

"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

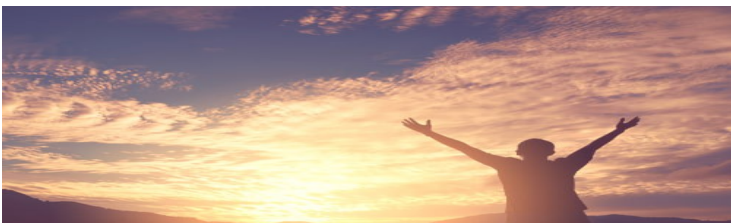
"ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS is a fellowship of people who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

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



Every time I drive down Swift Street and see the women's correctional facility, I say a prayer for all the residents. I drank during a time when 25 year old girls from the suburbs surely could not be alcoholics, so I got away with way too many offenses. But I believe

finally getting caught is what brought me to my knees and made me willing to grab the AA lifeline.

My perception as a kid was that asking for help was a weakness, so when I left home at 17 to find I was totally unprepared for real life, I found alcohol to be the only help I needed. Of course at the time I didn't realize I was self-medicating the anxiety away, I just knew it was a relief to feel nothing when I drank. In fact, I believe that if someone cannot turn off life by drinking, chances are good they will not become alcoholics.

Towards the end of my drinking, I would wake up with a terrible hangover and drag myself to work, vowing never to do that again. By noon I could eat something and, on my way home, it seemed like a good idea to stop at the liquor store. I only bought one bottle at a time, though, because I knew I would drink it all. Unscrewing the cap gave me both a sense of relief and the feeling that I was stepping off a cliff, because I knew I would end up somewhere I would regret, with someone I didn't know.

Then I took a hostage, a social worker who I thought could fix me, without technically asking for help, and that did slow down my drinking. I became a binge drinker where I could go 2 or 3 weeks without a drink, but then I couldn't stand the extreme tension in my body, my anger, my life spiraling, and I had to get wasted. But because I could go weeks without a drink, it proved to me I didn't really have a problem, although I had no friends, my family did not want me around and my supervisor threatened me because my attendance record was so bad. My neighbors called the police to my apartment repeatedly, I lost my license, and I wanted to crawl out of my skin. One night after a regular night of drinking, lying about it, arguing about it, I knew I couldn't live another day like this.

I went to my first AA meeting with five old, unshaven men. (Now that is what I thought alcoholics looked like.) They said if I didn't do steps 4 and 5, whatever that was, I would drink again. By then I had the gift of desperation and I had to step off a different kind of cliff. I had to trust that those already in the rooms were telling me the truth about a new way of life and take a step out in faith. The gift of desperation allowed me to do what was suggested- get a sponsor, go to 90 meetings in 90 days, get a home group and help set up and clean up. My sponsor told me to pray to her God until I found my own. At first, the only material I could

comprehend were the stories in the back of the Big Book but eventually I began working on the steps with my sponsor. The craving went away.

I allowed myself to be led around by women who kept telling me it would get better, but at the same time it was becoming evident that only I could do what was necessary to keep myself sober. I remember calling my sponsor to ask her if I should shower or brush my teeth first – my mind was so foggy. For a time all I could do was go to work, go to a meeting, go to bed, repeat. I cried every day, washing away some of my self-hatred and shame. When I heard the promises I craved knowing how to handle things that used to baffle me, because I had no faith in myself. And then I realized that (some) God had already been doing for me what I could not do for myself because I was still alive and sober.

By grace and willingness, I have been given the gift of AA, many years full of life. I thought nothing bad would happen to me under the protection of AA but how could I grow in love and let fall away the thinking that no longer served me if all was smooth sailing? I have a Higher Power who loves me extravagantly, regardless of my mistakes.

My prayer is that each of you will know that love that changes everything.



From Daily Reflections, p. 330 November 17

OVERCOMING LONELINESS

Almost without exception, alcoholics are tortured by loneliness. Even before our drinking got bad and people began to cut us off, nearly all of us suffered the feeling that we didn't quite belong.

AS BILL SEES IT, p. 90

The agonies and the void that I often felt inside occur less and less frequently in my life today. I have learned to cope with solitude. It is only when I am alone and calm that I am able to communicate with God, for He cannot reach me when I am in turmoil. It is good to maintain contact with God at all times, but it is absolutely essential that, when everything seems to go wrong, I maintain that contact through prayer and meditation.

I'm Jennifer and I am an alcoholic.

It's customary to share what it was like (in my active alcoholism), how I got here (In AA) and What it is like now. (being sober) So...

What it was like:

It started off innocent enough. Drinking just on weekends -just having a couple of beers. I was young and thought a six pack was a lot for one person. How quickly that changed. I was chained down from my addiction and I couldn't go very far and I do not mean just physically. I mean that before I went anywhere alcohol had to be a part of the plan. And if it wasn't I would change my plans.

I could tell you about the drunken escapades and the humiliating things I did either while using or trying to get what I needed. I have been arrested. I don't know how many times. I have been in accidents, slept with people I shouldn't have. The list can go on and on. There is a saying in AA. Every time I drank I didn't get in trouble but every time I got in trouble I was drinking. That was me. The actions are one thing but the feelings that came about due to drinking were what I wanted to drink away.

One night I was walking home tired, hungry, ashamed and lonely. I stood in front of my house looking in. I watched my mom at the sink doing dishes, the warm glow of the light radiating off the snow and smoke coming out of the chimney. Thinking I just want to go home. I want to go home again. I wanted to be a good child for my mother, a friend among friends. I wanted to be trustworthy, available if people needed me. Like what I was like before alcohol took over my life. I wanted to stop hurting and hurting others. I was lost and could not find my way home. I wanted that desperately but knew I couldn't. Standing outside my home looking in I knew I would be right back out there again and again. Nothing I could do would change that and I was right. Nothing I could do would help with my drinking and behavior.

How I got here:

I was 24 years old working as a parking lot attendant and on this day I didn't want to drink. I truly didn't want to drink. I was getting off of work at 5 and by 4:30 I started to get upset because I knew if I left work I was heading for the bar. I started to cry. I honestly didn't know how to get home without picking up a bottle. I actually ask

God for help. I wasn't bartering or begging or promising promises I couldn't keep but just humbly asking God to help me get home.

Five o'clock is getting closer and I don't want to leave. I don't know how to leave work, go home without stopping for alcohol. In the last minutes of my shift an old drinking buddy whom I hadn't seen in years came walking around the corner and asked me "You want to go to an AA meeting with me tonight?". Every Time I tell this part of my story I know there is a God. I went to an AA meeting that night and then the next morning. I got a sponsor at that meeting and was willing to go to any length to stay sober. I did everything she suggested. I got the words "yeah but," out of my vocabulary. I can say one thing: doing all the suggestions made my recovery that much easier and less painful. Not to say there were things I didn't want to do but I did them anyway. I did a lot worse things to use.

What it's like now:

I am free to go anywhere and do anything I want to. I have gone through some rough times. I have been happier than ever. And so sad that I never thought the pain would leave. And I did it sober. My plans and actions do not change because of alcohol. There are no words to describe the gifts I have received from AA. I have a job of great responsibility. I help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety. I don't get paid for it but I get so much more. It keeps me sober. My belief is that God has appointed me to this job, because one alcoholic sharing with another alcoholic can have an understanding of each other like no other. I have peace, grace, and gratitude even in my darkest hours. I am not saying that once I put down the drink everything became all peaches and cream. I mean no matter what I do not need to drink. Good times or bad.

Thank you

God bless, have faith, Lots of love J



Artwork by Crystal, Sobriety date 06/03/2013

God's Amazing, Uplifting Program

My sponsor believed in the resurrection of the dead, or the near dead at least. He was a witness to the miraculous power of the program and an evangelist of the good news of the Twelve Steps. Not in a religious way but in a spiritual way so that I always felt affirmed by his wisdom and his words. If I could paraphrase his positive message of resurrection recovery in one Uplifting paragraph, he basically told me:

"If you're FED UP with being sick and tired of being sick and tired, then remember you have to WAKE UP to the truth that you're an alcoholic/addict and you don't know it all. You're no longer a SCREW UP but if you want to learn how to stay sober/clean, SHUT UP and LISTEN UP. Sooner or later you'll have the courage to FESS UP to your character defects. If you have half the brains you think you have you'll GIVE UP your struggle and JOIN UP with us. Together we'll ask God to help us STAND UP, STRAIGHTEN UP and SHAPE UP. If you're willing to go to any length to CLEAN UP there's a good chance you'll GROW UP and live the life God wants you to live. SHOW UP each week at meetings and take each STEP UP one at a time. RISE UP early each morning so you can pray and meditate before you FACE UP to your daily responsibilities. Don't be afraid to OWN UP to your debtors and PAY UP, because until you do they will own you forever. Let the people FILL UP your heart with new hope, love and peace. LIGHTEN UP about yourself, you're important not unique. When life gets tough and you feel discouraged, LOOK UP to God and He will help you. When He does, say "Thank you", and try to MOVE UP closer to Him on a daily basis for that's what it's all about. One more very important thing is to realize you are now responsible to HELP UP another alky/addict. Never be so selfish or lazy that you PASS UP an opportunity to GET UP off your butt to PICK UP another suffering soul. If you do these things God will RAISE UP your spirit into peace and you will know your purpose in life. And remember, when I'm long gone, I'll be UP THERE cheering for you, so KEEP UP the good work."

I pray this message BRIGHTENS UP your day.

Rick P.

ONE DAY AT A TIME



AA QUOTES OF THE MONTH

“Learning daily to spot, admit, and correct these flaws is the essence of character-building and good living. An honest regret for harms done, a genuine gratitude for blessings received, and a willingness to try for better things tomorrow will be the permanent assets we shall seek.”

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 95

“If you are as seriously alcoholic as we were, we believe there is no middle-of-the-road solution. We were in a position where life was becoming impossible, and if we had passed into the region from which there is no return through human aid, we had but two alternatives: One was to go on to the bitter end, blotting out the consciousness of our intolerable situation as best we could; and the other, to accept spiritual help. This we did because we honestly wanted to, and were willing to make the effort.”

Alcoholics Anonymous, pp. 25-26

THERE IS A SOLUTION

Got a story for this newsletter?

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

area70corrections@aavt.org

Meeting Guide is a free-of-charge meeting finder app.

The app helps people find A.A. meetings and resources near them. A.A. service entities provide the meeting data for the app. Meeting Guide is available for iOS and Android smartphones.

About Meeting Guide

Meeting Guide syncs with area, district, intergroup/central offices and international general service office websites, relaying meeting information from more than 400 A.A. service entities directly to the app. Over 100,000 weekly meetings are currently listed, and the information is refreshed twice daily.

Meeting Guide features

- Listing of both in-person and online meetings
- A default view that provides a list of meetings showing time, location and meeting name
- A meeting detail view that offers extra information such as meeting format and any notes provided by the group
- A search function to find meetings by location or keyword
- A daily quote feature lets users read from "Daily Reflections"
- Multiple access points that make finding local A.A. contact information easy
- A news feature with the latest from the General Service Office and Grapevine

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