



# THE ROAD BACK

includes Service News

APR - JUN 2026

ISSUE NO. 453



*young*  
in AA

## Editorial

Our chosen theme “YOUNG IN AA” has drawn a lovely response from our contributing members, some with long term sobriety, some who got sober more recently. When you read them, it is easy to see how important our slogan “One Day at a Time” is. After a power greater than ourselves, it is one of the key slogans for us if we are to achieve long term sobriety.

It has always been lovely to see young people arrive in our fellowship; they are the future and the responsibility will be with them to pass this message on for the foreseeable future. There is a short address given by Bill W at a Young People's Convention in 1969 in this edition. It speaks volumes about how our co-founders viewed the important role of the old timer in acknowledging and encouraging the young and the young at heart to be part of our service structure.

The theme for our next edition will be “STEP 5”. When we say that what we really mean is to get your laptop, computer or tablet out and let us know what your experience of step five has been.

For recent editions our team have been directly asking members to write their experience on whatever the theme is. Have you ever been asked as an individual to contribute? Well, you have now because you are the one reading this, so please contribute, long or short, to our meeting in print.

Email articles to [roadback@alcoholicsanonymous.ie](mailto:roadback@alcoholicsanonymous.ie) or post to the General Service Office.

We can do what I can't in this wonderful fellowship.

“Úr in Alcólaigh gan Ainm” – Cé acu tosaitheoir nó seanfhondúir thú, is iad daoine óga ár dtodhchaí agus ní mór dúinn fáilte a chur rompu agus iad a chothú. Tá sé go hiontach na scéalta ar fad a léamh san eagrán seo.

Agus táimid ag tnúth le bhur dtaithí ar an gcúigiú céim a léamh. Uaireanta, nuair a “admháimid do Dhia, dúinn féin, agus do dhuine eile, an nádúr cruinn d’ár lochtanna,” siúlaimid ar shiúl ón taithí spioradálta seo níos éadroime.

***The Editorial Team***

# Contents

A Letter from Bill.....	4
Úr in Alcóláigh gan Ainm.....	5
Aisling's Story.....	6
To Live Two Lives in One - Chris's Story.....	8
Eimear's Story.....	11
Shannon's Story.....	14
Six Months of Failure.....	16
Humour in AA.....	17
Heard at Meetings.....	18
Service News.....	19 - 26
Amanda's Story.....	27
What is an AA Convention?.....	30
All Ireland Convention 2027 Poster.....	33
A Flicker of Hope.....	34
Q&A With Christophr.....	37
Being Sober Abroad.....	40
What Recoery Means to Me.....	42
The Twelve Steps and Traditions.....	43

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, organisation 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 | Website [www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie](http://www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie)

June 15, 1969

To my younger friends in A.A.

On this occasion of your 12th International Conference, please have my warmest greetings and congratulations.

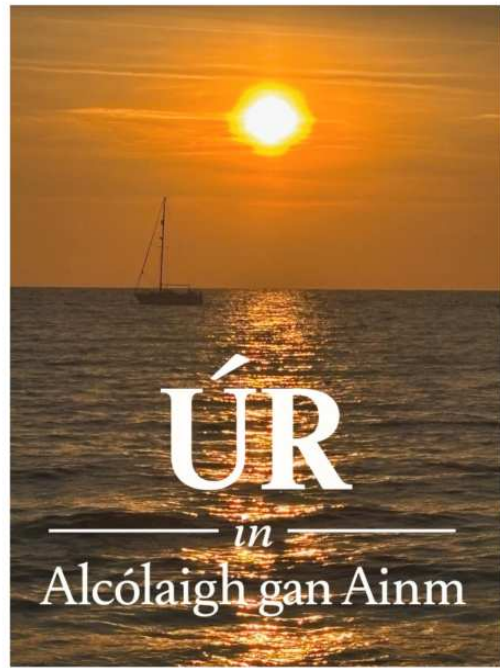
Besides, I want every one of you to know that in recent years I have found nothing for greater inspiration than the knowledge that A.A. of tomorrow will be safe, and certainly magnificent, in the keeping of you who are the younger generation of A.A. today.

With great affection for you all -- and my God bless you, and A.A., forever.

Always devotedly,

  
Bill 

12th Int. Conference of Young People  
2202 St. James Street  
Philadelphia, Penna.



Tháinig mé isteach in AA nuair a bhí mé 27 bliain d'aois. Ní raibh mórán mná óga ann ag an am, mar sin bhí an t-ádh orm go raibh mná i mo ghrúpa baile a ghlac faoina sciathán mé, a choinnigh greim orm agus a threoraigh mé trí na céimeanna.

Bhí an-mhuintearas idir na daoine agus chuidigh na mná seo liom a mhothú mar chuid de phobal AA mar mhothaigh mé mar strainséir nuair a tháinig mé isteach sna seomraí. Bhí na mná seo óg ina gcroí cé go raibh siad níos sine ná mise agus thug siad a gcuid ama agus grá go fial. Mhúin siad an modh gur clár mealltacha agus gnímh a bhí ann.

Táim in AA le fada an lá anois. Agus mar

sin tá mo dhearcadh athraithe ó dhearcadh bhean óg go dearcadh atá níos aibí. Ach táim óg i mo mheabhair fós le cuidiú Dé. Bainim triail as rudaí nua, déanaim iarracht dearcadh agus fuinneamh úr a thabhairt do mo shaol. Cé gur óg agus neamhaibí mé, tá mé tar éis fás aníos cé go bhfuilim fós óg imo chroí.

Tá mo chroí ag pléascadh le lúcháir as na rudaí maithe go léir a tharla dom. Tá na rudaí seo go léir mar thoradh díreach ar an gclár seo a oibriú agus na rudaí simplí seo a dhéanamh.

Is fíor go bhfaighimid saol thar ár mbrionglóidí is fiáine. Is féidir linn teacht amach as an dorchadas isteach sa solas. Agus sa solas seo, is féidir linn cabhrú le daoine eile tríd a ndorchadas. Is féidir linn a bheith úsáideach bíodh sin i seirbhís in AA, inár saol oibre nó inár saol baile.

Mar sin, ciallaíonn Úr in Alcóláigh gan Ainm domsa fanacht oscailte d'athrú agus leanúint ar aghaidh ag fás. Smaoiním ar ár bPáidir Suaimhneas:

A Dhia,  
Deonaigh dom an suaimhneas glacadh leis na rudaí nach féidir liom a athrú,  
Misneach na rudaí is féidir liom a athrú  
Agus an eagna a fhios ag an difríocht.

**Isibéal**



# Aisling's Story

I came into AA at 22, and 18 years later I'm still here by the grace of God. I could not have done that on my own, nor continued this journey without God, the fellowship, and the 12-step programme.

Before recovery, all I wanted was to feel OK. I tried all sorts of people, places, and things, but nothing worked the way alcohol did. Alcohol took me out of my head. The relief was just too good—relief I didn't even know I needed—from care, boredom, and worry.

However, with that relief, with that complete abandonment of social norms and propriety came the consequences, then inevitably the encounters with the hideous four horsemen ensued: terror, bewilderment, frustration, and despair, add to that shame. I knew them well.

To be honest, I got to know them even better in sobriety. The pink cloud was great — I loved being sober, having a solution to living, taking life one day at a time instead of constantly living in the past or future.

But the longer I have stayed sober, the more aware I have become of my unmanageable emotions, the "isms," and my deep need for God, and that I absolutely need to rely on our Creator if I want peace in my life.

Today that's what is important to me, having peace in my head and AA has offered me a path to that peace, away from the murky darkness and '*incomprehensible demoralisation*' referred to in the Big Book. To anyone who is new or has been around awhile, read the promises, they can and do come true if we do the work and most importantly let go and let God. The Big Book refers to a '*common solution*' and as it has worked for me it can work for anyone.

One of the first lines I identified with in the Big Book was, "*We were maladjusted to life,*" and then "*the bondage of self*" in the Step Three prayer. I had found my language of the heart. For the mind, it gave me words for thoughts and feelings I'd always had but could never explain. It brought unconscious thinking into consciousness so I could look at it, sort through it—discover, uncover, and discard.

And of course, God. Developing a relationship with a Higher Power is the absolute purpose of the 12 steps—to remove the blocks between us and God: fears, resentments, and defects of character. It taught me how to cope with life on life's terms and helped me understand why I think the way I think and why I drank the way I drank.

Understanding the threefold nature of alcoholism was key: the physical allergy, the mental obsession, and the spiritual malady. And really, it all begins with the spiritual malady. If I am dealing with a spiritual malady then the solution is spiritual.

If I am not in tune with God—clearing my blocks, being of service, working on healing—then I become sick. First spiritually, then mentally, and eventually I will seek relief however I can.

