talking to me and moved out. This gave me huge anxiety and heartache. However, the programme helped me to cope with it all, encouraging me to talk about what was going on

in my life, telling me to let go and let God, telling me this too shall pass. I have to be honest at times I got sick of hearing the slogans, I thought things would never change. I got one piece of advice that I really listened to though, and that was to keep the lines of communication open with my child no matter what. So, I tried. At times it was really hard, the rejection was hard to take, but I kept going, kept trying. Almost four weeks ago, my child came home and moved back in. A miracle, a gift from the fellowship and my higher power, one today for which I am truly grateful.

I haven't come this far, to only come this far...

Life today has changed for me since the time of my rock bottom. Today I have peace, happiness, love, joy, faith, comfort, self-respect, dignity, the list goes on and on. Recovery and sobriety have been a sometimes-difficult journey, but without doubt, the best journey of my life. As it states in chapter 5 How it Works, my life today is about progress not perfection. I am human, I will make mistakes. But now, I will make amends, and move forward and keep trying. I have to keep moving forward and not looking back. I have a motivation quote that I found in my first month of being sober.... It states. "If you quit right now, you will end

up right back at the beginning. And at the beginning you were desperate to be where you are right now. Don't quit! Don't pick up the first drink! Keep going. You are doing great!". This quote says it all for me, I read it daily. I am going to keep working this programme because it works!!!

I love it. I haven't come this far, to only come this far...I'm going to keep working it. It is so worth it. The differences are vast in how my life was, to how my life is today. It hard to believe in just three years.

*M L
Waterford*

Comfort in My Own Skin

One of the most vivid memories I have from early sobriety is of a recognition, not an action. I looked in the faces of the sober women I was meeting and saw a light, a serenity in their faces. I remember the moment when the light shone and spoke to me—I wanted that. What I recognize now is that light is a gift of sobriety that is mine today: comfort in my own skin.

The sober women who sponsored me and in other ways extended the hand of AA to me were comfortable in their own skin. They had taken the 12 Steps and were practicing them in their daily lives. They had turned their will and their lives over to a power greater than themselves.

I can't say when I first felt what I had recognized in those women, when I first felt comfortable in my own skin. It may have been the time when I realized while on my way to the airport that I was going to miss my flight and there was absolutely nothing I could do about it. I accepted that without worry, anxiety, fear or anger. I was powerless over that situation. Although I was powerless over the circumstance, I was not powerless over my attitude. I felt comfortable in my own skin.

In sobriety, I have experienced the loss of my parents and daughter, as well as other relations and many dear friends. I mourned them and felt deep and painful sadness. Because I had taken the 12 Steps and continued to follow the design for living, they offer, I was able to fully grieve. The desire to drink had been removed which meant I felt those losses. I felt them and was able to share my experience with other alcoholics.

The 12 Steps have given me a way of living that allows me to accept life on life's terms. By trusting in my Higher Power, I am comfortable in my own skin today and can offer to others what has been so freely given to me. When life disappoints or devastates, I have learned through the example of sober women and men, and through my own experience, that I can practice acceptance and be comfortable in my own skin.

*JW
County Galway*

Winnowed

An imperceptible remove
Rock hard and real
Exiled to suffering and loss

A rebellious spirit sought
Autonomy and rights
Power at any cost

All imagined forms
Of distractionary fare
Incessantly magnetize

Feverishly, tirelessly
Devouring sensations
Inbuilt with their own demise

**Had to retreat to view
The peak of a mountain
Too close to see**

The Spirit wind
In winnowing the chaff
Now reveals the seed

No thought no word
No poem no song
Can express this timeless state

In stillness it dwells
Its silence tells:
Just be without fear and wait

*JEFF B, Warwickshire
Share Magazine January 2020*



THE SECRET ALCOHOLIC: A Tale of Living with Alcoholism in the Real World

WORK drinks. It's the same every time. Trying to be sociable has never made me feel so unsociable. They must realise that I don't want to be here. The scowl on my face, the continued rolling of the eyes and glances at the time should surely be an indication that I am doing all I can to endure this artificial showing of amusement at the same embellished, re-hashed stories, regurgitated again for the sole entertainment of that one person whom per chance, may not have heard it the first 1,000 times. I sigh. Then, my training kicks in. "Grant me the serenity ..." I whisper under my breath.

