

# Roundabout

August 2020 £1

*Your meeting in print*



*Special Themed Issue:  
'Came to believe...'*

# THE TWELVE STEPS

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were *wrong promptly admitted it*.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.



## Preamble

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women 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 A.A. membership; we are self supporting through our own contributions. A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organisation 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.

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## SUB-COMMITTEE NOTICE BOARD



The Roundabout Sub-committee hope to continue with themed editions for the remainder of this year.

September: The Traditions

October: Recovery

November: Unity

December: Service

We look forward to receiving your articles based on these themes.

Roundabout is published by the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (GB) Ltd. and is the official journal of Alcoholics Anonymous in Scotland, though views expressed in the articles are not necessarily those of Alcoholics Anonymous. All articles, cartoons and contents of Roundabout are copyright material of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous and Roundabout.

The Editor invites the submission of articles and letters which should be sent to:

## **ROUNDABOUT**

**Northern Service Office  
Alcoholics Anonymous  
50 Wellington Street  
Glasgow G2 6HJ**

**Tel: 0141 226 2214**

**or by e-mail to:**

**roundabout@aamail.org**

Articles and letters will be attributed to 'Anonymous' if the writer wishes, but the original submission to the Editor should include name, address and telephone number (these details will not be published).

The Editor cannot guarantee to publish all materials submitted or return contributed matter. Payment for any submissions cannot be made.

**Roundabout does not publish poetry or obituaries.** Contributors are asked to accept these conditions.

**Payments and administrative enquiries should be sent to:**

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Alcoholics Anonymous  
P.O. Box 1  
10 Toft Green  
York YO1 7NJ**

Telephone enquiries can be made between 10am and 2pm  
Monday to Friday on 01904 644026

# **Editorial**

I did not relax at my first AA meeting until the main share began. I felt exposed and vulnerable and was scared that if anyone spoke to me that I would be found out as the terrible human being I believed I was and would be unceremoniously turfed out by the ear and told not to come back, ever.

Hearing my first table was a revelation. I felt relief and hope followed by disappointment and anger. The relief came from the identification I got when I heard someone else share about how their life had been ruined by drink. The hope emerged when I saw and heard how their life had changed and thought that perhaps all was not lost for me.

The disappointment and anger came when I heard the words "Higher Power" and saw the word 'God' on the scrolls. So there was the catch. There was the bar. I was not going to be permitted a new life after all as I had turned away from my childhood religion decades before.

I was incredibly upset and spoke to an AA member later. I wanted, so desperately, what was on offer but in no circumstance was I going back to church again. I was done with organised religion years before.

What happened next was how I 'Came to believe...'. Firstly, I was told that the 12 Step Programme was spiritual in nature. It was not about religion. Secondly, I was told I had to stop thinking that I was God and thirdly, I was invited to choose my own conception of God. At this point a scrap of paper was slid across the table to me in the homeless flat I was living in and I was encouraged to write two words to describe a God of my own making. I wrote those two words down and my journey of recovery began.

This issue of Roundabout is filled with articles about how other AA members 'Came to believe...'.  

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## SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

Yet it is true that our first printing gave many readers the impression that these personality changes, or religious experiences, must be in the nature of sudden and spectacular upheavals. Happily for everyone, this conclusion is erroneous.

In the first few chapters, a number of sudden revolutionary changes are described. Though it was not our intention to create such an impression, many alcoholics have nevertheless concluded that in order to recover they must acquire an immediate and overwhelming "God-consciousness" followed at once by a vast change in feeling and outlook.

Among our rapidly growing membership of thousands of alcoholics such transformations, though frequent, are by no means the rule. Most of our experiences are what the psychologist William James calls the "educational variety" because they develop slowly over a period of time. Quite often friends of the newcomer are aware of the difference long before he is himself. He finally realizes that he has undergone a profound alteration in his reaction to life; that such a change could hardly have been brought about by himself alone. What often takes place in a few months could seldom have been accomplished by years of self-discipline. With few exceptions our members find that they have tapped an unsuspected inner resource which they presently identify with their own conception of a Power greater than themselves.

Most of us think this awareness of a Power greater than ourselves is the essence of spiritual experience. Our more religious members call it "God-consciousness."

Most emphatically we wish to say that any alcoholic capable of honestly facing his problems in the light of our experience can recover, provided he does not close his mind to all spiritual concepts. He can only be defeated by an attitude of intolerance or belligerent denial.

We find that no one need have difficulty with the spirituality of the program. *Willingness, honesty and open mindedness are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable.*

"There is a principle which is a bar against all Information, which is proof against all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance – that principle is contempt prior to investigation."

-HERBERT SPENCER



"I got no drinkin' problem... My problem is when I ain't drinkin'!"

An article taken from *Roundabout*: May 1981

## WHEN AND HOW

"Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

When does an alcoholic come to accept that there could be anything or any person greater than him or her? When does he or she come to see that they are not functioning in a sane manner? How does this all come about?

I cannot tell you about any other alcoholic but I can tell you how it happened to this one, although mind you I did not recognise it at the time and it is only because I have tried to practise the A.A programme in my life that I can today easily recognise the when and how of the matter.