Recovery can feel like a game of whack-a-mole: putting down one compulsion only to have another take its place. Relationships, fantasy, food, shopping, Netflix—whatever it is, I will seek ease and comfort unless I am working my programme, helping others, surrendering, and trusting God.

God has never let me down, even though I still doubt at times despite the mountain of evidence in my life and recovery. God has seen me through the highs and lows of sobriety: getting sober young, learning how to have fun sober, getting qualifications, travelling, relationships, grief, and even just leaving the house in early sobriety asking God for help before heading to a university lecture.

Thank God for the Just for Today card—for instructions on how to do this thing called life, because I never really knew how. I used to look at people and wonder how they managed if they had the same head I had.

I learned everything in recovery rooms: service, commitment, listening—really listening instead of waiting for my turn to speak. I learned how to speak to managers, how to be a manager, how to ask for what I needed, how to handle interviews, and how to be a friend, partner, and daughter.

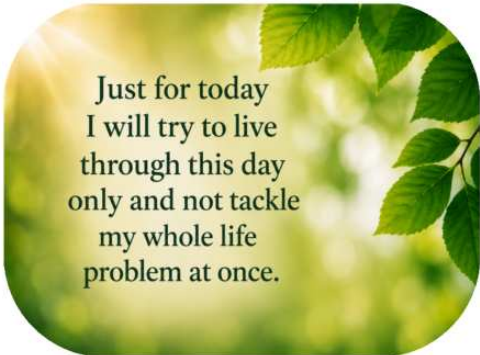
All of this has only been possible through God and the rooms of AA. I thank God for the people He placed in my path—especially the women who gave their time and showed me love when I had none for myself.

Recovery has led me to a deeper faith, to greater awareness of the healing I still need. AA has also taught me I am loved and accepted as I am despite my need to change. Recovery is about change and getting help to do that and as Dr. Bob has written on page 181 of the Big Book, *'Your Heavenly Father will never let you down'*.

It is by His grace that I live this life, as wonderful and as challenging as it can be, one day at a time.

Thank you God.

**Aisling**



Just for today  
I will try to live  
through this day  
only and not tackle  
my whole life  
problem at once.



# To Live Two Lives in One - Chris's Story

I'm Chris and I'm a grateful alcoholic today. I'm from near Killarney in County Kerry and I'm currently serving as Munster YPLO. My Home group is Primary Purpose in Killarney. My Sobriety date is 10/07/08. I had a very difficult start on this planet. I lost my mother when I was five years old to cancer. She was my world, my light. My father was a functioning daily alcoholic.

I suffered severe physical, mental and emotional abuse. I learned early in my childhood, trust no one. I was always in bars often seen at 11pm on a Saturday night bringing my four year old brother for chips and sausages in a local takeaway. I got drunk at eight years of age for the first time and boy it was magic!

The fears and worries subsided and a confidence and bravado replaced them. I felt like... why hadn't I been given this earlier? My older cousins brought me down a dark bóithrín in the countryside away from the adults. Obviously anything that makes you feel that good and powerful needed to be repeated as often as possible. It became my solution, my best friend and the only thing I trusted. Little did I know I already suffered from a deep spiritual malady.

The second time I got drunk was 6-8 months later. I was already looking forward to it- an uncle's wedding, planning on how to get it. For many years after, adults I'd meet would tell me how good a dancer I was. I would smile awkwardly as I had only the faintest memory because I'd have blacked out during the night.

My drinking continued down this path becoming weekly by second year in secondary school. I had anger and rage from home. When I started getting into discos, a highly disruptive buzz progressed even further. I hated authority, religion and everything else along the way. I went working on the buildings at 15 ready to prove the world wrong about me. The buildings turned out to be an alcoholic's paradise for me and my drinking progressed very quickly.

Consequences worsened weekly. From 18 to the day of my 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday I got spiritually very unwell- suicidal, depressed, anxious, resentful and full of rage. Most days I didn't want to be alive.

I believed, like the alcoholics in my family, I was to die an alcoholic death. On this I

steadily withdrew from my family and friends (as did they). In the last couple of years of drinking I started to get seizures and lose my sight and different parts of me were bleeding regularly. I was destroyed physically and spiritually. I believed I was soulless. Thankfully I was wrong. My nan, the last left who hadn't given up on me got me to a treatment centre. I arrived to the treatment centre in borrowed clothes (from an awful dresser!) and in Dunnes Stores slippers. The treatment centre was a good start in taking me out of circulation. On my second day there I attended my first AA meeting. I identified. After treatment I started attending my local town's meetings.

At my first meeting, I already knew the Secretary and Chairperson as they had already attended the AA meeting in the treatment centre. This was a great link for me. For a month I had to force myself to meetings. After that... I wanted to. I went to seven a week, I knew I needed it. I was still dominated by the mental obsession.

Unfortunately, I had no tools for resentment and had two enormous ones that started to grow again once I left the door of the treatment centre. Even with members trying to put out the hand, I couldn't hear. I had to drink again and was very lucky to survive four days and nights. I thought I would be able to stop once I had enough. I got scared as the will to ever stop again was totally removed. My last night drinking was my first time

getting on my knees. Crying, asking something, anything, to give me the desire to stop drinking again. Thank God, I awoke with renewed strength and hope. That was it, the last corner of the towel. I was even willing to maybe look at those steps on the wall. My local meetings had great fellowship and really looked out for me. I was handed the key to the Friday night meeting after 3 months and told it was my turn.

Thank God for that kind of fellowship. I then got my second sponsor who gave me great time, patience and understanding. Doing meeting secretary really helped me to feel part of something. I listened better and learned about group conscience decisions and how that works. It's hard to fall out of the bed when you are in the middle of it! While doing my first meeting secretary, two members that had recently gone through the Steps through the Big Book and they were on fire. I wanted what they had. One of them suggested listening to them with another member which we did!

My second sponsor fell ill and I got my third. We started going through the steps in the book. Up until now I still thought about drinking regularly and feared that if something bad enough happened, I would drink. Going through the three-step chapters that cover Step 1 was what relieved the mental obsession to drink like '*normal people*'.

As my then sponsor, used to say- each step is like moving into a new room with more light. This was my experience of the 12 steps of AA. Gradually, enormous changes in attitudes and outlooks occurred. It was years later before I could see that. A spiritual awakening had occurred as promised in the 12<sup>th</sup> step. This awakening must be deepened and maintained on a daily basis. Helping others is paramount in this. Opening the door of a meeting, service in structure, sponsoring or just putting out the hand to others and saying *"Great to see you, Keep coming back!"* Helping others recover through our 12 steps has given me many of the great joys of my sobriety.

I've served as GSR three times and Area Treasurer and Secretary. There was huge learning here for me (always in service). I learned that everyone is saying what they think is best for AA. I learned how to bring my higher power to these group conscience meetings. This process in AA has helped me in other areas of my life.

This led me to UL to do a degree in Health and Fitness which I love. Having the patience to wait to find and marry the woman beyond my dreams (just for today) and starting my new business has shaped the life I have today. I returned to Area in 2021 and took on Area secretary. After that I felt it was my time to go to Intergroup and I served as an intergroup delegate. I also joined the newly created YPLO subcommittee.

When the first Munster YPLO was rolling out, I was asked would I take it on. I said no for the first time in AA. I had done 4 years in the structure and felt that was enough. Within a half an hour on the way home, I rang the person back and explained why I said no but now it didn't sit right with me. I agreed I would discuss it with my sponsor, home group and Area, which I did. They all felt it would help me and AA. The old YPLO helped me to understand how small the pool was for this position. So I gratefully took it on. I am only in the position since October but have done a lot of service in it. I went to my first Young People in AA on Zoom earlier this year. I love to help all members, especially younger members to get involved.

We need new outlooks and attitudes to keep AA current whilst respecting the Traditions and Concepts. It is my hope that the higher power will guide us to keep AA evolving to meet the needs of today. Social media etc is now a new large challenge to be faced and worked through. To live two lives in one... the first hopeless; the second, hopeful, constantly growing and healing. I learned how to come out of my head and into my body (and heart). I learned to connect to God through my body more and more. I'm a happy customer and a grateful humble servant of AA. Keep coming back.

**Chris**



# Eimear's Story

I was 22 when I first walked into an AA meeting, my hair was still wet from the shower and I had gotten on a train because I didn't know meetings existed outside of the city, it was an impulse decision. I didn't really know what AA was, I had seen it on TV, but it was a foggy distant idea for most of my life.

I had just gotten out of my fourth hospital visit in four years for suffering/feeding into delusions/paranoia, threatening my own life and putting my physical safety in danger. At this stage, I had been fired from my job (again). I had harmed my reputation in my dream career to a point where I thought I would never work in that field again. I had lost the respect and friendship of countless people, harming most if not all of them in the process.

