

# “A NEW FREEDOM”

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

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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

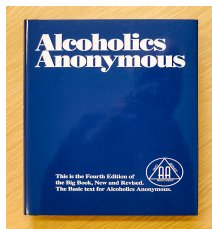
*“ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS is a fellowship of people who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.*

*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*



**My name is Ernie. I'm an alcoholic.** Today is my 13<sup>th</sup> anniversary in sobriety. I always like to be the speaker on or around my anniversary to show the gratitude of how Alcoholics Anonymous has inspired me. For a while before I came here, I knew I was an alcoholic. I just didn't want to do anything about it.

I came from a little town in the bottom of Vermont called Vernon where the atomic plant was. We didn't live too far from the plant and our backyard butted up to the fence. A lot of people used to say I glowed at night. I grew up with seven sisters – no brothers. I was the youngest one. My father was an alcoholic. My mother was an alcoholic. When I finally got into high school, I found drugs and alcohol. Just like anybody else, it was new – it was adventurous. It was everything I really didn't want to do in the beginning, but once I did, I fell in love with it.

On my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday I remember my best friend and I going to the liquor store and picking up a fifth of 151. Then we headed to the school to pick up our girlfriends. Of course, we were walking, thank God. We didn't even make it. We got to the woods, and we started drinking. We also had beers. One thing led to another, and we got into a slap fight. He was a lot bigger than me – I didn't have a chance. He was still my best friend, so I didn't care. I just gave him everything I had. Then he hit me a little too hard. My head went into this tree that had this big point and my eye went right into it. My friend put me on his shoulder, brought me to the school, got me to the hospital. This is when my mother quit drinking! She was a nurse at the Brattleboro Hospital at the time and was just getting out of work at 3:30. She had a bad feeling when she saw this truck pulling in and she went in to see what was going on. The side of my head swelled up the size of a tomato and the splinter created a bad infection. So that was my first horrendous experience – one I'll never forget. And my best friend quit drinking after that, and he has never drunk again! He never went to AA. I asked him how he does it and he said, "Mind over matter." Some people can do that, and some people can't – right?

After that I quit drinking for a while and then got into selling drugs. I thought it was something that would spruce my life up a little. I had family down in the Bronx. I'd go down there on the weekends and pick up what I needed and come back. This went on for years and years and years. I got to the point where I was making a

lot of dough. I was being watched for a while, then I finally got caught. One of my guys that was selling for me ratted me out. My father was also on the select board in Vernon. So, I made a real bad name for my father in the town I grew up in.

I finally went to prison. Ended up getting three and a half to four years. They weren't playing around. It was a lesson I'll never forget. But that just brought me to my next drug which was alcohol. I started drinking right when I got back out of prison. I met this girl who was just coming out of rehab. We had this great idea: Hey, let's move to California. So, we moved to California for ten years. We drank pretty much every day. Got into some PCP and watched my weight go right down to about 90 pounds. I was skin and bones.

I would have thought that with all the times the alcohol was against me I would have learned, but I didn't. I didn't learn until there was nothing else to be taken. I did it until everything was sucked right out of me and I couldn't do it any longer. I was totally bankrupt. I had nothing left to give. I had nowhere to go. I had nobody that wanted me around. My kids didn't want me around. Especially my ex-wife – she said, "You'll never get sober. You'll never get clean. You're a hopeless case." And for a while I started believing in all that. We got divorced and I stayed drunk though all that.

About four years later I ended up getting my third DWI. That was thirteen years ago. I never want to forget that night. I put these reminders in my way. For instance, I own a house and live near a police station. I don't trust myself. Give me an inch and I'll take a mile. I began to slack off on meetings and started to wonder if maybe I could drink again. I get these stupid ideas in my head when I stop going to meetings and stop calling my sponsor. I actually have two sponsors – one isn't enough! The most important for me is that first word in step one, "we."

It's so nice to be responsible and pay my mortgage and my taxes. The plates to my vehicle belong on that vehicle. The insurance is legal, and the inspection sticker is legal. Sobriety is one of the greatest things I have going for me. If I don't have sobriety, I'll have nothing. As we go along in sobriety, good things happen. One of the best things was that I got married. I'm so grateful that I got married to this woman who inspires me to go to meetings.

Life today is so precious. I learn so much from others. I have to stay teachable. I can't get stagnant. I always reach out to people who may need my help, or are sad, or who inspire me because they remind me of me. I haven't thought about a drink for so long. It's this program or I'm done. I've got to have it.



From Daily Reflections, p. 368 December 25

## AT PEACE WITH LIFE

***Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God's will into all our activities.. "How can I best serve Thee—Thy will (not mine) be done."***

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 85

I read this passage each morning, to start off my day, because it is a continual reminder to "practice these principles in all my affairs." When I keep God's will at the forefront of my mind, I am able to do what I *should* be doing, and that puts me at peace with life, with myself and with God.



**Hi! My name is Marge and I am alcoholic.** When I first came into AA, I really didn't understand what an Alcoholic was. I didn't know the difference between a problem drinker and an alcoholic. I thought because I was very young and didn't drink for a long time, I

couldn't be one. I was only 20 years old. I didn't have the consequences that I heard other people talk about in meetings. I did not want to admit that my body and mind was different than my friends. So many times I tried to drink like other people. So many times I failed. I tried switching to different brands of alcohol, drinking only on the weekends, not going to the bar, drinking at home, just smoking pot, just doing dry goods, drinking like my sister, who wasn't an alcoholic, only drinking beer.

You get the picture! Maybe you tried some of these things too? The list would go on and on, I always ended up at the same conclusion. My body and my mind are different than others. I had to surrender to the fact that I could not drink! Every time I picked up a drink it ended up in a disaster. I had to give up and stop fighting. Get honest with myself! It says in the book of Alcoholics Anonymous "We know that we have lost the ability to control our drinking" We know that no Real alcoholic ever recovers control"

I knew deep down inside that I was different. I was full of shame, guilt, fear and anger. That was a hard truth to swallow! I also found out that I suffered from an allergy of the body and an obsession of the mind. The first drink set off the allergy. I would say to myself, "I'll just have one!" I never could! Then the times between my drinking sprees all I did was "think about drinking." I was restless, irritable and discontented. I was miserable, being dry is not fun! I was consumed with the thoughts of getting the next drink. I felt like the hamster on a wheel just going around and around. My life was going nowhere fast. I had to admit that I was a sick person and needed help.

I had to stop fighting with myself and admit that I was Powerless over alcohol and my life was unmanageable. Take that first step! Ask for help. You are worth it! Someone a long time ago told me that. They put their hand out and told me I would never have to feel this way again.

The good news is that there is a solution to our problem. It lies in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, the meetings, the literature. The Big Book provided so many answers to my troubles. It is amazing that the book was written back in the 30's. They are just like me, I can identify with all of their feelings. They provided answers to my troubles. Seek out the truth! My sponsor always says, "take the experiment" let someone take you through the Program of

Recovery, the Steps. What do you have to lose? I have been Blessed with a beautiful life. Everything I looked for in the bottle, I found in AA. And so much more! You can too, you are worth it. God doesn't make trash.



Artwork by Genevieve, Sobriety date: 08/05/2009

# KEEP COMING BACK

## **To Thine Own Self Be True: The Gifts of Sobriety**

My name is Jennifer, and I'm an alcoholic. I am also a woman of the transgender experience.

I grew up in a small town in Nassau County, Long Island, NY. At two weeks old I was adopted by two wonderful parents. Growing up I had a learning disability and experienced a lot of problems in school. Throughout my life I never felt comfortable in my own skin, I cross-dressed in private and never revealed my true feelings. I started drinking at the age of 12 and when I picked up that first drink, that was it, I felt at home. I was a blackout drinker from the very beginning; it helped numb the pain and shame that I felt about myself. Drinking controlled the rest of my life until I was mandated into rehab as the result of a DWI in the summer of 1988. It was in the rehab that I found AA and

## AA QUOTES OF THE MONTH

got the gift of sobriety. Because of the steps I knew I must be honest, however, I only shared about my cross-dressing, I was not ready to explore it any further at that time.

Throughout sobriety my life got much better, but I still had that secret, and the AA slogan we love you until you can love yourself was not there 100 percent. It was not until ten years later that I could no longer hide from my true self. I knew if I continued my life this way that it would lead me back to drinking again. I hit my knees for the second time in sobriety. I had to be rigorously honest with myself and it wasn't until then that I finally reached out for help outside of the program. I finally started on a transition to become my true self. It was a very hard road in and out of the program, but I had the steps and my higher power to guide me along. Some people in AA, who I knew for a long time, did not understand, but many stood by me throughout my journey. Most would say, "Whatever makes you happy." I thank the 12 Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tradition especially stating, "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking." First and foremost I am an alcoholic and a member of AA and with that tradition in place I could not be turned away.

Throughout my sobriety I deeply desired to find others like me in AA that I could identify with, but to my avail I could not. I attended GLBT meetings, which helped a lot in the beginning. It has been many years since I started on this road and now I can truly say that I love myself today. Today I have met many others on the same road of recovery. We even started an open transgender GLBTQ friendly meeting in our area. Today I am truly happy, joyous and free. In the 27 years that I have been growing up in AA, it has been a wonderful experience to see how diverse we have become. Like Dr. Bob stated, just keep it simple and that we still only have one primary purpose: stay sober and help others to achieve sobriety.

With love and service, Jennifer D.

**"It is when we try to make our will conform with God's that we begin to use it rightly. To all of us, this was a most wonderful revelation. *Our whole trouble had been the misuse of willpower. We had tried to bombard our problems with it instead of attempting to bring it into agreement with God's intention for us.* To make this increasingly possible is the purpose of A.A.'s Twelve Steps, and Step Three opens the door.**

**Once we have come into agreement with these ideas, it is really easy to begin the practice of Step Three. In all times of emotional disturbance or indecision, we can pause, ask for quiet, and in the stillness simply say: "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. Thy will, not mine, be done."**

**Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, pp. 40-41**

**"Most of us have been unwilling to admit we were real alcoholics. No person likes to think he is bodily and mentally different from his fellows. Therefore, it is not surprising that our drinking careers have been characterized by countless, vain attempts to prove we could drink like other people. The idea that somehow, someday he will control and enjoy his drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker. The persistence of this illusion is astonishing. Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death."**

**Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 30**

**MORE ABOUT ALCOHOLISM**



**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)**

**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](http://aavt.org)**