

A photograph of a snow-covered road lined with trees, serving as the background for the entire page. The road is in the foreground, leading into the distance. The trees are heavily laden with snow, creating a white canopy. The overall tone is cold and serene.

THE ROAD



BACK

includes AA News Sheet

JAN - MAR 2022

Issue No. 437

**One kind word can
warm three winter
months**

Japanese Proverb

Editorial

Spring is in the air once again and, with the removal of most COVID-19 restrictions, there's a real sense of growth around us. Physical meetings that have been closed for almost two years have started to open again, just like the snowdrops and daffodils, sprouting from unexpected places just before coming into full bloom.

I was touched by the recent interview in the Tommy Tiernan show on RTE 1 when Tommy spoke with Brent Pope. Brent said that, in a time of difficulty, being addressed as 'friend' by a stranger meant the world to him. Isn't that so very true of us too? Kind words from other members mean so much to us. Having friends in the rooms can mean so much when we feel lonely.

The Japanese proverb on this edition's cover, namely "One kind word can warm three winter months" is very relevant in this regard. It need not be the seasonal winter. We all have our own seasons and have times in our lives when the world may seem cold and unfriendly. Brent spoke bravely about the difficult times that he went through. In this situation, words can be powerful, lifesaving life-lines.

The old saying "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me" is blatantly untrue. We don't want words to hurt us, but they can do – and very easily. We never know how vulnerable a person may be. A smile or a kind word to somebody that we meet can be powerful messages of connection to them. We never know how much a person may need this, but we know how helpful it is when it happens to us.

Those of us of a certain age may remember what the comedian Hal Roach would say at the end of his shows "Nobody needs a smile as much as he who has none to give".

The Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh says "Because of your smile, you make life more beautiful". While our life contains many big events, both good and bad, big, and small, it largely consists of a multitude of little things. Kurt Vonnegut reminds us to, *"Enjoy the little things in life because one day you'll look back and realize they were the big things."*

A smile or a kind word could be just that, a big thing in the sometimes-lonely mind of an alcoholic.

The Editorial team at the Road Back welcomes your articles, comments, poems, and anything that you would like to say. Once approved, they will be published in the magazine or held for future publication. We wish you and your families a happy and healthy spring.

The Road Back Editorial 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.

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Beyond my wildest dreams

When I open my mouth, despite being in New Zealand for 47 years, it is apparent that I am not from these parts. My English accent has never completely left me. I am a late bloomer in AA as I didn't get to these rooms until I was 48. For years, by virtue of my white hair, I have looked like an AA old timer. Now I finally am one, it's timely for me to write something about my experience, strength and hope.

My experience consists of 30 years of drinking, starting off binge drinking at weekends and slowly progressing until I needed a drink first thing in the morning to stop the shakes from the night before and get myself out of bed. I had only been drinking about 7 years when I needed to drink every day and it was at that time that I did my 'geographical' although I didn't realise that's what it was at the time.

In a pub (of course), I had this great idea to emigrate to New Zealand believing that what I needed was a change of scenery. The original miracle of alcohol had long since worn off and I was again restless, irritable and discontented with my lot in life. I blamed my parents, the boyfriend of the day, my job, the small town I lived in, etc. Nothing

was ever my fault.

My big adventure started in Southampton when I was 27 years old, and I boarded a ship and was off to a new beginning. The first thing I did once on-board ship was to find the Outrigger Bar and that's where I spent most of the six weeks it took to get to New Zealand. Suffice to say that nothing much changed in my attitude once I arrived here, and my drinking got worse. Then I blamed New Zealand. I never once looked at myself as the cause of my problems.

I arrived in New Zealand in 1972 and got to my first AA meeting in 1993 so I got into quite a lot of mischief in those intervening years. I won't bore you with details as none of it will come as a surprise as we have all done such crazy things. I do regret the way I treated people, especially those close to me, but have done my best to make amends. Alcoholism is a very selfish disease, and our Big Book tells us that self-centredness is the root of our troubles. That is a hard pill to swallow but absolutely true I realise now.

Eventually arriving at AA in 1993 is not due to any admission or willingness on my part. I was still in total denial about the drinking

being a problem. It was a necessity. I was manipulated into these rooms by a number of people outside AA, workmates, my GP, and an understanding counsellor. I had been to counselling before and loved it. I was able to dump my stuff and have someone just sit there and let me waffle on about myself. Unburdening myself in this way never worked but I did get relief for a few hours. However, this new one had me pegged from the word go and knew where I needed to be even though I wasn't interested in AA. An AA member picked me up and took me to my first meeting. Well, I saw the Serenity Prayer on the wall and down came my mind shutters. I had been to an all-girls school where religious instruction was a daily lesson, interspersed with cookery and needlework (such was the curriculum for girls in the late 1940s and 1950s in England). I thought I knew all there was to know about God and I didn't want a bar of it.

I often share about the miracle of AA for me was not that I got to that first meeting. It was that I got to the second one, even though it was almost against my own will. I had a sponsor given to me and we started work on the 12 Steps straight away even though I wasn't completely sober. That first meeting was in September 1993, but I didn't have my last drink until May the following year. Every time I drank, we went back to Step 1, so it was a tedious process. I am so grateful nowadays for being

exposed to the Big Book so early because it was the book that convinced me finally that I was an alcoholic and I had run out of excuses. The complete surrender even took me to my knees (for physical reasons, I can't get on my knees these days, but I don't think God minds).

Despite being convinced that a sober life was going to be boring beyond imagination, my life today is full and exciting, and I look forward to each day. A far cry from the anxiety of wondering how I was going to get the money to buy the next bottle. Alcohol was constantly in my thoughts and getting the next drink was always paramount in my mind. Today, I enjoy my family instead of blaming them. Unfortunately, my parents passed away before I got sober, but I do have a daughter, a son-in-law and a delightful little granddaughter who is 3 years old and a source of constant entertainment. I still go to three meetings a week and try to give something back but will never be able to repay what I have received. The joys of sobriety are beyond measure and, if I had achieved everything, I wanted for myself when I first got sober, I would have sold myself short. My life today is indeed beyond my wildest dreams, thanks to the fellowship and the 12 Steps of the AA programme.