I was isolated from my family. I was on the brink of homelessness - couch surfing with friends and not paying rent. I felt so powerless, so empty, so alone. I didn't want to live and I didn't want to die. I wanted to be a good person, to be kind and a positive presence in people's lives, but I had no real idea how.

Whenever I tried to fix it , it got worse. I thought I was fundamentally bad, broken and unworthy of life, but also that I was misunderstood, victimized and unfairly judged. (Which of course in my recovery, I have come to see both of these ideas were inaccurate to reality.) When I would have my breakdowns that landed me in hospital, I remember begging the staff to section me, put me away somewhere and fix my mind using whatever means they saw fit. I was desperate.

That desperation saved me, I would not be alive today without it. I walked into that first meeting and I knew it was this, or further and further down the spiral until I died (Which probably would not have taken very long). I can't remember what was said fully, but I know I was welcomed over and over again. I know I kept nodding my head, identifying with these people in a way I have never related to anyone before. This thick black tar of shame and fear began to melt away, my hopelessness began to ease off, and I started to see a world in which I could not only live, but maybe be okay too.

That's all I wanted, just to not feel this way anymore. Alcohol and weed used to help me not feel that way, but it had stopped working a long time ago.

I didn't drink every day until the last few months, but there was never an off switch, never a time to slow down, and never, ever, under any circumstances, enough. I spent years abusing myself physically, mentally, and in every aspect of my life. I was so done.



I got a book, a newcomers pack, and I went back the next night. I took numbers, and called them every day. I met a woman who had what I wanted, and asked her to help me, she became my sponsor.

I didn't start the steps immediately, because the wreckage of my past was still being bandaged, and it resulted in me having to live in a hotel several hours away from the city for about 3 weeks, before I could get help to stay in the city again.

I also connected with mental health services, and began to get treatment for emotionally unstable personality disorder, and just started to slow down, treat myself with kindness and softness, and fall into the arms of those in AA, who caught me and helped me up until I could start to do it myself again.

When I was in the hotel, my sponsor had told some of the women in the local area to me where I was and what my situation was, and I had never been surrounded with such selfless love and care.

I got to a meeting every night thanks to those incredible women. By being willing to go to any length to get help, the fellowship did something unexpected, they went to any length to help me.

I eventually went back to the city, but I would not have survived those first few weeks/months without the unrestrained kindness I was given.

Today I try to give it back as much as I can, while I am still young, figuring out how to navigate the world and there's a lot I can't offer, but in this program I have learned sometimes the best thing you can do for someone is to just listen. Make them a cup of tea, go for a walk, be there, be of service in my group wherever they may need me as there is no job that I'm "too good" for, like I once would have thought when I was living in fear and insecurity.

I started the steps when I got back, and we worked with patience but also with momentum, each part took as long as it took, but I didn't "rest on my laurels" really, everything else was gone so I was actually quite lucky to be able to focus all my energy on AA. The fact that it was free helped a lot too, as I was very broke. It did help though because I both could not afford to drink mentally, but also financially. I'm not going to go into detail of the steps, because I believe that each person has their own journey to take and discoveries to make, it is such an amazing and special process that the only thing I can say is to just do it.

The mindset I took going in was thinking that it might not work, or I might not understand what the point of a lot of things were but what if I was wrong? What if it did work? I trusted the people in the room, I saw them get better, I saw their lives come back, sometimes quickly sometimes slowly, but those who got better were those who were completely open, humble and allowing themselves to learn.

I do not work a perfect program by any means, but it is part of my blood now, I know I need it to live and I feel so lucky to be given this chance to heal, and to be the person I knew I wanted to be within. The steps are a guide to life, the suggestions are just that, no one has to do any of this, but here's what's happened since I have chosen to hand things over to a power greater than myself nearly 3 years ago. I am 25 now, and

I have so many incredible friendships with people I respect and love, I am trusted by my family and by those around me, I have my own flat (yes it's only temporary, but it's still a great step forward), I have worked professionally in a career that I love many times and been offered incredible training opportunities, I have amended the harms done to others wherever I can, I have listened and supported other women in AA the way I was listened to and supported, I have travelled, I have experienced activities that I probably never would have, I have received mental health support and begun to find stabilization, and maybe this is a silly one, but I learned how to ride a bike!

Among so many other things that I just do now automatically. I am also so so grateful to have relief (dependent on a daily practice) from that savage state of mind that used to torture me and those around me, as while life is absolutely far from perfect, nothing worth doing tends to be very easy, and healing is never linear.

I was never the harmful, fearful, angry voice in my head. I was the one that heard it. The more I move towards recovery, towards the next right thing, the more progress I know I'm making even when it doesn't really feel like it. I do it because it works. I know it does, because I have seen, and because I live it.

*Eimear*





## Shannon's Story

I definitely didn't wake up one day intent on pursuing a very diligent and destructive career in alcoholism, but such was to be the case. I didn't possess the foresight or wherewithal to know that at sixteen; when I took my first proper drink, I would be signing over my own death warrant. I loved school.

I was passionate and driven, I excelled at sports, had aspirations to go to university and travel, and was circled by a kind and caring friend group. On the surface, the road map of my life seemed pretty ordinary and straightforward, yet the trajectory alcohol dragged me down was anything but.

From the minute I started drinking I was blacking out. I found myself getting slower on the field, my mind wasn't as sharp in class and I'd developed this unshakable irritability that only agreed to pipe down as the clock ticked closer 4pm on a Friday evening. Fortunately, I did make it to university, but by that stage, I was almost

incapable of applying myself. My mind frenzied, caught in the constant loop of cyclic thinking; plotting, scheming and planning for the next party, pint or pill. It was exhausting. I started missing classes, not turning up for my part time job and becoming increasingly more belligerent with my partner and friends. I skipped out on university and did a geographical, as moving abroad was sure to solve the problems that raged inside my head right? Wrong.

I completed my first residential rehab at twenty four and within a four year window I ended up spending twelve months in either rehab or psychiatric institutions. I had considered myself '*beyond help*', but then one day something happened. In AA, we call this a '*Spiritual Awakening*'.

In November 2021, in the midst of a horrific relapse that saw me almost lose my life to this disease twice in a twelve month window, I cried out for help. It was

the first time in ten years that I cried genuinely, from deep within my soul. Truly, with every fibre of my being I meant it when I cried to a god of my understanding and begged for help. This, I believe, was when my true acceptance of the first few steps happened. I had welcomed a higher power into my life and had finally surrendered. I knew for many years before this that I was an alcoholic, but I had never been ready, willing or able to put the drink down.

*When I cried out in earnest to god, this changed, and I've been contently sober since, by the grace of god, one day at a time.*

I was young getting into AA, and initially I resented it. After my first rehab, I didn't want to know AA, avoided it, did everything backwards and inevitably relapsed. However, by the time of my third rehab, when I was on my knees begging for help, I had a spiritual experience, and have been beyond grateful for AA ever since. AA has taught me everything I know about myself.

It gave me a quiet courage to pursue a life far beyond my wildest dreams in sobriety. Having a sponsor that I trust, being ruthlessly honest with the program and steps, and attending regular weekly meetings has provided me with a life I couldn't have ever imagined back then. I'm back in University doing a degree that I love, and I've been fortunate to travel the

world. If I knew back then that giving up alcohol, welcoming a higher power into my life and sticking close to AA would give me the life I have today, I'd have snatched the opportunity from you with both hands, but you can't see until you can see.

I'm grateful for every sober breath I take today, and I urge any young person, or anyone at all that's struggling while reading this to grab sobriety with both hands and never let it go. You'll be astonished by the life you can create for yourself sober, One day at a time.

**Shannon**



# Six Months of Failure

Described as being disheartened about zero successes, Bill went to Towns Hospital, to Dr Silkworth which he did frequently and confided with the doctor about his failures.



**This is were Bill, and our entire future fellowship were given a monumental , Game Changing suggestion from the Doctor**



**The dawn of how to approach the still suffering alcoholic is born.**

Have you also forgotten that Dr. Carl Jung in Zurich told a certain alcoholic, the one who later helped sober up your friend Ebby, that his only hope of salvation was a spiritual experience? No, Bill, you've got the can before the horse. You've got to deflate these people first. So give them the medical bureaus, and give it to them hard. Pour it right into them about the obsession that condemns them to drink and the physical sensitivity or allergy of the body that condemns them to go mad or die if they keep on drinking. Coming from another alcoholic, one alcoholic talking to another, maybe that will crack those tough egos deep down. Only then can you begin to try to dry up any drunks.

**-And will be Proven Successful**

After six months of failure on my part to dry up any drunks, he again reminded me of Professor William James' observation that truly transforming spiritual experiences are nearly always founded on calamity and collapse. "Stop preaching at them," Dr. Silkworth had said, "and give them the hard medical facts first.

