

Roundabout

October 2020 £1

Your meeting in print



*Special Themed Issue:
Recovery*

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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email: roundabout@aamail.org

visit: www.aa-roundabout.org.uk

SUB-COMMITTEE NOTICE BOARD

Vacancy for Fellowship Calendar and Diary Editor

The Fellowship Calendar and Diary Production Officer is rotating out of post and we need an enthusiastic person to take on this exciting role, continuing production of this important means of carrying the message. This is a service position for which the candidate must have a minimum of 5 years sobriety and will be required to attend a minimum of two sub-committee meetings per year.

They will be responsible for the preparation and compilation of the Fellowship Calendar and Diary by:

- Sourcing programme materials and quotes.
- Gathering, selecting and evaluating photographs submitted by AA members, within agreed timescales.
- Supplying all material to printer and liaising with GSO, the Board Trustee and the printer.
- Having some basic photo editing experience and knowledge of Microsoft Office.
- Being familiar with AA's 12 Traditions.

This is a shared post with the ROUNDABOUT magazine. If the Editor comes from England or Wales, he/she will be attached to the SHARE Editorial Team; if from Scotland then he/she will be attached to the ROUNDABOUT Editorial Team. This is a four/five year term.

A detailed description of duties can be sent on appointment.

If you are interested in this service position, please ring the General Service Office for further details and an application form as soon as possible. A letter of recommendation will be required from your intergroup/region.

The closing date for this position is 16 October, 2020.

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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:

AA ROUNDABOUT
Alcoholics Anonymous
P.O. Box 1
10 Toft Green
York Y01 7NJ

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

Editorial

This month's theme is 'recovery' – the First Legacy. When I was choosing the extracts for page 4 from AA literature, I started by thinking about my own journey and what it meant for me. I remember distinct moments in time when the 'penny dropped' – things shifted and I could notice and more importantly feel a difference in myself. The first time my head fell silent; the first time I could say I loved someone; the first time I felt safe in the outside world and the first time I finally had a belief in a Higher Power and actually believed it! All these things made life better for me and those around me. These moments are what I had in mind when looking for extracts to include in this issue.

I enjoyed looking in books I'd not visited for a while and although I didn't use most of the passages I read, it was good for my own recovery to read them! The story of Bill W's own spiritual awakening and how the room 'lit up', was something I always heard members mention in my own early days and along the way I've had my own experiences, where there was not necessarily big balls of light, but it was like someone turned the TV set to colour from black and white – another marker in my recovery to remember my progress.

My final flicking of pages took me to The Promises. I didn't hear or read about them for a while in AA but when I did – Wowser! It was like someone had perfectly described my own drinking journey and the change that did and was yet to happen! My whole life had baffled me. I had struggled to navigate it as an adult and childhood had just been a maze of wrong turns. The Promises sum up for me the journey of recovery. I think as a newcomer they can seem like the impossible but once you are on that journey and those moments of change start to happen, it all begins to make sense.

Assistant Editor Roundabout

Taken from AA Comes Of Age pg 63

Suddenly the room lit up with a great white light. I was caught up into an ecstasy which there are no words to describe. It seemed to me, in the minds eye, that I was on a mountain and that a wind not of air but of spirit was blowing. And then it burst upon me that I was a free man. Slowly the ecstasy subsided. I lay upon the bed, but now for a time I was in another world, a new world of consciousness. All about me and through me there was a wonderful feeling of Presence, and I thought to myself, "So this is the God of preachers!" A great peace stole over me and I thought, "No matter how wrong things seem to be, they are still all right. Things are all right with God and His world."

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Taken from Alcoholics Anonymous pg 83

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us – sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.



My sponsor says I suffer in silence louder than she can complain.

GOD GRANT ME

Such a short time ago I was an active alcoholic. The bottle was the controlling power. ‘God had deserted me’ I said. I was alone with the thoughts of a lonely man, even though I might be in a crowd. I was sick, not only in body but mentally and spiritually. No need to tell you how I felt, all other alcoholics have suffered the same, suffice to say that I was doing things which I would never have done in my sober and sane senses. Lonely and sick, there seemed no future but ultimate death, or certified detention.