When I, a physical wreck, whose head seemed to be full of cotton wool and with no spirit left to carry on with my lousy life, in my black despair, telephoned A.A. at the suggestion of my doctor one June night in 1976 and when a sober alcoholic arrived at my house the process of the second step started to take place although as I say I was too sick in my mind to see the reality of it at the time.

Believe me, when I used the phone that night, the last thing I could accept was that I was in the state that I was because of booze. I firmly believed that alcohol was the only comfort in my miserable life, as a matter of fact I thought if it wasn't for other people, places or situations, I just knew I would not drink or react the way I did.

The how of the second step happened when this sober alcoholic started to tell me about himself, no nagging, no lecture, no telling me what I must do, he just told about himself, and listen to what happened.

Before he had stopped talking I knew what was the matter with me. I could plainly see that I was powerless over alcohol, that my trouble had been the first drink and that I had kept lifting it. Because this man was so willing to tell me about himself in such an honest way I was able to see quite a bit about myself in his story and I felt a feeling of joy (that is the only way I can describe it) come over me. I could see that I was not the degenerate I suspected I was, that I could stop worrying and wondering if maybe there had been insanity somewhere in my family etc, etc. I could see that I was only an alcoholic and if I tried as this man had, then my future held hope not hopelessness as I had thought before he came.

Because I have not taken that first drink and because I have been only too willing in fact eager to try to practice the twelve steps of A.A., because I picked a good sponsor, because I attend meetings, because I TRY TO LOVE MY NEIGHBOUR I can plainly see what happened that night in 1976. It was not because I had suddenly become super intelligent. It was not because I had been mesmerized or brainwashed by this man. I know today it was because a power greater than me whom today I call GOD had listened to my pleading for help with my lousy life and who restored me to sufficient sanity that night so that I was able to hear the A.A. message and take the first step.

Looking back on my "life" before A.A. came to my rescue I was like a man whose feet hurt so very much but because of my arrogance and pride still felt I knew better than the fools around me. I was blind to the fact that I limped through life because my shoes were the wrong size, it was not the road which had been poorly made.

Today, thanks to A.A. I walk with comfort. I am what I am, thank God.

George M  
(Greenock Sat)



*"Of course, you're the only one who can say whether or not  
you're an alcoholic."*

# The Seed Was Planted

My name is Mark and I'm an alcoholic. I've discovered through my drinking years and after, that life is full of twists and turns. Some test us whilst others delight us. A massive test came when I was around eight weeks sober and Covid-19 started to shut down the meetings. Like every other person in recovery I panicked. My thoughts were mostly about me and my sobriety but as I calmed my mind and listened to my Higher Power I began to worry about my new family, AA, and how we were going to cope.

I grew up with sober parents who always provided what we needed. They were loving and spent time with us but when I was young I remember taking things from other kids. I was a bully and a thief. People told me that I was in the wrong but my conscience wasn't firing on all cylinders and when I wanted something, I truly didn't see why I shouldn't just take it.

During my teenage years my home life started to break down. This was long before I picked up my first drink but it's important for me to understand when things started to go wrong. That was when I found my first addiction. I survived by hating. I hated everyone and resented anything that made other people happy. I manipulated and stole, made others' lives miserable to feed my own pain and when I found alcohol, I discovered I could become even more angry.

I first found AA when I was in my early twenties but I only went to get out of trouble because I had stolen from my dad. I didn't believe I was an alcoholic and had no intention of stopping drinking. I wanted AA to teach me how to drink like a normal person. I gained no sobriety at this point but I did make friends and got a glimpse of what AA was about. The seed was planted.

Fast forward 15 years, during which time I was frequently arrested for drunk driving and should have been jailed. I lodged in people's houses, stealing from them and hiding my bottles around their houses. At one point I ran out of places to hide the bottles and had to hide them under the covers on my bed meaning I had to sleep on top of empty bottles – and I mean no mattress – just bottles. I raked through my bins shaking the last drop of vodka out of each bottle to get something, anything, to stop me shaking. I bought drink instead of food, had breakdown after breakdown and lost jobs, all because of my drinking. Even with all this insane behaviour along with the physical problems I was developing, I still didn't accept I was an alcoholic. I gave up hope of a life. I saw no future. My faith had crumbled and my body was in pain. I was dying and I knew it. I valued drink over my own life and was resigned to my fate.

Then an old friend decided to pick me up and show me a different way of life and I slowly regained hope. We became a couple and my daughter was born but I was still drinking even with all I had to lose. Eventually I decided to stop for them – but just for them – not for me. I stopped drinking at home but continued when away on business and ended up in hospital 50% of the time. I was slowly creeping closer to complete insanity and suicide.

This brings us to January of this year. My wife hadn't left me and we had dealt with my suicide attempt and were moving on but I couldn't shift the black hole in my chest. Then I clearly heard a whisper in my head telling me "Go to an AA meeting." I believe my Higher Power had been waiting for this moment to grow the seed that AA had planted 15 years before. I was overcome with a peace that I can't remember ever feeling before and I got back to meetings.

I heard the same things that I had heard the first time but this time I understood. I got a sponsor and started working the Steps. I help where I can as I handed my life over to the care of my Higher Power and my AA family. It's this faith and fellowship that I believe will get us through this current crisis. Look at how we have adapted.

We've found Skype, Zoom and other platforms and the energy and love that we have in the rooms is now being transmitted through screens and phones. AA is the light that guides us and by following that light not only are we still sober but we are welcoming new people into our Fellowship online. People who have never been to a physical meeting are managing to stay sober over Zoom! This added challenge is the same for everyone. As long as we maintain our unity all will be well.

**Mark**

***Elgin Big Book Study***



### Points To Ponder

“True humility and an open mind can lead us to faith, and every A.A. meeting is an assurance that God can restore us to sanity if we rightly relate ourselves to Him.”

*(Twelve Step and Twelve Traditions, pg 34)*



## The Voice In My Head

My name is Howard. I'm an alcoholic and a grateful member of Alcoholics Anonymous. We've all been to hell, our own hell. I lost my career prospects, relationships, family, marriages, freedom and a few other things as well. I was a working man most of my life. I worked hard, earned the cash, drank the cash but in the end the places where I drank the cash, barred me. I ended up banned from every bar in Oban as well as the supermarkets and the off sales. Things that should never have happened to me, happened. I ended up a public toilet drinker.

On Tuesday 5 November 1996 I was heading to the toilets, praying to God "Please God, let there be someone in the toilets with a drink." I pushed the toilet door open and heard the skooosh of a can being opened and I heard these words in my head and God is my only witness "If you take a drink from that can Howard, you'll feel this way again tomorrow but if you don't take a drink you'll feel a hundred times better."

I went in but when it was my turn to take a drink I walked out of the door and wandered up and down the street until the police van stopped across the road. Two officers got out and opened the back doors for me and I ended being kept in the cells until the next afternoon for something outstanding. When I appeared in court I was given a 24 hour remand without plea and I had to appear in court the next day as well. As I left the court I heard the voice again "If you take a drink of that can Howard, you'll feel the same way again tomorrow."

I didn't go down to the toilets to celebrate my bail but I was homeless in the town where I had been born. I had relatives in the town but they wouldn't put me up and I couldn't find a flat to let. I wasn't a dirty drunk – my reputation was the problem. On Tuesday 12 November 1996 at 7.30pm I was standing at the bottom of Argyll Street in Oban wondering where to go for a cup of coffee. It was too late to go up to the convent where I went every day and suddenly I thought "I'll go to Alcoholics Anonymous." There was a meeting that night in the Baptist Church Hall. I went there and was met by a man who showed me where to get a coffee.

He told me to sit down and listen for the similarities, not the differences. I sat with my coffee and listened from the Preamble to the end of the meeting. I fell in love with Alcoholics Anonymous that night. After the Serenity Prayer I was asked if I wanted to go to a meeting the following night. What a change for me to be asked back anywhere! I went to the five evening meetings every week, enjoyed hearing the similarities and got on with my life, ODAAT.

My first time out of Scotland was in 1999 when I went to Blackpool for the AA Convention. I spent as much time at the Pleasure Beach as I did in the Norbreck Castle Hotel. I stayed with family in Atlanta, Georgia in 2004 and we travelled down to Florida, sailed the inner coastal waters, saw blue dolphins, heard thunder and saw lightening. I cruised the Mediterranean on one of the world's most famous cruise liners, The Queen Victoria, and every night at midnight I went up to Deck 10 dressed in full Highland Dress and walked along saying a few wee prayers and each wee prayer began with the word "Thanks." The cruise cost me a few bob but then I thought staying away from that first drink for a day at a time was the price of my cruise – a reward for myself.

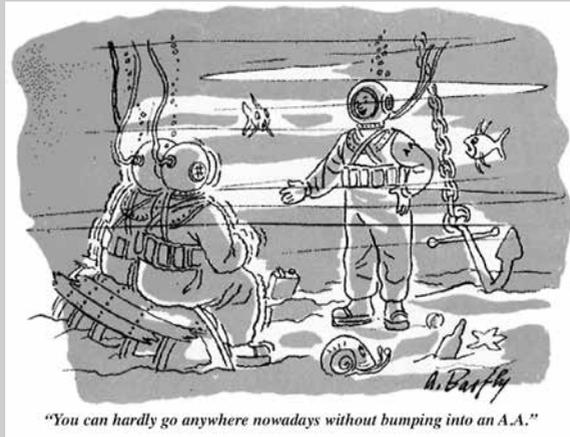
In 2016 I went on The Western Wonders of America taking in Los Angeles, Las Vegas and San Francisco. I crossed the Golden Gate Bridge, went up the Twin Peaks, sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge and round Alcatraz. I saw the Hoover Dam and I had a front seat in the helicopter going into the Grand Canyon. In Beverley Hills, Hollywood I walked down the Walk of Fame and saw the stars' names on the pavement. One night in a hotel on Hollywood Boulevard I got up on the stage and sang two verses of 'O' Flower of Scotland' and 'Donald, Where's your Troosers?'

I often look back but I don't live in the past. I know all the money in the world can't change the things I did or didn't do but imagine someone with my background going to all those places – Howard in Hollywood singing the songs that I sang. I was one of the town's homeless drunks – a liar, a cheat, a thief and a jail bird.