**Inc. Alcoholics Anonymous World Services**

*Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age: A brief history of a unique movement*

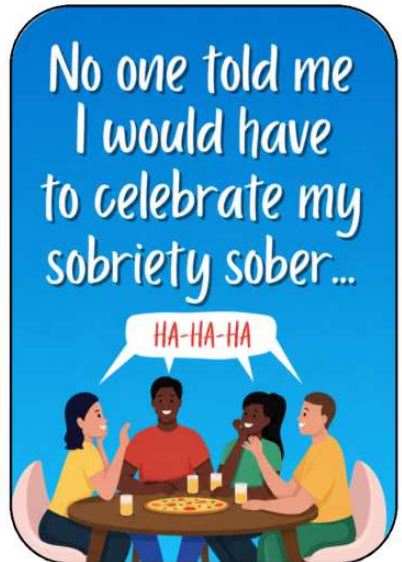
# HUMOUR in AA



"BEFORE AA, I WAS OUTSTANDING IN MY FIELD. MOSTLY BECAUSE I COULDN'T FIND THE HOUSE."



"I CAME TO AA FOR MY DRINKING PROBLEMS. THEN THEY STARTED TALKING ABOUT MY THINKING."



# Heard at Meetings

IDENTIFY WITH OTHERS BUT NEVER TRY TO COMPARE YOUR STRUGGLES.

THE WORST DAY SOBER IS STILL ALWAYS BETTER THAN THE BEST DAY DRUNK.

IF YOU'RE COASTING, YOU'RE PROBABLY GOING DOWNHILL.

CHANGE STARTS WITH A CHOICE. MAKE YOURS.

I DRANK TO FORGET AND INSTEAD BECAME HAUNTED.

I DRANK BECAUSE I THOUGHT I HAD THE RIGHT, AND YET EVERYTHING TURNED OUT WRONG.

# SERVICE NEWS

Welcome to the Summer edition of Service News.

APR-JUN 2026

## Communications

In recent months, the General Service Board, through the General Service Office, have distributed a number of important documents to the Fellowship. This is as a result of feedback we received from the Fellowship through the Conference Delegates. Members across the country have been looking for clarity on various topics throughout the whole Service Structure. Over the coming months, we will publish these documents in Service News. In this edition we will deal with 'Rotation in AA Service' and 'AA Conduct and Safety'. The later of these is a new document, approved by Conference, which replaces the previous document, 'Suggested Guidelines for Personal Conduct and Appropriate Behaviour for AA members'.

## Rotation in AA Service

### *A Fellowship Briefing Paper*

'Rotation in AA Service' is not merely an administrative custom. It is a spiritual safeguard. It protects the Fellowship from dependence on individuals, from the gathering of power around personalities and from the mistaken idea that service positions belong to those who hold them. It also helps make room for new trusted servants, new voices and new growth.

The 2026 General Service Conference in Ireland agreed that members at all levels of service should rotate out of their positions

following the completion of their term, as set out in the Service Handbook and that if there is nobody to replace them, the role should remain vacant. Conference also heard from the encouraging-members-into-service work that rotation helps prevent burnout, power accumulation and dependence on individuals.

### *Why rotation matters*

The Service Handbook reminds us that the General Service Conference begins with Group Conscience and leads back to the Group and that AA in Ireland continues to adhere to the Twelve Concepts, the Twelve Traditions and the Big Book as the yardsticks by which the activities of AA in Ireland must be measured. It also reminds us that AA service is any activity that helps us reach fellow sufferers and that recovery is not a gift to be clutched selfishly, but brings responsibility for service to others.

Rotation must therefore be understood in that light. It is not about pushing people out for the sake of it. It is about preserving the spiritual character of service. Service in AA is entrusted, not owned. A role is held for a time, then passed on.

### *Tradition Two and Trusted Service*

Tradition Two gives the clearest foundation for this: "Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern." In the Twelve and Twelve, Bill W. explains



that rotating committees are servants of the group, leaders do not govern and the group conscience speaks. He also describes the familiar AA experience of members learning to let go of position and status. He contrasts the “elder statesman,” who accepts reduced status and continues to serve with humility, with the “bleeding deacon,” who cannot let go and continues to seek influence after his time has passed.

That contrast is a useful one for all of us in service. Rotation is not only about leaving office. It is about leaving office in the right spirit. It is about being willing to step back, trust the structure and let those now entrusted with service do their work.

#### *Tradition Nine and Rotating Leadership*

Tradition Nine strengthens the same point. Bill W. writes that AA. will always need workers to serve, but that there is a great difference between the spirit of vested authority and the spirit of service.

In that spirit of service, AA elects its informal rotating committees, Intergroup committees and General Service Conference. In the Long Form he says plainly that “rotating leadership is the best,” and that true leaders in AA derive no real authority from their titles and do not govern.

That phrase is worth holding onto. AA never intended service to become permanent occupation by the same people, nor to become a platform from which a member

continues to direct matters after a term has ended. Experience remains valuable, but it must be offered in humility, by attraction and good example, rather than by lingering control or influence.

#### *Tradition Twelve and Principles before Personalities*

Tradition Twelve reminds us that anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities. If AA is to remain spiritually healthy, then positions cannot become extensions of ego, recognition or personal control. Rotation helps protect the Fellowship from that danger. It keeps us mindful that no position belongs to any of us.

#### **Step Twelve and Spiritual Maturity**

Step Twelve helps keep this matter spiritual rather than merely procedural. Bill W. says the theme of the Twelfth Step is action and speaks of “giving that asks no reward.” In service terms, that means we are asked to give our best while we hold a role and then to let it go without clinging to title, status, or continuing influence. Rotation is one of the ways we practice these principles in all our affairs.

#### **The Twelve Concepts**

The Concepts also give strong support to rotation. Concept IX says that good service leaders, together with sound and appropriate methods of choosing them, are indispensable for our future functioning and safety. Concept X says

that every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority, with the scope of that authority always well defined. Concept XI refers to “the systems of their rotation” as a matter of serious care and concern.

Concept XII warns that Conference must never become the seat of perilous wealth or power and that none of its members should ever be placed in unqualified authority over the others. Taken together, the Concepts show that rotation is not an optional extra. It is one of the means by which AA avoids the concentration of power, protects itself from dependence on individuals and keeps service accountable, balanced, and spiritually sound.

### ***Rotation after Service***

The Service Handbook in Ireland is explicit that rotation is real and should lead back to Group-level service. In the case of former GSCDs, it says that after a full term they ought to return to Group-level service and ought not continue in Area or Intergroup service except for the stated exceptions. That wording helps show the broader AA principle that higher service is held for a time and then handed on. That is significant.

It makes plain that higher service is not meant to become a revolving door for the same people. A full term is meant to be followed by a genuine return to ordinary Group life, where service continues in a different form and new trusted servants are given room to grow. The same spirit can be

seen in relation to Trusteeship, where office is held for a defined term and with defined responsibilities. When the term ends, the office ends. Experience remains valuable, but the trust attached to the office does not continue indefinitely.

### ***The Spirit of Stepping Back***

Rotation is weakened if a member leaves office in name but remains a continuing centre of authority around it. The spiritual purpose of rotation is not only to leave a role but to make room for those now entrusted with it. Former servants still have experience to offer, but AA is healthiest when that experience is offered by attraction, humility and ordinary Group life rather than by continued direction.

This does not mean silencing anyone. It means respecting Group Conscience, trusted service and the difference between counsel and control. When members step back in the right spirit, they strengthen unity, protect new servants and show that the work belongs to AA as a whole rather than to any individual.

### ***Conference 2026 - making room for others***

Conference 2026 identified a very practical point. Members staying on past the completion of their term “because there’s nobody to take on the role” was said to be one of the biggest obstacles to attracting other members into service. The answer agreed by Conference was plain: if there is nobody ready to replace the person rotating out, then the role should remain

vacant. That may seem difficult, but it is spiritually honest. If we say rotation matters, then we must mean it. If the same person simply remains because nobody else is ready, then the Fellowship may never feel the need to encourage, support and develop new servants. Vacancies can be uncomfortable, but they can also tell the truth about where growth is needed.

### ***A Positive View of Rotation***

Rotation should not be seen only in negative terms. It is not merely about ending someone's term. It is also about opening the door for others. It creates opportunities for newer members to grow. It helps trusted servants learn to rely on principles rather than personalities. It reminds the Fellowship that A.A. does not depend on one person, one old hand or one fixed set of officers. It depends on God as expressed in Group Conscience and on trusted servants who come forward, serve faithfully and then step aside when their term is complete.

### ***Conclusion***

In the end, rotation is an act of faith. It says that AA belongs to God and to the Fellowship, not to any one of us. It says that service is a privilege, not a possession. It says that no servant is indispensable and that our task is not to hold on, but to hand on. That is why rotation deserves to be honoured, not merely admired. It protects unity. It strengthens Group Conscience. It keeps us from personalities over principles. It makes room for new life in service. And it helps ensure that A.A. remains what

Tradition Two says it must be: a Fellowship in which our leaders are but trusted servants and do not govern.

### ***References used in preparing this paper***

- Service Handbook for Ireland, including the Conference Charter and provisions on rotation in service.
- Conference 2026 Draft Minutes, including the Conference decision on rotation and the Service Structure Subcommittee report.
- Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions: Tradition Two, Tradition Nine, Tradition Twelve, and Step Twelve.
- The Twelve Concepts for World Service: in particular Concepts IX, X, XI and XII

### **A.A. Conduct & Safety**

**Safety is an important issue within AA which all groups and members can address to develop workable solutions that help keep our meetings safe as based on the fundamental principles of the Fellowship. Every AA member attending an AA meeting or event, or participating in service in the fellowship, has a right to feel safe and protected at all times.**

*"Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. AA must continue to live, or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward."* — Tradition One (The Long Form)

## AA and Safety

Alcoholics Anonymous is a microcosm of the larger society within which we live. Problems found in the world can also make their way into AA. As we strive to share in a safe environment, whether at in-person meetings or virtually, alcoholics can focus on maintaining sobriety and the group can fulfil its primary purpose to carry the AA message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

### **The group should be accountable for members safety and protection.**

There is no government within AA and no central authority to control or direct its members. However, we do share the experience of groups and members in applying AA principles to issues that arise. As expressed in Tradition Two and Tradition Nine, it is through an informed group conscience that individual members and AA groups can find solutions to group matters as they relate to safety. Service entities such as Area, Intergroup and Conference are available to help provide AA services and shared experiences. When concerns about conduct arise, they should be addressed through an informed group conscience and guided by our traditions. The length or quality of a member's sobriety does not exempt anyone from responsibility for their behaviour, nor should it influence whether the concern is considered.

Common sense and experience suggest that AA membership does not grant immunity from the law or local regulations, and that

being at an AA meeting does not put anyone beyond the jurisdiction of law enforcement. As individuals, AA members are also accountable to the laws of the land. Neither our traditions nor concepts offer any AA member special exemption from the law, which all of us as members of society ought to adhere to. Calling the proper authorities (An Garda Síochána/PSNI) does not go against any AA Traditions. Anonymity is not a cloak that protects criminal or inappropriate behaviour.

Through the group conscience process, many groups have established guidelines regarding when it may be appropriate to call authorities to handle a given situation. Experience has shown that it can be necessary to contact the authorities immediately rather than wait for the next scheduled group conscience meeting. Situations that groups have faced include, but are not limited to: violence, intimidation, harassment, coercion, racism, discrimination, threats, embezzlement and theft of property etc. While AA members and groups can be caring and supportive to those affected, we are not professionals trained to handle such situations. The help of An Garda Síochána, the PSNI or other professionals may be necessary. AA members do not have the authority to investigate allegations of criminal behaviour. Individual members should contact the appropriate authorities if they feel that their safety is at risk.

## AA Safety and Unity

Situations that groups need to address to maintain unity include: threats of violence, bullying, sexual harassment or stalking; financial coercion; racial discrimination, sexual orientation or gender intolerance; and feeling pressured to adopt a particular point of view relating to medical treatments and/or medications. Bear in mind that there may be experiences/harassments that originate from group interactions that then continue outside of meetings. These experiences can affect whether someone feels safe to return to the group.

## Dealing with Disruptions

While most groups operate with a healthy balance of spontaneity and structure, others have experienced situations that can threaten group unity and challenge the safety of the group and its members. One such situation is a disruptive person whose offensive language/behaviour inhibits the group's ability to carry out its primary purpose. Members exhibiting such behaviours may be asked by the group officers to stop attending those meetings for a period of time. In-person and virtual groups that are dealing with these kinds of disruptions are making such a request to preserve the common welfare of the group and to maintain AA unity. They recognise that no AA group can bar any individual from equal membership in Alcoholics Anonymous.

## Possible Helpful Suggestions

Safety is a topic within AA that groups and

members can address. Developing workable solutions to help keep meetings safe can be based on the principles of AA. In discussions about safety, keep the focus on our primary purpose, our common welfare, and placing principles before personalities.

- Predatory behaviours and unwanted sexual advances conflict with carrying the AA message of recovery and with AA principles.
- Most experienced members suggest that men work with men and women work with women particularly in early sponsorship relationships to avoid possible complications. (Questions & Answers on Sponsorship, page 15)
- A.A. does not provide medical advice or detox services; it has no opinion on outside issues, including medication or treatment. These are best discussed with qualified professionals.
- The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking. Groups and members strive to create a safe environment for the alcoholic who still suffers.
- If safety concerns arise, individuals can speak with a sponsor, members of the group, a trustee friend and/or a professional to address the concern.

Service entities, such as Area, Intergroup or Conference, are available to help provide A.A. services and shared experience. While all groups and entities in A.A. are autonomous, they are linked in service and unity. Within AA there is no

government; our leaders are but trusted servants guided by love, the group conscience and the collective wisdom of sharing their experience, strength and hope.

- In all our group and service discussions about safety and conduct, members are encouraged to listen to the minority view and to apply the right of appeal.
- Groups and members can seek shared experience from Area, Intergroup or GSO, remembering that A.A. does not offer rules or penalties.

## All-Ireland Convention 2026

This year's All-Ireland Convention was held in the Gleneagle Hotel, in Killarney, from Friday 17<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2026. The theme of the Convention was "We Do Recover". The Convention was a tremendous success with a large attendance. The town of Killarney and the backdrop of the lakes and mountains provided a truly beautiful venue for the Convention. The Gleneagle Hotel and all its staff were wonderful hosts to us all and could not have been more helpful. The Convention meetings were held over two rooms, the Mangerton Suite and the main ballroom. A range of restaurants provided a choice of food and beverage options and the shop did a roaring trade in coffees and '99' ice creams. The reception and foyer area had ample seating areas where members could meet and chat with friends.

There were 28 meetings and events over the course of the weekend, this included 19 marathon meetings. Feedback from those

attending was that there was great range and scope in the meetings and their themes strongly reinforced the Convention theme of 'We do Recover'.

Two registration desks were manned over the weekend with over 70 members taking part in registration service. Extremely good levels of registration were noted, with almost a quarter of these being overseas visitors. Copies of the latest 'Road Back' magazine were distributed along with the Convention information pack to all from the registration desks and proved popular.

Our young and young at heart members took part in a number of events including a Saturday morning walk, a 'speed recovery' event and a closed meeting. A YPLO stand was manned for the weekend to provide information for younger people in AA, with a particular emphasis in getting involved in service. Our friends from the Al-Anon Family Groups had a one day event in the hotel on Saturday, holding nine meetings, including an open meeting for which we provided an AA speaker. Al Anon in turn provided speakers to our open meetings over the weekend. Kerry Area organised the display of their archive material in the MOD suite and this drew a steady stream of visitors over the weekend. They also arranged a literature desk, with a wide range of AA literature for sale. Friday night entertainment was provided by members and a disco was held on Saturday night. We are already looking forward to next year's convention, which will be held in



Belfast. (More information available on page 33) Enquiries can be emailed to [allirelandconvention@alcoholicsanonymous.ie](mailto:allirelandconvention@alcoholicsanonymous.ie)

As this edition is focused on young people, we felt it would be appropriate to outline the roles and responsibilities of YPLOs and YPARs.

## Young Person's Liaison Officer (YPLO)

*Purpose:*

The Young Person's Liaison Officer (YPLO) is an Intergroup position which seeks to encourage the involvement of younger members in service. The YPLO should be familiar with the various service positions and responsibilities throughout the service structure, and will maintain awareness of vacancies at all levels, sharing this information with Young Person's Area Representatives (YPAR). The YPLO acts as a central point of contact and a representative for YPARs and the information they gather. They attend their provincial Intergroup Committee and provide a report on their activities and the activities of the YPARs they represent. They liaise closely with Public Information Committees at both Intergroup and National levels, where appropriate.

*Suggested Term:* Two years.

*Voting Rights:* The YPLO is an Intergroup Representative and has equal voting rights with other Intergroup Representatives.

## Young Person's Area Representative (YPAR)

*Purpose:* The primary function of the Young Person's Area Representative (YPAR) is to encourage and support young people to get involved in AA service. YPARs attend their Area meetings, and form a subcommittee of their respective area. This subcommittee is responsible to the area they serve. YPAR's remain informed of service vacancies within the Groups and Area and communicate with the YPLO and other Area YPARs in their province. They may liaise with the Area Public Information Committee where appropriate.

YPARs also maintain a contact list of younger members willing to participate in school talks, prison service, open public meetings, and 12th Step calls. They share this contact with their YPLO and other YPARs.

*Suggested Term:* Minimum of one year, with the option to extend to two years.

## Qualifications for both YPARs and YPLOs:

- Found sobriety at the age of thirty or younger.
- A suggested minimum of two years' continuous sobriety.
- Must be an active member of their delegating Group.
- A working knowledge of the Twelve Steps and Traditions, and familiarity with the AA Service Handbook for Ireland.

### IMPORTANT REMINDER

**If you are leaving this publication in a public place such as a treatment centre, prison or doctor's surgery - please be sure to remove the centre pages beforehand.**



# Amanda's Story

My name is Amanda, I'm a grateful alcoholic. I came into AA at 23 thinking my life was over, little did I know it was only beginning!!!

I swore that I would never drink. I grew up in a home affected by alcohol - I witnessed the violence, mental torture, silent tension, emotional neglect - everything that goes with active addiction. On the outside our home looked perfect - but inside it was a very different world. I am the oldest and it became my responsibility to protect my younger sister and brother.

I learned how to read the body language and tension levels way in advance and when I thought it was about to kick off between my parents it was my job to get my siblings out of the house and over to a neighbour for safety. If I missed that window, not only would I hear and see the violence I would also be on the receiving end of it from my mother because I hadn't gotten us out of the house. My earliest memories are of this.

My parents separated on and off over the years. When they eventually separated permanently I was about 15. My mother gave me instructions to tell my father to leave the house. Needless to say,

this caused a huge rift between my father and I. The best thing about the separation was that the tension was gone from the house. But that was about it. Around this time I took my first drink. A cousin of mine and I were out, she was having a drink so I did too.

That was as much thought as I put into it. To this day I remember the instant relief from how I was feeling. I always felt uneasy in myself, never good enough, never fitting in, awkward about how I looked.

As soon as I drank that first drink I felt just great. All the tensions and anxiety left me. I felt as though I could talk to anyone. So, of course, I wanted more of that feeling so I kept drinking. I blacked out that first night.

I don't know how we got home. I woke up next morning with cuts and bruises from falling. This was to be the pattern of my drinking from that first night to the last - from drinking in Ireland to travelling through Europe to the other side of the world - I drank til I blacked out or passed out, never knew how I got home or to

where I woke up, covered in cuts and bruises. I made it to University. But so did my drinking. Away from home, I could drink as much and as often as funds would allow. My grades went down as my drinking escalated and eventually I failed out.

I was born in Australia, my parents returned to Ireland when I was 3, so I told myself the problem was living in Ireland. So off I went to the other side of the world. I thought I'd landed on my feet when I moved in with a man 20 years older than me that I met in the local Irish bar - a business man, suited and looking dapper - who didn't mind buying me drink. He turned out to be a drug dealer. The situations I found myself in became much more serious. Deep down I knew it was no good but I had access to all this drink and drugs and escape from myself. I compromised myself and my morality to get what I wanted.

The party ended when he became tired of my antics - I could be plastered after a couple of drinks, falling around the place, slurring, arguing - although I believed I was the belle of the ball!!! So back to Ireland, no money, back to the house I ran away from.

Something changed when I got back. In retrospect, it was my Higher Power. I got a clear glimpse of how I was doing exactly what I swore I wouldn't do. I was with my parents and looked at my father - I could see the desperation in him that I was feeling - I recognised me in him and the penny dropped that everything that had been

"happening to me" was my own doing through my drinking. I was terrified. My mother had been going to Al-anon for years so I asked her what I could do. In fairness, she got me to an open meeting and that's where I heard all about myself.

I was 23 and the people speaking at the meeting were much older than me but I knew exactly what they were talking about - the uneasiness in themselves, the not fitting in, the shame and remorse after drinking, the not being able to stop at one drink, blackouts, situations they would never have considered in a sober mind - and so a small bit of hope crept in.

I went to a treatment centre for thirty days. While that gave me a start it has not kept me sober. AA has kept me sober. The programme, the fellowship, service. I had the gift of desperation when I came into AA - I was willing to do whatever it took to get sober. And it took hard work and rigorous honesty to get sober.

It tells me in the Big Book;

*"half measures availed us nothing"*

and this is so true. I wanted what I saw in the rooms - people were content, laughing, calm. So I did what they did. I got a sponsor and knuckled down to the steps from Step 1 to Step 12 in that order.

I started to get some discipline into my life by attending regular meetings.

I got a Higher Power into my daily life, first thing in the morning and throughout the day. I started to do service in my home group - this was so important for my recovery because it showed me how to be reliable and to be there for my fellow recovering alcoholic - the total opposite for this selfish, self-centred drunk.

So at 23, yeah that's great I'm now in AA with these lovely people but I've my whole life ahead of me. I'm living at my mothers house, single, no job, my social life is now going to meetings, what a boring life I'm going to have????

Well, the past twenty nine years (a day at a time) have just flown by. Honestly, I wouldn't have believed it either. I'm writing this, sitting in the kitchen of the home I own with my husband. Our two rescue dogs are sleeping soundly near me. There is zero drama in my life today. I am safe and secure.

I have been in the same job for almost twenty years. I started my own business, grew it successfully only to realise during Covid lockdown that it had brought an unmerciful amount of stress with it - I was able to make the decision to finish it.

My husband and I have travelled to places we've wanted to see and experience. I discovered I love live music and concerts - I've lost count of how many gigs we've been to. I've learned how to love and take care of myself in the way my soul needs.

The most important thing I've learned is to be gentle and kind with myself, I have a disease that will torment me.

If you stayed with me and got this far, thank you. I wish you the very best in your recovery journey. Stick with it, it really is worth it.

*Amanda*

---

## Do the Right Thing



When I am willing to do the right thing, I am rewarded with an inner peace no amount of liquor could ever provide. When I am unwilling to do the right thing, I become **restless, irritable, and discontent**. It is always my choice. Through the Twelve Steps, I have been granted the gift of choice. I am no longer at the mercy of a disease that tells me the only answer is to drink. If willingness is the key to unlock the gates of hell, it is action that opens those doors so that we may walk freely among the living.

Over the course of my sobriety I have experienced many opportunities to grow. I have had struggles and achievements. Through it all I have not had to take a drink, nor have I ever been alone. Willingness and action have seen me through it all, with the guidance of loving Higher Power and the fellowship of the program

Big Book My Chance To Live p317.

# What is an AA Convention?

Following the very successful 69th All Ireland Convention held in Killarney in April, it may be helpful to pause and explain what an AA convention actually is especially for members who have never attended one or may not know what to expect.

The numbers attending Killarney were among the largest seen at an All Ireland Convention in many years. That in itself was encouraging. It showed that the appetite for fellowship recovery and service is still very much alive across AA in Ireland.

At its simplest an AA convention is a gathering of members of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is not a conference in the business sense. It is not a decision-making meeting. It is not a place where anyone is in charge of anyone else. It is a fellowship event organised by members for members and centred on our common solution to alcoholism. The purpose is very simple. To bring members together to share experience strength and hope and to strengthen our recovery, unity and service.

Fellowship is an important part of AA and of AA life. For many of us our first experience of AA was a small room a cup of tea or coffee, a few chairs and someone

saying something that made us feel less alone. That remains the heart of AA. A convention does not replace the home group. It does not replace sponsorship, regular meetings or service at group level. But it can widen our view of the Fellowship. It reminds us that AA is bigger than our own group, our own town, our own area or our own province.

At a convention members may hear speakers from different parts of Ireland and sometimes further afield. They may attend open meetings, closed meetings, Step meetings, Tradition meetings, service workshops, marathon meetings or informal gatherings. They may meet old friends make new ones and hear recovery shared in a way that lands just when it is needed.

A convention can be especially powerful for newer members. It shows that AA is alive and well beyond the room they first walked into. It can help them see people with different lengths of sobriety different backgrounds and different life experiences all held together by the same simple purpose. Staying sober and helping another alcoholic to achieve sobriety

For any member who has never been to a convention it can be a good idea to go

along with another member especially the first time. Like many things in AA conventions are often best approached in twos. Going with someone else can make it easier to walk through the door find your way around meet other members and settle into the weekend.

It also reflects something very simple that has always worked well in AA. One alcoholic helping another. For older members conventions can be just as important. They can renew enthusiasm deepen understanding of the Traditions and remind us why we keep showing up.

Many members who have been around a while will know that recovery can become routine if we are not careful. A convention can gently shake that up. We hear something fresh. We are reminded of what it was like. We see the newcomer again. We remember that AA was freely given to us and must be freely passed on.

There is also a strong service element to conventions. Long before the first meeting begins members are quietly giving their time. Rooms are booked, programmes prepared, speakers arranged, literature organised, accounts kept tea and countless small jobs carried out without fuss.

This is AA service in action. Much of it is unseen but without it the event simply could not happen. That service matters. It is often at conventions that members first see service beyond their own group. A member

may come for the speakers and leave with a willingness to help at group level, attend Area, carry a message into a prison or hospital, help with Public Information or simply put their hand up when their group needs a secretary, treasurer or GSR. That is no small thing. Conventions also help protect unity.

In AA we can sometimes become focused on our own local difficulties personalities or opinions. When members from many places come together, we are reminded that our common welfare comes first. We hear the same illness described in many voices and the same recovery found through the Twelve Steps. We may not all think the same speak the same or do things exactly the same way, but we are bound together by something greater than personal preference.

A convention is also one of the biggest Public Information opportunities AA has. Not because we are promoting ourselves but because the public can see AA recovery in action.

A busy local hotel filled with hundreds of sober alcoholics well-dressed well behaved and clearly enjoying themselves says something powerful without anyone needing to make a speech. It shows that sobriety is not a punishment.

It shows that recovery can be full of laughter friendship and purpose. For hotel staff visitors and members of the public

who may see the convention taking place that can be a quiet but very real message of attraction.

The All Ireland Convention has a particular place in the life of AA in Ireland. It brings members together from across the island and gives us a visible expression of fellowship. It moves between provinces and is organised through service not ownership. No province owns it. No committee owns it.

Like all good AA service, it is held in trust for the Fellowship. Killarney showed again what can happen when members come together in the right spirit. There was warmth, laughter, identification, gratitude and service.

There were members attending who had been sober for decades and others still finding their feet. There were people who knew exactly what a convention was and others who may have arrived unsure and left encouraged.

***Next year the All Ireland Convention will be held in Belfast, in April 2027.***

The last time the All Ireland Convention was held in Belfast was around 40 years ago so it will be a special occasion for many members. But members do not have to wait until then to experience a convention. AA members throughout the country organise other conventions and

one day events during the year. Keep an eye on the events section of the AA Ireland website at [alcoholicsanonymous.ie](http://alcoholicsanonymous.ie) and listen out for announcements at meetings.

A good convention sends members home lighter steadier and more willing. It points us back to our groups back to the Steps back to the Traditions and back to service. It reminds us that the hand of AA must always be there for the alcoholic who still suffers and that each of us has some part to play in making sure it is.

For any member who has never been to a convention perhaps the best suggestion is this. Go once. Better still go with another member. Do not worry about knowing everyone. Do not worry about understanding the full programme. Just come along listen have a cup of tea or coffee say hello to someone and allow yourself to be part of it.

Many of us came to AA feeling alone. A convention is one more reminder that we never need to be alone again.

***James | Chairperson***

— . ✨ . —  
If we are planning to stop drinking,  
there must be no reservation of any kind,  
nor any lurking notion that  
some day we will be immune to alcohol.  
— . ✨ . —  
— *As Bill Sees It*, p. 49

# Belfast 2027

*"There is a Solution"*



## Alcoholics Anonymous 70<sup>th</sup> All Ireland Convention

*Celebrating Seventy Years of the All-Ireland Convention*

Crowne Plaza Hotel Belfast , Co. Antrim, BT8 7XP

**16<sup>th</sup> 17<sup>th</sup> 18<sup>th</sup> April 2027**

E-mail: [gso@alcoholicsanonymous.ie](mailto:gso@alcoholicsanonymous.ie) NI Tel: 028 90351222 ROI Tel: 01 8420700

[www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie](http://www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie)





## A Flicker of Hope

I was introduced to Alcoholics Anonymous when I was 24 years old. My last drinking companion had disappeared from our usual “watering holes” and when I sought him out, he told me that he was going to AA meetings and hadn’t taken any drink for three weeks. We had been daily drinkers for a few years at this stage.

I was flabbergasted. Not only was I confused by the fact that he was off drink for three weeks, which seemed like an eternity to me then, but also by the fact that he thought he was an alcoholic. I set about trying to convince him that he wasn’t an alcoholic and used various arguments in my attempts to persuade him so: e.g. that he was too young, he still had a job, had his driving licence, wasn’t sleeping rough etc., all to no avail.

My parting words to him were that at least if he were alcoholic he had somewhere to go to get help. What about me, what was I to do, me not being alcoholic? *“There are none so blind as those who cannot see,”* springs to mind.

Loneliness settled in, as never before. I tried desperately to control my drinking

and then tried to stop totally and found I could do neither. I arrived in hospital where I was detoxified. I went through a treatment centre and it was there I met with AA. At my first meeting I heard members sharing their stories and a little flicker of hope was sparked in me that night.

When I first began drinking alcohol in my late teenage years I found it to be a really pleasant experience, more so the effect of it than the taste. I’ve heard it described in various ways. Turning my world from black and white to colour is one that I can strongly identify with.

I came from a family where alcohol wasn’t used and I can’t point to anything in my childhood which caused me to drink the way I did. All I can say is that I really enjoyed that wonderful effect for the first few years.

Life seemed to hold so much promise; there were lots of parties accompanied by many lapses of memory, known as blackouts. Bit by bit my drinking increased with that magical effect becoming more difficult to reach, until eventually I could

get no lift from drinking at all. By then I was drinking every day. I couldn't wait until work ended till I'd get to the pub.

I've heard the term "*functioning alcoholic*". If I was one of those I wasn't functioning very well. I was becoming unreliable, missing time from work and one of the worst things was that I could no longer rely on myself. There were lots of broken promises, made and meant very sincerely at the time.

I lost good friends and gradually the feeling that life held no meaning or had no purpose started to creep in. Constant thoughts of doom and gloom became the norm, which I tried to drown out with more alcohol.

So at meetings I heard people sharing their experience, strength and hope. That little flicker of hope which was ignited at my first meeting has been fanned into flames of faith and trust that life now has a far greater purpose and meaning without alcohol than it ever held for me during my drinking days.

I have been encouraged and supported along my journey in recovery by members who had already started along on their own journey. I'm also greatly inspired by the many members I meet along the way, who maybe haven't been so long in the fellowship but have so much wisdom and experience to share.

Two suggestions which stand out in my

memory from those early days are;

- a) The importance of meetings
- b) That I'm off drink only for today

If I had been told that I was to stay off drink for the rest of my life, I know that that would have seemed an impossible task, but when it was suggested to take it one day at a time, that seemed more within my grasp. I've had many days of sobriety since then, without ever a relapse. I experienced in early sobriety what I've heard described as "*white knuckle*" sobriety with frequent thoughts of taking drink and was quite close to doing so on a few occasions.

Thankfully I had continued attending meetings which I found to be a great help. Also I had found someone I could confide in who later became my sponsor. That person reminded me that I am powerless over alcohol and when I try to do it on my own unaided resources then I am likely to fail. I get a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of my spiritual condition.

The concept of God was quite a challenge to me back then. I had an idea that if God existed at all, it was a god of punishment and anger. I have since developed a notion of God as a source of strength and comfort, a guiding power to help me in everyday life, with all the things that life can thrust at me. This idea has been a gradual evolution which is ongoing. Suffice to say that I came to believe one night, when in sheer desperation, I asked if there is a God, would it please help me.

That was the night it all changed. The obsession to drink was lifted completely out of me and, as I write this, it has never returned. The second thing that happened is that the lurking notion that I may not be alcoholic was also removed. That was many days ago. Today life is totally different to what it was back then.

At that time I was a single person, drifting along on the edge of a very precarious life. Today I am a parent and grandparent with a loving partner and family, as well as having the love of siblings and relatives. I have

found a satisfying and rewarding life when I try to live by the spiritual principles of our program. If I fall short, as I sometimes do, I have learned to pick myself up, dust myself down and move forward. What do I suggest to newcomers? Please give this an honest try. It was said to me that I didn't get into the condition I was in with just taking one or two drinks and that I wouldn't get well by coming to one or two meetings. It's at meetings where I continue to hear the solution, which is the message contained in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous.

*Anon, Ireland*

---

## *The Empty Chair*



An empty chair beside me,  
A newcomer walks through the door,  
I smile and share my story,  
Like others did before.

No lectures, no grand answers,  
Just honesty and care,  
For someone once sat with me,  
Beside an empty chair.