Who am I to judge really? It wasn't that long ago that not only was I one of those clowns re-telling an awful story about what had happened to me when drunk, in a way that made it sound amusing, I was the master! My hazy memory has me holding court in this exact pub telling fables about how hilarious it was when I... or remember when I ...or how drunk was I when I. Masking the pain of what I was

feeling inside by trying to make light of the trouble I was in made me feel much better at the time and certainly justified my drinking but now, here I am. An imposter. Uncomfortable in a situation that I used to thrive in. Uncomfortable in a situation that reminds me of a time I am trying to learn from. Uncomfortable in a situation that used to be so comfortable. It's too comfortable and so easy to go back. To take the pressure off. To avert the eyes, I think are staring at time. To give in. I have to leave.

"So soon? We're just getting started. Stick around. Just one more? Wait. Is it your round? Is that why you're leaving?" Through the nervous laughter I stick to my guns and slip away. I don't think anyone noticed or cared. Walking back to the nearest tube station I realise that I also don't think anyone noticed or cared that I wasn't finding their stories as hilarious as they thought they were. I don't think anyone noticed or cared that I was going home sober, my dignity intact and my hangover, remorse free day ahead of me tomorrow. I don't think anyone

noticed or cared I didn't drink. I noticed and I cared for I had done well. I am aware of the change in myself immediately. It is not that I am unsociable or that the people I am with are that irritating, it is that I am protective of my sobriety, and I need to nurture it, so putting it in risky situations is something that I need to be wary of.

If I had drunk that evening, would I have drunk to fit in? To stop the people around me being less annoying.? To make myself feel more comfortable? No. I would have drunk that evening because I did not have solid foundations in my recovery and a strong enough relationship with my Higher Power.

I shared this experience at a meeting the next day. I felt I needed to talk through why I felt I needed to justify myself to others, even when I did not. In doing so,

I realised that the justification comes from within, and I had changed and that's ok. It's ok to not get the same pleasure from people, places and things that I once had because those situations were entirely a façade, an outlet to behave in a way that was self-destructive and an opportunity to drink with others, to allow them to enable me without their knowledge or consent. The gratitude list I did that night bought in to focus the fact that I am sociable, I am fun, I am confident, and I am ok with the fact that I don't drink. If others wish to judge me for that then that is out of my control and AA has taught me that I am accepting of life as it is right here, right now and it is exactly as it supposed to be at that moment. An attitude I embrace and feel free in living by.

Richard
Share magazine January 2020



AA News Sheet

April - June 2022

Great news, for all of those that have been asking about an updated version of the Service Handbook for Ireland. All changes that have been agreed at conference meetings up to April 2022 have been incorporated into the latest publication. It's available for purchase from the online store in GSO and will be available to download on our new website which we are hoping will launch soon.

SERVICE & STRUCTURE QUERIES

We have received feedback that there are many groups, areas, members etc., that have queries about the structure of AA in Ireland. There are people that are unsure as to how to do some of the service or structure tasks. There may be questions about how you would go about sending a motion to conference, about setting up a new group etc. We have started a pilot program where you can email your queries to:

aastructurequeries@alcoholicsanonymous.ie

We endeavour to try to respond to most queries with 48 hours, so please be patient.

We can only respond to specific queries that relate to AA Service and Structure. Please remember this service should not be used to find AA meetings. You can use the online meeting finder on the website – It also has the most up-to-date meeting lists.

UPDATE ON YOUNG PERSON LIAISON OFFICERS (Y.P.L.O.)

During the September 2021 Meeting of Conference, it was agreed to introduce a new Intergroup position, a Young Person Liaison Officer (YPLO). Their role is simply to be a point of contact, to try help attract young people into service. The subcommittee has been quite active in finding members from each province that have a keen interest in the role. Hopefully at your next Intergroup you will have an opportunity to welcome and support them in their new roles.

