

"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



Hi, my name is Paula and I am an addict/alcoholic. It's a blessing for me to have the chance to communicate with you regarding recovery.

I had fear even as a small child because my mother died when I was 4. Right after that an uncle started sexually abusing me. Because of that trauma I was

petrified of the world. I compensated by being a funny people pleaser.

When I found drugs/alcohol I remember looking in the mirror and saying outloud, "I have finally found the answer to alleviate all this fear". From that time on, I was 16, I was off to the races. I drank and took all drugs except sticking a needle in my arm. That would have come eventually. I was a terrible student and did even worse in college. All I was doing was partying.

After graduation I got a job and my drinking and drugging slowed down just to weekends. I then started a job in NYC and I took off all over again because I had access to alcohol/drugs all the time. It was a crazy busy job that would have been so much easier by being sober and clean. I ran around like a chicken with my head cut off trying to re-invent the wheel.

After that job ended I started with a constant stream of painful kidney stones. I was swallowing untold numbers of pills everyday. It was at that time my drug of choice and that was it. My life was a mess and it came to the point that I couldn't leave the house. I was so paranoid

One day I lit about 50 candles and proceeded to pass out on the sofa. My young son could not wake me up. By the grace of God, I woke up and the next day I asked for help. Up until that time I was full of alcohol/drugs and bad decisions. I was fortunate enough to go to rehab but didn't take it as seriously as I could have. I went home and relapsed a year later while going to AA and NA. It scared me so much because I knew what was out there waiting.

I kind of knew about the rooms of AA/NA. I was petrified and came back as willing as the dying can be. I immediately found a sponsor, worked the steps and did service. All of the promises came true in recovery and now I have a life beyond my wildest dreams. I am not that petrified little girl anymore. If you are reading this, may God bless you in your journey. My sobriety date is 7/11/03 and I'll keep coming back. Xoxo



It was a hot and muggy day in the mountains, and I had my bags packed and ready to go. The cab was on its way. The train tickets were booked. I had successfully manipulated my family into sending me hundreds of dollars to pay for the trip home.

I was two weeks sober at an inpatient rehab center and had fallen head over heels in love with a girl I had met there. We were involved in a rehab romance together. Unfortunately, a rumor had been started about me that made her not want to talk to me anymore.

After finding out that one of the kids whom I considered to be a friend had spread the rumor (out of spite and jealousy), I decided to do what I did best: leave.

Leave the treatment center before I had to deal with any complicated feelings or confront any problems head-on.

Leave, because I wasn't capable of dealing with any emotional stress when I was doing drugs and alcohol - let alone when I was sober.

Against all of the advice of the counselors and treatment staff, I remained stubbornly determined to leave. I was charting a full speed ahead course towards my inevitable relapse and self-destruction.

Underneath all of the layers of smirking late-adolescent bravado, I was scared, weary, and on the verge of a mental breakdown. I was heartbroken and confused, grasping at straws for any type of emotional or physical distraction to fill the emptiness I felt growing inside of myself.

As I sat in the treatment center office and waited for them to call the cab, I thought about all of the times in my life that I had been in the same situation: lying to myself - and manipulating everyone around me to justify abandoning my commitments.

The clock ticked. The counselor looked straight at me with the same skeptical half-lidded-eyed-look that countless other treatment counselors had given me before. I saw my reflection in a small glass mirror on the desk. As I looked at myself, I saw a vision. Actually, I saw two separate and distinct possible visions for my future – each based on whether I decided to leave or decided to stay. One was alive and sober, and one was dying from addiction.

From Daily Reflections, p. 28 January 20

“WE PAUSE ... AND ASK”

As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, p.87

Today I humbly ask my Higher Power for the grace to find the space between my impulse and my action; to let flow a cooling breeze when I would respond with heat; to interrupt fierceness with gentle peace; to accept the moment which allows judgment to become discernment; to defer to silence when my tongue would rush to attack or defend. I promise to watch for every opportunity to turn toward my Higher Power for guidance. I know where this power is: it resides within me, as clear as a mountain brook, hidden in the hills – it is the unsuspected Inner Resource. I thank my Higher Power for this world of light and truth I see when I allow it to direct my vision. I trust it today and hope it trusts me to make all effort to find the right thought or action today.

**To THINE OWN SELF Be
True**



I realized then and there that it was going to be harder for me to run from my problems than to confront them head on. I told the counselor to cancel the cab, I grabbed my bags, and I walked back to my room, knowing that whatever petty drama I would have to confront was not worth the price I would pay down the line for leaving rehab.

That was the most important day of my life. It was the day I made the decision to stand and face my fears and not run from them. From that moment on, I made the decision to work every day to confront all of my problems with honesty and patience, and I have lived by a simple philosophy which has kept me clean and sober through the darkest times:

KEEP MOVING FORWARD.
RUN TOWARDS THE TRUTH.
DON'T QUIT BEFORE THE MIRACLE HAPPENS.