*Val H
From MainstayDec19/Jan 20*

Family and Group Meetings

A man, who regularly attended family and group meetings suddenly, without any notice, stopped participating. After a few weeks, one very cold night another member of that group decided to visit him.

He found the man at home, alone, sitting in front of a fireplace where a bright fire burned. The man welcomed the member. There was great calm and silence. The two men only watched the dancing flames around the logs that crackled in the fireplace.

After a few minutes the member, without saying a word, examined the logs that formed the fire and selected one of them, glowing most brightly of all, and removed it to the side with a pair of tongs. Then he sat down again.

The host was paying attention to everything, fascinated. Before long, the lone log's flame subsided, until there was only a momentary glow, and the fire soon went out. In a short time what was previously bright light and heat had become nothing more than a black dead piece of wood. Very few words had been spoken since the greeting.

Before preparing to leave, the member picked up the useless piece of wood with the tongs and placed it again in the middle of the fire. Immediately, the

piece of wood was rekindled, fuelled by the light and heat of the burning logs around it.

When the member was about to leave and had reached the door, the host said: 'Thank you for your visit and for your beautiful lesson. I'll return to the group soon.

Why is a group important in our life? Very simple, Because each member that withdraws takes fire and heat from the rest.

It's worth reminding group members that they are a part of the flame.

It's also good to remind us that we are all responsible for keeping each other's flame burning. And we must promote the union among us so that the fire is really strong, effective and lasting. Keep the fire burning.

THE GROUP IS ALSO A FAMILY
It doesn't matter if sometimes we are bothered by so many messages, quarrels and misunderstandings.

What matters is to be connected. We are here to meet, message, learn, exchange ideas or simply to know that we are not alone

Let's keep the flame alive.

Life is beautiful with friends and family.

Stay blessed
Stay together

Together we are Strong.

Anon

Heard at Meetings

“ Experience is what you get when you don't get what you want. ”

“ If you put nothing into AA, you get nothing out. ”

“ You'll go a long way in AA, because you've a long way to go. ”

“ You can't plough a field by turning it over in your head. ”

“ If not now, when? ”

“ In AA it doesn't matter who is right, only who is left. ”

“ It is easier to live through someone else than to become complete yourself. ”

Even if the Truth Hurts

At his daughter's school one day, a sober dad learns a valuable lesson about telling lies.

Years ago, when I was just a few months into my newfound sobriety, I was confronted with a situation that most parents have experienced. On this occasion, my eldest daughter had been caught up in the worst kind of trouble that a 9-year-old girl can engage in - lying.

Naturally, as a concerned father I was furious to hear that my precious daughter had been lying to me and her mother about her schoolwork. It wasn't until I got a letter from her teacher and found missing assignments stashed in her backpack that I knew for sure that she had been dishonest with us for quite some time, even when we asked her if her studies were done.

I was devastated. My innocent, loving, caring daughter with whom I share a special day (my sobriety day is her birthday) had lied. My wife and I were very upset, and we wondered what else she might have been lying about. We wondered if this was only the tip of the iceberg.

I wondered how this would affect my relationship with my daughter. These all were things I should have talked to my sponsor about, had I enough sense to call him. But I felt certain that I could handle it without his help. So, without consulting anyone, neither my wife nor my sponsor, I took it upon myself to "take care of it." And boy, did I ever.

While I drove my daughter to school the next day, I proceeded to criticize her actions and warned her of the severe consequences she would receive for lying. After an entire car ride of me spewing anger at her, I noticed that we were late to school by about 10 minutes because I couldn't stop myself from going on and on about how awful what she did was. My daughter, with her head down in shame, left my car humiliated. I thought, I won. She'll never do that again.

I watched her walk into the school, and I saw through the vestibule glass that she had been stopped by the school secretary. My daughter was clearly getting an earful again, only this time from someone other than me. Well, I wasn't having that. I parked my car, walked into the school, and there was my daughter getting told that she could not come late



into the school without a note from her parents explaining her tardiness.

“No worries,” I said. “We had a bit of car trouble.” Without even thinking about what I was doing, I had lied in front of my daughter. She looked up at me with her big brown eyes and I sunk. In that moment, I wished the earth would just swallow me up. I left the school ashamed.

I went back home later and told my wife what had happened. She smiled and said perhaps I should apologize to my daughter. I also spoke with my sponsor, who laughed and pointed out that perhaps I should have asked for advice first, not after the damage was done. He added that the incident was something that I would never forget.

I may have been right in being angry, he said. I may also have been right in talking to her, but I was horribly mistaken to shame her. It was the love of my wife and my daughter that led me back into the rooms of AA. My

sponsor pointed out all the lies I spoke while I was drinking. He also pointed out to me that perhaps the reason I was so angered by Kylie’s dishonesty was in part because it reminded me of myself.

The truth may hurt for a short time, but a lie hurts all the time

I got off the phone and immediately apologized to my wife for the times I was dishonest to her. Then I picked up my daughter from school and apologized to her for my lie. We promised each other never to lie again, even if the truth hurts. She told me that she had figured out something about life. The truth may hurt for a short time, but a lie hurts all the time.

I learned a great deal from my daughter that day and a great deal about myself. That was one of the best days of my sobriety.

Kevin M.

From The News Oct 2019

“Any goal, whether great or small, is a victory when won.”

Beryl H.,

From AA Reviver Oct 21



A Sobering Experience; How Alcoholics Anonymous gave me my Life Back

“My name is Paul, and I am an Alcoholic.” I don’t remember much about my first Alcoholic Anonymous meeting. I put it down to being so mentally and physically broken that all I have is a vague recollection of a group of people sitting in a large circle, lit by candlelight. What I distinctly remember, though is hearing those present speak their truth and knowing, immediately that I was in the right place.

I was a successful lawyer, well-respected by clients and peers alike. Work was my life. It was also, in retrospect, the environment in which I was able to best practise my alcoholism. I just enjoyed a drink. I can’t be an alcoholic. I thought alcoholics were homeless and unemployed, drank first thing in the morning out of brown bags. I was none of those things, so I kept drinking, And drinking. It took me about fifteen years to get to that first meeting, at the age of 41.