To me, like to other alcoholics, the door was open to me to admit me to AA with the gleam of hope appearing on my submission to the inescapable evidence that I was an alcoholic. Before me, too, was the inescapable evidence that others had recovered by following the suggested programme of Twelve Steps. “Rarely has it been known to fail” kept ringing in my ears. Step One, oh yes, that was not too hard to take, but Step Two.... “Came to believe that a Power greater than myself could restore me to sanity”.... that was a stumbling block. What power was greater than myself? I had to admit that when drinking the bottle was greater than myself. Around me too were many who had recovered. They had taken the great step in Humility of acknowledging that as individuals, they could not on their own stop drinking and stay dry, but required some other help. The admission was made that they would accept help. Well, what was I doing in the AA rooms except asking for help? I am so near now to acknowledging my belief in a ‘Power greater than myself’ and to become willing to ask that Higher Power to give me the help I need.

Someone is reading from the ‘Big Book’, or is it “AA Comes of Age”? What are these words? “If there is a God let him show himself” I am ready to do anything, anything! The words are those of Bill W, the co-founder of AA. Not for me the blinding light, the ecstasy of the wind, not of air but of Spirit blowing. And yet there is that light, the light that shines from the eyes of the members. There is the atmosphere of being where I belong, being among friends, being where there is but good. Back comes the thought that if Faith in God can restore all these other people to sobriety and sanity, then let me find that God. Back comes the words so long forgotten. ‘God works in wondrous ways’ it must be true. I am humble now, I want, I want so much to be like the others sober and contented, I will accept, I will believe, I have faith.

In Humility, I realise that when I once prayed, I told God what I wanted, and I only told him when I did want something...particularly when in trouble. “Get me

out of trouble and I will trouble you no more." Let me get it right, I submit and ask in Humility, I ask God to look on me and grant me my prayer.

Now I realise I have taken the Second Step, I own my belief in that Power greater than myself, whom in the Third Step I call God, I realise He can give me the help I need. I am now ready to commence the Serenity Prayer: "God grant me."

A thought as I say these words. How mighty is God, how small am I, and yet with what wonder I can, as in the meeting we bow our heads, feel the Presence. I never felt it so before, I never realised how comforted and assured I could be in saying these words.

G.R.N.

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 and click on 'this link'

You can type your article directly into the blank field then
click 'Submit Article'.

Learning To Listen

My name is Gavin, I am an alcoholic and in total I have spent over 32 years around Alcoholics Anonymous. I first stepped through the doors of AA aged 17 and was in and out of the Fellowship for 22 years but could not stay sober. I am now 50 and have 10 years free from alcohol and the insanity that comes with it.

I recall being about three months sober and feeling that I was getting nowhere. I could barely get out of the house once a day to walk the dog for a hundred metres without feeling totally exhausted and during the first year I would often sit crying as my emotions came back with a vengeance. I was totally beat and had reached my personal gutter. I just wanted a little rest from the sleepless nights and the madness I had felt for years. A good friend in AA would pick me up to take me to meetings and drop me off again afterwards. He was a blessing. I am in no doubt that he was sent to guide me.

Every time I had come back into the Fellowship I did what was suggested and quickly recovered physically but this time was different. I wasn't getting or

feeling any better at all, either mentally or physically. In frustration I spoke to my Higher Power. I said "Why am I not getting any better, Big Man?" Within seconds that familiar gentle quiet voice said "Gavin, sit down, shut up and listen as AA suggests." I knew that voice was right. I was so used to coming back to meetings, bringing out my Alcoholics Anonymous Big Book and reciting all the wisdom I had gained over the years as I tried to help others with my knowledge and wisdom even though it had not kept me sober!

By this time, I had found a Higher Power and had been through the Programme as well, so I thought I knew it all. I now know I knew nothing. I could not stay sober, full stop. My ego had run the show but I was now ready to let go of my old way of thinking. This revelation was a gift I gladly received. I wanted to sit back and listen and not be that person I thought I had to be all the time. I went to meetings a lot surer about how and what I had to say – and that was nothing at times.

I always thank the speakers but say very little now, unless I am asked to share my experience, strength and hope. I have let go of all that I thought I knew, started to listen and have started to get better. I had learnt a lot over the years but had been unable to stay away from alcohol for any length of time. God was telling me to do it His way, the way that shines from those who practise the AA Programme and Traditions.

Alcoholism had me fooled for years. I thought I had been doing something wrong or not sharing something that was hidden deep within me and that in turn was causing me to lift the first drink but I had been stopping for others. I remember one night about 2am gazing at the stars and realising that many years had gone by and I could see nothing. No holidays and no memories of fun times with the family – nothing. Why? Why all this waste of time? Why couldn't I get sober over all these years? As I was contemplating this, the 'Big Man' came into my head and said "Gavin, you did not want to stop drinking, son." Finally I could accept my truth. I had not wanted to stop. Wow! How deep this illness goes. How cunning, baffling and powerful 'king alcohol' is to the alcoholic. It had me completely fooled. Finally, the veil was starting to fall from my eyes. The fog had eventually begun to clear.