I still believe after all this time that the voice in my head that day in 1996 was a Power greater than me. I wasn't alone that night – my Higher Power was with me. The words I heard in the toilets in Market Street didn't tell me not to take a drink – they told me the consequences if I did.

**Howard**  
***Oban Sunday***

***Submit your article to [roundabout@aamail.org](mailto:roundabout@aamail.org)***



## Lockdown Thoughts

I am presently in lockdown during the coronavirus pandemic of 2020. As I write this I have not been out of the house for six weeks. Luckily, we have a large garden and the weather is good so I have not felt claustrophobic. There are a couple of online meetings which I attend but I am really looking forward to getting back to the live, face-to-face meetings. Recently I was speaking at one of these online meetings when the thought occurred to me that I have been here before.

In November 2018 my wife and I went on a six-week cruise. It began in Barbados, went through the Panama Canal, wandered through the South Pacific and ended in Australia. I hoped that I would meet some fellow AAs on board.

It sometimes happens. Many cruise lines routinely set aside time for 'Friends of Bill W & Dr Bob' to meet in one of their rooms. If the ship does not do this as a matter of course then the staff are usually willing to put a small advert into their daily newsletter asking such Friends to meet. In addition, I always look at the ports we will be visiting. Sometimes there are AA meetings ashore at a time and place it will be convenient to get to. One way or the other, I have met others in the Fellowship on many of the cruises we have been on. I have never felt the lack of AA company during any of these cruises. At worst, it has been a week, occasionally two weeks, without a meeting.

This cruise was different. If there was nobody on board then it would be far longer without AA company than I had ever experienced in all the years of my sobriety. At one point, for example, we would be ten days at sea without sight of land – the Pacific is a large ocean.

I put a small advert into the newsletter and at the appointed hour I set up an AA station. To my disappointment, nobody came. I repeated the exercise on the next two evenings but still nobody.



I found a solution, however. It was not cheap to take the internet package but it was certainly worth it. Through email, telephone calls and FaceTime, I was able to keep in contact with my AA friends back in Scotland. It was marvellous to be in the middle of the sea, a thousand miles from human habitation, and still to be able to call home. The one precaution I had to take, however, was to keep a clock in the cabin which showed the time at home. For us, the clocks went forward frequently and the number of hours of time-difference was always changing.

Towards the end of the cruise, I tried to get to a couple of meetings in Sydney but I found that on the 1st and 2nd January they were closed. On the last day of the holiday I did find one in Brisbane so all was not lost.

And this is what I meant when I said that I had been here before. Effectively, I was six weeks away from my regular schedule of meetings but I found ways around this problem. In my early days of sobriety I was told that AA has a spanner for every nut. Thank you, AA, for finding the right tools for me.

**James**

***Cupar Sunday***

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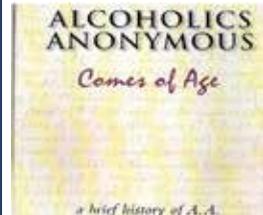


**I am responsible.  
When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help,  
I want the hand of AA always to be there.  
And for that: I am responsible.**

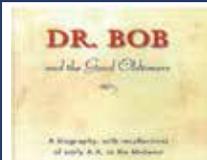
# AA Conference Approved Books

## New Items and Revised Prices

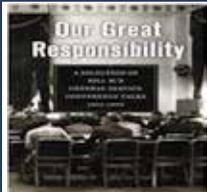
### AA Comes of Age Soft Back

	<p><b>AA Comes Of Age: a brief history of A.A.</b> Written when nearly half a century had gone by since AA's historic 1955 Convention in St. Louis, when the founding members passed on to the entire Fellowship the responsibility for the Three Legacies</p>
<b>Item code 2121</b>	<b>Price £6.00</b>

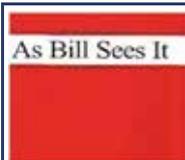
### Dr Bob and the Good Oldtimers Soft Back

	<p><b>Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers Soft Cover</b> A biography, with recollections of early A.A. in the Midwest</p>
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### Our Great Responsibility Soft Back

	<p><b>Our Great Responsibility</b> A selection of Bill W's General Service Conference Talks, 1951 - 1970. 270 pages, softcover with over 60 black &amp; white and colour images. Derived from original audio recordings.</p>
<b>Item Code 6070</b>	<b>Price £6.00</b>

### As Bill Sees It

	<p><b>As Bill Sees It</b> The A.A. Way of Life (selected writings of A.A.'s co-founder).</p>
<b>Item Code 2100</b>	<b>Price £5.00</b>

## Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions Pocket Size

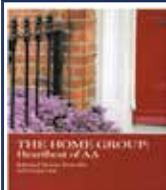


### **Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions**

How members of Alcoholics Anonymous recover and how the society functions.

**Item code 2250      Price £5.00**

## The Home Group: Heartbeat of AA



### **The Home Group: Heartbeat of AA**

Selected Stories from the AA Grapevine.

**Item Code 2230      Price £5.00**

## Alcoholics Anonymous Fourth Edition (2001) Hard Back



### **This is the Big Book**

Rumour has it that at Bill's suggestion the first edition was printed on very heavy paper to make it look bigger, thicker and therefore seem to be better value for money! Hence the 'Big Book' nickname.

Often described as the basic textbook of our Fellowship the first 164 pages describe our recovery program and have hardly changed since that first edition. The personal stories contained at the back of the book are changed from one edition to the next to reflect changing social situations.

**Item Code 2020      Price £8.00**

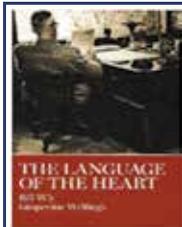
## Alcoholics Anonymous Soft Back



### **Soft Back 4th Edition of The Big Book**

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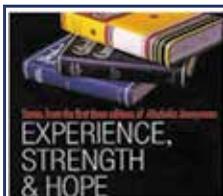
## The Language of the Heart



**The Language of the Heart**  
Bill W's Grapevine writings.

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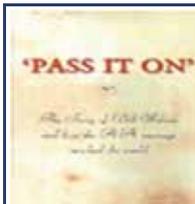
## Experience, Strength & Hope



**Experience, Strength & Hope**  
Stories from the first three editions of Alcoholics Anonymous

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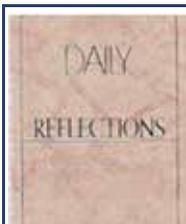
## Pass It On



**Pass It On**  
The Story of Bill Wilson and how the A.A. message reached the world.

**Item Code 2200      Price £8.00**

## Daily Reflections



**Daily Reflections**  
This is a book of reflections by A.A. members for A.A. members.

**Item Code 2260      Price £5.00**

**TO ORDER ANY OF THESE BOOKS PLEASE COMPLETE THE FORM BELOW OR SCAN THE QR CODE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PAGE WHICH WILL TAKE YOU DIRECT TO THE ONLINE LITERATURE SHOP**

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As Bill Sees It	2100		5.00	
Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions Pocket Size	2250		5.00	
The Home Group	2230		5.00	
Alcoholics Anonymous Hard Back	2020		8.00	
Alcoholics Anonymous Soft Back	2040		7.00	
Language of the Heart	2220		7.00	
Experience, Strength & Hope	2210		7.00	
Pass It On	2200		8.00	
Daily Reflections	2260		5.00	

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**Shop | Alcoholics Anonymous - Great Britain**

Using the camera on your smart phone, point the lens at this QR code and it will show you a link to the website.

How to Shop with AA. Use the category links to find the various sections from our literature order form. Use the link and buttons to view the item or to add purchases to your shopping cart.

# The Roundabout Interview

Many thanks to Alan P, St Andrews Just For Today, Saturday.

## **What Brought You to AA?**

Drink! I recognised that I had a problem for about two years. I had tried all the usual routes of trying to stop myself, without any success. My principal success was getting myself admitted to a hospital as a result of trying to stop on my own. I literally woke up one morning and said to myself "Today is the day I am going to get serious about getting sober." I looked at good old Yellow Pages, as it was then, under 'alcohol', and luckily for me Alcoholics Anonymous was first on the list.

I became known as 'the Twelve Step from Hell.' After I had called the AA Helpline it was suggested that two AA members could come round to my house to see me. At that point I thought "What on earth will the neighbours think?" I knew I had a problem with drink but I didn't consider myself an alcoholic. I thought alcoholics were men who were roughing it down in the park, sleeping on a bench. Two of these guys coming to my house? Instead, I insisted on meeting these guys at the bar of a local hotel. Needless to say, these two people suggested that being Twelve Stepped in a bar was not the most appropriate place and they took me to a quiet side room for our first meeting. That was only the start of it. I was very arrogant. One of these guys told me later "Your attitude was, I'm a busy guy. I can give you an hour of my time. Get me sober."

## **Was there one thing that made you realise you had a problem with drink?**

I had become a 24-7 drinker who was never totally drunk but never totally sober. It was the realisation that this couldn't continue. I had been on a plateau in terms of the amount of alcohol consumed but it then suddenly started to increase. I thought "There's a limit to what you can get away with." I was a functioning alcoholic. I had a good, responsible job and I actually got to work most days but it was becoming more and more of a struggle.

## **Did you know about AA and if so, how?**

When I made that first call, I knew absolutely nothing about AA. I didn't know anybody in AA. It was only after I had been to a few meetings and talked to other members that I began to appreciate what AA was all about.

## **What do you remember about your first meeting?**

There were two things about it. It was quite an unusual meeting. It was largely dominated by guys who were just out of prison. I didn't get much from them. Much more important for me, I discovered that I was suffering from an illness.

It was incurable and if I carried on drinking it was simply a question of how quickly it would kill me. I remember being quite shocked by this. The big thing I took away from the meeting was this little message of hope: that there was something I could do about it, simply by staying away from the first drink, one day at a time.

### **Was there anything you found hard to do in AA?**

In the early days I was in AA purely and simply to stop drinking. I was fortunate that I had lost little through my drinking. I still had my job, my driver's licence and a supportive family. I had stopped drinking so it was, in a sense, job done. It was difficult for me to accept that I actually had to make changes.

### **When you first came into AA, what in particular made a difference to you?**

I began to realise that alcoholism can affect absolutely anybody. It was that appreciation that you are not alone. Like most alcoholics I thought my drinking was totally unique. When I got into the rooms I discovered that it was really quite typical, so perhaps I wasn't the special one that I thought I was.

### **How do you feel that you have changed?**

It is primarily in my thinking. I was quite arrogant when I came into AA. That arrogance had to go because it was precisely that sort of attitude that could have taken me back out to drink again. There was also a question of accepting that it takes two to have an argument. Other people have a right to have an opinion and you know what, I might be wrong! I stopped rushing in to judge people which I was very quick to do in the past. Even when I come across somebody with very obvious defects of character I completely ignore all the negative aspects and look for the positives.

### **What has AA done for your family?**

They have got back trust and there is a degree of stability and contentment. I am totally predictable now as opposed to when I was drinking when I was totally unpredictable. I am a lot less moody. When I was drinking you were never entirely sure which Alan was going to turn up. I also became much more involved with my family. I was prepared to give my daughters a lot more of my time. I became their chauffeur as an additional role. They were teenagers at that point. One of the freedoms of being sober is that if they were going out for the night, I was quite happy to pick them up at midnight or later and at short notice from wherever. I regarded that as one of the joys of being sober – being able to jump into the car at any time, day or night, knowing that I was fit to drive.

### **What do you say to a newcomer?**

The main thing is "If you really want to stop drinking, you're in the right place." A lot of people come into AA for all the wrong reasons. To please their partner,

to keep their job, driving licence, etc. That will not work. They must have a strong desire to stop drinking for themselves. By getting themselves sober and staying sober all the other problems will start to resolve themselves. At worst, you will be in a better position to manage.

**What does “putting back into AA” mean to you?**

I think it means just about everything. I’m very grateful to AA for what was done for me. I show my gratitude by putting something back. I have done that through getting involved in service. I’ve been in service virtually the entire time I’ve been in the Fellowship. It gives me a better understanding of how AA works. I appreciate that it isn’t just me, it isn’t just my group, it’s part of a worldwide organisation of people, all with a common purpose. If everybody who got sober through AA was willing to put a little bit back by doing some service, I think AA would be in a much better place than it is at the moment.

**Any thoughts or comments about Coronavirus and lockdown?**

I expect there will be casualties within AA. There will be some people who haven’t got themselves involved in online meetings or kept in close contact with other members by phone or e-mail. They may drink again. That’s the downside.

I think in the long term it could be of benefit to the Fellowship from the point of view, quite ironically, that people have discovered Skype and Zoom. I’d like to think that we are going to have a Fellowship which is more IT savvy. There’s a whole world out there for carrying the message. I think AA has been a little slow to recognise how the world has changed. I recall being involved in service meetings where most were opposed to any form of internet-based presence or even the use of e-mail.

Electronic communications are how young people communicate. We need to use whatever technology younger people are into to effectively carry the message in to the future.

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**IT’S EASIER THAN EVER NOW TO SEND US AN ARTICLE**

Visit our national website at:

<https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk>

and navigate through AA Members Area > Fellowship Magazines > Roundabout Magazine > Roundabout Flyer > this link.

Type your article directly into the blank field then click ‘Submit Article’.

# **75th ANNIVERSARY OF AA IN GREAT BRITAIN**

**The 75th AA Convention to be held in Leeds in June 2022  
will include a booklet for all delegates featuring the history of  
our regions.**

Good progress has been made on this project and most of the 16 regions that make up AA in Great Britain have responded enthusiastically to requests for their region's history. The Fellowship would like to take this opportunity to thank all those responsible for producing their excellent regional histories.

**However, we are still waiting for a handful of regions to  
participate in this common effort to mark this historic milestone  
in our Fellowship's history.**

**The deadline for the receipt of your Regional Histories was set  
as 30 June, 2020.**

**It is now a matter of urgency that we get the outstanding  
histories as soon as possible so that we may proceed with  
editing the booklet.**

Examples and support are available.

Please contact Ranald at [75years6.sc@aamail.org](mailto:75years6.sc@aamail.org)

We are very grateful to you for your co-operation  
with this project and thank you in advance.

*Article first printed in Grapevine: July 1953*

## Another Doubter “...Came to Believe...”

By: Anon. | New York, New York

THESE words to me and for me are three of the most important and significant in the whole program of Alcoholics Anonymous.

In the first place it was necessary for me to come to believe and accept the fact that I was and am an alcoholic. This was a difficult decision, for at the outset, it was just a theory or pipe-dream in the minds of others as far as I was concerned. I drank and got drunk innumerable times but still had my family, my home, my business and money in my pocket. How could I be a bum, an alcoholic?

Through the efforts of my wife, I went to an AA meeting one June evening, not drunk but in a fog, and did not like it, it was not for me. Why? because I was not ready. I had not imbibed sufficiently. So I went on my “merry” way until the following March, when I could not get drunk anymore.

Drinking to get drunk and drinking to get sober, without attaining either, finally gave me the glimmer of an idea. Maybe I was one of those alcoholics. I called for help, went to a hospital and got drunk the day I was released. I could not and would not believe that I could not drink and not get drunk.

I wanted to drink and stay sober and found it impossible, but I had to prove it to myself and I did in the only way I knew. I drank. Then a few months later I came to believe that I was powerless over alcohol, and the only thing that made me make this decision was booze and more booze.

I got dry, not sober, and regularly attended meetings. I heard other alcoholics tell their stories and they were sober far longer than I ever hoped to be and were enjoying it. There was a challenge and (thank God!) there was a response from me. If they could do it, why couldn't I? I came to believe that there was something in this fellowship of ours. I began to belong to AA.

I learned many things, none new, but all new to me. I came to believe that AA was a force for good greater than myself. I eventually got sober; at least that is my opinion, for my thinking straightened out to some extent. I still have a long way to go, but the important thing was that I came to believe that AA and what it stands for could help me in my sobriety if I followed the suggestions of those who had gone before.

Now only in the past few months have I been able to find with your help another power greater than myself, one new to me. I have come to believe in a God, one I cannot explain, but one which I have come to believe can be of invaluable assistance and comfort as long as I ask for his guidance and will. Oh, I have done wrong many times in my sobriety, for I am human. However, I know this now: had I never had a drink, I would not have had what I have now. I would not have had to change my thinking and habits and try to get rid of defects of character. I would not have been an alcoholic, but a neurotic, a maladjusted personality, an immature person unable to face the problems of living. Alcohol was, in a sense, a force for good. It compelled me to do something and it, along with a small spark of decency, brought me to AA and only recently to my God. Yes, I have come to believe.



Some have lower bottoms than others...

**National Helpline Number**

0800 9177 650

**email**

[help@alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk](mailto:help@alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk)

**AA website**

<https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk>

**AA service website**

<https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/members>

## Came To Believe

I've heard it said that there are three phases to the phrase 'Came To Believe'. The first is 'Came', the second is 'Came to' and the third 'Came to believe'. On July 1, 2017 I 'came' to my first meeting. I was shy and awkward. I had no sense of self and I didn't want to talk to anyone. I chose an Open meeting because that way I wouldn't have to say anything. I sat at the very back and as soon as the meeting ended with the Serenity Prayer I dashed out. No-one noticed me as I intentionally sped down the road back to my flat. I counted that as a success!

A few days later, after being drawn to return, I drove back to that same church basement for my first Closed AA meeting. The people were friendly, the coffee mediocre and the biscuits a bit stale but the smiles on people's faces and the way they spoke about alcoholism as a thing of the past, drew me in. It just so happened that this particular meeting had a 'beginner's group' where people new to the Programme were invited to a separate room to go over the first three Steps and I had happened to come on the week they were discussing Step Two 'Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.'

I had no problem believing in a Power greater than myself. I grew up in the church and never had any issues with organised religion at all. In fact, I was able to draw a lot from my faith during some deep and dark days prior to AA. However, I did wrestle with the second part '...could restore us to sanity' although I was not a sane person back then. I had caused irreversible damage to both my physical and mental health as a result of my drinking. In fact, when I was 26, a psychiatrist had told me that my brain would be forever changed due to alcohol. After the meeting, one young woman gave me her number. There was something different about this woman and I decided I wanted what she had.

The 'Came to' phase came after a few months. I put the bottle down and began to enjoy life. When I was drinking, I had withdrawn from life and now that I had stopped I was starting to take part in life again. Thankfully, within six months of being in the Fellowship I was able to reverse my negative health effects, started making friends in AA and came to a new understanding of myself. Everything about me changed – how I talked, how I reacted to things, how I viewed and thought of other people and even how I looked.

The last phase 'Came to believe' was by far the hardest and is still an ongoing process. In AA I have come to believe many things. First, I had to come to believe in my own alcoholism. Despite coming to the meeting in July, it took many more months and another few relapses before I finally conceded to my innermost being that I truly did have a problem with alcohol.

It took many months after that for me to come to believe that AA was a real gem rather than a life sentence. For the first year or so I constantly lamented being young and all the events I would have to forego by giving up alcohol. I didn't understand why anyone would think it lucky that I had come in so young and I definitely did not agree with people who said "We are not a glum lot."

Now though I have come to believe a number of things about AA. That there is a miracle which takes place in these rooms. That I am worthy of love and to be loved and that I am worth more than a bottle or a couple of pills. That I can get through life sober and actually enjoy it. That I have many talents which can help others. That no matter how bad my experiences were, they can benefit someone else. That I am not useless and that I do not need to fear alcohol anymore. Lastly that I can be reborn.

Coming to AA has given me a much healthier view of myself. Sometimes it is still really difficult not to engage the inner-critic or analyse myself to death and to genuinely see myself as loveable and a positive role model but I am getting there slowly with the help of my sponsor and the Fellowship. I know that these self-defeating character defects will be with me until the day I die but at least the self-hatred is gradually being replaced by love of self and others. I am one of those people who can honestly say that AA saved my physical life – but more than that – it saved me from myself.

**Deborah**  
**Aberdeen**



*"Help – I was just restored to sanity for a full five minutes!"*

# That Was The Week That Was

**Monday:** A minor domestic crisis. The kitchen sink was blocked. It had happened before. "I'll get the plunger and fix it," I announced breezily to my better half. There then followed twenty minutes of strenuous pumping and squelching, to no avail. In the end, I had to unscrew the U-bend and remove a disgusting plug of impacted gunge. My wife was so delighted she sent me upstairs to clean out the shower trap. Apparently, it was also clogged up!

**Tuesday:** The real point is I didn't resort to booze yesterday. I carried out the work obligingly, without wondering what was in it for me. In the past, I usually ignored any household chores. Or I did a botched and resentful job. Troublesome tasks were an ideal pretext for a rewarding drink. Nowadays, I really appreciate the genuine feeling of liberation derived from being able to utter to myself that inspirational AA saying: "It's not like that today."

**Wednesday:** Choosing an online AA meeting can be exhilarating! Where on earth would I surf to today? What about laid back California? But it's eight hours behind us. Not ideal. I prefer to support our local suppliers anyway. I opted for Wick's lunchtime meeting (12 noon). Cheery welcome. And the ambience every bit as chilled out as the west coast of America!

**Thursday:** Browsing through old photographs. Holidays abroad in the 1990s. Happy memories, you'd think. But the images proved decidedly uncomfortable. My family were seemingly happy enough by the poolside and beach. Yet I was always out of it, to some extent, with cheap booze. A zombie husband and dad, trying to act sober. Fooling nobody. Saddest of all, not in that very precious moment. Thank goodness for AA!

**Friday:** A sponsee phoned to confess he'd taken a drink. Only one small swig. Then he'd poured the vodka away. But he was terrified that sample dose of firewater would kick off the craving. I reassured him. The same thing had once happened to me. I'd been anxious too about having caused a fatal chink in my sobriety armour. Yet I continued to stick close to AA again and to keep away from alcohol ODAAT To this day!

**Saturday:** Another terrific AA experience! The excellent Irvine 11 am group. Solid, bread and butter stuff from the long time sober sharer. The perils of lifting that first drink were mentioned too. A vital message sometimes neglected from online meetings.

**Sunday:** My daughter and her family popped round. The others sat in the garden, sipping sangria. I had a far better time! A water fight! I scooshed my pre-school grandson with a hose while he pelted me with balloon bombs. Making amends for missed moments with my own children. Fab fun, though totally drookit!

**Take care**

**GL**

## **AN INVITATION TO YOUNG MEMBERS and MEMBERS YOUNG IN SOBRIETY**

Roundabout would like to hear from young people who are living sober thanks to AA. What are the challenges? What are the benefits? Send your experiences to the email address below so that other young people who may have a problem can benefit from your experience.

Roundabout would also like to remind Fellowship members that they should never consider themselves 'not long enough sober' to contribute to our magazine. If you are sober today and grateful for that then please write and share.

**[roundabout@aamail.org](mailto:roundabout@aamail.org)**

**Why not take out a subscription to Roundabout today?  
This could be for yourself or as a birthday gift for a friend.  
Subscription form is on page 23 of this issue.**

**Please support your Roundabout.**

## **THE MAGNIFICENT OBSESSION**

**Sobriety is the most important thing in your life without exception. You may believe that your job or your home life or some other things come first but consider:  
if you do not get sober and stay sober, the chances are you won't have a job, a family, sanity or even life.  
If you are convinced that everything in life depends on your sobriety, you have just so much more chance of getting sober and staying sober. If you put other things first, you are only hurting your chances.**

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# THE TWELVE CONCEPTS OF WORLD SERVICE

1. Final responsibility and ultimate authority for AA world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.
2. The General Service Conference of AA has become, for nearly every practical purpose, the active voice and the effective conscience of our whole Society in its world affairs.
3. To insure effective leadership, we should endow each element of AA – the Conference, the General Service Board and its service corporations, staffs, committees and executives – with a traditional “Right of Decision.”
4. At all responsible levels, we ought to maintain a traditional “Right of Participation”, allowing a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.
5. Throughout our structure, a traditional “Right of Appeal” ought to prevail, so that minority opinion will be heard and personal grievances receive careful consideration.
6. The Conference recognizes that the chief initiative and active responsibility in most world service matters should be exercised by the trustee members of the Conference acting as the General Service Board.
7. The Charter and Bylaws of the General Service Board are legal instruments, empowering the trustees to manage and conduct world service affairs. The Conference Charter is not a legal document; it relies upon tradition and the AA purse for final effectiveness.
8. The trustees are the principal planners and administrators of overall policy and finance. They have custodial oversight of the separately incorporated and constantly active services, exercising this through their ability to elect all the directors of these entities.
9. Good service leadership at all levels is indispensable for our future functioning and safety. Primary world service leadership, once exercised by the founders, must necessarily be assumed by the trustees.
10. Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority, with the scope of such authority well defined.
11. The trustees should always have the best possible committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs, and consultants. Composition, qualifications, induction procedures, and rights and duties will always be matters of serious concern.
12. The Conference shall observe the spirit of AA tradition, taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principle; that it place none of its members in a position of unqualified authority over others; that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote and, wherever possible, by substantial unanimity; that its actions never be personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy; that it never perform acts of government, and that, like the Society it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action.

# THE TWELVE TRADITIONS

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centres may employ special workers.
9. A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

**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*

Scan here to answer 12 questions  
if you think drinking is becoming  
a problem