I can’t pinpoint exactly when my drinking changed from social to programmatic. Drinking socially

became drinking on weekends, became drinking a few days during the week, became a daily habit. I drank to celebrate, and I drank to commiserate.

My drinking had started out fine – fun even – but, after polishing off an entire wine rack of Tasmanian reds in a week I wondered if I had a drinking problem.

The last few years were the worse the hours – the minutes – until I could drink, I craved it, needed it. I continued to work but took more and more sick days. I left work earlier and earlier, going home via the bottle shop where I got into bed and started drinking. I rarely ate. I was drinking two litres of cask wine a day out of a blue plastic wine glass because I had broken all the glass ones. I was dogged by constant and painful obsession; did I have enough alcohol to get me and keep me drunk?

I regularly cracked ribs falling off chairs and was covered in mysterious bruises. I started having blackouts, unable to remember things I’d done or

said. I later learned they were caused by drinking too much too quickly, impairing judgement, coordination and memory. Because of the blackouts my first morning ritual was to check my phone to see what nasty things I'd texted to friends, trying to piece together the events of the night before. I'd apologised so much that "I'm sorry" no longer meant anything. My second morning ritual was vomiting and diarrhoea. And I kept drinking.

My rage grew exponentially. Plates and cups were broken, cutlery thrown, computer keyboards smashed. My dogs actively avoided drunk me, terrified of my yelling. I cut people off, including my partner and family, retreating into isolation to drink the way I wanted to. Seeing the way I drank my closest friend - one of the few I had left - told me she knew someone who had stopped drinking by going to AA; and suggested I do the same. I told her to "F**k Off." I still didn't consider myself an alcoholic despite my unmanageable life. Or maybe, somewhere in the sensible part of my brain, I did.

I tried to stop or, at least reduced my drinking in the years before I entered Alcoholics Anonymous. I saw doctors, Psychologists, and Psychiatrists and lied to them all about how much I was drinking I was prescribed drugs to reduce alcohol cravings and washed them down with booze. I read self-help books, books on spirituality. I gave Buddhism a crack. I switched red wine for white and

clear spirits for coloured. Going days sometimes weeks without drinking. I relied on a willpower that was so fragile it was easily broken watching someone on television sip a martini. None of these methods curbed my drinking. It took hitting what is referred to in AA as rock bottom for me to change.

My rock bottom involved me in a blackout assaulting a taxi driver. I ended up with a broken wrist, the clear loser in that encounter. The taxi driver was unharmed. Cut to me laying on an emergency department trolley, my right forearm plastered, I was in a great deal of physical and emotional pain. It was what I needed. I reflected on where my life was headed without the fog of alcohol. Terrified I would be charged with an assault, which might mean the end of my law career, my best friend's words - "you need to go to AA" - circled around in my head. It was the only viable option I had left. I'd tried everything else; it was either jail, a slow death or Alcoholics Anonymous. I left hospital resolved to give AA a try for a month.

My understanding of AA was minimal informed by media portrayals of alcoholics. I searched online for a local meeting and dragged my partner along for support not knowing what to expect. Although I sat in the corner, not speaking, I felt instantly understood. Importantly, I realised that I was not alone in this. I was not the only person in the



world with this problem. The next day I went to another meeting. Then another then another, and another. I did 90 meetings in 90 days, as suggested. I learned that alcoholism is a disease that can be treated by attending meetings, getting a sponsor and working through the Twelve Steps that underpin the AA program.

And I didn't drink. One day at a time. I clocked up a week of sobriety, then a month, then six months. I kept going back. I started feeling better more human. My obsession with alcohol left me after three months. For the first time in a very long time. I didn't argue; I listened. What I heard was versions of my story voiced by people from all backgrounds. The Myth of the stereotypical

alcoholic I had for years, used to justify my drinking was exploded. Alcoholism can affect anyone, regardless of age cultural background, socioeconomic status.

Socialising with people outside of AA was tricky to navigate at first. So, it is unsurprising that I was often asked "Why aren't you drinking?" My response "I'm doing it for my health" satisfied most people. Persistent questioners were met with "You wouldn't like me when I'm drunk" or "I've had enough booze to last me a lifetime." I directed those who wondered out loud whether they might be an alcoholic to Alcoholics Anonymous quiz, they had to arrive at a decision themselves.

AA is a spiritual program but let me correct a common misconception. It is not a religious cult. Yes, God is an integral part of Alcoholics Anonymous, but it is a God of my understanding. Growing up a religious, the idea of DIY God, whether that be a burly, white bearded man who lives in the sky or the beauty of nature, fit perfectly with my concept of spirituality. I readily put my faith in a power greater than myself, someone or something that could guide me; a spiritual buddy that took the focus off me and my ego.

For me, Alcoholics Anonymous worked. I'm not sure how, and I don't care. Over time, I came to understand what drove my behaviour, why I reacted poorly in certain situations. Alcohol had been my anaesthetic, an escape from myself and a way of avoiding the feelings that are an inevitable part of life. AA gave me a blueprint for living and the tools to address feelings in a non-self-destructive way. Now I am honest with myself and others. I've made amends to people I had hurt and repaired relationships with family and friends. I am reliable, able to show up for people instead of making plans and then ditching them at the last minute.

Soon I will celebrate eight years of sobriety. I still go to meetings a few times a week, where the stories of newcomers as broken as I was when I first entered AA, remind me of where I was and where I am now. I regularly speak to my sponsor and other sober

alcoholics. Four years ago, I paid off a substantial credit card debt I'd racked up during my drinking. Three years ago, I married my partner of 20 years who, by some miracle, had stuck by me despite often bearing the brunt of my alcohol fueled rage. Being sober does not mean living a boring life. I have done things in sobriety I never dreamed of doing while drinking. Today I can laugh - really laugh - again.

Alcoholics Anonymous can stop you drinking and give you tools for living but, it is not a cure-all. I have had to seek help outside of AA for mental illness. But what AA has given me, and continues to give me, is a great deal of serenity and a wonderful, I support system. I am the best version of myself.

Don't get me wrong, it hasn't always been rainbows and unicorns, but neither is life. I have lost friends and family during my sobriety; I have been laid off from jobs and suffered financial hardship. The difference is that I am present, can contribute, participate, help and support others and myself without turning to alcohol.

