

November 2020

£1

The Fellowship's
RECOVERY MAGAZINE

share

Produced for members
by members

Our Meeting Between Meetings



**Prayer, Meditation,
Knowledge and
Power**

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.

THE TWELVE TRADITIONS

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA 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 AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An AA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every AA 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. AA, 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 AA 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.



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The Journal of Alcoholics Anonymous
in England & Wales

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our meeting in print

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the 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 AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.

AA 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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editorial

Dear Reader

WELCOME to our November issue. The eleventh month, a time of bonfire smoke and hearty meals. Thoughts of Step Eleven come to mind. Taking time to improve our conscious contact with our own version of a Higher Power and to improve our spiritual life. As the Big Book says, *“For if an alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, he could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead.”* (BB p.14). My own experience has shown me that we all need to work these Twelve Steps to get sober and maintain our sobriety but we often work them in many different ways. Helping others is very much a part of this Step. This includes passing on the message of AA and service within the Fellowship as perhaps group secretary or as an on-line host, an officer of intergroup or a telephone responder. But we can also work this Step by helping those around us. Some members volunteer to help a charity, get shopping for an elderly neighbour or are the chief cook for their family meals. Any activity which gets us out of self is helpful for us in recovery. But it does need to be an action. We find that thinking up grand schemes and ideas is a bit of old behaviour, recovery is very much about action and yet more action.

It looks like we are going to be in a time of restricted movement for a while due to Covid 19. But the AA Fellowship continues to be very active with on-line meetings, telephone support, AA literature sales and much more. We know that alcoholism does not take a break, for a holiday or a crisis. But then neither does the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

**** * * *

NEXT MONTH: STEP TWELVE

We invite articles on your experience, strength and hope. This month we are particularly looking for those on Steps and Traditions One and Two for the January and February 2021 issues.



STEP ELEVEN:

“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.”

STEP ELEVEN AN ONGOING DAILY PRACTICE

JUST for today, I have recently reached the ‘maintenance’ Steps Ten, Eleven and Twelve. It has really shown me how the Steps are a foundation and an ongoing daily practice.

In my drinking, I wouldn’t and couldn’t ask for help. I could lazily bark orders at someone to have things my way. Yet the truth of how I felt, how overwhelmed with the idea of life I was, the misery and the struggle in accepting that I couldn’t drink were not on the table for discussion. Steps One through Nine make me face my condition, myself, break things down, strip away the non-essentials, change me, give me an undeniable spiritual experience and reconnect me with the world. If you’ve not tried them yet, they are everything I

didn’t know I was looking for in the drink and I don’t need to flee anymore, I get to live! Intellectually, I understand that Steps Ten, Eleven and Twelve will allow me to face life on life’s terms, continue to grow spiritually and be of service.

What they also are doing so far is remind me that I’m not fixed, that I need to grow spiritually to overcome resentment, fear and doubt and the main source of connection is through service to others in AA and in all my affairs. Sounds really complicated but I’m assured it isn’t.

“Alcoholics Anonymous is not a religious organization.”

(BB p.xx)

The starting point, as always, has been to ask for help. On a recent call to a Fellow who is helping me all the way from LA, I surrendered and said, “How do

you do Step Eleven?”. He gave a few examples of how I was doing it through gratitude lists and readings but suggested using the ‘Just for Today’ card. Something like this – read the ‘Just for Today’ card and meditate on what you are fretting about for the day.

Write out a few pre-emptive Step Tens and try to consider how you can apply ONE of them in your day. NB: don’t expect perfection, just ask God to help you do it better.

This year, whilst on holiday, was a prime opportunity to try this. The person I was with wanted to go on a day trip, to a certain place at a certain time. They will want to talk about buying a bigger house or booking another holiday. I can write an inventory about how I don’t want to go then because I’m so important and I know best and about how I think we shouldn’t be pinning our happiness on property or having enough money to go on

another holiday but instead we should be enjoying the one we were on. Just for today I will be agreeable and criticize not one bit. So instead of telling them what we will do and why, I’ll either try their way and nine

“...self-searching is the means by which we bring new vision, action, and grace...”