Artwork by Sam, Sobriety date: 08/05/2005

There was nothing spectacular or traumatic about my childhood. My family was close and my parents got along. I was loved and provided for. At some point in my early teen years feelings of being different or not good enough, cool enough, tough enough, started to creep in. My peers were going to parties and having shared experiences of smoking weed and drinking and I wanted in, so I started smoking and drinking and going to parties.

When high school ended and most of my peers went off to college, I stayed behind. My plan was to move to California to go to school out there, but that never happened. Drinking and drugs became the priority. I struggled to hold a job for more than a month, and every penny I made went to supporting my habit. I was breaking into houses and robbing businesses to get the money I needed to stay well. I stole from friends and family. I still lived with my parents and life at home was pretty tense.

Around the time I should have been finishing my first year in college in California, I was arrested with a car full of drugs on my way back from the city. I found myself suddenly confronted with the consequences of my actions and in trouble no one could get me out of. Talking to my parents on a phone through glass was not something I ever thought I would be doing. I wish I could say that I turned everything around at that point, but I didn't.

I left jail and was sent to a long term treatment facility. It was a bumpy transition and I struggled to stay sober. I attended meetings out of obligation but never really did any of the work. Despite my lack of effort, my life started to improve. Staying sober was enough to allow me to hold down a job and get back some of what I had lost before. I was also under federal supervision for three years, which gave me added incentive to keep it together.

Eventually, I enrolled in a local college and continued to be outwardly successful. I stayed sober for about six years, going to meetings for the first three and then nothing for three years. At some point, I decided that everything that had happened earlier in my life was because I was young and immature. I figured I had grown enough to handle myself differently. I would stay away from the hard drugs but could drink and dabble in other things. After eight years, I found myself feeling the same way I had all those years before. I didn't end up in jail again and was able to hold a job, but everything

else was exactly the same. I would go to bed – or pass out – resolving to do things differently the next day. The following morning all of that resolve was gone and had been replaced with shame, fear, and hopelessness. I went through the motions at work, often using throughout the day. I couldn't wait to get home at night so I could drown everything out with more of whatever I had. It was the same thing everyday and not a life I wanted for myself.

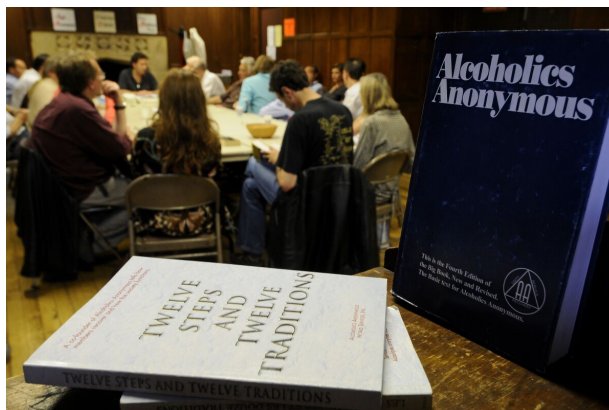
One day while fighting with my girlfriend at the time, she told me she thought she was an alcoholic. To my surprise I replied by saying, "I am too." We went to a meeting together a few days later and, while it was her first time, I felt at home again. I still wasn't quite ready, though. I kept looking for shortcuts and ways to slide through. I slipped a couple of times over the next few years and blamed it on a failed relationship or the loss of a job when in reality I had never worked the 12 steps as outlined in the book, Alcoholics Anonymous. Four and a half years ago I stopped fighting and began to take the suggestions that I'd been ignoring for 17 years.

I got a sponsor and called him. I also took his suggestions which were to go to 90 meetings in 90 days, to call him daily, and to get involved with service. I didn't know if those things would work, but it didn't matter anymore. I was tired of fighting and trying to figure it out on my own.

What has happened since has been nothing short of a miracle. Through working the steps in the program laid out in Alcoholics Anonymous, I have been given a life that is far better than I could have imagined. I have a community of people with shared experience. I have a relationship with my family and can show up today. I have experienced personal and professional growth. I have a home and a job I love.

From the outside, my life is good, but what is truly amazing and what I am most grateful for is that I feel that way on the inside as well. I have a level of peace and perspective that I thought was reserved for other people. I am able to handle whatever life throws at me and I have a network of people I can reach out to if I'm struggling. By doing the work, I have a life today that I love. I'm a long way from the scared teenager talking to his parents through glass.

IT WORKS IF YOU WORK IT



AA QUOTES OF THE MONTH

"Then I woke up. I had to admit that A.A. showed results, prodigious results. I saw that my attitude regarding these had been anything but scientific. It wasn't A.A. That had the closed mind, it was me. The minute I stopped arguing, I could begin to see and feel. Right there, Step Two gently and very gradually began to infiltrate my life. I can't say upon what occasion or upon what day I came to believe in a Power greater than myself, but I certainly have that belief now. To acquire it, I had only to stop fighting and practice the rest of A.A.'s program as enthusiastically as I could."

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 27

"Abandon yourself to God as you understand God. Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny. May God bless you and keep you—until then."

Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 164

Got a story or artwork for this newsletter?

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

area70corrections@aavt.org

**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

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