Renowned countercultural writer Kurt Vonnegut, not alcoholic himself, once said that Alcoholics Anonymous was America's greatest gift to the world, and I must agree.

Paul

From The News Oct 2021

Happiness with a New Driver

The other night I had a dream. It was not the first I have had since sobering up. In the early months there were those terrible alcoholic nightmares, but lately those have disappeared.

This dream was different in that I was sober enough. I was in an automobile rushing down a steep hill. To my horror, I suddenly discovered that the brakes wouldn't work at all. It seemed to me that I had known for some time that the brakes were gradually getting worse. Now they were absolutely useless. At every cross street there were red traffic lights, but I was helpless to obey them. Street cars and trucks passed miraculously in front of me. I was terrified. Here and there were policemen holding up their hands and there was not a thing I could do about it.

Ahead of me I could see a solid brick wall and I knew beyond doubt that I was going to crash into it. Suddenly I woke up shaking, sweating and my heart was pounding. It reminded me of other times when I woke up in that condition or worse. I lay awake waiting for sleep to return, and my mind wandered, half awake.

How like my drinking days was that car ride. My life, like the car, was unmanageable. I was powerless to use the brakes that had worked for so many years but were gradually becoming less efficient. Alcohol had been the brake I used to control my state of mind, until it too became as useless as other brakes. In my dream I was saved from complete destruction by suddenly awaking. In real life I was saved from complete destruction. How?

I admitted that the car was unmanageable, that as a driver I was completely powerless over the brakes. But I came to believe that I could get another driver who would give me a safe ride to the destination of happiness that I wanted so much. All I had to do was to make a decision to get out from behind the wheel, climb into the back seat and take it easy.

At first my new Driver was strange to me. I had heard that He was pretty good behind the wheel, but I didn't know because I had never ridden with Him before. I have learned one or two things about this driver. For instance, He isn't very fond of back-seat drivers. Sometimes I tell Him when

we are coming to a fork in the road and which one to take, but He pays no attention.

I can ask Him to turn right or left, except I have noticed that He won't turn left. When we pass the crossroad on the left, I see why. It's always the same road and it's the one in the dream. Anytime I want to make a right turn, however, He's willing. Sometimes the Driver goes along too slowly to my way of thinking, but His pace is nice and steady, and I must admit we cover the ground in better time.

There is only one thing I have to do for the Driver. Once in a while the car stops, and I can feel the Driver looking at me. Out the window I see an old lady trying to cross the street, or a little boy with a broken toy, or a drunk lying in the gutter. If I am lazy, I don't let on I see these things and the sun doesn't shine and it is raining and dark. It must be dark for the Driver too because He hits all the bumps and holes and I'm afraid He'll run off the road and leave me to my fate. Up till now He hasn't though.

In a while He stops again, right back in the same spot where we stopped before. This time I jump out and help the old lady across the street, or fix the kid's toy, or help the drunk to his feet. Now the road is smoother, and the sun is shining again. I can't afford to let this happen too often. One of these days He might leave me, and I will be to blame.

I can look at the road map whenever I want and see the route we are following

I can look at the road map whenever I want and see the route we are following. It's marked the Twelve Steps of AA. It looks to me as if I'd better do what the Driver wants, because my driver's license hasn't been suspended. It's been cancelled for life.

By a member who moved from left to right.

From AA Reviver Nov 21

“Not picking up a drink creates infinite possibilities for me. Who knows? This could be the greatest day of my life”

*From Daily Reflections
page 9*



AA News Sheet

January - March 2022

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous of Ireland CLG (GSBAA) recently completed its Annual Report for 2021. Some information included in the report will hopefully be interesting to our readers and is incorporated in this News Sheet section along with some other useful AA news.

COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

The restrictions that affected our office and group meetings have for the most part been lifted. The latest guidelines state that it is compulsory to wear facemasks at meetings, all other restrictions have been lifted. This is very welcoming news to our members, and we ask that groups continue to take a practical and common-sense approach to safety at meetings. Our website is updated with the latest guidelines as we receive them.

CONFERENCE & AGM

Around the first week of March each year we have our Annual General Service Conference. Achievements over the past year, various reports and many other items are discussed. Motions that come from groups through the structure, are also discussed and voted on by all members of Conference. If your group would like to see a change for the better, write down up what you believe should be changed and bring it along to your Area meeting. After discussion, the Area may then bring it along to Intergroup where it is discussed further then Intergroup may bring it to Conference. The Conference delegates that visit your Area attend our General Service Conferences, along with the Intergroup Secretary. Also in attendance are World Service Delegates (WSD) and members of the General Service Board which includes the AA Trustees. It is important that Conference delegates get to know the feelings of their Areas and Groups so they can share with others. You can help this by making sure that your group is represented at your Area meeting.

One of our two WSDs, Helen from Munster will rotate from service this year. Nominations have been received from several provinces and we hope to vote in a new World Service Delegate.

The Annual General Meeting of the company, The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous CLG is also held around this time of the year. The Board of Directors report on how the company operated financially during the year and provides general information on the achievements of the past year.

Once again both the General Service Conference and the company's Annual General Meeting will be held online this year. This decision was made in advance of the unexpected recent lifting of most restrictions. We very much

wish to have a physical General Service Meeting of Conference as soon as possible and will continue to explore how we can do this during 2022.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Early in 2021, we developed a twitter account as a pilot project, it went live in the springtime. We tweeted current and useful information regularly to our followers. It is envisioned that this will continue, in the capacity of us pushing information and tweets, rather than an interactive service.

GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE (GSO)

Throughout this year the pandemic caused considerable challenges to the operations of GSO & GSBAA. While the staff operated from home, the service to members went unhindered. Calls were answered, meeting listings continued to be updated and our website became a critical point of contact for the latest HSE guidelines. Information that was provided by the HSE in relation to guidelines for AA meetings was constantly updated on the website. The shop remained closed for physical collections, but online order processing continued without break.