PHONE RESPONDER SERVICE

For over a year now, there has been a pilot program running where we have provided a Phone Responder service to help members of the public who call GSO to get help with their drinking. People can talk to members of AA instead of staff members who will try to help them get to their first meeting. Due to its success, the GSBAA have decided to continue to provide the service on a permanent basis. This service operates during office hours to help 12th step calls to GSO. AA Trustees will continue where possible to provide responders for this service. This service is not the same as the after-hours service that many Areas and Intergroups provide. We hope these services will continue.

IS THERE A NEW DIRECTORY BEING PRINTED?

We are often asked if we will be printing a new directory since the last one was printed pre-Covid-19. The reality is that we know there are many more meetings that are open compared to what is listed on our website. If your group has reopened, have you informed GSO? Have you submitted updated meeting details to GSO? Some groups have been extremely proactive, and this makes the meeting finder guide very current while some other groups have been more reluctant.

Remember, when a newcomer calls AA's GSO looking for help, we refer to the list of active AA groups for information. If you don't update your meeting information, we can't update the website and provide meeting details to those who need it. If you don't update your group's contact names and numbers, we can't pass 12th step calls to you.

The process of updating your information is quite straightforward, the staff of GSO have experience in helping groups with this process. Simply contact GSO at 01-8420700 or email aagroupinfo@alcoholicsanonymous.ie with any AA group information enquiries and we will be happy to help.

We would hope that when the majority of groups have given us their meeting details, we can once again look at the viability of producing a physical directory.

2023 GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE - MOTIONS

If your group has changes that it would like to bring to conference through a motion, now is the time to start your preparations. The process generally is that a motion is written and supported by a Group. The Group will then bring the motion to their Area meeting where it is normally discussed and questions answered. Often times people at Area can help with the wording, and format. Sometimes a Group needs to take the motion back to their Group to reword before bringing it back to Area again.

After discussing the motion at an Area meeting, the motion is then sent to the Intergroup Secretary. At the next Intergroup meeting, the Area that has brought the motion can discuss it and answer any questions. Once again, often members at the Intergroup may suggest changes that the motion may need, and so it may need to go back to area once again.

Once Intergroup have discussed the motion fully, and believe it should be sent to conference, the Intergroup secretary will send the motion to the Board Secretary to be included on the agenda for conference. This must happen at least six weeks before conference. As the General Conference is normally held early in March, that would mean that the motion has to have been discussed and sent on to the Board secretary very early in January. If your Intergroup meeting is late in January there won't be time to meet the deadline, so it may be prudent to have any motions brought to your Intergroup in the Autumn/

Winter so that there is enough time to resubmit the motion if necessary. It is also really important to have the motion discussed at Area and at Intergroup. Your Conference Delegates (GSCD's) we be present at conference when the motions are discussed, so it is vital that they understand the feelings of the Groups, Area and Intergroups. Conference members can't make changes to motions once they are submitted, so well discussed motions, correctly worded and written with no ambiguity are far more likely to be successful. Often at Conference, motions need to go back to the group that submitted them due to them being poorly worded/submitted.

All other reports (Provincial Public Information Report, Conference Delegate Reports etc.) similarly need to be submitted to the board secretary at least six weeks prior to Conference. It might be prudent to aim to have all reports & motions submitted after your last Intergroup in the calendar year. e.g., Make the submissions after your November Intergroup.

ALL IRELAND CONVENTION 2022 - MUNSTER - CORK

Many of you recently attended the All-Ireland Convention in Cork. It was fantastic to see several hundred people attend the opening meeting, along with fantastic support for all of the events that ran all weekend. We'd like to thank the Munster Convention Committee for organising such a popular and successful event.

We were also delighted to hear that Ulster Intergroup will host the 2023 All Ireland Convention in Monaghan, in the Hillgrove Hotel. We wish them the very best of luck in their planning and organisation.

THE SERVICE HANDBOOK FOR IRELAND 2022

In Cork, at the All-Ireland Convention and at the AGM, the Board were asked questions about the updated Service Handbook for Ireland, and its contents. At the Annual General Conference in 2017 & 2018 the matter of the handbook being out of date was once again raised. Subsequent to this, a team worked to modernise it, to improve the grammar, remove duplicates and clarify some points that were ambiguous in the previous version. There were some places where clarifications were made due to changes in Irish legislation. Conference decisions that had been made over many of the previous years had not been incorporated, and in some cases contradicted what the old Service Handbook stated.