Love and light

**Gavin
Bathgate**

Joining Up The Dots....

Was it a moment of clarity or a brush with reality? All I remember is I knew "I can't do this anymore".

Someone once said to me "an alky's not done 'til he's done". When I asked what that meant, the answer was "you have to have every single drink to prove you can't do it anymore". I'd also heard the realisation wasn't dramatic – no thunderbolts or lightning flashes. No volcanic eruptions.

It was a simple argument – on the phone. It was a Monday evening in the month of May. I'd phoned my ex-wife to check on progress on the sale of our house, my wife had already divorced me, because of my drinking. When I heard the house wasn't selling, I was furious – as usual. I shouted abuse down the phone and slammed the handset down. Then I picked it up, redialled and apologised profusely, as I always did. Then I put the handset down, gently this time. I gazed out of the window and realised – every time I drank, I got drunk and I ended up in an argument.

The truth dawned – I'd never, ever, have a relationship with anyone – ever again. And by 'relationship', I didn't mean a marriage or civil partnership. It referred to any dealings, with anyone. The woman in the paper shop, the man in the dry cleaners, the bus driver, train driver, colleague, neighbour – anyone.

I fell asleep that Monday night, when I awoke on the Tuesday morning, I didn't want to drink. The compulsion had gone. That's when I decided to do what I'd been told 18 months earlier – stay away from the first drink and get to an AA meeting.

I went to at least one meeting, every single day. I got a sponsor, worked through the Steps and embarked on a brand new life. AA didn't become my life but it became my way of life. That night of my final drink, my final argument and my final moment of clarity was the moment of truth.

I'd finally joined up the dots and they spelt the word 'A...l...c...o...h...o...l...i...c'.

Jeff B
Warwickshire





2021 Fellowship Diaries & Calendars NOW AVAILABLE



Produced by members for members, the 2021 Fellowship pocket diary and wall calendar are full of Fellowship inspiration, with quotes from AA literature on every page.

Once again, the calendar features stunning photographs from AA members across the country – vivid reminders of the gifts sobriety gives us.

Both the calendar and the diary represent great value at £4.95 each including postage. To order, please complete the form below and send it with your payment to: Fellowship calendar/diary, PO Box 1, 10 Toft Green, York YO1 7NJ.

In order to make payments direct through your bank please use the following information: Sort code: 40-47-31 Account no.: 63930408

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Points To Ponder

"Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.
Fear of people and economic insecurity will leave us.
We will intuitively know how to handle situations
which used to baffle us."

(Alcoholics Anonymous, pg 84)



Living Sober in Lockdown

My name is Flora and I'm an alcoholic. As I write, Scotland is in its thirteenth week of lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic and everyone, whether alcoholic or not, has had their lives changed by this virus. The lockdown restrictions in Scotland have not been as strict as in some countries; the deaths in Scotland and the rest of the UK have been higher than in some countries. I know this isn't all about me but it's me that lives with my head. As an individual who has the illness of alcoholism and who is sober in AA, I want to stay physically sober. I want my head to be a sober head and I want my behaviour to be sober as well. One of the things I do to help me achieve that is to share my thoughts and feelings honestly. So here goes.

Firstly and possibly most importantly, I'm grateful. I'm grateful I'm sober and I'm grateful that I'm not in a hospital bed. I have no underlying health conditions so I am allowed out to exercise, chat to people I bump into in the street by chance whether they be strangers, friends or AA members, go for grocery shopping and recently, meet with one person from another household outside as long as we maintain social distance. I can do most of my work from home so I get to stay at home and so there is much less chance of me catching the virus. I have no school-age children or elderly dependents. Any problems I have are luxury problems and I know I am very fortunate.

However, despite all that, I get moments of being fed-up because I'm not allowed to do what I want to do. Moreover, I can get anxious when I start thinking: did I use the hand sanitizer thoroughly after touching that door that lots of other people touched? Did I use it before I touched my face?

