

# Time for a Happy New Year

This will not have been a happy Christmas for many families where alcohol is a problem. January is always a month when more people come into the rooms of AA for the first time, seeking help after a Christmas and New Year ruined by excessive drinking.

If you know of someone whose drinking is causing difficulties in their lives, a first step could be to recommend attending AA. The important message is that people can and do recover from this illness to regain control over their lives.

It is our hope, as Non-Alcoholic Trustees of AA Great Britain, that this letter will change the perception of Alcoholics Anonymous and dispel various myths and prejudices about AA.

The image of AA in North America appears to be more positive than it is in the UK. However, that is changing — the economic climate is perhaps encouraging more creative solutions to our national drinking problems.

AA is not a religious organisation. There are people from all walks of life and every persuasion. There are people who are atheists, agnostics and others who belong to formalised religions. It doesn't matter what your beliefs are, nor will anyone try and persuade you to change your beliefs.

There's growing scientific awareness showing the effectiveness of introducing patients to AA, and the therapeutic benefits of sustained recovery when patients join AA.

The individual's first step is to contact AA — there's a national phone line (0845 769 7555) — and to attend an AA meeting. A member from AA will be willing to have an initial meeting and share his/her experiences of the illness and their recovery.

Contacting AA can be daunting and AA members will be available to help newcomers get to their first meeting, where they will be made extremely welcome. At that first meeting, they will be helped by the experiences and hopes of people who are already in recovery.



Call our National Helpline  
0845 769 7555  
[help@alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk](mailto:help@alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk)  
Calls charged at local rate on BT lines. Other networks may vary

There are many and regular AA meetings throughout GB; the help is free to the sufferer, as well as to the State. AA accepts no external donations. It is entirely self-funding.

The underlying stability of AA is achieved by the recovering alcoholic reaching out to the still suffering drinker; this simple act reinforces his or her own sobriety. AA started in England in 1947, Scotland in 1948 and Wales in 1951. With decades of collective experience and a worldwide reach, AA is a remarkable survivor and remains highly relevant after all these years.

Sincerely,

Prof Jonathan Chick, *Consultant Psychiatrist, Edinburgh*

Dr Ashraf Kahn, *Consultant Psychiatrist, Birmingham*

Paul Myles *BSc Psychol. (Hons) MSc (substance misuse), Sussex*

Martin Weegmann, *Clinical Psychologist, London*

**Alcoholics Anonymous**  
OUR PRIMARY PURPOSE IS TO STAY SOBER AND HELP OTHERS TO ACHIEVE SOBRIETY

**YOU DON'T HAVE TO LIVE HERE TO CALL US!**

THE ONLY REQUIREMENT IS A DESIRE TO STOP DRINKING  
**0845 769 7555**  
GO ONLINE AT: [alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk](http://alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk)

## It crept up very slowly...

My name is Amy, and I'm an alcoholic. I don't remember my first drink — sometime in my teens — just something everyone else was doing. For years, I drank socially, but no more than that. That continued into my marriage; we both worked and when I was pregnant, I retired to be a mum.

Suddenly, my work life disappeared. I was stuck in the suburbs and feeling alone. When the baby was born, although I loved him dearly, it wasn't enough. I began increasingly to feel inadequate, a failure, depressed, and very, very lonely — I was 27.

It occurred to me one evening to have a glass of sherry at 6pm while cooking dinner. For the first time, it wasn't a social drink but purely to change the way I felt. It worked. A few weeks later I realised I had drunk half a bottle the night before.

I remember to this day the slight shock and thinking I should control this, and tucking the thought carefully to the back of my mind. It crept up on me very slowly, but what had changed right from the beginning was the reliance on this liquid, the feeling of release from my problems, I could

see a brighter future and everything would be OK. That's what that glass of sherry gave me.

Gradually every day became like the one before — promising myself today would be the day I would change things. I knew I couldn't stop on my own. I couldn't talk to my doctor because I knew he would just say 'stop' and maybe they might take the children away. Then, out of the blue, my husband arranged for me to attend a treatment centre. I stayed for seven weeks and they taught me about the illness of alcoholism and that there was a way out based on the 12-step programme of Alcoholics Anonymous. I listened and I believed them.

I started going to my local AA meeting. I didn't argue, didn't resist, didn't rebel, I wanted what the sober women in the meeting had; they seemed content and happy to be sober and I wanted that.

I've made good and long-lasting friends, a shared common bond, we can trust each other. AA members know precisely where I come from, can understand me and I understand them; one alcoholic talking to another. **Amy**

## It controlled me...

As I write this, I am wearing a suit, cufflinks and polished shoes. I look like someone preparing notes for a meeting — little does anyone know the clothes mask my truth. I am an alcoholic. I am not a victim; nobody forced a drink down my throat. I'm responsible for my own mistakes.

I didn't choose to be an alcoholic. I didn't think it was fashionable. The only reason I knew there was a problem was that I knew inside that I couldn't stop drinking. I didn't drink every day. I didn't get drunk every time I had a drink. I didn't always make a fool of myself.

I was, however irresponsible, paranoid, angry, fearful, bitter and dishonest. I had lost sight of the truth. I would engineer rows with my wife to justify storming out and not coming back. My head would race, creating arguments, permutations and solutions to problems that didn't exist. I could see only negatives.

None of these things happened while I was drunk. Drink was not my problem — living was. I treated my condition with alcohol. It worked

through university and my burgeoning career. I had just been headhunted, but at all times I had to drink, working to pay for it, overworking to compensate for the results of my last bender. It controlled me. Six months later, I was sacked.

I am a lawyer. I did a job for a man who was dealing with the Kafkaesque regime of social services. He was sober through AA. He didn't drink. He could cope. Like the swan on the surface, I looked OK. Inside where nobody sees, I felt dead.

I did something I never thought I could do. I called him and asked for help. I went to my first AA meeting in 2000. I got and stayed sober. I've had my fair share of trials and tribulations, laughter and love. I live today, rather than exist. Today, I don't want or need to drink; today, I am part of the world. The prison in which my soul was held has gone. I'm free to enjoy and see the world. I try to live a good life today.

If drink is causing you a problem, give AA a go. All I did was gain from the fellowship and I have a life beyond my wildest dreams. You've got nothing to lose. **Paul F.**