

“A NEW FREEDOM”

area70corrections@aavt.org

APRIL 2023

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

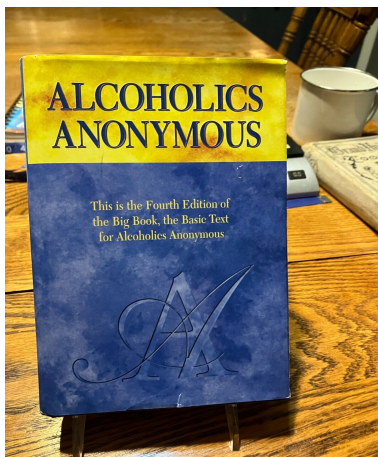
“ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS is a fellowship of people who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

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



A Different Kind of Release

By Meghan P

I was sitting on the floor of a bathroom, with my friends around me asking me if I was OK. How did I get here? How long had I been there? Why were they asking me if I was OK? The last thing I remembered was drinking a plastic cup of beer from the keg and talking to people from my school that I never had the courage to speak to. That was the first time I got drunk and I was 16. I don't remember a chunk of time from that party, and I don't know what I did to concern my friends. What I do remember is the incredible feeling that the alcohol gave me – a strong sense of belonging and of being part of the group; courage to be myself and interact with people. This was magical – it released me from the anxiety and fear of not fitting in that had always plagued me. I was a little concerned about the short black-out, but not enough to not drink again. Alcohol clearly was the answer to my problems!

I chased that first feeling of release from myself for the next 20 years. I drank to escape my feelings of inadequacy; I drank to release social anxiety; I drank because I was fearful; I drank because someone treated me badly; I drank to forget the bad things I did; I drank because I felt free. At some point things changed, and I drank because I had to. Once I started, I could not stop and often experienced black-outs. My drinking prevented me from being able to truly be there for my friends and loved ones and it prevented me from being in a true relationship with other human beings. I drove drunk many times, but somehow never got a DUI. I was able to maintain and even excel in my employment, but everything else in my life was falling apart.

Then I found out I was pregnant. Maybe this was the answer and would change things and release me from this horrible cycle of drinking and getting drunk every day. I moved back to Burlington, got a new job and prepared for the baby. And I didn't drink during the pregnancy! I convinced myself that I couldn't be an alcoholic because I was able to stop – I just needed a

change and something to bring purpose into my life, and this baby was the answer. I was able to not drink during my pregnancy and for a short period after the baby arrived, but then I told myself that a glass of wine with dinner wouldn't hurt and I deserved it because working full time and being a single mother was stressful. That glass of wine turned into a bottle and in a few years I was drinking every night and getting drunk after I put my son to bed. I would wake up in the early hours of the morning sweating and cursing myself for getting drunk again, and vowed that I would not drink that day. I repeated that promise to not drink during the morning, but when I started feeling better from my hangover, my mind started telling me that I was being drastic. I could simply have just one or two drinks and then stop. I could do that – it was simple. And, I deserved to have a drink at the end of a long and hard day. However, once I had the first drink, I couldn't stop and the horrible cycle repeated itself day after day. I tried everything – therapy, eating first, drinking only beer – but nothing worked. This cycle went on for years. I finally became so desperate that I reached out for help and went to my first AA meeting.

I knew what being in AA meant – you couldn't drink ever again. I didn't want that. I wanted to be released from the grips of my dysfunctional cycle of drinking and learn how to drink like a normal person. I started reading the big book and comparing rather than identifying. When I came to the part that says if you don't think you are an alcoholic, try some controlled drinking, I thought, well that's the answer. So I tried to control my drinking, not realizing that I had been trying that for years before and it had never worked. My "control" lasted a little over a week and I was back to where I left off and quickly getting worse. I drank for another year and a half before I made it back to AA.

When I crawled into the room of my second AA meeting, I was truly bankrupt emotionally and spiritually. I had no hope and questioned what the point of living was. The only thing that kept me going was my son; I still wanted to be a good mother for him, so I was willing to listen this time and do what was suggested. That willingness was the key to the beginning of my sobriety. I secretly thought that you were all very simplistic with silly sayings and stupid suggestions that couldn't possibly help me not drink. But something made me be willing to try getting on my knees and praying and taking other suggested actions and to my surprise, I found that they worked. I couldn't explain how or why, but these actions worked and I started to accumulate some sober days. After several days I realized that the obsession to drink had been lifted from me. I didn't have to drink!

I found a sponsor at my second meeting, even though I didn't think I needed one. I think my higher power gave me the willingness to try it, and for that I am truly grateful. I committed to going to a meeting every day and I found that I felt renewed and filled with something that helped me throughout my day. I now know that it was my higher power working through every person in that AA meeting to give me the messages I needed to hear. My sponsor took me through the first 164 pages of the Big Book and then we started working the 12 steps. I wanted to rush to complete them, but my sponsor slowed me down so I could understand and really commit to and believe in what I was doing. After completing steps 4 and 5, I really felt like I belonged and I wasn't alone. I also didn't hate myself as much as before. When I started to work steps 8 and 9, becoming willing to and making amends, I found a release from the shame and guilt I had been carrying my whole life. I also began to see that the Promises were starting to come true for me as stated in the Big Book. I felt a freedom and release that I had never experienced before.

Through working the steps I discovered many things about myself, including that I had let other people and situations define who I was and what I did, and then I developed resentments and reacted with anger and self-loathing. I came to believe that I am not a horrible person, but that I have a disease, and most importantly that my disease of alcoholism will never be cured, but I can recover and I can not drink one day at a time if I continue to practice the steps and maintain a connection with my higher power and stay "spiritually fit." I have continued to attend AA meetings, to read AA literature, to call my sponsor regularly, to work the steps in my life every day and to be of service when and where I can. I pray to my higher power every day, sometimes multiple times a day, asking for the gift of sobriety and that my character defects will be removed for that day so I can be of service to others. These simple things have kept me sober one day at a time for 10 years now. I do not take any of this for granted – I love AA because it gave me a sober life filled with AA friends, love for myself and others and opportunities to be helpful to other alcoholics and other people. AA has also allowed me to be a good mother to my son and we have a beautiful, close relationship today. AA released me from the bondage of alcohol and has given me a freedom that I could never obtain through drinking. This can all happen for you too if you have the willingness to give AA a try and follow suggestions of other sober alcoholics!



From Daily Reflections, p. 111 April 12

GIVING UP INSANITY

. . . where alcohol has been involved, we have been strangely insane.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, p. 38

Alcoholism required me to drink, whether I wanted to or not. Insanity dominated my life and was the essence of my disease. It robbed me of the freedom of choice over drinking and, therefore, robbed me of all other choices. When I drank, I was unable to make effective choices in any part of my life and life became unmanageable.

I ask God to help me understand and accept the full meaning of the disease of alcoholism.

I grew up in northern New Jersey in a good family. I sometimes wish I could point to some family trauma or dysfunction as the reason for my alcoholism, but I cannot. My parents were stable people and would only drink during holidays. I come from a big family of 7 siblings. We were all close and are still to this day. However, I (and my parents) noticed that at a young age, I was not like my other siblings. They seemed to be confident, happy, easy-going people while I on the other hand was constantly anxious and would fall into deep stretches of depression. I always felt like there was a playbook to life and I just didn't get it when I was born. I felt like I was always behind everyone else and never felt like I quite belonged. I always strived for identity and a place to call home where I felt at peace. Yet, this anxious child grew up into an anxious fearful teenager which is when I was first introduced to alcohol in high school. Suddenly all my fears, worries, obsessions, and racing thoughts would slow down and then stop. I thought I have finally found the cure to all my problems. It didn't take long before people began to see how my drinking was different from other peoples drinking. I would not want to stop and the next day I would obsess about drinking until I was able to get my hands on them. This kept going all through my twenties promising myself that I was going to slow down and stop once I finished

college or got my first real job or had my first serious relationship and the list went on and on. I watched how my friends were able to stop partying and settle down to a life of having a drink maybe once a week or so. I would try this but would only be able to make it maybe a week before the anxiety and fear was just too much for me and I would go back to drinking and it would be worse than before -- never better. Once I got into my late twenties I was drinking all day every day. If I was awake I was drinking no matter what. I was in a loving serious relationship with a wonderful person. We had a house and three dogs, it was an ideal life. But I was still so restless, irritable, and discontented when the alcohol was not in me. Life was never good enough. She busted me many times when I would try and hide my drinking and every time I would make promises I never meant to keep. My drinking progressed until May 6 2021 in a blackout state I was arrested. Sitting in that jail cell, withdrawing from alcohol, I was just trying to figure out how the hell I got here. The guilt and shame was overwhelming. I was bailed out a few days later and immediately went to the liquor store. I had more reasons to drink now. Luckily, in a week's time, I was in rehab. I was introduced to Alcoholics Anonymous while there and it changed my life. I got a sponsor and worked the steps. I do service work and meet with people in the program. I go to meetings and work on myself every day. Trying my hardest to unravel the things that have brought me to drink and burn my life to the ground. I have found personally that before I would drink I was usually a mess emotionally and mentally incapable of accepting life as life is with all its ups and downs. I would drink and once that happened I could not stop. My life now however is filled with hope and promise. I have a long way to go, but it is a much much better life than where I was before. I am a productive person now who can give back to the world and I am surrounded by people who love me. My life did not end on May 6 2021 but just began.

-Dennis

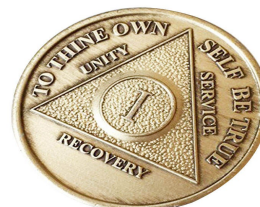




Photo by Karen P., Sobriety date: 04/02/2022

Today I walk in my Truth. I realize this long road I'm on has taken me to where I need to be.

I've gained perspective, and breaking down the Serenity prayer has been useful in my recovery and opening my eyes when I use it.

God has indeed granted me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change.

There are numerous things I cannot change, and the most important is knowing I'm an alcoholic.

For courage to change the things I can, I have learned to change my outlook and behaviors. I have learned the focus needs to remain on me, and not to put my focus on things in my life that will take me off this path called Recovery.

The Wisdom I have gained that has helped me to grow is knowing I have a disease that talks to me, this disease needs to be fed to keep it under control, it must be fed with meetings, staying in the present, staying connected with others that are on the same path that open my eyes when I veer out of the lines.

I've learned that taking it one day at a time is all I need. With this new way of Being, I can't go wrong, unless I stray from this way of thinking.

Paula from Florida

Where Does Recovery Start & End?

By Jessica R.

"Have you ever snorted one of these?" I'd only been home from surgery a few hours when my ex-boyfriend's buddy picked up my bottle of percocet from the coffee

table. "It'll work way faster and you'll feel great." Had I known that day would lead to a 15 year long battle with drugs and alcohol, would I have made a different choice? No, because it really started before that.

I was 16 years old, half living at home, more with my boyfriend; working, dropped out of high school the summer before my senior year. I was allowed to smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol and be myself. My addiction to alcohol and drugs started before. I was sneaking out of the house, and got worse when I left home. I'd sneak out at 13/14 years old and go get wasted. One time a friend and I walked to a party at midnight. A cop picked us up walking and dropped us off at the party! We made it back to my house at dawn. My friend left my house on a stretcher and had to get her stomach pumped. We were 15! I remember sneaking wine to school, walking to my best friend's house during lunch period to have a drink, smoke some weed and a cigarette, and go back to class wasted.

My mom has always been on the straight and narrow. Here mom and brother were alcoholics, my dad also a raging alcoholic, along with his sister and parents. I grew up with my dad gone more than around. When he was around, I'd have to occupy my little sister, cover her ears, or hide from my parents. I tried to protect my sister from seeing my mom with a phone cord around her neck, or bite marks, or I'd be cleaning up the broken dishes he threw at her. My dad worked a lot, but also was in jail a lot. I watched him put a garbage bag over his head once, while holding a gun at the top of the stairs during a standoff with the cops because of a domestic dispute. I was 9 years old.

By the time I had my first daughter at 18, I thought I had life figured out. I soon learned her father was just like mine-an abusive alcoholic, narcissist. The only difference between how my mom handled it compared to me is I chose alcohol and drugs to hide my fear, some make up for the bite mark on my cheek. My mom chose to fight.

My daughter wasn't even a year old when I packed my car and showed up at my moms. My sister was 12, my mom worked from home, and I had a new

freedom. I worked a lot, but I went out a lot. My family raised my daughter. I was a good mom. I just cared about men, booze, and coke just as much!

I waitressed, so I worked late. I was in community college, and I was getting my nursing assistant license. I was going to the bars a lot. By the time I was getting my LNA, I was addicted to painkillers and pregnant with my second daughter. Her dad was a casual drinker who did coke and pills occasionally. I was prescribed painkillers for my pregnancy. We broke up due to a domestic dispute. He was the manager at the restaurant I worked at. We went out partying with friends. I asked him to hold my phone and he found I was cheating on him, selling and buying pills, and we were drinking a bottle of tequila every few days. We were also engaged.

I ended up back at my mom's; my 3rd bottom, my heart in a million pieces, and only one way to fix it. Alcohol and pills.

By the time I was 24, I'd had 6 surgeries for cysts on my ovaries, and endometriosis, 2 cesareans, 2 broken hearts, and nowhere to turn. I found an apartment. My cousin and sister stayed and babysat a lot. I remember packing my daughter up to drive 2 hours to see a man, just to drink and have sex! My dad was staying with me on the weekends. We did pills together, but he gave me structure.

One day my kids were with their dads, mine was at work, and I'd woken up cold, shaky, and sweaty. My neighbor usually had pills. I didn't know this was sick. This was a detox. My stomach upside down, alcohol not helping. She showed up with a tiny wax baggy-Heroin.

It was 9 years ago when I first saw that bag. Since then I've gone to rehab 3 times, 2 bids(prison time), 4 years on probation, 2 on furlough, 3 overdoses, lost and gained and lost my kids. I quit doing drugs, but I drank a ½ gallon every day!

I'm in jail now with no idea for how long. I've been on the run for 16 years, but the last year, from the law. (But that's another story.)

My kids are 16 and 12, that's when my journey started with this battle. I haven't seen them or my family for a year. No way to go back in time to fix anything. My kids won't talk to me, but they are so smart, beautiful, and

talented. If I've done anything for them, I showed them drugs and alcohol are bad, and that love comes in many forms.

I sit here today 4 months sober, content in jail, safe, grateful I'm alive. There are days I wish I was home. I have bad days, but I have the members of AA here, counseling, and a beating heart with a future.

You see, it was always someone else who needed to change. It wasn't ever my fault. As I sit here in my prison cell, I'm alive and here to tell you it's never too late to change yourself. You can be better. The walls of those meetings keep me going. They keep me honest. They keep me accountable. They give me a future filled with a clean and sober life. This cell is better than a grave. I have time to fix my relationships with my family. And I will.

AA QUOTES OF THE MONTH

“A.A.'s Twelve Steps are a group of principles, spiritual in their nature, which, if practiced as a way of life, can expel the obsession to drink and enable the sufferer to become happily and usefully whole.”

Forward to the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 15

“It is plain that a life which includes deep resentment leads only to futility and unhappiness. To the precise extent that we permit these, do we squander the hours that might have been worth while. But with the alcoholic, whose hope is the maintenance and growth of a spiritual experience, this business of resentment is infinitely grave. We found that it is fatal. For when harboring such feelings we shut ourselves off from the sunlight of the Spirit. The insanity of alcohol returns and we drink again. And with us, to drink is to die.”

Alcoholics Anonymous, P. 66

KEEP COMING BACK!

IT WORKS IF YOU WORK IT!

**If you are going to be released soon,
make sure to put this app on your cell
phone.**



**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

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 24-hours a day.

(802) 802-AAVT (2288)

**For meeting information in Vermont, go to
aavt.org**

Got a story for this newsletter?

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

area70corrections@aavt.org