Then I can get annoyed with others who are not adhering to the rules but I have to remember I don't know what's going on in their lives. In AA I have been told that what other people do is none of my business and I should just concern myself with what I'm doing. I found that difficult, especially at the start of the

lockdown as I am affected by what other people do or don't do as far as the virus is concerned. I was starting to get resentful when people weren't doing what I wanted them to do and then laughed at myself, as that had figured in my Step Four when I went through the Programme, with the help of a sponsor. So my shortcomings are still there, ready and waiting for an opportunity to pop up and teach me another lesson about myself. What's the biggest issue I've to deal with in lockdown? Lack of toilets. Lack of power is our dilemma the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous says. For me when I go out, lack of toilets is my dilemma.

Before AA got me sober I often didn't know what day of the week it was and with no phone, TV or radio I had no idea what was going on in the world outside my tiny, narrow existence of back and forward from my stinking couch to the off sales so I wouldn't have noticed that a global pandemic was happening and if I had known, I wouldn't have cared.

My life was a mess and I was a mess when AA got me sober but when I first came to meetings, I didn't think I had a problem with alcohol. My denial was so strong it never crossed my mind that I should try and do something about it. My baby son was in care because of my drinking but I still didn't see it so when someone from the social work department suggested AA I thought "Well, it will be something to do in the evenings." I drank again and came back once I'd surrendered.

That thought of something to do to fill my time came back in at the start of lockdown. I started doing AA meetings online on my laptop and found myself just going through the motions and half-listening. People were going to the bother of setting up the meetings; members were baring their souls, while I was scrolling through my phone and looking at what was in the background in people's living rooms! What had happened to my primary purpose of staying sober and helping others to achieve sobriety? Thankfully, I caught myself and I pay attention now.

It's important for me to keep in touch with other AA members on a one-to-one basis, as well as in meetings whether to share with or listen, so I've been using the phone a lot more than usual. The conversations I have with my partner always revolve around what he is having for his dinner. This comes up too when I'm speaking to an AA member but I don't forget the important stuff. Saying out loud what I'm thinking often helps me by giving me some clarity on something that has been rattling around my head.

Another activity I'm doing more of in lockdown is writing about what's going on in my head. I've been revisiting what having a power greater than me in my

life means to me. I don't believe in God but AA as a Fellowship and the 12 Step Programme of Recovery are powers greater than me. Although as individuals we are fallible human beings, I am helped by the examples of people staying sober in AA through some horrendous life experiences and the obvious desire of others wanting me to get well and stay well. Fear plays a part too as I don't want to go back to the way I felt, the physical withdrawal I went through before AA got me sober. I don't live in fear or in the past but I don't want to forget what it was like. On my own, I can forget but by keeping in close contact with AA I'm reminded, especially when a newcomer or someone just back generously shares with me what it's like for them.

Living sober in lockdown also means working the principles of the Programme. One that popped up recently was honesty. An AA friend had died and the funeral was local to me so I knew I could go and stand outside the crematorium to pay my respects. Another AA friend lives close to me and previously I would have offered them a lift if we were both going to the same funeral. But that would mean having someone in my car. That would have meant breaking the lockdown rules and though I'm guilty of bending rules when it suits me (I feel another bit of inventory writing coming on here!), this wasn't a rule I wanted to break. But how do I tell this person, without them thinking badly of me?

I came up with the brilliant idea to blame my partner. I would say "Sorry, I can't have you in my car because if I do my partner will have a 'hairy canary'." So I asked my partner if he would mind me saying this. Quick as a flash, he, who isn't an AA member, replied "I thought you are supposed to be honest?" He was spot on. I'd convinced myself that if I was honest to him about implicating him in my excuse that would be enough. It wasn't and I didn't. Instead, I told my friend that I hoped they wouldn't take it personally but I was being careful and not having anyone in my car. And guess what, they absolutely agreed. So it was another lesson for me that my character defect of worrying about what other people think of me is still there lurking and ready to strike.

Whether I'm in lockdown or not I need to try and keep it in the day, stay grateful, work the Programme, do a bit of service, connect with other alcoholics, and share what's in my head. One day at a time, I do all these wonderful AA things and then I binge-watch some crime dramas on iPlayer. Thank you for being there for me.

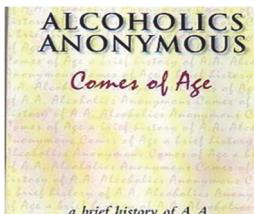
Flora

Dennistoun Afternoon Big Book Discussion Friday

AA Conference Approved Books

New Items and Revised Prices

AA Comes of Age Soft Back

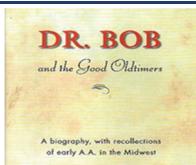


AA Comes Of Age: a brief history of A.A.

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

Item code 2121 Price £6.00

Dr Bob and the Good Oldtimers Soft Back

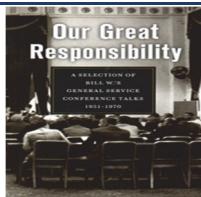


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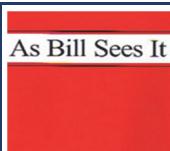


Our Great Responsibility

A selection of Bill W's General Service Conference Talks, 1951 - 1970. 270 pages, softcover with over 60 black & white and colour images. Derived from original audio recordings.

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As Bill Sees It



As Bill Sees It

The A.A. Way of Life (selected writings of A.A.'s co-founder).

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Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

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

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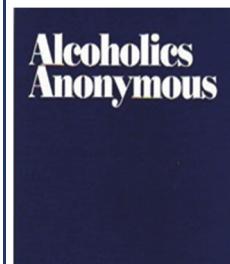


The Home Group: Heartbeat of AA

Selected Stories from the AA Grapevine.

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Alcoholics Anonymous Fourth Edition (2001) Hard Back



This is the Big Book

Rumour has it that at Bills 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.

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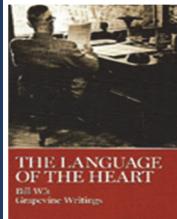
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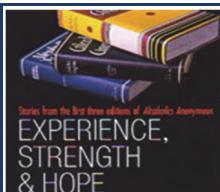
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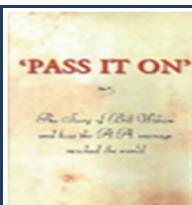
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Experience, Strength & Hope
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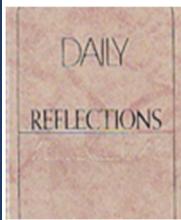
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Pass It On
The Story of Bill Wilson and how the A.A. message reached the world.

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

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The Roundabout Interview

Many thanks to Morag, Moray AA

What brought you to AA?

A friend showed up at my door one December afternoon and refused to leave until I let her in. She was shocked by my appearance and basically begged me to allow her to phone the AA Helpline. I agreed as I thought it would get her and everyone else off my back! My friend phoned and I then spoke to the person on the phone. About half an hour later a lady local to me phoned, shared her story with me and asked if I wanted to go to a meeting. My drinking had taken me to many dark places, I had been hospitalised on many occasions. I had an alcoholic seizure in hospital one time that nearly cost me my life. I also ended up in the psychiatric ward twice but nothing would stop me drinking. The denial was incredible. The alcohol was not working any longer but I could no longer live without it nor live with it – I had reached the ‘jumping off’ point. My drinking was angry, greedy, belligerent and self-pitying. What a horrendous combination. I was frightened of my own shadow and locked myself away not caring about my appearance, health, career or the daily chores.

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

The effects of my drinking were the accumulation of the calories alcohol contains; I was getting bigger and more bloated. My skin would regularly break out in rashes and I had so many unexplained cuts and bruises from falls in the house during blackouts that I had to lie about how I got them. A healthy diet was non-existent in the latter stages of my drinking except when I had such a bad hangover, I would eat lots of yoghurt to try and coat my stomach lining before drinking again. It was getting harder and harder to lie and manipulate my way out of situations. The effects of my drinking were becoming too hard to bear or hide any longer. I couldn’t live with alcohol or without it and by this time had alienated everyone I loved and cared for.

Did you know AA existed?

I had heard of AA but didn’t make any attempts to find out more.

How did you contact AA?

My friend got in touch on my behalf and passed the phone to me.

What do you remember about your first meeting?

My first meeting sticks with me always. I was collected and driven to the meeting. During the short car journey, the basics of what would be said and would be

happening were discussed. When I arrived in the room, I was welcomed warmly by everyone and given a cuppa. I was told “If drink is your problem, you are in the right place”. I relaxed and listened to what was being said. I don’t remember what exactly was said but I still remember the feeling that somehow, sometime, things would be okay. I felt safe for the first time in a long time.

What was your initial impression of AA?

My initial impression was that these people didn’t look like my idea of an alcoholic! They were smiling and friendly.

Was there anything you didn’t like about AA at first?

Keeping things in the day.

What helped you most in AA?

Learning that alcoholism was a threefold illness. Before learning this I thought that I was weak-willed, could control my drinking and that my past would not enable me to move forward. I had carried various traumas and situations around for so long that it was, as I thought, something that could never be changed for the better. I had been to doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, drug and alcohol services and numerous NHS admissions. Nothing helped. I know why now. I was not honest with the practitioners or myself. I now know that I suffer from an illness called alcoholism and if I have the capacity to be honest I can recover. I need never drink again.

Was there anything you found hard to do in AA?

I found doing what was suggested hard. I thought that I could get sober myself and do it quickly. My plan was to read everything, study everything, debate everything and become super sober. I had to learn to listen to the experience, strength and hope in the rooms and not think that I knew the answers. I had to lose my pride and ego. I could admit I was an alcoholic but it took time for me to fully accept what I am.

How do you feel you have changed?

I had to change and be in AA for me and not anyone else. I had to let the bad stuff out and then the good stuff started to get in. The good stuff has been wonderful. Life is life, but I now have the ability to cope with whatever life brings. I sometimes cope well and sometimes I don’t. I have come to realise that this is okay too. As long as I stay away from one drink, for one day, then I have a chance and a choice. For the girl who thought life was not worth living to being able to show up for life and be part of society is one of the many blessings that I have been given. I have many new friends, new experiences of conventions, meetings and now ‘Zoom’

friends. What a wealth of knowledge now that I am ready to hear the message. My relationship with my family is very strong and I have not stolen their peace of mind for many years now. They are proud of me and very supportive of the fellowship of AA. I have retrained in my career, set boundaries and continue with self-development. I know now that I am worth it and my self-esteem continues to grow. When things are tough, I have that wonderful blanket of the Fellowship to wrap up in.

What has AA done for your family?

My family have peace of mind and the understanding of alcoholism. I have a loving family and we have shared so much and learnt so much together about this illness. They are pleased that I show up for life now.

Do you have a favourite AA slogan or phrase, and why?

Keep it Simple. I revert back to this when I try and take the reins into my own hands or complicate a situation.

What do you say to a newcomer?

Welcome. Keep coming back and wait for the magic to happen. This was said to me.

What does ‘putting back into AA’ mean to you?

I enjoy doing service and prefer to do it quietly in the background. I find myself in uncharted territory with Zoom meetings and share openly and honestly in the hope that someone gets identification. I have recently taken on some more service. Service gives me a sense of belonging and giving back.

Has Roundabout played a part in your AA journey?

I have always enjoyed Roundabout. In my early days of sobriety, it was a real lifeline until I could get to a meeting. I would read past editions that were kept by the various local groups that I attended. I read them over and over and felt comfort in reading them. They became part of my defence against the first drink. I was always blown away by people taking time to write in.

Anything else you’d like to add?

An old timer used to say that “Honesty and Acceptance are the keys to sobriety” – wise words!

ARE YOU WONDERING HOW TO OPEN UP AFTER COVID?

Please check the ‘Starting Up’ information on the AA GB Website <https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/Members/Coronavirus-News>

Keeping Up With My AA

My name is William. I was brought up in Glasgow with mum and dad, one sister and two brothers. My folks got divorced when I was about eight years old.

My life was good until I started on the drink when I was about 17. I had lost my gran and I started drinking very hard. Since the 1990's, due to alcohol, I have been in and out of prison for breach and police assaults.

I ended up homeless by getting thrown out of the house for my alcohol problem as my mum did not want to know me. Then I was in a homeless unit run by the Salvation Army. I was off alcohol for four years but got kicked out because I fell away from my AA meetings, stopped talking to my sponsor and started back on the alcohol.

Through drink I ended up back in prison again and my family didn't want to know me. I made amends to my family because it's not their fault, it's mine. No one makes me pick up that drink.

I recently phoned my sister-in-law who told me that my brother is back inside and wants me to write to him, but I said "No". I have done everything I am supposed to do and looking after myself is my number one priority.

My sister-in-law is going to support me when I get out and I have to keep up with my AA and keep speaking to my sponsor.

William G
HMP Glenochil

National Helpline Number

0800 9177 650

email

help@alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

AA website

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

AA service website

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

IN THESE ROOMS

By: MATT S. | Buffalo Grove, Ill.

Before I found the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, I'd lost all hope that I'd ever find a way off the relentless merry-go-round alcohol had seduced me into riding. After 30 years of trying the same drinking experiments and expecting different results, losing all that was good in my life was fast becoming a foregone conclusion. But like a drowning person crashing through the water's surface and gasping perhaps his last breath, I grabbed hold of the last speck of hope I saw on the day I met a fellow alcoholic, who brought me to my first meeting and later became my sponsor.

In these rooms, whether church basements, community centers or the homes of members of the Fellowship, I have found the hope that eluded me most of my adult life. People sharing their stories of hopelessness, and subsequent recovery, remind me I'm not alone and shine a light into my future. Almost from the start, I felt this believable sense that everything generally would be okay. The glass, for the first time in my life, has become half-full.

In these rooms were laughter and jovial behavior, the last things I'd expected to see from people afflicted with alcoholism. This one element stands out for me even today. People who feel any sense of hopelessness generally don't laugh and carry on. Some of these members had lost everything--some had nearly lost their lives--and yet, here they were, happily drinking coffee and enjoying life again. There was hope for me! I was in the right place.

It's been almost three years since the obsession to drink shredded to pieces any remnants of human dignity I had left. At that time, it had sucked out of me all that was good, and left a fractured shell of a man, trembling with nameless fears and indescribable loneliness. But today, hope is abundant for me in these rooms, where all I have to do is show up and fill up on the inspiration of others. They provide for and guide me and, like brothers and sisters, they look out for my well-being. I genuinely feel a fellowship beyond any I've ever known.

Hope is a derivative of faith, and you can't have one without the other. Every time someone acknowledges his sobriety anniversary at a meeting, whether I'm chasing that date or have passed it, that experience, strength and hope gives me faith that I too can achieve what just a few short years ago seemed impossible.

Recovery

When I look back to one year ago, I never imagined my life would be the way it is today. Before I came through the doors of AA in July 2019, my perception of the alcoholic was uneducated, along with my perceived idea of recovery. I have battled my alcoholism for a long time, since a young girl actually, I did not know what I suffered from and did not discover this until I walked through the doors of AA. I had been trying to control my drinking for a long period of time – I just wanted to drink like ‘the rest of them’ until eventually I hit my rock bottom in 2019. Due to my uneducated perception of an alcoholic, I thought I was too young to be sober as I was only 23 when I started my recovery and embarked on the 12 Step Programme. I thought my life would be drinking coffee, talking to old folk and never entering a party again! Oh, how wrong I was!

I had been to AA before but I believe I wasn’t ready. However, when I came back last year, I really wanted help (not knowing exactly what that was) and I needed answers to the long, agonising confusion that had been in my head from a young age. I took on the suggestions and went to as many meetings as I could, building friendships with strong, supportive women, taking numbers and more importantly using the numbers when I was struggling or having a bad day. Eventually, when I was ready to tackle the war zone in my head, I asked a lady to be my sponsor and discovered (later on) that I am the issue and alcohol had appeared to be the solution to my problem – I could not live life, on life’s terms.

I was honest, willing and open minded when I embarked on the Programme of Recovery. I gave it my all and trusted the process. To be honest, I didn’t fully understand it all but eventually the confusion cleared and I could start to help other young alcoholics. So, what is my life like today? Is it a life beyond my wildest dreams as I was promised? The answer is YES! Keep coming back and keep it simple.

Jo

Hamilton Late Night Big Book Discussion Friday



**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.**

He Restores My Soul

From the day I came into meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous, I heard and believed I suffer from a three-fold illness: physical, mental and spiritual. I had no difficulty understanding the first two elements. Physically I'm different – when I take even a small amount of alcohol into my system I experience the phenomenon of craving which compels me to drink until I pass out. Mentally I'm obsessed – I think alcohol is the answer despite massive evidence to the contrary and even after periods of abstinence I forget the pain it causes me and others around me – I am driven back to drinking. But what about the spiritual side? I couldn't find the words or the thoughts to understand this aspect.

I don't wish to complicate matters but I find it easier to think of this in two parts. My soul is the core of my being that knows right from wrong and gives me energy. My spirit is how I express my soul in the physical world. For a long number of years I felt my soul was dying but maybe it wasn't completely dead. I didn't know for certain. One thing I did know: life used to be happy, bright and clear. Music was sweet, art was inspiring and life was good. At the end of my drinking everything seemed dull and dark and flat. Perhaps my soul was covered in grime – the grime of neglect. When static objects around the house don't get cleaned they get covered in grime. Grime is oily and sticks hard; maybe grime sticks hard to the soul.

Over decades I had neglected my soul and ignored any spiritual life. Slowly, I built a wall around my soul. The more it rose, the darker things got. Although I thought my soul was dying, it was simply cut off from the light of life. As my soul lay in the darkness festering, my actions became more and more dark. The spirit of my life was ebbing away. Deep down I knew something had to be done. I needed my soul restored. But how on earth do you restore a soul? Anyway, I'm past it; too old. Where's the value in restoring my soul?

For me, the first step in recovery was pain. My pain was such that I tried to kill myself. I emerged from that pain with a lot of the darkness removed. This gave me the opportunity to grasp what the Recovery Programme has to offer. As time passed, my soul began to revive and I became more spiritually awake. Experience tells me that this is a life-long activity: my soul becomes healthier as my 'awakeness' increases. Recently, I was gifted with the awareness of my spiritual journey; I remembered something long forgotten. When I was 12 my mother took me to the first 'Billy Graham Crusade' in the Kelvin Hall. Near the end of his sermon, we were called to the front to pledge our lives to the care of God. I held my mother's hand as we went down. The next day I felt whole for

the first time in my young life. However, slowly this feeling of oneness faded away over the next few weeks.

I returned to my previous state of being restless, irritable and discontented. I was back to being a square peg in a round hole. The hole in my soul had returned. As the years passed I filled this void with toys, bikes, sweets and so on. Then I discovered alcohol. I loved the effect. The hole was filled on command. We all know where this leads.

So there it is. I believe that the root of my illness is spiritual. I received help when I was 12 but, being a child, I didn't know how to build on this help. I tried to ignore my spiritual malady for a long time until pain forced me to face the solution. I love all of the Big Book, but when thinking of my illness and salvation, I am drawn to the Promises on page 85. In particular, the paragraph that defines how we measure whether or not we have recovered. It talks of being placed in a position of neutrality as far as alcohol is concerned. I am aware of the caveat, 'that is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition.' I feel my soul has been restored and my spirit continues to awake and it's all due to the People, the Power and the Programme.

Colin I
Troon Sunday



That Was The Week That Was

Monday: One thing I love about recovery from alcoholism is the astonishing freedom it gives you! I'm no longer a pathetic slave to booze. Everything is on offer nowadays except that fatal first drink. I have choices. This morning, for instance, it's bright and sunny. I contemplate going for a walk. But I need an AA meeting (so my wife says!). A quick glance online and the Largs 12 noon group appeals. Very congenial crowd!

Tuesday: I stumbled upon my mother's old handwritten recipe book. It opened at clootie dumpling. A traditional Scottish delicacy, similar to Christmas pudding, boiled in a cloth or 'cloot'. It had been a delectable treat for childhood birthdays, with little trinkets and silver coins. I hadn't tasted it for decades. 'I'll miss out on the tiny treasures,' I thought. 'But I must give it a go.' How hard could it be? (Find out below!)

Wednesday: Last night a young woman sharer confessed she'd never fancied virtual AA meetings. She'd attended lots of 'live shows' in the past but they hadn't worked for her. So how could internet AA ever get her sober? Then she'd suddenly noticed she was perpetually on her mobile phone anyway. So why not use the device as an indispensable tool in her recovery? She's now several months away from drink.

Thursday: I take another look at 'The Doctor's Opinion'. I'm going over it with a sponsee later today. One bit always jumps out for me. That's the need for 'an entire psychic change' in order to achieve meaningful sobriety. And the way to do this is meticulously described in AA's remarkable Big Book.

Friday: Feeling vaguely troubled this morning. I'm beating myself up. It's the young man I'm sponsoring. Did I miss anything vital yesterday? Could I have clarified some point better? Did I do my best? I click into Edinburgh's 1 p.m. Zoom group. By a neat coincidence, the topic under discussion is 'progress not perfection'!

Saturday: It was a doddle preparing the dumpling, following my mum's old fashioned instructions. A tablespoon of black treacle, 2 cups of raisins, 1 teaspoon of cinnamon etc. I adhered to them exactly. Almost. Then I stuffed the cloot with the mixture and simmered it for three hours. That distinctively sweet, spicy aroma! Mmmm! It looked the part too. Yet when I tried to slice off a yummy morsel ... catastrophe! Solid as a cannonball!

Sunday: I realised my mistake. To make the pudding healthier, I'd added an extra ingredient, a hefty mug of oatmeal. This had ruined the recipe. There's a message here. It's similar to doing AA's 12 Step programme. It needs to be executed properly, fully, with absolutely no amendments. Otherwise, it becomes impossibly hard (not unlike my disastrous dumpling!).

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

**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 for the latest Coronavirus news
from GSO and information on 'starting up' again

