

# "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*



## **I'm Ray and I'm an Alcoholic**

I could have used an intervention at 13 years of age; that's when I began pouring booze down my throat. After a few weeks of drinking I eventually got caught on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. I returned home to get my dad's 22 single shot rifle. A friend's dad had sprayed me down with a garden hose after he saw

me staggering around and walking into exploding firecrackers. I guess I was pissed so I went to get the rifle.

My parents got hold of me and I was given a shower and made to clean up all the puke in my room the following morning. I vowed to myself to never get caught drinking again.

Fast forward 17 years; I'm handed a phone and I hear the voice of my father say, "If you're not at work by 7am tomorrow you're fired!" Click. It was a sobering moment for sure. I had been gone for days. It was already afternoon, and I was a couple states away with no vehicle. No problem. I'd show my dad. I borrowed a car and headed out of my friend's apartment, and even though I was in no condition to, I made my way back to Vermont.

I arrived to work on time the next morning. My dad had a client's dog on a leash and we walked up the driveway together. It was a mild winter's morning and the air felt good after being cooped up in an apartment and then the car for those couple of days.

My dad had some concerns about me and as we walked I interrupted him at one point and said, "Dad, whatever you think is going on, it's way worse." That day he let me go home to get some rest and be ready for work the following day.

Over the next couple of days my Nana talked to her son, my dad, about the whole situation. I was soon presented with the option of going into treatment, or going to Alcoholics Anonymous.

A day or so later I found myself in a church, sitting on a folding chair, and holding a small styrofoam cup of coffee. I observed several people early on identify themselves as alcoholics. When the announcement of newcomers came up I said, "Hi, I'm Ray." It bothered me the entire meeting.

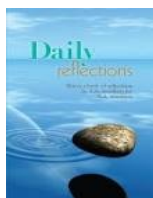
Looking back I believe it was a good meeting. I didn't spill my coffee. I heard some interesting stories, and

genuine laughter. In my bones it was still bothering me that I had said only my name. At meetings close, as we all stood holding hands in an extremely disfigured circle, I blurted out, "By the way, I'm Ray and I'm an alcoholic."

Whatever it was that I was carrying was lifted at that moment. I became a part of something greater than myself. What a relief.

That was 33 years ago. I believe today that Alcoholics Anonymous saved my life. I am so grateful to have been given the chance to get better. I hope I continue to remain teachable and humble, and to be of service to others. May I never take for granted the gift I've been given through the program of AA.

I'm Ray and I'm an Alcoholic. Thank you and God Bless You All.



From Daily Reflections, p. 84 March 16

## AS WE UNDERSTAND HIM

**My friend suggested what then seemed a novel idea. . . . "Why don't you choose your own conception of God?" That statement hit me hard. It melted the icy intellectual mountain in whose shadow I had lived and shivered many years. I stood in the sunlight at last. It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a Power greater than myself. Nothing more was required of me to make my beginning.**

### ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, p. 12

I remember the times I looked up into the sky and reflected on who started it all, and how. When I came to A.A., an understanding of some description of the spiritual dimension became a necessary adjunct to a stable sobriety. After reading a variety of versions, including the scientific, of a great explosion, I went for simplicity and made the God of my understanding the Great Power that made the explosion possible. With the vastness of the universe under His command, He would, no doubt, be able to guide my thinking and actions if I was prepared to accept His guidance. But I could not expect help if I turned my back on that help and went my own way. I became willing to believe and I have had 26 years of stable and satisfying sobriety.

## My name is Marge and I am a Recovered

**Alcoholic!** I wanted to share about home groups and why it is important to have one. The home group is where a person accepts service responsibilities, meets with other members who they can identify with, sometimes you meet your sponsor there but you don't have to, and where you just feel comfortable.

The very first meeting I attended became my home group. I got sober in NJ and my first meeting was at a church called Trinity Church. The AA group was called the Barber Group. Named after a local barber who lived in the town and worked there. He was in recovery! I can still remember that night I went to my first meeting. I

was really scared 😨

I had no idea what to expect. We walked down about 15 stairs into the church basement. I felt like it was the end of the world. The worst thing that could happen to me. Little did I know it turned out to be the best thing that could ever happen. When I got to the doorway I

saw 👁️ a bright room, smelled like coffee and cigarettes.

There was a lot of older people there. Older men! A gentleman came over to me and introduced himself. His name was Chicago John. Sometimes, if you're lucky enough, you get a nickname in AA. He became a very good friend of mine. He welcomed me, told me to find a seat and offered to get me a cup of coffee. I am really glad that John offered to get that cup of coffee because I was shaking so bad I don't think I could walk across the room, let alone hold of hot cup of coffee.

I don't remember much of what was said that night. But I do remember a feeling of comfort. For just that hour and a half, I felt like I was not alone, I felt hope, I felt a sense of ease and comfort. I didn't talk that night but each person in that room shared an experience that I could identify with. They looked different, they had different lifestyles, different consequences. One thing we did have in common was the fact that when we picked up the first drink, we could not stop.

Someone told me that I should look for the similarities and not the differences. Just a moment, I felt like I belonged somewhere, all my life I felt like I was a square peg trying to fit into a round hole. These people got me. They understood me and it was OK to let my guard down. They told me to come back tomorrow night.

