

"A NEW FREEDOM"

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August 2021

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



Hi guys, - My name is Maggie and I'm an alcoholic. What I remember about my first drink is how it made me feel - like one of the Big Kids, cool and funny and fitting right in. Several months after that drink my mother died, and I discovered that drinking helped to erase the pain. From that point on I put a tremendous amount of effort into not feeling pain. For the last six years of my drinking I was a daily drinker, and every single day I'd wake up with yet another layer of shame and regret. Every day I became more miserable.

Since all of my problems seemed to involve people (people judging me and my drinking, or me imagining that people were judging me and my drinking) I found myself avoiding people as a form of relief. I gradually stopped going anywhere or hanging out with anyone, outside of work. I came home and drank alone. It was so much easier.

By the time I reached out for help, my life consisted of my job that was hanging by a thread due to my hostile attitude, and a cat. I was completely isolated from people and overwhelmed by emotions I couldn't even name.

The EAP counselor I was sent to recommended outpatient treatment. I refused, because the thought of spending hours in a room with a bunch of people freaked me out. The counselor handed me an AA meeting list and wished me luck. It was weeks before I became desperate enough to go to a meeting. I tried a couple and didn't like them, but I bought the books and read them all, hoping to find what I needed on my own. As I read, I felt a sliver of hope that there was a way out of the dark hole I lived in. Whatever magic the people in the stories found wasn't happening for me, though, as I sat alone in my room.

I tried one more meeting - a small one near my home. I arrived late and left early, and the only thing I said was "My name is Maggie and I'm an alcoholic."

A week later I went back to that meeting, and when I walked in the room someone remembered my name and welcomed me. And something inside my

miserable, hostile, fearful, and desperately lonely heart melted. I didn't even know what I needed until it was freely given to me, and what I needed was connection with others. I kept going back. I learned how to act like a human being by greeting people and having normal conversations. I learned how good it feels to help out - to stack chairs and do dishes after a meeting. To be useful. To be valued. They were so kind and patient with me!

I've learned to be kind and patient, too, and it sure beats walking around with a chip on my shoulder to keep people away so that they don't find out what a terrible person I am. I've learned to share those painful, shameful nuggets that fester and burn from the inside out, and I've felt the relief of being accepted and loved regardless of my past actions.

I ran away from my feelings by drinking, and it was hard to look at them in early sobriety. I couldn't distinguish anger from fear from sadness, and avoided talking about how I felt for as long as I could, until it became unbearable. Working with a sponsor (and later, a therapist) to tease out those feelings, to name them, and to eventually accept them & let them go has given me such freedom. I am no longer overwhelmed by my emotions, and I no longer have to run away from them by acting out.

Just as every hangover morning would add another layer of shame & self-hatred to my miserable self, now every day is an opportunity to add a layer of self-respect and healing. I go to 4-6 meetings a week, and talk to someone on the phone or read AA literature every day, because I need the daily reminder that I won't find the help I need sitting at home alone. I find it sitting in a circle (literal or figurative) of AA members as we help each other to heal. Because that, for me, is how it works.

From Daily Reflections, p. 239: August 18

GETTING WELL

Very deep, sometimes quite forgotten, damaging emotional conflicts persist below the level of consciousness.

TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS, pp. 79-80

Only through positive action can I remove the remains of guilt and shame brought on by alcohol. Throughout my misadventures when I drank, my friends would say, "Why are you doing this? You're only hurting yourself." Little did I know how true were those words. Although I harmed others, some of my behavior caused grave wounds to my soul. Step Eight provides me with a way of forgiving myself. I alleviate much of the hidden damage when I make my list of those I have hurt. In making amends, I free myself of burdens, thus contributing to my healing.



Hello. My name is Todd C. I am called "TC." I am a grateful recovering addict. Inside these walls everyone is wearing an invisible mask, suppressing secrets. Being in the climate and environment of prison, recovery has many facets, faces, and faults.

The reasons, motivation, ulterior motives for one's participation is sometimes questionable: early release possibility, parole board consideration, and even simply extra credit, but there are some that are genuinely attending for their recovery along with men that are seriously tired of being tired.

Being serious about recovery and discovering who you truly are comes at a price sometimes. Transparency, a tool for self-discovery, brings vulnerability and can hinder one's work on shortcomings and character defects.

Presently, I am in my 12th year of a 20 year sentence for a drug related, attempted debt collection during a two day relapse during which I was on a drug binge and in an alcoholic blackout. The reality of waking up in the

county jail was real sobering. Going through the judicial process and receiving what seemed like a death sentence made me feel like my life was over. My initial instinct was to escape through the use of available drugs which happened to be marijuana but I also knew that I needed to remain focused and try to get my case reversed in the Appeals Court.

Given that I was in and out of the rooms, I had an understanding of and insight into a higher power but I hadn't completely surrendered and submitted to the God of my understanding. But the spirit took over and gave me the strength to abandon any thoughts of being continually sedated or intoxicated. Through past experience, I knew the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous and that to get through the loss of my freedom I needed to use the time to my advantage. Equipped with the knowledge of the sick and suffering addict buried alive in a physical prison, I understood that I had emotional wounds that were bleeding and needed healing.

At the age of 42 with previous incarcerations, I wanted something different. I wanted to do everything with purpose and integrity. I wanted to make a sincere effort to work steps 10 – 12 while revisiting all of the steps without restriction and with complete transparency. So, I started attending the meetings regularly understanding that it was a process and honesty, openness, and willingness (H.O.W.) was required of me.

Personally, I found that the power, growth, and hope that I receive from being serious about my recovery has been of benefit to others. To serve others, I have become unrestricted in how I share. I am an open book about my experience, strength, and hope. The ridicule, accusations of being a snitch, and being called righteous only motivates me to lead by example. The pain of change is greater than remaining the same but in recovery, I have found that pain is necessary but suffering is optional. Peeling the layers of years of addiction back during the healing process will free us if we keep coming back and don't leave before the miracle happens.

Recovery is possible from the inside out.

T.C. – Lima, Ohio



I grew up about 5 minutes outside of the Philadelphia. Came from a good family. They were a lot older when they had me. Drinking and other things came into play around 13. By 18 I was drinking everyday. Still working so I didn't see myself as having a problem. Helped people out with their vices in order to be able to keep drinking the way I wanted to. But also used them as examples to justify that my drinking wasn't that bad.

By 2009 I had my first DUI.

2012 my second.

2012 I started to realize my drinking wasn't normal and was trying to stop drinking on my own. Started to isolate thinking it was the friends I was with but I just ended up alone drinking to not feel and as a way to cope. Thus was off and on.

Summer of 2012 I had to give my mom CPR. She didn't make it. All bets were off at that point. At that point I also was sentenced to house arrest. But all I did was go on binges. It didn't matter.

While on house arrest went on match.com thinking no more girls from the bars. Met my now wife on there but my drinking wasn't done when we met.

I went and got a union job, bought a house and leased the newest Jeep. Thinking if I spend all my money on bills and work all the time I wouldn't have time to drink.

Worked 2800 hours my first year in the building trades and still found time to drink.

Fast forward to the night of my last drink August 31 2016. Company event at a Phillies games. Suite tickets. Free liquor and food. I don't think I ate a thing that night. Later heard we drank two bottles of Jack and who knows how many beers. Leaving the game I saw a lady selling tee shirts and thought "fuck her she doesn't pay taxes" so I stole the shirt and ran to the Jeep. As I was driving I heard someone yell "stop stop stop!" I looked over my left shoulder, I think it was the person I stole the shirt from. As I went to face forward I saw two people in the way so I swerved to not run them over and when I did that I swerved and ran over a third man.

4 hours later I got a breathalyzer. 3.5 bac. Thought I was going to jail for forever and a day. My wife and dad posted bail. And I went to search for a lawyer. Lawyer told me to go to rehab. Where I learned about alcoholism and addiction. The rehab had me 302ed and

sent to nut house. After twelve days the nut house thought it would be funny to send me back to the rehab.

On the last day of rehab I was scared to go back out to normal life. Scared of the way I felt, not knowing how I would do it with out substances. I also found out that the man I ran over was released from the ICU and was alive.

For 18 months I was going back and forth between court hearings. We were at court so often my now wife and I looked at each other and thought we're here let's get married.

Through everything AA showed up. All the promises old drinking friends made "we got your back, you're our boy, etc". People of AA were the only ones to fulfill those promises.

Early sobriety was like whistling in the dark with a devil in my ear saying, "fuck it you'll ruin this anyway" and an angel on the other saying "have faith."

There was one time I was ready to throw it all away thinking this AA is bullshit and I'm still going away.

That night I had to be asked by an old friend to attend a meeting. That meeting, by no coincidence, did an old man speak with 30+ years. He had a similar story where he was drinking and driving and ran over a little girl and killed her.

He asked me to not do what he did and go on the run and continue to drink. And that when he did it only made matters worse.

It gave me faith that this is all going to work out how it should.

So court comes around and AA physically showed up to sentencing. They testified on my character and that I wasn't the same man that they first met. My wife testified as well. That morning I prayed for the judge. I prayed for the victim. I prayed for my wife. I prayed for my lawyer. I prayed for God's will.

I ended up getting 8 month house arrest. 2 years parole and 2 probation. Walked all of it off. And I can no longer go to another professional sporting event forever.

AA is the best thing I have ever joined. It really found me. I would never have gone and realized I couldn't stay sober alone. I had a hole in a soul before AA. AA filled that void with peace. It's given me a new attitude on life. A chance to make my tomorrows better than my yesterdays.

Writing this I'm watching my 1 year old son trash the cabin I'm staying at. And all I can think is thank god I'm sober and not ruining the moment of a baby running around happy being a baby because I'm drunk and miserable.

I used to find comfort in the hole I dug myself and I never wanted to leave it. But today I couldn't be happier that I'm removed from that. I'm no longer around that negativity

Pete, alcoholic from Philadelphia



It Only Takes Two for an AA Meeting!

I've told my story in an earlier "A New Freedom" so won't repeat it. I'm blessed to be around the rooms for a while; it's always about getting back to the basics to stay sober, joyous and free.

Doing an AA meeting is about two people together helping each other stay sober. Two images come to mind. A few years ago, I was visiting a friend in a remote part of Alaska and arranged to go to a meeting in a more populated town about 2 hours drive away. I arrived at this small town-no one there at church until a few minutes later a local business owner pulled up and said hello. That was our meeting. We made a pot of coffee and told our stories and the hour went by very quickly.

Just recently, our group read the last chapter(11) before the Personal Stories in the Big Book. That chapter relates how AA's founders, Bill and Bob(both born in Vermont), met in Akron in 1935 at Bob's home and started talking to each other about their stories including identifying with the feelings each had. This meeting led to others and Bob got sober.

Together they contacted a local hospital so they could carry the message to other drunks and in doing so stay sober themselves. Again, the meeting involved two alcoholics talking to each other about drinking, trying to stay away from a drink, failures, successes and all the emotions involved.

An AA Grapevine is a good source of stories to use when two alcoholics get together to have a meeting. Taking turns reading the brief stories helps getting the conversation going and the stories of other people wind up down deep being very alike. A Grapevine has AA's Preamble, Twelve Steps and Traditions in each issue.

No matter where you are, there may be another person who wants to talk about being sober with you. And if at the moment no one is available, maybe talking with a

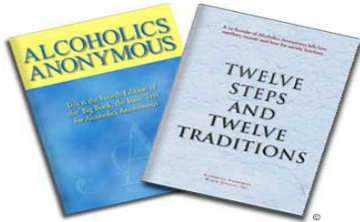
power greater than yourself(Higher Power) may fill the gap and, who knows, HP may help you find another to have a meeting with.

Good luck-we are all rooting for you!

Michael K

Early Bird Group

Brown Bag Group



AA QUOTES OF THE MONTH

“We never apologize to anyone for depending upon our Creator. We can laugh at those who think spirituality the way of weakness. Paradoxically, it is the way of strength. The verdict of the ages is that faith means courage. All men of faith have courage. They trust their God. We never apologize for God. Instead we let Him demonstrate, through us, what He can do. We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be. At once, we commence to outgrow fear.”

p. 68, Alcoholics Anonymous

Tradition Nine

“A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.”

“Unless there is approximate conformity to A.A.'s Twelve Traditions, the group, too, can deteriorate and die. So we of A.A. do obey spiritual principals, first because we must, and ultimately because we love the kind of life such obedience brings. Great suffering and great love are A.A.'s disciplinarians; we need no others.”

p. 174, 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