Additionally, the staff in GSO are back onsite and are delighted to be able to extend the opening days of the AA Literature Shop to each Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday between 9.30am and 4.30pm. This is to facilitate members that wish to purchase literature in person. You can of course continue to order literature via our online shop at **www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie**

GSO continues to encourage visitors to pre-order literature items so orders can be ready for collection. Order Forms are available to download or posted to you. There are still protocols in place so visitors must wear a mask when visiting the shop.

PHONE SERVICE FOR MEMBERS THROUGH GSO

Calls to GSO from new members looking for help for their drinking are increasing. The staff are not AA members and although they were willing to help with 12th step calls, it became apparent that there was an urgency to fill the void and transfer these calls to AA members as efficiently as possible. A pilot program was launched, where those who call GSO seeking help for an alcohol problem could select a specific option to talk to an AA member. This is routed to an AA member (responder) who can offer help. This has been a tremendous success, especially for new members who get to talk to a fellow alcoholic. It has also allowed the staff in GSO to concentrate on their principal duties, which in turn provides a much better service to those contacting GSO for more general information.

FINANCE

When our face-to-face meetings stopped, so did most contributions that normally flow through AA. We decided to make the 'Contribute' button on our website much more accessible to all members. Thankfully this was well

received and because of members contributions, we were able to operate without dipping into our prudent reserve. Of course, there were many other contributing factors, including a significant cost saving by having our Annual General Conference online. AA meetings, Board meetings, Office management meetings all continued online providing a significant cost saving to the total operating costs. Your support & willingness to adapt is greatly appreciated. We hope that our members will continue to help in the same way while we all adjust to our ever evolving new normal, in whatever shape that will take.

FIRST ONLINE ALL-IRELAND CONVENTION

During the year, Connaught Intergroup hosted at short notice, the very first All-Ireland Convention online. They overcame many challenges, and in a short time successfully hosted an event that attracted hundreds of attendees. The AA message was carried, in a safe and friendly manner.

This year in April 2022, the Annual All Ireland Convention will be held physically in the Metropole Hotel in Cork, from Friday 22nd to Sunday 24th April.



Alcoholics Anonymous Ireland
65th. All Ireland Convention
<https://www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie>

“One Day at a Time”

Friday 22nd. to Sunday 24th. April 2022
Metropole Hotel, McCurtain Street,
Cork City

For Reservations call +353 (0) 21 4643700



We wish the Munster Convention Team the best of luck with their planning and organisation of the event which we believe will be a fantastic event for all that attend. It is amazing that this will be the first physical event since Ulster hosted the convention in 2019. We hope to see as many of you there as possible!

NEW DIRECTORY & GROUP INFORMATION SHEETS

Prior to the pandemic, we had listed all our meetings on our website and in the printed directory. As meetings had to shut down, all the physical meetings were taken down from the AA website, and a new online section was created to help members find online meetings. Now, as physical meetings are reopening, we are depending on AA Groups to notify GSO so we can update our website with the relevant meeting information.

Remember, when a newcomer calls AA's GSO looking for help, we refer to the list of active AA groups to find a 12th step volunteer to help. If GSO does not know that your meeting is open, with contact details, they will not be able to give this information to newcomers or update the website with meeting information for other members.

The process to update GSO 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.

YOUR GROUP

Conference delegates received a consensus that there is difficulty in loads of groups finding members who are prepared to do service. Your group needs you and your help. You can volunteer to become a secretary, to wash cups, to meet and greet people, to clean up afterward meetings, to go to a group conscience, go to an area meeting – the list of what you can do for your group is quite extensive. All you need to do first is...decide to help. Every little bit that you do, will help your group become a little stronger. It is all part of what we are trying to do, to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic and show our gratitude through AA service.

OUR NEW LOOK WEBSITE: www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie IS COMING SOON

We have been working behind the scenes to update the infrastructure and internals of our website for the past few months. We have invested in a format that will be more cost effective and much easier to maintain going forward. We hope to include many improvements to the website content, how meetings are found and the general look and feel. The shop has been completely revamped, we are putting the finishing touches to the new 'Just for Today' section, our online 'Big Book' section along with other pamphlets in pdf format. We have removed the need to login for members, and you will be able to submit meeting information much easier. It should also be more useable when using your phone or tablet. We also plan to have a region area for each intergroup, for more local news. Watch this space for more details.

Turbulence

While flying from Philadelphia to Key West, I had to call on the Tenth Step to make my three-hour flight a happy and pleasant one instead of an angry and miserable one.

After boarding the plane, I sat comfortably in my window seat with my well-packed, carry-on luggage arranged strategically at my feet for maximum leg stretch. I prayed and meditated on how wonderful it is to be a sober woman in flight. I was organized and on time. What a gift!

Then a woman sat next to me in the center seat. And what does she proceed to do? She orients her body in my direction and crosses her legs right into my personal leg space. Unbelievable. My tiny bit of foot territory was invaded by her feet. I quickly gave her the look. No response. Then I gave her the look and breathed heavily. Again, no response. I shifted in my seat and glared at her feet. Still no response. Rats!

**Oh, I was fuming.
Smoke was coming
out of my ears**

I didn't know what to do now. I wondered what other people

would do. Probably someone else would ask her politely to move her feet. So, I played that scenario out in my head, and I imagined her saying, "No, to hell with you". What would I do then, take her by the throat?

As I mulled this in my mind, she stretched her legs and put her feet right on top of my carry-on bag, totally oblivious to the fact that she was being completely rude. And that bag she put her feet on was not even mine, it was my sister's brown houndstooth bag that I had borrowed.

So finally, I threw a small tantrum. I grabbed my bag and jerked it to the other side of the seat, all the while twitching and snorting at my inconsiderate neighbour. She did not even flinch. Her feet remained elevated in the same space in front of me and her body was as relaxed as could be as she gazed at her book, unaffected by my huffy behaviour.

Oh, I was fuming. Smoke was coming out of my ears. I was so angry and resentful. I just wanted to smack her while shoving her feet right over into her foot space. Of course, I didn't do that. Even though I am much more aware of my feelings in recovery, I am still amazed at how quickly my emotions had shifted from

peace and serenity to anger and resentment. In the snap of a finger, I can still be miserable. I knew I could sit there in these emotions, or I could change them. And since I am a member of AA and I've gone through the Steps, I knew what to do. And I did it-Step Ten. I asked my Higher Power to remove my anger and resentment and to put someone in my path I could help. And like that, I knew the person that I needed to help was this woman sitting next to me. I had acted poorly, and I needed to make it right, no matter her behaviour.

Suddenly, I noticed she was shivering. "Are you OK?" I asked. "I'm freezing," she said. "I'll get a blanket from the flight attendant," I said and asked if she would like me to lower my window shade (and I hate lowering my window shade). "No," she said. "Leave

the shade open. The sun feels good. And here comes the attendant with some coffee. That will be perfect."

We both ordered hot coffee and she proceeded to tell me that her father had passed away recently. That she and her husband were going to Key West for a much-needed vacation. I immediately felt an emotional shift back to peace and serenity. She and I talked for more than an hour after that about connections in our lives: aging parents, teaching children with special needs and spirituality. It was such a beautiful conversation, and when I looked down at the floor, I noticed her feet never came back into my foot space.

*Karen S,
From The News Oct 2019*



I Was Afraid to Stop Drinking

There are many reasons that people find it difficult to stop drinking. Most of us think that the difficulties lie in breaking a bad habit or fighting addictive tendencies. But I was literally afraid to stop. There are many reasons why I was afraid to “not drink”.

1. Stopping drinking meant I had to change my life, literally, for when I thought of things I did, alcohol was there, overflowing. Photos were evidence of the amount of activities where I was drinking. It seemed that at every social event, every family get together, every smiling image of me on Facebook - there was a glass in my hand. If I said I wasn't going to drink, what then?
2. Stopping drinking meant that I had to admit to myself that there were parts of my life that were out of my control, and strongly influenced by alcohol.
3. If I said aloud that there was a problem with my drinking, well, it was like sitting alone in the forest when the tree fell. They said that if a tree falls in the woods and no one was there, did it make a noise? I knew, deep down inside, when I was waking up in the mornings foggy and without knowing what happened the night before - well, I knew that I had a problem. But if I said it out loud, then like the tree falling in the woods, my words would make noise and others would know that I wanted to stop.
4. What if I didn't want to stop drinking forever? Will it be held against me if I picked up drinking again? Would people hold it against me if I said I was going sober but couldn't make it stick? Then THEY would know I had a problem. Scary.

These thoughts overwhelmed me and kept me self-negotiating and arm wrestling with my drunk alter-ego. I wanted to be better, but I didn't want to change kind of like wanting to fit in my skinny jeans, but not wanting to do the

diet or wanting to run a 5K, but not wanting to plan the workout. I knew that stopping drinking was going to be stressful, but I also knew that I was sick and tired of waking up feeling like dog breath. But on the first night, I just

knew I wanted to wake up sober, just to see what it was like.

Waking up that first morning - holy, moly, who would think that the sounds we take for granted in the early morning would be so clear? Chirping birds, car doors slamming, engines starting my quiet neighbourhood waking up, and I was alert enough to recognize that I hadn't heard these sounds in eons. No headache. Clear-headed. WOW!

When I went downstairs on that first morning, I made a fresh pot of coffee and reved up my computer without the impending sense of doom about what I left unfinished the day before, because I remembered yesterday. Productive before noon? WOW - to be fair to the "high functioning" me, being awake early in the morning wasn't something new even before I stopped drinking, but having a clear head WAS something that I hadn't experienced for years. Instead of going through the motions, my brain was clear. Ironically, at about 3 pm, the wine which perched on my shoulder, quietly congratulating me for all of the hard work I had accomplished that day, and suggesting that I had worked enough for just "a glass" ..

Imagine her surprise when I refilled my water glass and ignored those cravings. When it was time for dinner, and my husband went to open a bottle of wine for me, I

confused him when I told him not to open it. (I was the wine drinker whilst he is the rum drinker) ... and on the morning of Day two, when I woke up before my alarm went off, I was astounded - WHAT just happened, I'm awake.

The initial fears from before I stopped drinking were cautiously replaced with curiosity ... what can life be like without having a glass in hand? Will my relationships with my grown children improve? Will my work performance be better? Will I be quietly happier about me? Sober?

"Do I want one? Yes. Will I have one? No"

Sober days strung into weeks. And weeks into months. One year later, my sober sneakers are still double knotted. Life is not perfect, but alcohol is no longer part of mine. I stopped drinking I had moments where peer pressure to have "just one and done" popped into my head. One time, my husband was pouring a drink and suggested, "Do you want one??" I answered honestly "Do I want one? Yes. Will I have one? No. My drinking days are over.

Life is bigger than a liquid that is officially considered a poison.

Being sober is a gift, for the present.

Today I protect my quilt,

*Patty P.
From The News Oct 2021*

OBSTACLES TO GRATITUDE

“I’m grateful to be sober, and I’m grateful to be grateful.”
Grateful to be grateful? You bet! For me to have this kind of gratitude means I need to put some serious work into recognising and removing any obstacles to it. Here’s a list of seven obstacles to me becoming grateful and staying that way:

1) Amnesia

I suffered amnesia when excessive alcohol consumption gave me memory loss. Alcohol can disrupt or block my ability to form memories of facts and events when I get drunk. I used to have ‘blackouts’, which are episodes of alcohol-induced amnesia while drinking. Without memory there can be no healing because I won’t rightly know just how grateful I should be for unremembered protection, favours, blessings, benefits and benefactors. Self-awareness lies at the core of me experiencing gratitude and listening to AA members reminds me of things to be grateful for.

2) Arrogance & Pride

If I assume and take it for granted, I’m better than others then it will mean I’ve forgotten the times of receiving God’s grace which protected and strengthened me. I’ll end up wallowing in miserable ingratitude. Arrogant behaviours and haughty pride will prevent me

realising what a profound blessing it is to be alive, sober, contented and safe. My unwarranted pride must be overcome through Step 4, followed by Step 5 with my sponsor, and then regularly practicing Steps 6, 7 and 10. Gratitude is impossible without humility and self-knowledge.