There were meetings there seven nights in a row so that's what I did. I got some phone numbers and I called someone the next day and asked if I could get a ride to the meeting. She came and picked me up, she didn't want gas money, she didn't want anything. She said that in order for her to stay sober that it was her job to help me. Someone helped her one day, and now she was passing it on. And one day, maybe I could do the same for someone else.

So a few 24 hours past and I began my journey in AA. I found a sponsor in that home group. My sponsor asked me if I wanted to join the group. It's like I had a family now. I wrote down in a book, my sobriety date, the last time I took my last drink. I was given a service position, I had to wash all the ashtrays in the kitchen at the end of the meeting. Then someone volunteered me to be a coffee maker. I was really nervous, but they were good teachers. Taking these commitments, I didn't know if the time helped me to stay sober. It taught me how to be responsible! I got to know those people that came to the meetings every night, I got to know them well. And they got to know me! I came early to my home group instead of just getting there right at the hour.

They say you can learn a lot before the meeting starts and especially after the AA meeting. I let my guard down, I talked about my feelings, I talked about some of the terrible things that happened when I was drinking. They never laughed, they never judged me, they just told me to keep coming back.

Someone bought me my first Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. I still have that Big Book! That's where I learned about the program of recovery, A design for living that really works. In that book was everything that I ever looked for. Beyond my wildest dreams.

I learned a lot from all those people in the meetings, all those people that were so strange and scary in the beginning. They helped me build a foundation that is made out of cement, and has stood up so many times that I wanted to quit, give up!

So I encourage you, whoever you are, that's reading my story, give this program a chance. Ask for the willingness. When they put their hand out to help you, take that hand, it might be The best thing you ever did in your life. Take the experiment! That's what my sponsor always says. You don't have anything to lose you have everything to gain.

Marge M



Artwork by Michael, Sobriety date: 03/04/1995

## How Willing Was I To Go To Any Length

In the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, it tells you that if you are willing to go to any length, you are ready to take certain steps.

When I came into this Fellowship, I had no clue what that meant. I wanted to get over being self-destructive and causing myself shame and self pity.

I couldn't understand how these steps could bring me peace in my life.

I got to the point that if going to any length meant standing on my head, I needed to learn how to do that, but I realized I needed help. I found others who had done it and they showed me how.

I became willing to go to any length.

After that first step, I learned how to get to the second step.

I was able to progress, and felt such a relief that I was not alone.

My journey is giving me a peaceful life, even if some days are harder than others.

Being a part of a fellowship that promises that you'll have a life beyond your wildest dreams.

It's a beautiful life, and that climb was so much worth the effort.

Paula

## YET

**We have a saying in AA** - that when someone discusses their story and has experienced something that another hasn't – it is described as a “yet.” It can be positive or negative. Negative is more common. There but for the grace of God, go I etc. It could have easily happened to me ...

So, I spend my time trying to be as nonjudgmental as I can because I may not have gone that far ... yet. I may not have done damage to that person ... yet. I may not have had to (insert whatever consequence here) ...yet.

Coming home last night from an audiobook narration class (another step in my Voice Acting endeavor) I was thinking a lot about “Yets.” I have a tendency to dislike criticism and take things personally. I am aware of that trait and work on it. I get very disappointed when I am not good at something immediately.

I started thinking through my journey and all the “yets” that haven't happened (thankfully because of the program of AA) I also realized that there are a number of positive “yets” that also haven't happened ... YET.

My therapist likes to remind me that I have been a disciplined person before. I have been capable of doing many wonderful things in my life and that I wasn't good at them to start with.

I need to be a beginner. More than that I need to enjoy being a beginner.

So, as frustrating as my walk home was - it was an excellent opportunity for me to reframe what my overly critical inner voice was saying. The “not good enough” and “will never be good at this” diatribe was added to - one word ... YET.

It changed my whole perspective.

I then had the choice to either wallow in my apparent self pity or realize that I have just started the journey and that I GET to work on mastering another skill. You can teach an old dog new tricks :)

Martin P.



## AA QUOTES OF THE MONTH

**“Practicing Step Three is like the opening of a door which to all appearances is still closed and locked. All we need is a key, and the decision to swing the door open. There is only one key, and it is called willingness. Once unlocked by willingness, the door opens almost of itself, and looking through it, we shall see a pathway beside which is an inscription. It reads: “This is the way to a faith that works.” In the first two Steps we were engaged in reflection. We saw that we were powerless over alcohol, but we also perceived that faith of some kind, if only in A.A. itself, is possible to anyone. These conclusions did not require action; they required only acceptance.”**

**Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 34**

“Men and women drink essentially because they like the effect produced by alcohol. The sensation is so elusive that, while they admit it is injurious, they cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false. To them, their alcoholic life seems the only normal one. They are restless, irritable and discontented, unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few drinks—drinks which they see others taking with impunity. After they have succumbed to the desire again, as so many do, and the phenomenon of craving develops, they pass through the well-known stages of a spree, emerging remorseful, with a firm resolution not to drink again. This is repeated over and over, and unless this person can experience an entire psychic change there is very little hope of his recovery.

On the other hand—and strange as this may seem to those who do not understand—once a psychic change has occurred, the very same person who seemed doomed, who had so many problems he despaired of every solving them, suddenly finds himself easily able to control his desire for alcohol, the only effort necessary being that required to follow a few simple rules.”

**Alcoholics Anonymous, p. XXVI-XXVII**

**THE DOCTOR'S OPINION**

**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](http://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](mailto:area70corrections@aavt.org)**