

# "A NEW FREEDOM"

[area70corrections@aavt.org](mailto:area70corrections@aavt.org)

MAY 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*



**I grew up in a small town**, actually 5 miles out of town, on a dirt road. I was the youngest of five. I started drinking when I was about 14. A neighbor would buy me liquor and hide it in the bushes so I could pick it up. I became a daily

drinker in high school along with using other drugs. My older brothers went to parties in high school, so I went with them. I also had my own friend group and many days we would skip school and buy a keg. I didn't know at that point what alcoholism was nor did anybody say anything to me about it. I thought that blacking out while drinking and driving drunk were perfectly normal.

I graduated from high school and went on to college. I lived in downtown Burlington about one block from all the bars. I would go out every night and drink and dance and rarely get any sleep before my classes the next day. Somehow I graduated.

That summer after graduation I went to visit my sister in another state. I ended up in places there that I knew I didn't want to be in, but I still didn't know anything about alcoholism or drug addiction or how to change my life other than moving. So I left at the end of the summer and moved back in with my parents. I think I was 20. At this point, I knew I had to make some sort of change, so I moved again to another town.

One night I met my future husband in a bar. He sold drugs and drank like I did. so the party began. What I didn't realize was that my blacking out and drug use was getting out of hand. I was turning into someone I did not like.

One morning after being asked to leave where I was living again because of whatever I had done in a blackout the night before I showed up at work and

thought to myself, "I'm an alcoholic." I wrote a letter to myself saying that I was an alcoholic and that I wanted to be a better person. I looked up Alcoholics Anonymous in the phone book and called them. The person who answered said they would come pick me up for a meeting in 2 hours. That started my journey of sobriety in Alcoholics Anonymous. I was 23.

I have learned so much about the disease of alcoholism and drug addiction since I joined Alcoholics Anonymous. I learned it's a progressive, incurable, fatal disease. I learned it is baffling and powerful. I learned that jails, institutions, and death were what awaited me if I continued to drink. In Alcoholics Anonymous I met people who drank and felt like I did. I was not alone anymore.

I was told to get a sponsor. I was told to go to a meeting every day. I was told to read the literature and work the steps. I did all this to the best of my ability because I wanted to be sober. I could see the people were happy and content without using alcohol and drugs. They had something I wanted.

My journey in Alcoholics Anonymous has been full of wonderful times and some awful times as life still happens in sobriety. I first learned that I needed to grow up. which is what my first sponsor told me... that first I was going to sober up then I was going to grow up.

You see, I think I stopped growing emotionally when I picked up my first drink, maybe even before that. My sponsor told me that it was not anybody else's responsibility to get me sober and keep me sober, but my own. I had to remove the word blame from my vocabulary. I had to learn that I could stay sober through any circumstance or situation. I had to be willing to go to any lengths to stay sober.

The Serenity Prayer was the first prayer I learned in Alcoholics Anonymous. They say it at the beginning of most

meetings. I had to learn to accept the things I could not change and have the courage to change things that I could, and somehow acquire the wisdom to know the difference. Accepting what I could not change was hard for me because once I got sober I felt everybody else should get sober too. But others didn't feel that way so I had to let go of people, places and things. Courage came very hard to me because I found courage in a bottle, I realized courage had to come from somewhere. I had to rely on a power greater than myself. The wisdom to know the difference I think really comes from the first word of the Serenity Prayer which is God.

I told my sponsor I had to find God. and she said, "Honey, God's Not Lost You Are." LOL. So, I used Group Of Drunks as my higher power and I used Gift Of Desperation as my higher power and I used Good Orderly Direction as my higher power. Today, I have a higher power that is personal to me. In Alcoholics Anonymous you can believe in a higher power of your own understanding. I continue to go to meetings, read the literature and ask for help from people in Alcoholics Anonymous. I have found so much acceptance and love in the fellowship that I wouldn't want to live my life without it.

Today I have lived a long sober life. I am so grateful that there were people in Alcoholics Anonymous when I came to my first meeting. and now I can be that person that welcomes newcomers into the rooms and try to share my Experience, Strength and Hope so that maybe they can get sober and stay sober, too.

Grateful to be Sober! Kim

## ONE DAY AT A TIME



## From Daily Reflections, p. 146 May 17

### ... AND FORGIVE

**Under very trying conditions I have had, again and again, to forgive others – also myself.**

### AS BILL SEES IT, p. 268

Forgiveness of self and forgiveness of others are just two currents in the same river, both hindered or shut off completely by the dam of resentment. Once that dam is lifted, both currents can flow. The Steps of A.A. allow me to see how resentment has built up and subsequently blocked off this flow in my life. The Steps provide a way by which my resentments may – by the grace of God as I understand Him – be lifted. It is as a result of this solution that I can find the necessary grace which enables me to forgive myself and others.

---

**In my early sober years**, every Back to School time I would listen with envy as people shared about starting the semester. They would talk about choosing classes, being excited or fearful or both, applying for loans, buying textbooks and it all sounded so wonderful to me and so out of reach.

I did not come from a family that talked about college. My parents did not have college friends or memorabilia and never spoke fondly of any classes or professors. College was not part of my world.

When I was in high school and my good friend Melissa was studying for the SAT and talking about where she wanted to go to college, I could not understand why ANYbody would subject themselves to what I considered extra studying and extra school! Although I had started off as a pretty good student (as long as the instructor could hold my attention) by the time I was in 11th grade I was barely getting by. School was all social for me by then. I like to say that I majored in Parking Lot.

The beginning of 9th grade was excruciatingly awkward as I had not found alcohol yet and only had pain medication once in a while when my braces were tightened. Kids were mostly cruel on the bus and as soon as I got to school I would go into the library and check out Simon and Garfunkel's Bridge Over Troubled Water and listen on the headphones until it was time to go to class. I could not stand that awkward time when I didn't belong to any group and didn't know how to talk to people.

I figured out that if I volunteered in the cafeteria during recess I wouldn't have to talk to anybody then either. (AND I could set aside an onion bagel with cream cheese which they often ran out of)

Once I found alcohol, etc I stopped hearing that self doubting awkward voice and I quickly found people to hang out with. Some of them actually studied between parties but that was not for me. I did not know that I was a "nontraditional learner" or that I needed extra help to have an even shot at learning. I did fine in the classes that had a teacher I thought was cool who was able to hold my attention with interesting information. Anything that required extra effort on my part or, godz forbid, standing in front of the class, I could not pull off. I attended less and less and drank, etc. more and more and somehow made it to the end of my senior year without getting kicked out. I did not have enough credits to graduate but I had a very nice counselor and he said that I could walk with the class if I promised to come back for summer school and make up my PE credits. PE was WAY too awkward and uncomfortable. I was not a sporty spice and I could never tolerate feeling stupid (my least favorite of the feelings) when I could not keep up. Nobody had ever explained to me that I needed to build up my tolerance for aerobic activity, so I was the one who held it all up as I walked the second half of the field holding my side. I almost always had a note from my mother getting me out of changing for PE. I eventually stopped going and appropriately received an F my last semester.

So I promised to return that summer but of course I did not. I was off and running and did not look back until I got sober about 8 years later.

I was in my first year when I learned that it was OK not to know how to do something, that it was totally cool to admit this and that people LOVE to tell you what they

know. I became very good at saying things like, "I don't know what that means" or "will you show me how to do that?" or just sweeping my hand over the top of my head to let you know that you had gone over it with your political, historical or geographical reference.

Still, I did not think I could do college. This was mostly because I did not understand it. The whole thing was so alien to me that I didn't know what my questions were. One year I gathered up my courage and walked in to the counselor's office at our City College. I met with somebody who gave me a list of records I had to dig up. This was pre-internet so this was no small task!

I signed up for an english class and showed up the first day beyond excited. The instructor mentioned a syllabus (add that to the list of things I had never heard of) and lots of people had their textbook already. How did they know that book to get??? She asked us all to write an essay about something, I have no idea what. I was a prolific journaler and did not hesitate to fill a page with my thoughts. I was quite pleased with myself. The next time we got together, she handed the papers back and said things like, "thank you" and "nice work." She handed me mine and said, "this is not an essay." I managed to hold in the tears of humiliation until I got on my bicycle and I scratched my face as hard as I could on my way home. I did not even know what I was feeling but it was horrible. Something like energetic sadness. Crying and hurting myself, I called a friend to talk me down. She stayed on the phone with me while I cut my nails. I didn't want to be doing that stuff but I didn't know what else to do! I did not go back there and it was a few more years before I tried it again.

I took Political Science and PE at another junior college a couple of years later. I didn't last long in Poli Sci but the PE class was a blast. It was a running class and we started from walking and slowly made our way to running. I sent those credits to my high school and asked for my diploma and if that nice counselor of mine had not still been working there, I would have been turned down because so much time had gone by. He wrote to me and told me that he threatened to quit if they didn't send me my diploma!

The next time I tried to start school, I had the name of a counselor who had supported some other people in recovery. I was told that she understood us and that she was very helpful. She helped me figure out what my questions were and started me with the math that you take before

math and the english before english. She also hooked me up with a tutor to teach me how to study.

I did well in those first classes as I learned how school works. I used everything I had learned about how to get the most out of meetings and it was so helpful! People who teach LOVE us in class. We arrive early, we stay after and help, we sit up front, we thank the speaker and we are grateful to be there.