Early in 2020 a draft of the new Service Handbook was produced and provided to all members at the March Conference that year. Each Conference Delegate was asked to read through the Service Handbook, to discuss it at their Group, Areas and Intergroup, and to bring back any inaccuracies, mistakes or suggestions at the subsequent meeting of Conference many months later. Many changes were brought forward and discussed over subsequent Conferences. A decision was then taken at Conference in late 2020 to produce the new Service Handbook for Ireland, with all of the suggested and

agreed updates. Since then, the only changes to the Service Handbook have been updated conference decisions, or modifications agreed at Conference.

After Conference 2022, all of the agreed amendments have been incorporated into the 2022 Edition of the Service Handbook for Ireland which is now available to purchase or download from **www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie**

COMING SOON

Our new and refreshed and new look website: **www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie**
We had some minor integration delays, but we plan to launch the new look website before the next publication of the Road Back.

We have included some new sections that we hope you will find useful, and we plan to add more over the coming months. The shop has been completely revamped, we have a new Daily Reflections quote each day, we have published the online version of the Big Book along with other pamphlets in pdf format. We have removed the need to members to login, we have tried to make it easier for you to submit meeting information (Group Information Sheets). It should also be more friendly when using your phone or tablet. We now have sections for each province to have their own information on Provincial Intergroup. We have also completely overhauled the Find a Meeting section and hope that it will be easier for you to find online or physical meetings.

FINANCE

In recent months, as more physical meetings have reopened, we have noticed a drastic reduction in direct online contributions to GSO. We anticipate that contributions will possibly transition to physical contributions at meetings, and that in due course, contributions will move through the structure. We would encourage Groups & Areas to continue to process contributions and send the surplus through the structure.

RETIREMENT

Noreen, one of our long-term staff members is retiring after 22 years working in GSO. She will be greatly missed by the team here in the office and no doubt by members she has formed friendships with over the years. We wish her all the best in this next stage of her life and a future filled with good health and happiness. Thank you, Noreen, for all your hard work and commitment to AA over the past 22 years. Have a Happy Retirement - may the best be yet to come!

Here are some useful email addresses if you need to contact us in GSO...

For general queries:

gso@alcoholicsanonymous.ie

Group Information Sheets:

aagroupinfo@alcoholicsanonymous.ie

Service and Structure Queries
(related to Group, Area, Intergroup):

aastructurequeries@alcoholicsanonymous.ie

The Road Back :

roadback@alcoholicsanonymous.ie

Growing Into Me

I had never felt comfortable in my own skin, was always in fantasy from as early as I could remember, anything to take me out of myself. I was a problem drinker from my first drunk at 13. Alcohol allowed me to be a version of myself I was comfortable with - it would take me out of my reality, a reality which I found intolerable. When I drank, my self-obsession and inhibitions were gone, and I was lit up. My high school life was focussed around obtaining, hiding and using alcohol. My behaviour was always atrocious, against all of my values.

I began to change who I surrounded myself with to people who patted me on the back for my shameful behaviour rather than chastise me for it. I started drinking in the morning the day after my 21st birthday party, my 24-hour blackout drinking commenced. It went downhill quickly from there. I lost relationships, jobs, friendships. I kept lowering the bar to the standards of my behaviour and was very quickly becoming isolated and alone. My liver was struggling, and my mental health was deteriorating rapidly, I was totally paranoid. I was terrified all the time of what was happening to me and the only thing that would stop the terror was the next black out.

After yet another rock bottom, I went to my first AA meeting at 23. I was a mess. I couldn't believe that I was being so warmly welcomed after the way I had been living somewhere after seemed to genuinely understand the internal torment I had been living. Members kept telling me to come back and seemed to genuinely understand the internal torment I had been living. They understood the lies, the stealing, the going against every moral code I had. They said they had lived like that too. I felt I had found my tribe.

But I was torn, I couldn't imagine living life without alcohol. I had never experienced being an adult sober. I didn't know how to engage in life without being drunk. By the time I arrived in AA, I felt like I was just standing on the side-lines of life, watching connecting with people and get a few weeks up here, a month up there, but I would always relapse. I would convince myself that I would drink differently this time, I wouldn't black out, I would drink like a "normal" person. But once I took the first drink, I just plummeted back to where I had left off. There was never a choice for me to drink socially.

After yet another relapse on my 24th birthday, I turned up to a meeting with my tail between

my legs, again. But ` this time I reached out to someone who I admired and asked them "can you help me? - I just don't know how I to stay sober". She told me to not drink that night, to come to her house. the next day and we would start the Steps. I didn't drink that night, I went to her house the next day, we started the Steps, and I haven't had a drink since, that was 12 years ago.

Working through the steps allowed me to realign with my values, process what I had done, who I had become and begin to develop some self-esteem. I learned to do estimable things and finally became comfortable in my own skin; in my own reality it became not just tolerable but comfortable. I had to learn how to do everything sober, going out for coffee, dinner, going to work events, on dates! I had to learn how to be in relationships.

I went to uni. I developed a loving connection to my Higher Power.

I was guided by older sober members and was supported every step of the way. In my recovery journey I established a career as a health-care professional, I have incredible friendships, I am married to a man I adore and have two beautiful children with an-other on the way! I truly never thought this life was on offer to me. This was the life that other people had. I thought I was destined just to die from my alcoholism. Recovery life hasn't been without its hardships and challenges but with this program, the people in it and my higher power I have risen to every challenge, and I wouldn't change any of it. It all part of the beautiful tapestry that is my life.

Today I am grateful to be an alcoholic because of the path it set me on, to be living a spiritual life full of love.

The News March 2021

AA Humour

Anybody who says that talk is cheap has never talked to a lawyer.

You have heard of Murphy's Law, but have you heard of Cole's Law?

It's thinly sliced cabbage.

The Spiritual Principles of the 12 Traditions

The Twelve Traditions are often referred to as, “Why it works.” They ensure the continuance of A.A. as a whole, by providing guidelines for groups to evaluate their activities and actions. In a practical vein they are, individually and collectively, humility builders for the group; they ask that the group consider its conduct from a broader perspective and, when necessary, give up something for

the overall good of A.A.

The Traditions also contain spiritual principles. These principles, when applied in our lives, complement the Steps as a guide to personal recovery. Here, taken from Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, (with minor editorial modification) are the spiritual principles of the Traditions that I strive to apply in my daily life:

1. The A.A. member conforms to the principles of recovery; at first because he must, later because he discovers a way of life he really wants to live. (Unity)
2. When we come to understand the wisdom of the group decision and the necessity of patiently awaiting developments, the real and permanent leadership of A.A. can offer the quiet opinion, the sure knowledge and humble example that resolve a crisis, leading by example, rather than driving by mandate. (Group Conscience)
3. When confronted by the fear that is the true basis of intolerance, we need only ask, “What would the Master do?” (Membership)
4. Eventually, we must conform to whatever tested principles guarantee survival. Sobriety must be our sole objective. In all other respects there is perfect freedom of will and action. We have the right to be wrong, but we no longer have the right to harm others. (Autonomy)
5. It is the great paradox of A.A. that we know we can seldom keep the precious gift of sobriety unless we give it away. (Primary Purpose)
6. We are all perfectionists who, failing perfection, have gone to the other extreme. We cannot be all things to all men, nor should we try. (Non-Affiliation)

7. We, too, should be self-supporting through our own contributions. Not only is it a responsibility of sobriety, it is essential to our self-esteem. (Self-Supporting)
8. We give freely what has been given freely to us. (Non-Professional)
9. Unless each A.A. member follows to the best of his ability our suggested Twelve Steps to recovery, he almost certainly signs his death warrant. His drunkenness and dissolution are not penalties inflicted by people in authority; they result from his personal disobedience to spiritual principles. (Spirit of Service)
10. We should not back away from our individual responsibility to act as we believe upon the issues of our time, yet self-righteousness should not cause us to enforce our will on others. (Outside Issues)
11. Personal ambition has no place in A.A. There is never a need to praise ourselves. (Attraction Rather Than Promotion)
12. The spiritual substance of anonymity is sacrifice. We try to give up our natural desires for personal distinction as A.A. members both among fellow alcoholics and before the general public. We are sure that humility, expressed by anonymity, is the greatest safeguard that Alcoholics Anonymous can ever have. (Principles Before Personalities)

The spiritual principles of the traditions teach us that, “we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil

us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him who presides over us all.”

Jack D. (The Home Group)

Shake My Hand

I have found myself having trouble setting my boundaries in the rooms of AA. as a woman when I offer my hand instead of a hug.

I wish the men in the rooms would respect that. A lot of women in the program have been abused physically and no one knows what kind of day we are having mentally-a hug may trigger some bad memories. Don't make us feel bad by saying, "Oh, come on, what is this? Give me a hug."

I would like to suggest this as a topic. Thanks for listening.

JACQUIC
(Grapevine No Matter What Page 44)



Life Skills University

My name is Eibhlin, I am an Alcoholic. I was Alcoholic yesterday. I am today and "God Willing" if tomorrow comes round I will be Alcoholic too. In recovery I pray. A daily reprieve, letting go and Letting God.

In recovery I pray

My Powerlessness over Alcohol never changes. I have total Acceptance; Alcohol is poison for me. Equally I have learned in AA, I am powerless over: persons, places and things. Today I live these "twenty-four" sparkling hours. I follow the suggestions, which I learned in my home group, fellowship. With the help of my Sponsor. What are the Suggested things for me in AA?

I surrender my will and my Life to a Power Greater than myself, whom I call God, First things First I surrender early morning when I wake up. Where possible I pray and meditate. Read my reflection for today.

I get to Meetings, a day at a time. What kept me Sober yesterday will not keep me sober today. I reach out via phone. I have built up a bank of incredible members. Who have crossed

my path during my journey in Fellowship.

I thank my Higher Power (the God of my understanding), a compassionate, loving, forgiving and empowering God.

I help carry the message, through Service in my home group, also service at Area and Intergroup level. I Volunteer at Conventions where and when I'm needed. The reward for me personally is enormous. I am currently firmly in the Middle of the AA boat.

The learning for me is ongoing, I have heartfelt gratitude for the life I have been given by attending my meetings, sharing my message and learning from other members Joys and Sorrows. Life on life's terms, while sobriety is an adventure. I am never guaranteed a totally smooth path. By keeping close to meetings, practising with the "spiritual toolkit" passed to me via my Sponsor. Listening to members. I have a daily reprieve from this "Cunning, Baffling and Powerful disease" a disease I have learned through studying the "Big Book" with my Sponsor, working through Steps One-Twelve, and each day living out of the Maintenance and Growth, steps: Ten, Eleven and

Twelve to the best of my ability. Its baby steps which lead to Progress, Never Perfection.

Step four allowed me to clear Away the “Wreckage of the Past” Step five, sharing my History of my Drinking, Resentments, Hurts, fears all my natural instincts taken to Excess, with my Sponsor while my HP/ God listened. It gave me a true clear picture of myself to date.

What were my motives for doing things?

Step Six – Nine. Began a slow journey of rightsizing me. A journey which will never finish. What were my motives for doing things? When upsets, resentments, frustrations, fears compounded or daily compound my life, all challenges which take my peace of mind occur, I now look within. What are my true expectations? Where have I put myself to be hurt. It’s never about the other person. This is an inside job. If it’s to be it’s up to me. Do I make an Apology and Amend as Quickly as possible now here today? Today the most important piece of real estate I have exists between my two ears.

AA for me has proven to be a Life Skills University. By accepting I am Alcoholic, admitting my Powerlessness, I have received

so much Freedom and Gifts in return. A “Design for Living”, A fellowship growing and supporting me. A Spiritual toolkit, teaching me, I am never alone. Humility, Open-mindedness, Honesty, willing to be willing to try. A Stretching beyond my comfort zone. Baby steps, a daily reprieve, lead to rewards. A growing in Responsibility, Accountability, a Nurturing, all provide me with a compass to steer me on my path a day at a time. I have struggled with the Highs and Lows of life. Today, I try and keep my expectations low. Maintain Balance. Expect the best and prepare for challenges. I have seen members cope with tough “Acid Tests”, loss of family members, personal illness diagnosis, Grief, Bereavement, death of family members by suicides. Yes, horrific life situations present, and members stay sober. This is a killer disease. It has taken many lives of members around me in my short six years. It strips us of dignity, respect, family, and friendships. It strips us bare and comes back for our lives.

My disease is a disease of: Blindness, Forgetfulness, Isolation, Loneliness. A disease centred in the mind, which manifests in compulsive obsessive drinking. An allergy and a compulsion. From the first mouthful, all choices, and opportunities for a decent standard of life is gone. Newcomers today remind me of

where I was, any member who slips is doing research for me, they remind me, it will not get better only worse if I go back out. Old timers and those ahead of me shine the torch to light my path on my way forward, they teach me Discipline, Perseverance and Balance, to work for all who are willing to "Get up, dress up, Show up. "It's the "We "of Fellowship which impresses me.

**It will not get
better only worse
if I go back out**

Alone I'm lost, together we are an unstoppable force. I pray with heartfelt gratitude and enlightenment a "day at a time." Entire abstinence and

a dependence on God of my Understanding. full use of the Spiritual Toolkit as laid out clearly in the Big Book by our founders is only way to be Happy Joyous and Free. I am given a daily reprieve from my disease and today and all todays which God willing stretches before me, I will trudge the road of happy destiny keeping my God Squad, other members around me with their living supportive experience. I am full of gratitude for this priceless gift I have been given from Crossing the Threshold of Alcoholics Anonymous.

May God hold you all individually in his palm until we meet again.

*Eibhlin
West of Ireland 22/07/2021*



Some Do Some Don't

We are given a second chance in AA, I was told. At first, I thought it was just one of those reaffirming comments aimed at encouragement when times were tough. Or a "happy clappy" fridge magnet motto, based more on sentiment than fact. But over time, it's come true - time and time again. I remember the first time I heard it. I'd attended a dear friend's 60th birthday party. I had been too drunk to attend her 50th, something I was deeply ashamed of and bitterly regretted. I'd known this friend for decades. L had introduced her on a blind date to the man she would marry, another close friend of mine who was a colleague. That was the summer of 1966, and it was love at first sight for them. Fast forward more than 40 years to her 60th. I was sober in AA, and eagerly accepted her invitation to the party.

It was a long way from home, so I booked a hotel for the night. The party was being held in another hotel, and as I walked in, the room was full. As I entered the room, the host saw me and burst into tears - of joy, I should add. I said that women often burst into tears when they first saw

me, and people laughed. Then she led me to the microphone and announced: "This is the man who introduced me to my husband" Some cheers -and jeers - went up. "You've got a lot to answer for", someone said, followed by more laughter. it was one of the proudest moments of my life. When I recounted that story to a friend, she said: "We ARE given a second chance in AA". Since then, I've found I've been given a second chance in everything - life, relationships, the workplace, friends, and neighbours.

I've since been able to celebrate the couple's Golden Wedding anniversary, and the wife's 70th. All by staying sober one day at a time in the rooms of AA. Lately, I've re-discovered the music of a singer and songwriter from the 1970s. It still sounds as fresh and wonderful as when I first heard it. The artist was precisely one day younger than me. By all accounts, he might still be alive with AA in his life. I'm grateful for all the second chances I get. Some people don't get any at all.

*JEFF B, Warwickshire
Share Magazine January 2020*



Six Years On

I drank for 25 years, mostly as a weekend binge drinker. The first drink I remember taking was on my last day of Year 8. I snuck cask wine into my drink bottle, mixed in a little cordial, and drank it walking home from school. I did this because I was angry at my mother who was a violent alcoholic and who couldn't afford my private school fees anymore because she had racked up debt. She had blown up eleven credit cards to the limit with her compulsive shopping.

In Year 9 I was drinking cherry liqueur with lemonade in my bedroom while doing my homework. That led to buying a six pack of Strongbow cider on my sixteenth birthday. That night my first boyfriend told me I had a problem with alcohol, despite me never getting to drink it. He actually threw the six pack in the bonfire! So, I'm unsure how he came to the conclusion that I had a problem with alcohol. Maybe it was because of my behaviour when drinking it.

Around this time, I tried lit Sambuca shots with my mum and her two friends. I got a fake ID and started going to bars in St Kilda at sixteen. Nightclubs were too strict with checking IDs, but bars weren't. On the tick of midnight on my eighteenth

birthday I was sitting at the bar of the Waltzing Matilda to receive my first legal drink.

My first year of university was a real eye opener. We had nights of two-dollar shots and pub crawls. I started drinking until I vomited. My housemate would storm off and not walk home with me because I would be vomiting on the way home. I drank like this until I was 39 years old. Consequently, my marriage was heading nowhere with constant romantic liaisons with strangers. My husband and I spoke about having children but thank God we never took that further. We were both drunks on a path of destruction.

Things got unbelievably worse when my husband got permission for us to stay in the local nightclub while they cleaned up on Saturday nights. So instead of getting kicked out at 1 or 3am with everyone else, we could drink on until 6am. This meant spending Sundays not being able to take a mouthful of food or drink without spewing.

When I wasn't able to take any more of this, I announced "That's it, I'm going to AA." I knew in my heart I couldn't continue to drink like that, and I knew I couldn't get on my own. I couldn't get

past three weeks on my own. I had tried. I tried Ocober and Dry July. Both times I hadn't been able to go more than three weeks without a drink. That was my last drink.

One week in June 2014, I made it to my first AA meeting. I swear everyone there was over eighty bar one lady. I wondered "What am I doing here?!" "Maybe you don't quit until you're in your 80s." But when I listened to them speak, they had 50 years sobriety. Then I thought maybe I am in the right place. The younger lady came up to me at the end of the meeting and asked if I experienced black outs. I didn't know what she meant. I thought it was normal to not remember what had happened the night before. I did that every weekend. One of the older ladies told me, "You can leave these rooms and never drink again." At the start I didn't think I would make it past three weeks sobriety. But I thought I should give it a try.

I got my first chip at one month. I was sooo excited and sooo proud! That kept me going for a while. But then my life started changing and that made me want to keep going. I stopped suffering the physical

consequences, the hangovers, the heartburn, the reflux, the burning in my stomach, the long migraines, the illnesses I just couldn't shake.

At the start I didn't understand the Steps or Traditions. They could have been written in Chinese for all the sense they made to me. I actually went to a Steps night in my first year and never returned because it went right over my head. I just kept going to meetings and didn't pick up a drink. My mother-in-law stopped drinking to support me. I was sober for a year when my husband and I decided we wanted to have children. So, he got sober.

When I had been sober for two years and my husband had been sober for one year we conceived our beautiful daughter. Now we have a gorgeous almost four-year-old. I'm still sober. My mother is still sober and my husband barely drinks. I am so proud of the changes we have made as a family.

We have broken generational patterns and cycles of abuse.

*Belynda M, Melbourne
(February 2021 Issue The News)*

Up to date information about AA meetings is available on our website at

www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie



SOME REFLECTIONS TO UNDERSTAND DEEPER MEANING

Prayer is not a “spare wheel” that YOU PULL OUT when IN trouble, but it is a “steering wheel” that directs the right path throughout life.

Why is a car’s windshield so large and the rear-view mirror so small? Because our past is not as important as our future. So, look ahead and move on.

Friendship is like a book. It takes a few seconds to burn, but it takes years to write.

All things in life are temporary. If they are going well, enjoy them, they will not last forever. If they are going wrong, don’t worry, they can’t last long either.

Old friends are gold. New friends are diamonds! If you get a diamond, don’t forget the gold! To hold a diamond, you always need a base of gold.

Often when we lose hope and think this is the end, God smiles from above and says “relax, sweetheart, it’s just a bend, not the end”.

When God solves your problems, you have faith in his abilities, when God doesn’t solve your problems, he has faith in your abilities.

A blind person asked God “can there be anything worse than losing eyesight? He replied, “Yes, losing your vision”.

When you pray for others, God listens to you and blesses them, and sometimes when you are safe and happy, remember that someone has prayed for you.

Worrying does not take away tomorrow’s troubles, it takes away today’s peace.



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:
roadback@alcoholicsanonymous.ie

or posted to:
Alcoholics Anonymous
Unit 2, Block C
Santry Business Park
Swords Road
Dublin 9 D09 H584

Up to date information on forthcoming Conventions and One Day Events can be viewed on our website at
www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie