

“A NEW FREEDOM”

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Serenity Prayer

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.

AA Preamble

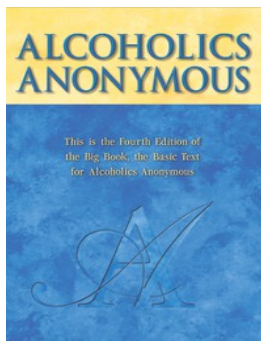
“ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS is a fellowship of people who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

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.” AA Grapevine



It does not matter who you are, alcoholism does not care. Throughout a high school and college career, I prided myself on being the best student in the room, and I was surely going to let you know about it. After one advanced statistics class, a classmate let me know just how much my sarcasm and contention with other students was not appreciated. But I knew that alcohol was going to rescue me. I loved alcohol because it always treated me well and

told me how important I was. You see, I had a well-established routine to study obnoxiously, receive the grades I wanted on upcoming exams, and then go on a black-out bender often totaling 48 hours; after all it was planned that way.

What I did not count on was my relationship with alcohol to turn very sour. As time went on, I rarely recovered from hard nights of drinking. This meant attending the next few years of classes, two separate internships, and my first career job; drunk, hung-over, and impaired. Now instead of facing an angry peer who I easily dismissed, I was receiving real-world feedback, and it mattered. An internship supervisor had to remind me that kids in an elementary school, could see what I would not admit to myself; I was drunk.

The years of early recovery did not remedy the large hole that I had inside. In fact, I had to learn to go to a somewhat under-achieving position, every day because that is all my nervous disposition could handle as I navigated real life sober. I had to ask for help, and admit that I was naïve, powerless, and lacking knowledge about myself. This is the kind of language that can deter people from staying in AA, but I am a real alcoholic. My malady is centered in my mind. I have grown up from a sulking seventeen-year-old, who accepted alcohol as his answer as to why life was unfair.

I cannot stress emphatically enough that the result that has come from sobriety in Alcoholics Anonymous, that matters above all else is accepting and practicing the spiritual basis of life. None of my philosophies, or those of others could have relieved my alcoholism. Specifically, my dependent relationship on God, has allowed for the removal of my character defects: pride, scorn, fear, and always feeling alone. My Creator has been able to convince me of the truth about myself and others. I have surrendered to the plans that He/She/They has for me, and I feel as though I am in the presence of someone who views you and me as special gifts. I have needed to learn and practice forgiveness and compassion toward all, and those who are most spiritually sick, like my former self.

Certainly, with enough time and sane-living I was able to get on a better track, specifically toward the end of helping others. In 2012, I became internationally certified as an addictions counselor, and have the humility to join regularly with others in my profession. I have finally realized that together we are capable of rooting out that which threatens us; the lopsided belief that life should be as we want it. I am reassured regularly when I see everyday people turn away from their prejudices about who is right and who is wrong. Spiritual demonstrations of good will towards others is what catches my attention first about people. It is the only thing that I am willing to boast about these days, and that for me is true freedom from alcohol, in the mind, body, and spirit.

Sincerely yours, Christopher R.

From Daily Reflections, p. 182:

June 22

TODAY, I'M FREE

This brought me to the good healthy realization that there were plenty of situations left in the workd over which I had no personal power—that if I was so ready to admit that to be the case with alcohol, so I must make the same admission with respoect to much else. I would have to be still and know the he, not I, was God.

I am learning to practice acceptance in all circumstances of my life, so that I may enjoy peace of mind. At one time life was a constant battle because I felt I had to go through each day fighting myself, and everyone else. Eventually, this became a losing battle. I ended up getting drunk and crying over my misery. When I began to let go and let God take over my life I began to have peace of mind. Today, I am free. I do not have to fight anybody or anything anymore.

Kate

"I sit here on my 65th Birthday a free woman, free from Psychiatric Hospitalizations, handcuffs, Psych commitments, and alcohol. Although I have been in cuffs, in the back of a Police Cruiser then court, etc. I have never been in Prison. Except, and it is a large except, the prison of the soul, mind and spirit. Where one cannot leave the house for fear of everything, where the only thing that matters is getting the next drink.

My story of drinking and sobriety is complex, yet simple. It is over many years, filled with drinking and sobriety, good times and bad. The bottom line is that I drank to deal with

life, good times, bad times, and then drinking dealt with me. There is a wise saying, not from AA, but from my Dad, " First a Person takes a drink, then the drink takes a drink, then the drink takes the Person."

When I came into AA in Burlington, VT, I was broke, living in what is now COTS, was then the YWCA on Main ST, sharing a bathroom with 8 other woman. I had no money for first and last months rent, I drank while looking for work. I was also pretty crazy. I had taken a geographical cure to South Dakota for Work, picked up a gun and come back to Vermont. My goal was to reasonably deal with the Psychiatrist who had committed me to the Vermont State Hospital in Waterbury, having spent 8 hours in handcuffs in the ED waiting for Transport. I was PISSESSED to say the least. I wanted her to explain her actions. I was suicidal that night, actually sober, and needed help. I got trounced instead, handcuffed, committed to Waterbury and released 3 days later on the conditions that I leave the State. I did and went to South Dakota. I laugh today, wondering if the Judge knows I have been back for 40 plus years!

Luckily, I got some help, did not need to shoot the Psychiatrist, it got worked out. I got a new Psychiatrist, she said I suffered from PTSD and Depression as well as Alcoholism. If I wanted her to help me, which I did, I would have to go to AA. On a Wednesday night, I went to Midtown meeting in the Church on South Winooski. I heard laughter and was convinced I was in the wrong place, but maybe these people knew where the AA meeting was. I went to the laughter in the basement and was told I was in the right place, I was immediately welcomed. That was 40 years ago.

I was not an everyday drinker, usually a binge drinker and also when the depression became overwhelming due to being raped early in our marriage by my husband. Like many woman in domestic abuse situations, I had no idea how to deal with this situation. I simply did not deal with it, at least on the outside in a positive manner. Instead, I started cutting myself very seriously with over 2,000 stitches and many hospitalizations due to being actively suicidal. I had a fascination with handguns for suicide, and would purchase one when terribly depressed always winding up in the hospital, sometimes sober sometimes after drinking.

Through all the mayhem and crazy behavior, I managed to keep a very well paying, high profile job in the engineering software industry. I worked up to this from a straight commission sales job. Due to drinking, depression and the rape, it was time to retire. I then became what was my biggest fear. A drunken housewife. I did not drink everyday, but my job and my so called, importance from work that had defined me, along with a big paycheck, no longer existed.

I so wish I could tell you, I never picked up another drink. It would have saved me a tremendous amount of shame, embarrassment, heartache, money, you name it. I had several periods of good and just okay sobriety 5 years, 10 years, etc.

Most recently, I am coming up as of June 15th on 6 years of good sobriety.

My last drunk, I blacked out, I had no idea how I wound up on the kitchen floor. The next time I woke up, I was on a mattress. My husband had gotten a mattress and rolled me onto the mattress so I would be comfortable. I always told my husband that he knew I was in AA when he married me, of course I was sober, he always stuck by me. I had a HUGE black eye, no idea how I got it, must have hit my face as I was falling to the floor passing out on the kitchen floor. That was my last drunk.

I can't imagine, what it must have been like for my husband to walk into the house and see me sprawled out on the kitchen floor not knowing if I was dead or alive, heart attack or drunk. The fear that must have put into him, I never want to be the cause of that again. That reason alone kept me from drinking for a while, I went to a meeting everyday, got a Sponsor, did what I was told, reluctantly, but none the less did what I was told. After a while, staying sober for my husband was not a good enough reason to stay sober. I needed and wanted to stay Sober for myself. In the short run, there are lots of other reasons to stay sober, get out of jail, get off the psych ward, keep your child, keep a marriage, keep a job, but ultimately, alcohol will dissolve them all if I cannot stay sober.

Even on dreadful, suicidal days, I make a grateful list, grateful I no longer own a gun since I can still have poor impulse control. I did not put myself into this life, I do not have the right to take myself out. I am here for some purpose, although I may not know everyday what that is. Gratefully, I don't drink so I don't buy a gun. Gratefully, I do believe in a higher power I call God, often referring to Good Orderly Direction. I talk to my Sponsor on a regular basis even if nothing is going wrong, just to check in and

remember who I am and want to be: A sober Alcoholic, a sober woman of dignity and grace.

I'm a Grateful, Recovering Alcoholic

Grateful alcoholic?! I shook my head in disbelief when I first heard these words at a meeting very early in my sobriety. Since then, step by step, I've come to fully embrace being grateful. From the program and my sponsors, I've heard the message-keep your gratitude list fresh. Thank you, Bill and Dr. Bob, natives of Vermont, and others present at the creation for planting the roots of alcohol recovery almost 85 years ago. My higher power that I call God offered me the gift of recovery. Why me? The answer is too deep for my words. I've learned that I have the disease of alcoholism, not some personal failing. And my recovery is a reprieve. Step 3 is very clear; my whole program depends on the quality of my relationship with the God of my understanding. And my defects are part of my reality. I'm told that to deal with those defects, I need to be in touch daily with God who is in charge of removing them. So, a measure of gratitude for defects. I don't expect others to give me high fives for them. I'm grateful for working with sponsees. They keep me honest and my program sharp and in constant touch with the roots of our Fellowship. There is no joy greater than this work. I'm grateful for family support; not everyone is so fortunate. An example from my heart: one afternoon in February 2016 when I was to celebrate 30 years, the doorbell rang and there to my surprise was my older son, Gregory, just off a flight from Philly-he smiled and said "Hi Dad, I thought I'd come and help you celebrate." He did 5 years earlier as well. I don't debate whether there is a God or not. I came into the program with a power no greater than myself. Today the available paths are with a God of my understanding or back to a life of perpetual selfies. I'm grateful for those who are on the daily journey with me-you help me walk the right path. Today, February 29, my Google Assistant invites me to take full advantage of this Leap Day, do something new, do something dramatic. I'm following the advice of my late sponsor, Jerry F-"Have an ordinary day." That seems just fine to me. I thank you for reading this and helping me to stay sober. And, may I ask, what's on your gratitude list today?

Michael K. Williston, VT
Early Bird Group & Brown Bag Group



Hi my name is Harley. I was born in Burlington, Vermont. My dad was a heroin addict and in a motorcycle gang called the Super Hogs and I was raised around a lot of chaos and drugs and alcohol. My dad would give me sips of his Budweiser, sips of his Jack Daniels and coke and blow marijuana smoke in my face at around 5 years old and his friends would laugh. I remember absolutely loving the smell of Jack Daniels whiskey and could tell when people were drinking it. When I first started grade school I was a reserved child and had this fear running through me and could feel it in the pit of my stomach. When I was around 3 years old My dad was involved in a bad motorcycle accident and drove his Harley off a bridge down a 60 foot embankment into a river and he was in coma for 6 months and had suffered a traumatic brain injury and had to learn how to walk and talk again. Our life changed very much after this.

At 13 I had my first drunk and high. I took shots of Fireball, drank some beers and smoked a joint and felt my fears drift away and I loved it. I felt like I had found the answer and after that I would try any drug or drink anytime I could. I was very involved in sports as a kid and in high school. I played Hockey, Football, and Lacrosse. I suffered many injuries playing sports and broke a few bones and every time was prescribed opiates for the pain and I loved them. The euphoria I felt from these drugs was like nothing I had ever felt. I was hooked! In high school I was pretty out of control but had to keep my grades at a level enough to play sports and I did. I partied as much as I could. I was arrested many times for underage drinking and possession of marijuana and did court diversion to get out of trouble. I went to culinary school my senior year and fell in love with this industry which was filled with drugs and alcohol and it was perfect for me and the life I wanted to live. In my early 20's I joined a metal band as a singer because music has always been a huge part of my life. I saw Metallica at 10 years old and absolutely loved heavy music. I also loved this scene and culture because again I had found something that encouraged heavy drug use and alcohol. The whole SEX, DRUGS and ROCK N ROLL atmosphere very much appealed to me.

Eventually my lifestyle led me down a very dark road into Oxycontin addiction and that is when life became very out of control and my suicidal ideation came to the forefront of almost every thought. I couldn't imagine life without Oxycontin and didn't much really want to live if I couldn't be high on them. This is when I began having overdoses and going to rehabs and psyche wards in attempts to arrest this brutal addiction. Not much worked and I wasn't willing to surrender to a spiritual program. It was always me thinking I can do it my way. At several points along the way I had given up on myself and didn't care if I died and actually tried taking

my life a couple times. I felt very miserable and hopeless. In 2014 both my parents were diagnosed with stage 4 cancers. My dad with stage 4 lung cancer and my mom with stage 4 breast cancer. I fell into self pity and the drugs were my only solution for the severe depression I was feeling. My dad passed away 85 days after being diagnosed and I was able to hold his hand as he slipped away and it was a very ethereal experience for me. A year later my mom had a miracle and her cancer was in partial remission. In 2016 after two years of hardcore drug use to cope with life I woke up one day and was like I don't want to live this life anymore and decided to take 200 pills and stopped breathing and slipped into a coma. My mom had found me and I woke up a week later in the ICU at UVM medical center. I had damaged my heart and my brain activity was abnormal. The doctors said I was "a miracle" I realized I needed help and I couldn't do it my way. I needed to ask and allow others to help me. I needed to surrender.

After leaving the hospital I was accepted at a sober house in Burlington and was back to my old behaviors and was asked to leave. I was then given the number to another sober living house in Saint Albans and moved in on February 12th 2017 and have been sober and clean since that date. I wanted to change. I started to work the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and got a sponsor. I followed the rules at the recovery house and life became easier for me to live and be happy, joyous and free. Working the 12 steps with a sponsor and living in a recovery house together allowed me the safe space and the environment to help me start to change and believe my life was worth it. I can't speak enough about how the 12 steps and the fellowship of AA have helped me to see this world and my life within this world differently. The dark cloud lifted and I started to grow and become a better member of my community. I also saw how my being of service and how my life was taking on a new purpose just by working the steps and showing up to meetings. It took a lot of hard work and much deflation of my ego and pride. I also found a higher power which I call God loved me and I started to love God back. A concept I never thought I would ever accept. Now I work in recovery and have a life I never thought I deserved although today I know I do deserve the life I have. I also learned that there is NOTHING I have faced in recovery that a drink or drug will make better. I can trudge on through difficult times and ask for help and take advice and I make it through without self medication. I am very grateful to be of service to my fellows and my community. I am very blessed to have a family that loves me and gets to see me live a better

life. I thank everyone who has helped me along the way and has shown me love, especially my mom! I will leave you with one of my favorite quotes. " We may only keep what we have by giving it away." Bless all - Harley L.

AA QUOTES OF THE MONTH

"Why all this insistence that every A.A. must hit bottom first? The answer is that few people will sincerely try to practice the A.A. program unless they have hit bottom. For practicing A.A.'s remaining eleven Steps means the adoption of attitudes and actions that almost no alcoholic who is still drinking can dream of taking. Who wishes to be rigorously honest and tolerant? Who wants to confess his faults to another and make restitution for harm done? Who cares anything about a Higher Power, let alone meditation and prayer? Who wants to sacrifice time and energy in trying to carry A.A.'s message to the next sufferer? No, the average alcoholic, self-centered in the extreme, doesn't care for this prospect—unless he has to do these things in order to stay alive himself."

p. 24, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

Tradition Three

"The only requirement for A.A. Membership is a desire to stop drinking."

"This tradition is packed with meaning. For A.A. is really saying to every serious drinker, "You are a member if *you* say so. You can declare yourself in; nobody can keep you out. No matter who you are, no matter how low you've gone, no matter how grave your emotional complications—even your crimes—we still can't deny you A.A. We don't want to keep you out. We aren't a bit afraid you'll harm us, never mind how twisted or violent you may be. We just want to be sure that you get the same great chance for sobriety that we've had. So you're an A.A. member the minute you declare yourself."

p. 139, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

New to AA?

Only you can decide

If you seem to be having trouble with your drinking, or if your drinking has reached the point where it worries you a bit, you may be interested in knowing something about Alcoholics Anonymous and the A.A. program of recovery from alcoholism. After reading this, you may decide that A.A. has nothing to offer you. Should this be the case, we suggest only that you keep an open mind on the subject. Consider your drinking carefully in the light of what you may learn from these pages. Determine, for yourself, whether or not alcohol has truly become a problem for you. And remember that you will always be most welcome to join the thousands of men and women in A.A. Who have put their drinking problems behind them and now lead "normal" lives of constructive, day-by-day sobriety.

Do you think you have a problem with alcohol? Do you want to stop drinking, but find you cannot quit entirely or you have little control over the amount you drink? If you answered yes to either of these questions, there are a number of ways Alcoholics Anonymous can help. For confidential support, please contact us.

Call the 24-hour help line closest to you now

- (802) 447-1285 – Bennington – **District 7**
- (802) 257-5801 – Brattleboro – **District 8**
- (802) 864-1212 – Burlington – **District 2&11**
- (802) 388-9284 – Middlebury – **District 9**
(802) 229-5100 – Montpelier & Morrisville – **District 4**
- (802) 775-0402 – Rutland – **District 6**
- (802) 281-3340 – St. Albans – **District 1**
- (802) 334-1213 – St. Johnsbury & NEK – **District 3**
- (802) 885-8281 – Springfield – **District 10**
- (802) 295-7611 – White River Junction – **District 5**

For meeting information in Vermont, go to aavt.org