I won't go into my many education miracle stories here but I will tell you that I was one semester away from an AA (tee hee) in Liberal Studies before I understood what a degree was. I managed to make my way from there to Nursing School and with the help of a strong sponsor, some smart friends to study with and a tutor or two, I graduated!

I love being a nurse and I am passing for an adult at work every single day. I believe that the Universe knows the longing in your heart. If there is something that you want to do and you don't know where to start, I hope that you will start talking about it and asking questions. You'll be amazed how things begin to unfold for you.



Artwork by Tammy W, Sobriety date: 12/09/1984

**Before I ever picked up a drink, alcohol made my life unmanageable.** My parents were active alcoholics and my childhood was an unhappy one. Starting in 9th grade and for the next 25 years, I drank to numb feelings of shame. I was a "functional" alcoholic, but for the last 10 years of my drinking I was putting away a fifth of bourbon plus beer daily. In spite of this I held down a job, helped raise 2 kids with a loving

husband, owned a home with 2 cars in the garage. This was the life I wanted- why was I suicidal?

Finally, I could no longer stay away from alcohol long enough to work an 8 hour shift, and I got sent home drunk (hardly the first time I got in trouble at work for drinking). I went home to sleep it off and when I woke up, I could feel something had shifted – I felt defeated, demoralized. Not really understanding that alcohol was my problem (I thought it was the solution) I nevertheless agreed to go to Maple Leaf Farm for rehab, where I was separated from alcohol for what I hope was the last time.

Before I left there I was introduced to AA, and to the idea that alcoholism was a disease and not a moral failing. I disclosed to a counselor stuff from my past that no one, not even my husband, knew about me.

Three days into treatment the craving became so strong I called and begged my husband to come and get me (he didn't, thank God). The counselor asked me if I wanted sobriety. I said, "Yes, but I can't do it."

He suggested I get on my knees and ask a Higher Power (which I did not have) to relieve me of the craving so I could stay in treatment one more day. I was out of ideas, so I tried it- the obsession disappeared and has not returned – that was in January 1996.

I was able to complete 10 days at Maple Leaf and, as suggested, went to an AA meeting the day I was discharged. It was hard to walk through that group of smoking men into the church basement- I felt like it was my punishment for being an alcoholic.

At that meeting I heard 2 women speak, and although I identified with their stories, I felt ashamed for them. It was a long time before I could let go of my shame through a God of my understanding and working the 12 steps with a sponsor. I didn't drink and continued to go to meetings, and slowly I began to defrost. I was mute in the rooms for most of the first year. I asked a glowing woman to sponsor me and started working the Steps right away: Clean house, trust God, help another alcoholic. I was 46 years old and I had a lot of baggage, but I trusted her and completed steps 4 and 5. I had no trouble with the God piece because I knew something had touched me in that treatment center. I prayed every day for 24 hours of sobriety and said thank you at night (I still do this).

Despite all this, toward the end of the first year I still missed the fellowship of the bars and nearly went back out but God pulled me back from the brink. It wasn't until I got my one-

year coin that I really believed I could have what my AA group members had if I continued with the program.

My relationship with my children improved. I stayed married because my husband and I did some healing together (he is a grateful member of Al-Anon). We celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary in Australia last year. We have backpacked on the Long Trail, in Quebec, and in Yosemite; these were just dreams when I was sitting on a barstool. I have 3 grandchildren who have never seen me drink.

Early on I became active in AA service and this kept me sober. I was told to give back to the program so I continue to sponsor newcomers. I believe I have had a spiritual awakening as the result of working the 12 steps.

I have a great life today and a reason for living, I love being sober and I'm sober because I'm a member of AA. Just don't drink and keep coming back!

## **Addiction**

I am more powerful than the combined armies of the world.

I have destroyed more people than all the wars of the nation.

I have caused millions and wrecked more homes than all the floods, tornadoes, and hurricanes put together.

I am the world's sickest thief. I steal billions of dollars each year.

I find my victims among the rich and poor alike, the young and the old, the strong and weak.

I loom up such proportions that I cast a shadow over every field of labor.

I am relentless, insidious, and unpredictable.

I am everywhere in the home, on the street, in the factory, in the office, on the sea, and in the air.

I bring sickness, poverty, and death.

I give nothing and take all.

I am your worst enemy.

I am Addiction.

Written By Robin B.

## AA QUOTES OF THE MONTH

“But upon entering AA we soon take quite another view of this humiliation. We perceive that only through utter defeat are we able to take our first steps toward liberation and strength. Our admissions of personal powerlessness finally turn out to be firm bedrock upon which happy and purposeful lives may be built.”

**Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 21**

“My friend suggested what seemed a novel idea. He said, “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. I saw that growth could start from that point. Upon a foundation of complete willingness I might build what I saw in my friend. Would I have it? Of course I would!”

**Alcoholics Anonymous, P. 12**

## **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

## **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 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](mailto:area70corrections@aavt.org)**