

“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



...experience, strength, and hope.

I grew up in a small town in Massachusetts after moving from Seattle at age 7. I immediately felt different than other kids based on sports team affiliations and made sure everyone knew where I was really from. When I was 10, I discovered laughing in class with friends and making trouble, and by 11 I was full-on into cracking jokes, interrupting class, and getting attention. I felt so uncomfortable as a kid, not really knowing what I liked and didn't like, and weighing everything I thought, wore, did and said against a metric of being "cool" or accepted by my friends. This didn't change when I had my first drink at 12, as I continued to care what other people thought about me. But I did feel the weight of it all lift when I was drunk. I felt the fear and tension disappear entirely - my spirit was awakened by spirits themselves in the form of random liquors and wines from my friend's parent's booze cabinet. I could finally be the passenger, watching someone else play a video game instead of having my younger brother watch me. I could finally breathe and not care what came out of my mouth, nor could I consider in the moment anything that might have to do with the consequences of my actions. My life was forever changed.

The following 6 years were filled with just-passing grades and no homework. I gave up playing music and true enthusiasm for sports and other hobbies in favor of getting high on the weekdays and drunk on the weekends with my close group of friends. We laughed and laughed and had a blast running around the small town, which now felt like a small city. My parents divorced, but I didn't care, I had liquor and friends to hang out with! My solution to the teenage years was to party harder than before. My town had what seemed like endless amounts of restaurants and concerts, so I started washing dishes to make money for concerts and booze and all the other fun things that go with it. With nobody on my back to check in on grades, I went through some suspensions at school and poorly handled sick drinking bouts with bad hangovers. I imagined I was like Ferris Bueller if he was in Dazed and

Confused. Little did I know that eventually the party would end, and I would be way too far gone to realize it.

I walked into my first AA meeting at 18, in Olympia, WA after too much trouble at a small state school and the county courthouse. Over the next 6 months, I drank a few times, lied about it, and continued to show up to outpatient and AA. Having a sponsor and not working the steps, I compared myself to all of the older people in the room. I hadn't lost a wife, a job, a house or a car. I wasn't really there because I knew deep down something was wrong. I was there because I was forced, and while I conceded that I lost control when I drank, I figured I would one day beat the game. Seven years later, I fully surrendered. In that time I found out not only do I lose control almost every time I drink, at certain points in time I would completely forget how horrific the last drunk or bender had been, and would drink without making a clear and conscious decision. I progressed deeply into bouts of depression and anxiety, and my benders on liquor would last months, not just days and weeks. I self-prescribed benzos and all types of pills to "manage" my drinking. At one point I bought nutritional yeast to eat before I drank because I read that's what the founder of Sam Adams did to handle his beer consumption. I moved places, found new partners, lost and found new barmates and friends, until I'd had enough. Every few months I'd go to an AA meeting and drink immediately after. On one beautiful July 4, I got absolutely obliterated and hurt people close to me, embarrassing them beyond belief and stunning myself once again with my complete lack of control and power. I decided I was done, and meant it. But this time I went into AA with both feet - alcohol made me willing to do anything to finally stop. I am so grateful that the very thing I loved more than anything in the world, and put before anything and anybody, destroyed me so much that I finally gave a different path a chance. I took, worked, practiced, made the 12 steps with a sponsor within a few months as I found a home group and made a commitment to be of service every week. A fellowship grew up around me, despite my hesitations for many years. The program has consistently revealed more to me as I connect to God in new ways as time keeps progressing. Progress is truly limitless in every facet and area of my life, and I wouldn't have it any other way. Sometimes I am in awe of how beautiful life really is and how incredible it is to be alive. These used to be fleeting moments, but now they are a lasting experience that at times feels like it will never fade. The pain of my old life and selfish, dishonest ways continues to bring me closer to God and those around me, so that I can lift their spirit up and help them in any other way. Tolerance of others is a guiding principle in my life today, and I have never been happier or more fulfilled. This way out is open to ANYONE, and I cannot wait to make new friends with those who are still out there suffering and drunk. I absolutely love Alcoholics Anonymous and the

Power that I've been granted to live a life beyond my previous dreams.



From Daily Reflections, p. 168 June 8

OPENING UP TO CHANGE

Self-searching is the means by which we bring new vision, action, and grace to bear upon the dark and negative side of our natures. With it comes the development of that kind of humility that makes it possible for us to receive God's help. . . . we find that bit by bit we can discard the old life — the one that did not work — for a new life that can and does work under any conditions whatever.

AS BILL SEES IT, pp. 10

I have been given a daily reprieve contingent upon my spiritual condition, provided I seek progress, not perfection. To become ready for change, I practice willingness, opening myself to possibilities of change. If I realize there are defects that hinder my usefulness in A.A. and toward others, I become ready by meditating and receiving direction. "Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely" (Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 58). To let go and let God, I need only surrender my old ways to Him; I no longer fight nor do I try to control, but simply believe that, with God's help, I am changed and affirming this belief makes me ready. I empty myself to be full of awareness, light, and love, and I am ready to face each day with hope.



Where does that chair get you?

I had a belief that there was a higher power when I first came to Alcoholics Anonymous, but I felt a bristle at how having a higher power was needed to get and stay sober. I felt, and believed it to be ridiculous that I needed to include a "God" in my recovery.

I felt God was a being you prayed to when things got rough, yes, those "Foxhole" prayers. I couldn't and didn't understand how relying on something I couldn't see was going to get me sober, as well as make me well.

I skirted through meeting after meeting for a few years, I wasn't staying sober, or getting well. I thought that placing myself on a chair meeting after meeting was the answer.

After enough pain from not getting results, I came to believe that I needed to open my eyes.

I saw others who were sober, happy and content. I looked at the solution they used to get well, their solution came from working the steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, but placing their higher power before them. They had trust, which I started out being leery of.

I was in enough pain to open up and try with what I could to place a belief in something that was evidently providing a cure and solution for many, many others.

It was very hard placing trust, but there it was, I made my beginning.

My belief began, and expanded. I slowly began to get well.

I need to include that I started to follow the steps that were laid out before me.

Today I believe the channel that opened up in me has led me to have faith because my life did indeed begin to change, and I began to get well.

Today I come across others who sit in a chair and expect that to keep them sober and change their life.

I've learned that placing my belief in something I couldn't see, but something that others found enlightenment from was exactly what I needed and wanted.

I found my faith.

Today I am sober, today I feel at peace, today I stay hopeful, today I want to pass along my message to those that place their belief in a chair.

Paula D. ~ 4/16/20



Photograph by Leslie T, Sobriety date: 10/25/2010

My Big Book

I was given my first "Big Book" of Alcoholics Anonymous when I was in treatment. I was about 20 years old. The book was the third edition of Alcoholics Anonymous, affectionately known as "the big book." It had a blue cloth cover with words printed on thick, course, off-white pages on the inside. I wrote my name on the inside cover. It was given to me by my roommate at the treatment center. I hated her and everyone in AA, but for some reason, I kept this book. I carried it with me everywhere.

When I left the treatment center, I tried to attend AA here and there, but I wanted to hang out with my friends, I wanted to be able to do the things I wanted to do. I wanted to be able to drink and not have bad things happen. I started using again.

I ended up getting kicked out of school and went to stay with my best friend from my home town. I thought maybe I could pretend I was a non-drinker and live a different life. I wasn't very successful at that.

I still had my big book with me through this move and I started to read it again. I couldn't stop drinking, but I kept reading this book. For some reason, I seemed to know that there was something in the pages of this book that might be able to help me. It had helped others. Why couldn't I stop drinking?

I lived in an area near the Long Trail and I would pack a big ski bag full of booze and then squeeze the "big book" into the last bit of space. I'd throw that pack on my back

and bike down to the Clarendon Gorge. I would sit there, drinking, crying, and reading the “big book.” I was hoping some story was going to get through to me and get me sober. One day as I was doing this I cried out, “Please help me!”

I had a horrendous night of drinking, but I came to see it as an answer to my prayer. The next day I woke up and I couldn't walk or talk or do anything but call the treatment center I had been in and beg them to let me come back again. They told me that if I could detox myself for 72 hours, I could come straight to the treatment center. They asked if I thought I could do that. My response was, “Yes, absolutely! I never want to take another drink as long as I live.”

I was so drunk by that afternoon that I couldn't walk straight. A non-drinking friend said to me, “What are you doing? I thought you were detoxing yourself?” I had no words to answer her. In my head I was baffled by my drunkenness. I knew I didn't want to be drunk. I didn't mean to be drunk, and I didn't know how to not be drunk. I was powerless over alcohol. Even though I never wanted to drink again, I couldn't stop drinking.

I packed that big book of Alcoholics Anonymous, and headed to detox before going back to treatment again. I read that book everyday. I was desperate to be sober. As I sat in the detox center, I would read it outloud to another patient. He'd stop me every once in a while and say, “Tammy, what does that mean?” and I'd say, “I have no idea”and continued reading. What I did believe about that big book was that there was hope in those pages, in those words, in those stories.

That was many years ago now. I have continued on my journey in Alcoholics Anonymous. I still have that big book, it's tattered and taped together. It's got notes written in it and pages falling out, but I treasure that book and I treasure my sobriety. I still feel the hope of a sober life each time I read it. There is hope in Alcoholics Anonymous. Get a “big book” and read it! You never have to drink again.



AA QUOTES OF THE MONTH

“We have been talking about problems because we are problem people who have found a way up and out, and who wish to share our knowledge of that way with all who can use it. For it is only by accepting and solving our problems that we can begin to get right with ourselves and with the world about us, and with Him who presides over us all. Understanding is the key to right principles and attitudes, and right action is the key to good living; therefore the joy of good living is the theme of A.A.'s Twelfth Step.”

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 125

“If you are as seriously alcoholic as we were, we believe there is no middle-of-the-road solution. We were in a position where life was becoming impossible, and if we had passed into the region from which there is no return through human aid, we had but two alternatives: One was to go on to the bitter end, blotting out the consciousness of our intolerable situation as best we could; and the other, to accept spiritual help. This we did because we honestly wanted to, and were willing to make the effort.”

Alcoholics Anonymous, Pp. 25-26

ONE DAY AT A TIME

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