*Anon*



## with Christopher

### Q. How long have you been sober?

A. *"I have just turned two years sober."*

### Q. What brought you to the fellowship?

A. *"Many things. I first tried AA in 2012 to 2017 but had one foot in and out of the fellowship. My first meeting was Christmas day 2012. Back then it was a ex fiancé nagging me so I first came then to save a relationship which ended on the 27<sup>th</sup> of December."*

*"I came back on May 2024 the day after my birthday due to spiritual experiences or signposts. A friend in recovery gave me a talking to me on the morning of my birthday saying I was killing myself. Another person, who is like a sister and still inspires me to this day, was a big part of my spiritual journey back and helped show me I was ready to try again."*

### Q. Did you know about AA prior to this?

A. *"I am what's called a legacy member of AA. I am a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Alcoholic. Both of my Grandfathers were Alcoholics and my Father was a member of AA and was sober for 38 years when he died. I also don't believe in co-incidences that I turned 38 years old I was sent signs to come back. I was aware of AA was about stopping drinking, but my Father told me back in 2012 that stopping drinking was such a small part of AA it was about learning to live. I finally understand what he meant today but I didn't at the time."*

### Q. What were your thoughts at your first meeting?

A. *"Honestly my first meeting in 2012 was I didn't want people to notice me. I wanted to hide at the back and fly under the radar, but I was introduced by the person who took me to the meeting, it was my first meeting and I hated the attention. My first meeting back in 2024 it was more the anxiety of who I would see there from my first try of AA and what they would say to me or think of me. Looking back now there was nothing to worry about coming from a clear headed and proud member of AA who's working a 12 step program."*



## with Christopher

**Q. What age were you when you got sober?**

A. *"I was 38 years old."*

**Q. Did you have any doubts about your chances of recovery?**

A. *"The simple answer is yes all the time. In my first time in AA the longest period I got off alcohol was 9 months. I kept going back drinking as I came in at the age of 25 and my thoughts back then told me I was too young to be here I didn't need to be here for another 20 or 30 years. The chances of coming back after leaving the rooms for one year drops to the near impossible the more years you are gone. My last relapse lasted almost exactly 7 years to the day. I drank mostly every day for 7 years. I ended up in hospital a few times."*

*"I think others doubted it as well, even a friend from childhood who helped look after me in hospital. She gave me the nickname of 'coffin dodger' as she knows my medical history and reminds me every chance she gets of how lucky I am to be where I am today. Those thoughts, and that doubt, can easily creep back in. The difference now is that I have a higher power in my life now."*

**Q. Was there any aspect on offer that made you think "no way"?**

A. *"The God question and looking at the steps in 2012 which I am sure a lot of people have issues when first coming into the room. What I will say is now, in December 2024 I was ready to go all in everything in AA. I switched from the wrong sponsor and found the right one who took me through the steps. I found in retrospect a great peace from doing the steps and guilt and shame of my disease turned into being glad I am a member of alcoholic anonymous."*

**Q. What slogan would you say is your favourite?**

A. *"The one that makes me laugh the most is "hit them with prayers, not chairs." My favourite slogan is "I can't, He can, I'll let him." This can also be changed applied to anyone's understanding of their own higher power. For me I use the variation for myself as "I can't, She can, I'll let her" as my higher power is my sister."*



## with Christopher

### **Q. Have you played any role in the fellowship in your recovery?**

A. *"Yes, I have done secretary, I attend group conscious and am a GSR for my group at area level. I also will have done phone service by the time this issue is published."*

### **Q. Does your family feel the ripple effects of your sobriety?**

A. *"Yes my mother, cousins and friends who are like my family feel and see the ripple effects of my sobriety. They don't worry about getting a call about me now with bad news. I am present now for family who are in and outside of the fellowship today and am closer with family and friends and reliable now."*

### **Q. Is just taking what's on offer enough or do you need to give back?**

A. *"That depends on what you want to achieve on your journey. Some people are content to just stop drinking. For me though I do have to give back as it helps with the psychic change in my thinking to try to be the person I always wanted to be."*

*"I give back in and out of the fellowship as I do service outside of AA volunteering to help others with addictions who haven't yet made it to the rooms."*

### **Q. What is your message to the newcomer?**

A. *"Try Alcoholics Anonymous for six months to give it a chance to see the change it can bring to your life. I would also say don't leave before the miracle happens."*

### **Q. Is there anything you would like to add?**

A. *"I am grateful just to be asked to do this and hope someone gets something from reading this. As long as I help one person or someone takes one thing from identifying with my story then that is all that matters."*



## Being Sober Abroad

I have always been grateful that my journey of recovery began in Dublin. It was there that I got a solid grounding in meetings, the programme, and the fundamentals of staying sober. Looking back, I can see that this was not by chance—there was a quiet guidance at work, placing me exactly where I needed to be at the right time.

Then, in the wake of the economic crisis at the end of 2008, my job required me to travel to the Middle East. This began in early 2009, initially with a pattern of three weeks abroad and one week back in Dublin. It was a disruptive period on the surface, but again, I can now see how my Higher Power was shaping a path for me, even when I didn't fully understand it.

A good fellow once told me that when you go to other countries, it's important to find meetings where you feel comfortable.

*"Meetings are like pubs—some you'll never go back to, others you'll feel at home in."*

That advice stayed with me. I learned to keep searching, trusting that I would be guided to the right places.

At that time, there were not many meetings in Dubai, but the Thursday night meeting at the Emirates Welfare Office became my anchor. It was always full, with a diverse mix of people from all over the world. There was something powerful in that room—a shared understanding that went beyond culture or nationality.

For me, that was another expression of my Higher Power at work, showing me that I was never alone, no matter where I landed. While traveling, I found meetings in Bahrain, Doha, and even Saudi Arabia—an alcohol-free country.

Through all of this, I felt like I had one foot in AA in Dublin and one foot in AA in the UAE. What held it all together was not geography, but something deeper—a sense that wherever I went, my Higher Power had already gone before me and made a space for me to stay sober.

As more of my life shifted to the Middle East, I gradually committed fully to AA in the region. Dubai became my home, and AA in Dubai became my home group. I began to give back through service—taking on secretary roles, sponsoring newcomers, and staying active in the fellowship. Service became another way of strengthening my connection to the programme.

Over the last 12 years, AA in Dubai and the wider region has grown enormously. From just five meetings a week in 2010 to over 70 meetings a week by mid-2026. Dubai AA now has its own clubhouse in Knowledge Village.

There are also two rehabilitation centres in the UAE, both with government backing. This reflects real progress and recognition of alcoholism as a disease—something that would not have seemed impossible a decade ago. The fellowship of AA is global, and not many people have access to something like this.

Through recovery, the fellowship, and the spirit of AA, my work has taken me to many places, and there are always meetings available. Whether I choose to go is another matter—but the fact that they are there is, to me, another reminder that I am being looked after.

Dubai AA is home for me now. When I return to Dublin, I feel more like a visitor. That shift is something I never could have predicted, but it reflects how my life has

been reshaped in recovery. At the core of it all, and always the guiding light in my journey, is my Higher Power—working through the fellowship, through meetings, and through the people I encounter along the way.

In the beginning, I never imagined I would be able to say any of this. Then again, it does say that the person who comes into AA rooms has to change, otherwise the same person will drink again.

*Dubai Damien*

## FACT

The **TREMENDOUS** fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. PG 17

The **GREAT** fact is just this, and nothing less: That we have had deep and effective spiritual experiences(\*) which have revolutionized our whole attitude toward life, toward our fellows and toward God's universe. PG 25

The **CENTRAL** fact of our lives today is the absolute certainty that our Creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way which is indeed miraculous. PG 25

When many hundreds of people are able to say that the consciousness of the Presence of God is today the **MOST IMPORTANT** fact of their lives, they present a powerful reason why one should have faith. PG 51

Ask them to remember, when they are impatient, the **BLESSED** fact of his sobriety. PG 100

This is the **GREAT** Fact for us. PG 164



**ALCOHOLICS  
ANONYMOUS**

# What *Recovery* Means To Me

Recovery means something different to each of us.  
Some people find peace. Others find hope, friendship,  
purpose, or freedom.

Write your own words in the blank clouds below.

*Hope*

*Gratitude*

*Serenity*

*Fellowship*

*Freedom*

*Courage*

*Service*

*Honesty*

*Patience*

There are no right or wrong answers.

*What does it mean to you?*

## The Twelve Traditions

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA 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 AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An AA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. AA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities

## 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 to practice these principles in all our affairs.



The Road Back Editorial Team would love to hear your stories, snippets of AA humour, amusing anecdotes, overheard at meetings, maybe you have some AA cartoons.

**BA BHREÁ LINN BHUR SCÉALTA I NGAEILGE A CHUR SAN  
ÁIREAMH INÁR N-IRIS. DÉAN TEAGMHÁIL LINN!**

Email articles to [roadback@alcoholicsanonymous.ie](mailto:roadback@alcoholicsanonymous.ie)  
or post to the General Service Office.



Up to date information on forthcoming AA Events can be viewed on our website [www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie](http://www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie)