

"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

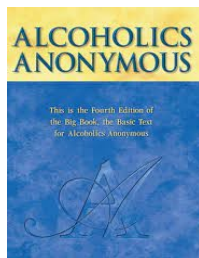
"ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS is a fellowship of people who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

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



March 3, 2021

It was July 1st 1978. I woke up that morning just like any other day. Sad, feeling sick, not remembering where I was the night before or what had happened. I had just moved back into my parents house, I had no where to go. They let me come back to their house only if I would follow and few simple rules.

Well, I broke all of them the night before. No more drinking, come home at a decent hour and be apart of the family. I

was gone for a couple of days. Never called to tell anyone that I was okay or alive.

I went downstairs and sat at the kitchen table, my mom was cleaning up and turned to me and said, "what's wrong with you, Margaret?" I really couldn't answer! My life was going down a rabbit hole. I didn't know how to turn things around. Alcohol was ruining my life, I felt like I was going crazy. Once I started to drink I couldn't stop. I was only 20 years old!

How could I be an Alcoholic? When I wasn't drinking I was always thinking of the next drink. Drinking was a way to ease the noise in my head. Made me feel, if only temporarily, like everything was going to be okay. They say that the definition of insanity is the inability to think straight, not quite whole. Well that was me!

My mom told me that my oldest sister was sober. She had gone to Alcoholics Anonymous. Why don't you give her a call? I did and we talked that day. She shared her experience, strength, and hope with me. She took me over to her sponsor's house. Her sponsor explained to me that Alcoholism was a disease! I had a physical allergy. It had nothing do with being weaker, sinful, or crazy. "But most importantly you'll never be able to drink safely again." She said. That hit me hard! How was I going to live the rest of my life not drinking. All of my friends drank! My life was going to be over!

Little did I know my life was going to change for the better. Everything revolved around drinking or getting high.. She said "we only do it for 24 hours" It was the First Drink that started everything. My body was different from other drinkers."Drink some more alcohol." Our bodies would produce an acute alcohol craving. There's a saying in AA," One drink is too many and a thousand not enough." If I was going to get this I had to be Honest. I never, ever drank One drink. It was all or nothing. I was a garbage mouth! She told me that the answer was Abstinence.

In our Big Book there are two questions that you can ask yourself. Page 44 In We Agnostics, "If, when you

honestly want to, you find you can not quit entirely, or if when drinking, you have little control over the amount you take, you are probably alcoholic." My sister's sponsor asked me those questions. I saw the truth for the first time. Self honesty was the answer. That's a hard one to swallow.

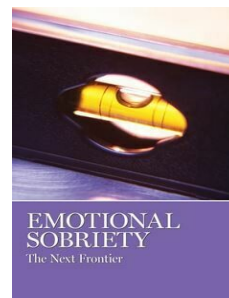
She described the mental obsession. When I was not drinking I would go around feeling restless, irritable and discontented. I would look for ways to feel happier and more content. I would remember the warm and fuzzy feeling that first couple of drinks would make me feel. I was getting back on the merry go round. Another drinking spree! Blackouts! They were no more good times. Just sadness and heartache. The more you crave the more you drink- and the more you drink, the more you crave.

Someone once said to me, "If you can't drink because of your body, but you can't quit drinking because of your mind, then you are powerless over alcohol."

I am so Grateful that my sister took me to her sponsor's house that night. She told me what the Problem was. It was up to me to make a decision. I admitted that my life was unmanageable. I had made a real mess of my life, I was an Alcoholic! It didn't matter how much I drank, or what I drank, or when I drank, it was what it did to me. I was Powerless over Alcohol! The first step in AA, the only one we have to do 100%.

She took me to a meeting the next night. Even though I felt really uncomfortable I sat there and listen to their stories. Try to identify and don't compare. On the wall there was the chart of the 12 Steps. I noticed the first Step said "WE" admitted we were powerless over alcohol-- that our lives had become unmanageable. The WE in that step was huge, I was not alone in this anymore. I was with like minded people. We were a family to me! They say in the Big Book we are like passengers of a great liner. But there exists among us a fellowship, friendliness and an understanding which is indescribably wonderful. It's all there for you too! All you have to do is ask for help.

Marge M



A story from this book, Emotional Sobriety

The Value of Life

June 2005

I am doing a life sentence in prison because of an alcohol-related accident, one that resulted in the death of an innocent man. So far, I have had several thousand days to re-evaluate my life.

When the shadows of my past were placed in the light, I was thankful for the "design for living" that the Twelve Steps provide. It helps me to handle the shock of who I was, who I am today, and who I want to be. But, even after ten years of sobriety, I find I am just scratching the surface. I have had some very painful moments of reflections on my life and on the actions and behavior that brought me where I am today.

Today, thankfully, a clear and sober mind provides me with the framework to lock my priorities in place. These priorities have become a part of what I consider imperative to the happiness and success of my family. Someone has said that the greatest gift we can give our family is peace of mind; I agree wholeheartedly.

However, once I think I have everything in place and the transformation into my new life is complete, something happens and I am reminded that I am a work in progress.

Three years ago, in my seventh year of sobriety and sixth year of incarceration, I thought I had finally got all my priorities straight. I couldn't have been more wrong.

I was talking to a good friend on the phone, and I brought up the fact that my youngest daughter, Shelly (not her real name), was turning six in a couple of weeks. I explained to him that I was very sad she didn't know what it was like to have a daddy at home. Up to that point, the only daddy that Shelly knew was the one she saw every now and again in a prison visiting room. When she was a baby, I knew I was going to prison for the loss of a man's life, so I memorized every single

thing about her and hoped that she would recognize me when she saw me again.

As my friend and I talked, he recognized my despair and wanted to make Shelly's birthday better. He asked me what kinds of things she liked because he wanted to go out and buy her some presents from me. I sat there on the phone in silence because I didn't have a clue what my little girl liked or wanted. I couldn't talk anymore and hung up the phone and went to my bunk and cried. Here I thought I had made all the right changes to ensure my family's happiness, and I didn't know what to tell my friend about my own little girl. I had, once again, discovered that an important priority in my life was missing---not only with my youngest daughter, but with all of my children.

This provided me with the opportunity to make some necessary changes. Sure, it was tough to endure another failure, but in dealing with life on life's terms, I already knew it was going to be difficult at times.

Seven years after my last drink, I still had not become the person I wanted to be. But after weeks and weeks of asking questions and sharing laughs with my little girl, I am a whole lot closer to being that person.

I discovered that everything I thought really mattered no longer did. I found that the little things I took for granted on a daily basis were the things that meant the most. When the fog lifted, and I was standing alone in a strange land, I realized how clouded my thinking had been during my self-medicated haze. I found out, very quickly, that my family was waiting, with hope in their hearts, for the person they knew and loved to return.

As I continue to work the Steps, I write my goals and priorities in pencil, so I can erase them. This is not so I can sell myself short, but so I can strive for more ambitious outcomes. Recovery is a lifelong process; the moment I engrave in stone my blueprint for living, I'll rediscover and recover something that is paramount to the value of my life. And then I'll be looking for a new stone.

Although it is hard not to envy those of you who are free today and can hold your wife and children in your arms and tell them how much they mean to you, I am very thankful to AA and what it has done for my life. In recovery, my life truly does get better, day after day. Each setback I encounter is really just another opportunity in disguise. It is another chance for me to become a better human being. If life can get better for me within the walls of this prison, then I know it can get better for everyone.

Today, I share the Fellowship with recovering alcoholics all over the world who have taken the time to write me and touch my life in a positive way. AA is an amazing Fellowship filled with amazing people. I am constantly humbled by the wonder of it all.

Jeff P.

Blythe, California



From Daily Reflections, p. 78 March 10

TODAY, IT'S MY CHOICE

...we invariably find that at some time in the past we have made decisions based on self which later placed us in a position to be hurt.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS p. 62

With the realization and acceptance that I had played a part in the way my life had turned out came a dramatic change in my outlook. It was at this point that the A.A. Program began to work for me. In the past I had always blamed others, either God or other people, for my circumstances. I never felt that I had a choice in altering my life. My decisions had been based on fear, pride, or ego. As a result, those decisions led me down a path of self-destruction. Today I try to allow my God to guide me on the road to sanity. I am responsible for my action- or inaction-whatever the consequences may be.



My former home group taught me to give my sobriety date as a sign of gratitude and respect for the miracle of sobriety. They also taught me to identify and not to compare...My sobriety date is June 1, 1997 and I have not had to pick up a drink since then.

I had the gift of desperation. My drinking career was short but it was similar to the stories I hear from many in the rooms. I did not start to drink alcoholically until my 40's although I believe the "isms" were there all along. I had a happy life in childhood with great parents, no excuses there. There was no money for college and perhaps that was a good thing, in hindsight, or my drinking might have started earlier.

I had what I know now to be "a high bottom", but it was low enough for me to ask a friend who was open about being in the program to take me to my first meeting. The admission of being an alcoholic terrified me due to my pride and shame but, while driving me home, she urged me to keep an open mind and know that I would be loved until I could love myself. She explained that I was now in Intensive Care and that if I were in hospital, I would not resist the care by doctors and nurses in the ICU. That advice made sense to me and I began to feel that I could identify with something from every share by each member of AA, if I could keep an open mind.

After about 18 months of sobriety, my higher power sent me a unique opportunity which I decided to accept. This meant that I would be at sea, away from my group with only sporadic meetings. I kept in touch with my sponsor and friends via email and was sure to make time for daily readings of the AA literature and attend meetings whenever possible in many different countries. This kept me sober and, for that, I am immensely grateful.

We are all individuals and, what works for one might not work for everyone, but I still love the meetings. I am grateful for Zoom during the pandemic and look forward to in-person meetings once that is possible for me.

God bless you. Sally R

**KEEP COMING
BACK**

Hello,

I am a recovered alcoholic. I say the word "recovered" because I have found precise, clear-cut directions on how to recover from alcoholism in the book Alcoholics Anonymous.

I am from northwestern Vermont, a first generation Vermonter. My father is from Boston and my mother from England. Alcoholism and addiction is deeply woven through both sides of my family. For that, I felt doomed to repeat the cycle from an early age. I drank alcoholically and used drugs frequently from age 13-26. I have heard drugs mentioned as an "outside issue" in the rooms of AA and respectfully disagree. Without drugs, my story would be by no means an accurate description of the hopelessness and powerlessness I felt from the mental obsession and the physical craving I felt while using or thinking of using substances.

I have been sober for a little over three years, and the physical "time" means nothing to me today. I was 35 months without a drink when the idea that I was not living a spiritual life came down on me like a ton of bricks. I had "been through the steps" before with a sponsor. I was trying to transmit what I had to newcomers. Why did I still feel so bad?

Upon further examination of the book Alcoholics Anonymous with sober desperation, it was revealed to me that I was very much still trying to be the Director of my life, and many other's lives. I was still playing God and it pained me every time I tried.

My desperation brought me to and through the steps rapidly and vigorously- as the book suggests. I was coming to meetings of AA only to stay away from a drink; completely disregarding the absolutely essential line of the book, "its [the book Alcoholics Anonymous] main object is to enable you to find a power greater than yourself which will solve your problem." I was floored. All this time, I was trying, with all my own will, to simply stay away from drinking alcohol. I had missed the whole point.

Today, I know that bottles were but a symbol of the true problem, and that problem is my self-reliance, selfishness, and self-centeredness. I rely humbly on

a power greater than myself to give me intuitive thoughts and actions which will enable me to live a life of service to all people on this planet. I did not come here to seek God, and to this day do not identify as a religious person.

I truly try to live a life today that was worth saving. Though you may come to scoff, I hope you will remain to pray. You are no longer alone.

With regard, Eddie M



Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 106-107

“My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding.
Amen.”

Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 76

Got a story for this newsletter?

Looking for stories of recovery to be included in this newsletter. Please send to:

area70corrections@aavt.org

AA QUOTES OF THE MONTH

“Maybe there are as many definitions of spiritual awakening as there are people who have had them. But certainly each genuine one has something in common with all the others. And these things which they have in common are not too hard to understand. When a man or a woman has a spiritual awakening, the most important meaning of it is that he has now become able to do, feel, and believe that which he could not do before on his unaided strength and resources alone. He has been granted a gift which amounts to a new state of consciousness and being. He has been set on a path which tells him he is really going somewhere, that life is not a dead end, not something to be endured or mastered. In a very real sense he has been transformed, because he has laid hold of a source of strength which, in one way or another, he had hitherto denied himself. He finds himself in possession of a degree of honesty, tolerance, unselfishness, peace of mind, and love of which he had thought himself quite incapable. What he has received is a free gift, and yet usually, at least in some small part, he has made himself ready to receive it.

A.A.'s manner of making ready to receive this gift lies in the practice of the Twelve Steps in our program.”

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