3) Conceit & Vanity

My sobriety was hard won. But I mustn’t deceive my heart by vainly imagining that my blessings came from my own superior wisdom and virtue. The greatest reward for my sobriety is freedom, which means freedom from the indulgences of conceit and vanity. Both these defects emphasise separateness and distinction from others. Because I am a person who needs people, I can’t presume superiority over anyone. If my happiness depends on me admiring myself, I’ll 100% never have gratitude - I must cultivate a sense of oneness with life and my fellows.

4) Entitlement

Feeling entitled means I have an exaggerated sense of significance and deservingness. This shows up as a need for admiration and approval. People with a strong sense of entitlement have unreasonable expectations and believe they deserve special treatment and special favours. If I believe the universe owes me

everything, why should I be grateful for it? To avoid having entitlement I need honest self-reflection, a dose of humility and a recognition that life owes me nothing. I must respect, value and care about others, and practice compassion towards them.

5) Resentment

Resentments arise after someone wrongs, attacks, cheats or hurts us. Resentment is a poison not just for others, but for me. Grudges and resentments are powerful barriers to gratitude. I hate having feelings of injustice, unfairness and victimhood, and desires to retaliate. Vengeful resentment must be replaced by thankfulness. I can't be simultaneously grateful and resentful. Can I be free of self-condemnation and possibly look at those who arouse resentment as teachers and guides? Humility and forgiveness are essential for replacing resentment with understanding, kindness, and a sense of detachment and acceptance.

6) Self-centredness

Self-centredness and self-importance are all about how I feel and whether I'm pleased, looked after and appreciated. Self-absorbed people need to satisfy their own self-seeking motives and think that by expecting everything and owing nothing they have no reason to feel thankful. Aiming for humility is a key to swapping self-centredness with gratitude because it requires me being interested in others. In humility I become aware of my limitations and my need to

rely on people. If I'm humble, I can acknowledge that life is a gift worth being grateful for.

Happiness won't always make me grateful but having gratitude will make me happy.

7) Self-pity

Some people feel worry, disappointment, frustration, anxiety, shame and more, and become so negative they see absolutely no hope. How can I know if I'm like that and if my self-pity is justified? Am I restored to sanity? I need Step 2 of the AA program. My circumstances mightn't be as bad as I think. Paying attention to life's positives trains me to see more of them. My sponsor told me the antidote to self-pity is gratitude, and gratitude is built on knowing the truth about how good life is now.

It took me a bit of time in early sobriety after the fog lifted before realising my own recovery and wellbeing were worth being grateful about. But my feelings of gratitude couldn't become consistent until I started using my AA program to clear away all the obstacles. Now with quite a few years of continuous sobriety, I live an untroubled life where being happy day-to-day is linked to the blessings of gratitude. Happiness won't always make me grateful but having gratitude will make me happy.

*Karen S.
From The News Oct 2019*

Reluctant Newcomers - What AA Has to Offer

As a relative old timer 21 years sober, I am reminded of what AA has to offer every time I meet a reluctant newcomer. Someone who has come to the rooms because of external pressure, but who still harbours a belief that they can do it on their own and are looking inside to their own opinions and prejudices. We often hear comments like, "it is just not for me" or "it is the God thing I can't get my head around" or "I didn't like the colour of the wall paint". (OK so maybe they wouldn't actually verbalise the last comment, but I am sure some think it, as I do myself on occasion). When I look back to my drinking and what led me to come to AA, I realize that my thinking was decidedly dodgy and that living in my own head was part of the problem, at the same time paradoxically blaming everyone else for my drinking. Fortunately, and it is something that I am eternally grateful for, the penny dropped at my first meeting, and I have not had an alcoholic drink since my phone call to the AA helpline three days before that. A middle class, professional, married, mother of two - still with a job and a family (just) - what was I doing in a Church Hall on a

Sunday afternoon with a group of "alcoholics"?

Prior to my phone call to AA, I don't think I was even consciously aware that AA existed. How I picked up the phone to that organization is what I call my "Higher Power moment" as it was definitely not driven by me. I remind myself that having dialled the AA helpline number, I then proceeded to give the person at the other end every reason from hormones to depression to explain the possible reasons for how I felt! Still, I went along to that meeting, and for the first time in my life felt I belonged, and that people understood me. I was like them. I had got off the train journey that is alcoholism a few stops before some (and a few stops later than others), but the feeling of identity and security was overwhelming. Since then, I have been practicing the program of AA - sometimes quickly and sometimes slowly, but it is working for me.

This brings me back to the reluctant newcomer, who doesn't like the word God, or doesn't think this "sharing" and "looking back" business is for them. What I have realized is that

when someone stops looking at their own opinions, but identifies with the feelings, personalities and life stories that are shared - they get identify. They are no longer alone, no longer feeling that they are the only person in the world with their particular problems or behaviour. Then, they see in the room the same people they identified with living happy, contented, sober lives -and they want that. At this point, they stop looking inside for objections and personal preferences, and decide to do "whatever it takes" to get what others around them have. They

listen to what other people have done - attend regular meetings, use the telephone, find their own version of God/Higher Power (spiritual, agnostic or religious), work through the Twelve Step program with a sponsor and get on with it.

We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it

Once these people have stopped drinking, what is in it for them then? Well, that's when the magic really starts to happen.



We all have issues in our lives, sober or not. We all have our own personalities and find different aspects of ourselves and our lives challenging. It is by learning to be open and honest, to share what we really feel, and to enjoy new friendships and relationships that we really start to live comfortably in the world around us. I hear all too often of people who think that as AA has worked, that they don't need it anymore. They stop going to meetings. They have forgotten what it was really like, they think that they are recovered. They generally end up drinking again

- because they no longer have the reminder that the newcomer gives, nor the continued support of the fellowship. As it says in the AA literature, **"We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it". (BB, p 83.)** The past is important, but in a positive way when compared with our progress now. So AA is as important for the old timer as for the newcomer. Both serve each other. Let the journey commence.

Nikki, AA
From The News Jul 2021

ADDICTION is

Giving up everything for one thing.

RECOVERY is

Giving up one thing for everything.

LOB
Dec 2021

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

Quick Inventory- Rushing into Recovery

Two children were discussing recent events of the day, and one tells a story about his newly recovering mom, who received a speeding ticket for going 30 miles per hour - in a designated 20 mile an hour school area:

“Mom was hurrying to get us to school, so she could make it on time to her AA meeting, and we got stopped by the cops just as we got to the school! ”

“She gave us that don’t say a word stare, but we were so embarrassed and afraid everybody could see us being busted, that we just slid down in our seats and waited to be let out”

When the cop came up to the car mom started apologizing, said that she was sorry for speeding and that because she was in AA, she was stressed today and trying to make it to her AA meeting on time.”

“The cop said, ‘Well, I’m in AA also, and I’m Going to take your inventory’, then they gave her this piece of paper and took off.” “What’s an Inventory?” the other child puzzled.

“I don’t know, but it cost us \$200.00 to get it back!

From AA Reviver Nov 21

AA Humour

What is the best thing about Switzerland?

I don’t know but the flag is a big plus.

A man tells his doctor, “Doc, help me. I’m addicted to Twitter!”

The doctor replies, “Sorry, I don’t follow you ...”

Last night my girlfriend and I watched three DVDs back-to-back.

Luckily, I was the one facing the telly.

POSITIVELY NEGATIVE

ALCOHOL ONCE A FRIEND BECOMES A SWORN ENEMY,
WE CAN BE POSITIVE THAT OUR DRINKING WAS NEGATIVE.

We drank for happiness and became unhappy
We drank to be outgoing and became self-centred
We drank for Joy and became miserable
We drank for social ability and became argumentative
We drank for sophistication and became obnoxious
We drank for friendship and made enemies
We drank to soften sorrow and wallowed in self-pity
We drank to sleep and wakened without rest
We drank for strength and felt weak
We drank for sex drive and lost potency
We drank medically and acquired health problems.
We drank because the job called for it then lost the job
We drank for relaxation and then got the shakes
We drank for confidence and then became uncertain
We drank for bravery and became afraid
We drank for certainty and became doubtful
We drank to stimulate thought and we blacked out
We drank to make conversation easier and slurred our speech
We drank for warmth and then lost our cool
We drank for coolness and lost our warmth
We drank to feel heavenly and felt hell
We drank to forget and then were haunted
We drank for freedom and became slaves
We drank for power and were powerless
We drank to ease our problems and they multiplied
We drank to cope with life and invited death or worse.

*LOB.
Galway*

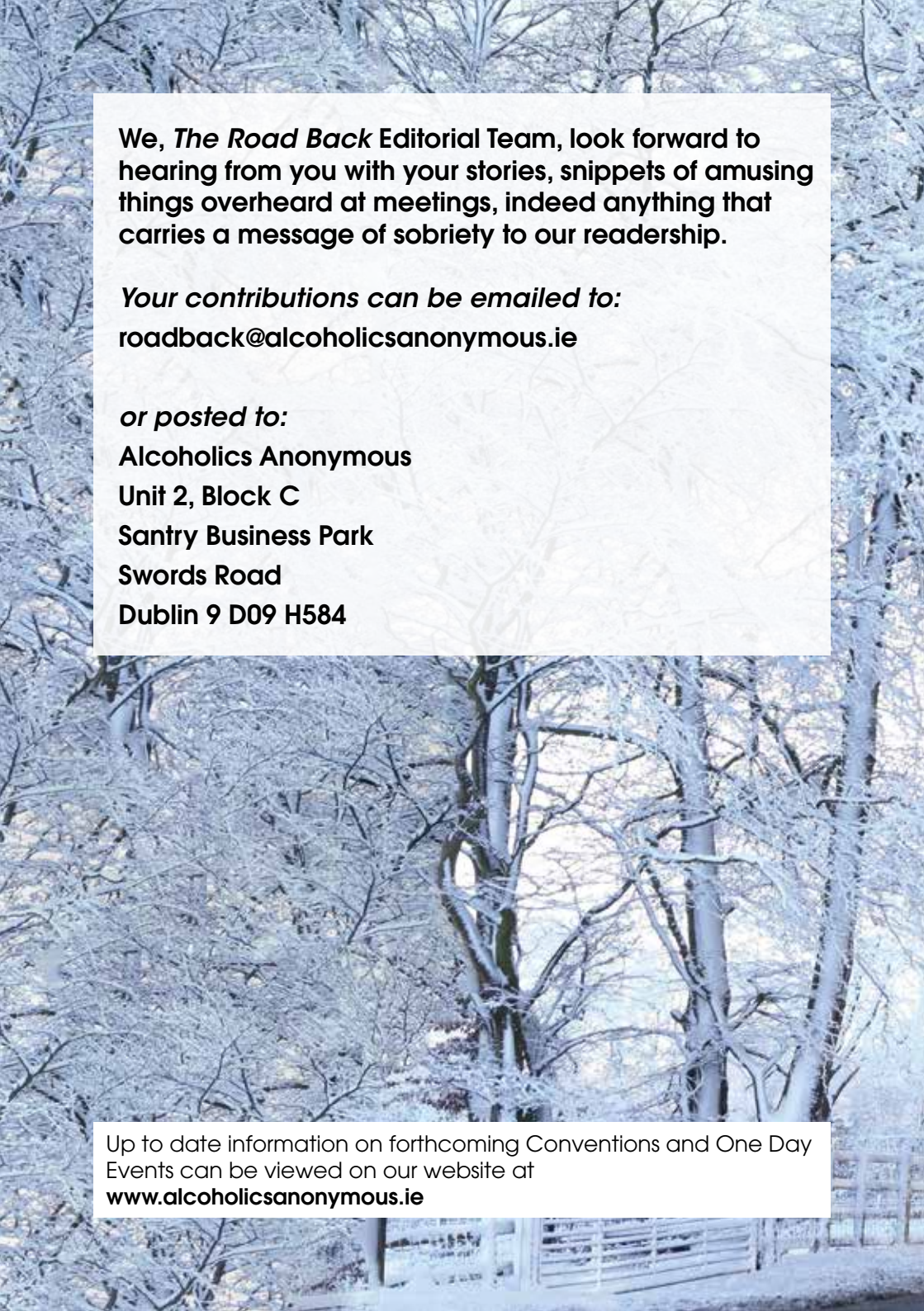
The Twelve Steps

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