(12&12 p.100)

times out of ten enjoy a new experience, or politely ask for a compromise. Whilst we are in the car instead of lecturing from a spiritual high ground [insert laugh

here], I will smile and pray about the property comments and engage in conversations about the culture and the people in different countries. Instead of arguing, we connect and laugh! This isn’t to say that it always works out perfectly, and definitely doesn’t mean I don’t get annoyed. However, when I take these spiritual actions, my Higher Power allows me a chance to be a little bit more like the person I want to be, one day at a time.

ANONYMOUS

DECLARATION OF UNITY

This we owe to AA’s future. To place our common welfare first; to keep our Fellowship united; for on AA unity depend our lives and the lives of those to come.

TRADITIONS CHECKLIST

Tradition Eleven



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.

1. Do I sometimes promote AA so fanatically that I make it seem unattractive?
2. Am I always careful to keep the confidences entrusted in me as an AA member?
3. Am I careful about throwing AA names around – even within the Fellowship?
4. Am I ashamed of being a recovered, or recovering, alcoholic?
5. What would AA be like if we were not guided by the ideas in Tradition 11? Where would I be?
6. Is my AA sobriety attractive enough that a sick drunk would want such a quality for themselves?

Tradition 7

In view of current circumstances, members can make their contributions direct to GSO by bank transfer. Please find details below.

*In the payment reference or message option
please put Tradition 7 member
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MY LIGHTBULB MOMENT

I STARTED this article off to express how I felt and my beliefs in the Programme and people – what I have written comes from my heart and is true for me.

I have been in the Fellowship of AA since July 2019. I have read lots, spoken to many and listened a bit. I have bent or broken every boundary presented to me and I've even deliberately avoided the Steps. There are some very supportive people here, there are the 'laid back if you need me people' and there are also the ones who say it like it is. Then there is one, the one single person who gave me all AA had to offer, gave it all with abundance right from the heart, without even knowing what he was saying, doing, showing, guiding – well everything. It was coming so free and easy from him. Well from July 2019 I just couldn't get it. Didn't want to, had no plans to embrace it. I just wasn't ready, none of it was going in. I had no faith, never had and I was good with that, no belief, strength or courage or any of that, I was content to be the way I was. I thought it was a place you came and basically

“...though perhaps he came to scoff, he may remain to pray.” (BB p.xxxii)

just dished the dirt of your life – you know get it out your system. Don't get me wrong I enjoyed that part.

But then, then it was different, I just couldn't get why. It wasn't until April 2020 and I have no idea how or why or what and I couldn't even explain it, it all just clicked, all the questions went

because the answers were right there, loud and clear. I wasn't even reading the Big Book; it was on audio. Clear with meaning – with truth, passion, love, care and honesty. Right there. Wow, totally got through to me to the point where I dropped every single wall, guard, mask – you name it. They all dropped in that very moment and if I'm honest it scared me through to the core. Twenty-eight years of protecting, gone.

To me AA is not the Rooms, it's not the books or magazines or literature, it's not the conferences, I mean I admit they do help a lot. No, to me AA represents the people, the people who attend the Rooms and talk about their lives, it's the people who are the Fellowship. It's you, the you who is reading this article. To me AA comes from

each and every one of you right from your hearts. It's what's in your hearts and the love you give because of your faith and belief in it. I had it. I felt it. I've seen it with my own eyes, I've witnessed it and I loved it. Faith, honesty, love, trust, loyalty and truth, it all comes from the sound of a voice reading from the Big Book, reading it with his heart and soul.

Every morning and every night, it came from the time given to show you it's magic, magic that comes from within you.

It's the love handed out when you're sitting on the sofa watching a television programme, drinking coffee.

My, well everything – my beliefs, thoughts, heart, soul – I believe you must trust in what you believe in. What you feel is right, what you see is good and pure and what is right for you. If you except it with all you have, drop every single wall or mask and are open to it and

“All those who have persisted have found strength not ordinarily their own.” (12&12 p.107)

you give the same in return – honesty, love, truth, everything – you will get it. You will love it unconditionally. It's from the Rooms, video conferencing, and all the technology we use on our phones. While in bed reading the Serenity Prayer that we all know and say from our heart. It's the common understanding we all share with each other.

My beliefs are in audio, my faith is a spoken prayer, my love is the time my heart is saying the Serenity Prayer together and kissing a piece of jewellery at the end. That's it. That's all I have, that's my belief in AA, in the Fellowship and in you, the one person who opened me up completely. I'll still feel the same in six months and more than likely I'll feel it forever if I'm honest in AA, the Fellowship and with you. Stay forever, if you're accepting of it all.

With love always

LYNSEY



SHARE is now available online on the AA Website.

The link is: <https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/Members/Fellowship-Magazines/SHARE-Magazine>

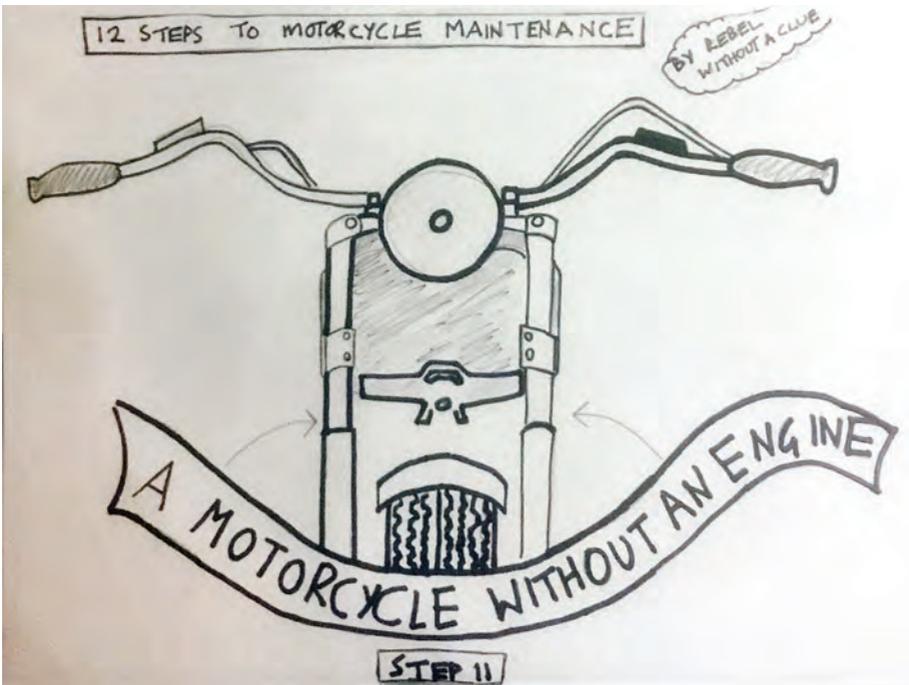
You can then go to the relevant month and find the link to download that month's magazine – **Our Meeting Between Meetings** – needed now more than ever!

WE ARE ALL MIRACLES

WHEN I came into AA I was driven by self-centred fear. I knew my life was a mess but I didn't know how to stop my compulsion to drink and to self-destruct. The only meaning to my life was to get the money to get the drink to get unconscious. The nature of alcoholism is (drinking, or not) through self-will, to remove my self-centred fears from my life by whatever means changing of any natural desires is possible. In the present lockdown circumstances, some of my healthy, natural desires cannot be fulfilled. A hug, a holiday, a distraction, fellowship with friends, sharing

a meal. All things I didn't do when drinking but now things that provide satisfaction and pleasure. I have noticed my self become variably sad, unable to concentrate, wanting food to fulfil my spiritual needs.

The hope in my recovery and through the present times are the sure knowledge that my life is in God's hands - love and service is my peace of mind. And yet it is the beautiful sunset, dog-walking with a friend, playing the piano, painting, anything creative that makes me appreciate my life and recovery. I still want more of everything but experience my



fair share of peace of mind these days.

My life has improved beyond all recognition from when I came to AA with no hope for anything but being stupid, boring and glum. It is a full, productive life where carrying the message of our Programme is a highlight. I see God in AA in all the miracles that we are. During this time, life

has slowed down. If I choose to spend more time with my Higher Power, let go and put my life in His care then my days seem to be a lot better. I remain one drink away from a drink but just for today I'm grateful to be sober in the knowledge that the best is yet to come. Thank you AA.

ANON

SERVICE IN ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

WHEN I first came to AA, I was suffering the pangs of guilt and shame and just wanted to stay sober on a daily basis. I was told I needed to get to as many meetings as possible and get a sponsor and do service. Service? – what's that? I went to many meetings and got myself a sponsor and started to work through the Twelve Steps. But service, still not sure. What was it? Did I need to do it? Someone else would do it, wouldn't they? What if no-one did? Where would the Fellowship be? Any ideas?

After time in AA I took my first service position, tea person, for the Saturday morning women's Living Sober meeting. These women wanted me as tea person – the most important position in the service of the group – who wanted me around before? I really enjoyed this position and

felt that I was contributing to my fellow recovering alcoholics in a positive way. Having that service gave me the courage to keep going even when I did not want to – milk was needed, not me, milk for our tea and coffee. I gained confidence in myself and felt good enough to take on service which required a longer term of sobriety i.e. chair, literature, I've even been trusted as treasurer, what an honour, then it was suggested I be GSR for my group. I was not sure about this one, but with help and advice from those who have trod this road before me and being sponsored into the position I said ok, I will give it a go.

This is one service where I feel I have grown in my recovery. Through being willing to be a trusted servant for my group and attend intergroup on their behalf, I have learned such a lot

about how the Fellowship works, I cannot begin to tell you, you will have to achieve this yourself.

From attending intergroup and being willing to give back to AA what has been so freely given to me, I became one of the Regional Representatives for intergroup and attending regional meetings on behalf of Notts/Leics Intergroup. I learnt more about this wonderful Fellowship of ours – I wanted to know more and so became a Conference Delegate and attended Conference in York, taking our Region's answers to the Conference Questions published each year in AA News. This is an important part of the Fellowship and gives our views – things do change with our help and understanding of the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, principles and concepts of Alcoholic Anonymous.

To have the honour and privilege of doing service in our Fellowship also gives me the humility I was so sadly lacking before in my life. Service has given me an acceptance of myself, a confidence that I am able to go where others have gone before and carry this amazing message of Alcoholics Anonymous. I hope all who follow in our footsteps get as much from doing service as we have, for without service being carried out where would our Fellowship be? As I grew in sobriety and recovery, so I grew into service and began to find the hidden treasures doing service brought to me. I began to see

the bigger picture of how we all fit in and how the jigsaw comes together to make our Fellowship work. Putting my gratitude into action is the key to my sobriety today.

ANITA S, Nottingham

THEMES FOR 2021

Due to the fabulous response during 2020, we will continue to have an additional focus in specific issues:

JANUARY – ‘Newcomers’

How did you feel as a newcomer to the Fellowship?
How do you support a newcomer?

MARCH – ‘How to keep sobriety to the forefront’

You have a period of sobriety under your belt –
What keeps you living sober?
Does life get in the way?

JUNE – ‘Prison’

Did you find sobriety in prison?
Have you enhanced your journey by doing service in prison?

SEPTEMBER – ‘Service in my Home Group’

Were you sponsored into service?
Do you find AA literature helpful?

DECEMBER – ‘A Sober Christmas and New Year’

What is your experience?
What works for you?
What would you suggest for a newcomer?

AA ARCHIVE CATALOGUING PROJECT

By James Neill, Project Archivist, Borthwick
Institute for Archives

Preserving A.A.'s history - its story - is our most important task, for whether we be alcoholics or simply lovers of A.A.'s wisdom, it is by telling and hearing their stories that Alcoholics Anonymous heals alcoholics and passes on its wisdom. As its name makes clear, Alcoholics Anonymous is its members, and so its story and its members' stories are one and the same.

Ernest Kurtz, scholar, writer, and historian of Alcoholics Anonymous (1997)

THIS quote, which emphasises the important role archives play in transferring knowledge and wisdom, neatly summarises the main goal of the Alcoholics Anonymous Great Britain Archive Cataloguing Project. While preserving records and documentation is crucial to the functioning of AA GB as a charitable organisation, the archive should serve the Fellowship by protecting its history for future generations. As the first and only scholar to be granted full access to the archive held at the GSO in New York, Ernest Kurtz appreciated the value of archival material, for without it he could not have written the seminal *Not God: A History of Alcoholics Anonymous*. Once the cataloguing project is complete, the archive will be the definitive resource for members

and scholars alike interested in researching the history of AA in Great Britain.

Starting in December 2018, the AA GB Archive Cataloguing Project is approximately halfway into its three year span. The project began with the transfer of the archive from the GSO to the Borthwick Institute for Archives at the University of York. Before diving into the some 600 archive boxes, my first responsibility, as a non-alcoholic, was to read as much as possible about the history of AA, its co-founders Bill W and Dr Bob, and the Twelve Traditions. From there, I learned about the establishment of the first groups in London and Scotland in the 1940s, Bill W's donation of 1,500 copies of the Big Book to help fund AA's growth in Great Britain, the beginnings of the GSC in the 1960s, regionalisation in the

1980s, and the development of the twelve service disciplines. An appreciation and respect for the origins of AA and the British Fellowship has greatly informed my approach to cataloguing the archive, and I hope this will be reflected in the final catalogue and the research it inspires and contributes toward.

The archive itself holds records and documentation from all areas of AA GB and the British Fellowship in the course of 74 years. This encompasses early founding records, material from across the Service Structure (including Intergroups and Regions, Service Disciplines, GSC, and GSB), paperwork from the GSO, AA literature and 'Where to Find' directories, and, of course, a full back catalogue of both SHARE and Roundabout. Composed of more than just paper records, the archive holds several formats, including photographs, audio-records, film, artworks, and memorabilia. Add to this a significant digital component, which will continue to grow as the organisation and Fellowship creates more electronic records and online content. Given the variety and scope of activities and projects undertaken by AA GB, it has often felt like I've been working on the archives of several different organisations.

At the start of summer, a major milestone was achieved with

the publication of the first draft of the AA GB Archive online catalogue, which can be accessed at: <https://borthcat.york.ac.uk/aa>. In addition to making it easier to navigate the archive and locate specific material, the catalogue provides key information such as dates, extents, formats, and a summary of content. An accompanying

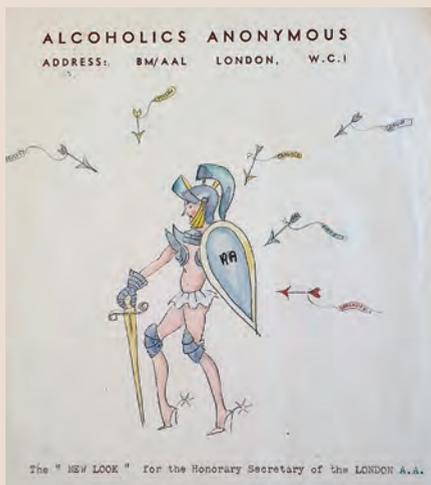
"Why don't you choose your own conception of God?" (BB p.12)

video tutorial on how to use the catalogue can be viewed here: <https://tinyurl.com/y3xl5uh4>, and a written guide will soon be available on the

AA website. Given that it's a first draft there are still revisions, edits, and amendments to be made to the catalogue, and I'm currently in the process of conducting user testing with members of the Archives Network. So far the majority of feedback I've received has been positive and encouraging, and I'm eagerly anticipating the response from the wider Fellowship.

As with all facets of British life, the outbreak of COVID-19 and lockdown has disrupted parts of the project, particularly outreach and engagement activities. At this stage of the project, it was anticipated that I would promote the project and collection through outreach talks and events at the Borthwick, and relevant AA gatherings. Thankfully, things are gradually returning to normal, and this

article is the first step in making the wider Fellowship aware of the archive cataloguing project's progress. In the upcoming year, I will start preparing for outreach events, digitising sections of the archive, working on an online exhibition, and helping answer enquiries from members, including those involved in preparing for the 75th Anniversary celebrations. Additionally, I will continue to catalogue the material, and edit and maintain the online catalogue. If you have any questions about the archive, catalogue, or project please feel free to contact me directly at: james.neill@york.ac.uk. I look forward to updating you in a future edition of SHARE.



*Archive reference code: AA/1/3/4.
Detail from a letter from Lottie T, secretary of the First London Group, to Canadian Bob, early member of AA in Great Britain and first Group Secretary.*

SHARE is our story, share yours

There are many AA members who are unable to go to meetings; the housebound, some single parents with children, those in the armed services, on oil rigs, in prisons or hospitals, who rely on SHARE for their meeting between meetings – and sometimes instead of one. Please take the time to write and share your experience, strength and hope with them.

Whether you are a newcomer, old-timer, or just an ordinary member we would like to hear your story just like at any other meeting. Not only that but putting pen to paper can enhance your own sobriety and that of the whole Fellowship.

You don't need to be a polished author. Spelling and grammar will all be amended if necessary. Don't forget 'Short is Sweet'. We love your articles but over 1,000 words will not be considered for publication nor do we publish poetry or obituaries.



Each issue of SHARE always features that month's corresponding Step and Tradition (January Step/Tradition 1 through to December Step/Tradition 12). We need your article at least two months before the relevant topic is due to appear, for example, for Step or Tradition Three (March) by mid-January, and so on.

Send your contribution to: The Editor, SHARE, General Service Office, PO Box 1,10 Toft Green, York YO1 7NJ or make an online submission via <https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/Members/Fellowship-Magazines/SHARE-Magazine/Submit-a-Contribution>

EXPERIENCE, STRENGTH AND HOPE

I WAS broken on the day I walked through the doors of my first AA meeting. I faced humiliation at work, pitying disapproval from my wife, the prospect of losing my children and deep depression. Life was bleak. For a very long time my drinking had created debilitating and embarrassing consequences. Attempts to stay off the booze on my own led to a predictable conclusion – greater madness, more discomfort and eventually an almighty and destructive alcoholic blow out. I was trapped. Damned if I did, and damned if I didn't. I'd been advised to seek Twelve Step recovery before and had attended a few meetings in another Twelve Step Fellowship. However, feeling limited identification I drifted away. But at AA it was different. I was ready. Desperate and willing to listen. I knew I needed to stop drinking but here I could also see a solution to a much wider malaise.

For as long as I could remember I'd been an outsider in my own life. Watching as others seemed satisfied and content, throughout the Party Years of my 20s, darker years of addiction

in my 30s and through into middle-aged angst. I meant well but persistently seemed to end up 'treading on the toes of my fellows'. They responded and as a sensitive, fragile person I suffered painfully with the disapproval and shame. Active alcoholism was an accelerating helter-skelter of consequences and remorse.

"But we must be careful not to drift into worry, remorse or morbid reflection..."

(BB p.86)

Recovery has been a revelation. A slow and bumpy process but the change and insight into my own psyche is life-changing and lifesaving. I am very grateful to have found a home group with a strong, caring culture. For an all-male group there's a notable absence of the testosterone and adrenaline which had fuelled my drinking life. Compassion and honesty are key elements of the group. Men from all walks of life meet to support and share their stories on this path to spiritual growth. It is the spiritual heart of recovery which has proved invaluable.

After two years in recovery I had an emotional rock-bottom. I had been working the Steps and attending meetings but I was still rampantly restless, irritable and discontent. Depression hit

me hard and I ended up in a mental health clinic to recover. At the time I was resentful of AA and my sponsor. "This obviously doesn't work." I thought. But as I slowly healed it became abundantly clear that it wasn't the Programme but my will that was the problem. Had I handed over my will to my Higher Power? Or even slowed down my life sufficiently to allow meaningful emotional change? Absolutely not. I had continued to plough along, working hard to seek elusive affirmation and building very little daily routine or spiritual maintenance into my 'busy' day. I had crowded out God. Ultimately I was still running on ego and self-will. I thought I could fix myself with work and family life. But this disease proved way too powerful for my solution. I was overwhelmed. Rage and depression overtook me and I became a menace in my own home. The final capitulation and move to hospital was a relief to me and my family.

Support from AA and some excellent outside help have set me on a new path. Every morning I practise a recovery routine including prayer, reading, meditation and gratitude. My ego used to find gratitude lists trite and meaningless. Today I gain daily fellowship and much clearer thinking from sharing mine with a group of men. The most important change has

been to restore Step Three in my life. The factory settings for this alcoholic are selfish, impatient and fearful. I need the power provided by God. I am very grateful for the patience and love which AA has shown me. There is always someone to help me and countless fine role models showing me how to live in the Fellowship of the Spirit. I have learnt that this progressive illness requires a progressive solution and a growing recovery. If we are not growing our spiritual health we are falling back into alcoholism's grip.

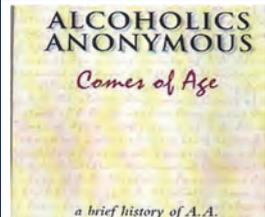
The key to this has been action. My disease via my egoic thinking will seek to dissuade me from action at every turn, "Why bother to reach out or call your sponsor?", "Stay in and rest - you deserve it." "Spend some time with the family instead of praying". This is the most dangerous time. Listening to my head and ignoring the instincts of my heart will always end in disaster. Thus far, I have had to learn many lessons the hard way. A cycle of action, happiness, complacency and, soon after, pain has dogged my recovery. Every day I seek to try and stay a step ahead of this disease via action and trying to help others. Selfish insularity and intellectual rationalisation are tools it uses to baffle and confuse me.

BEN W, Henley-on-Thames

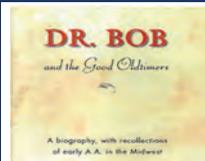
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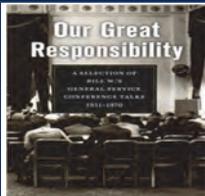
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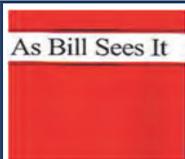
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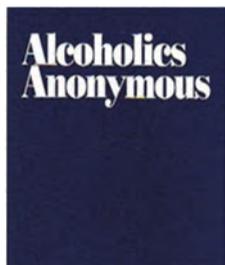
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This is the Big Book

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.

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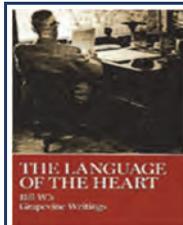


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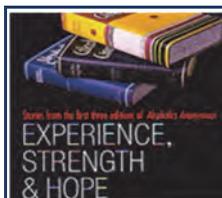
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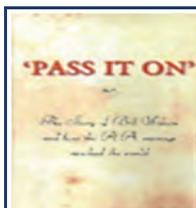
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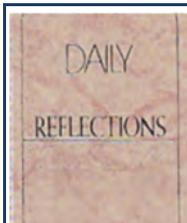
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AA GB 75th Anniversary Convention 10-12 June 2022 Leeds Direct Arena

Website <https://www.aa75.co.uk/>

Early Bird Registration Now Open

Our convention will be a time for AA members, from GB and beyond together with AI-Anon Family Groups, family and visitors to celebrate AA 75 years at this event with big meetings being held in the large theatre style stadium and other meetings and activities will take place throughout the weekend within the arena complex.

We know many are excited about the 75th Anniversary Convention, please keep checking the website for updates and some random facts as they become available.

A photograph of the Leeds Direct Arena at night, illuminated with blue and white lights. The arena's facade is a complex, geometric structure of hexagonal and pentagonal panels.

Email address: info@aa75.co.uk

ALCOHOL, MY TWO-FACED NON-FRIEND

I STRUGGLED with low grade, long-term depression from the age of 25. When everyone else was out revelling in the joy of youth I was leading a life of two halves. On the one hand I was functioning at work, learning and being promoted. The rest of the time I lived alone with alcohol. I drank at least a bottle of wine every night. A few glasses preparing dinner, a glass with my meal and the rest sat in my armchair. I then staggered to bed sometimes in blackout, sometimes on my hands and knees. It didn't concern me at first; there was no one there to see me and it wasn't like I was being thrown out of public places as a lush or drinking out of a brown paper bag on a park bench. Besides I was drinking decent wine not 'cheap as chips' wine. Alcohol is the most insidious playmate. It tells you that you're OK when you're not. It tells you, "Just one glass" knowing full well the bottle will be emptied, never returned to the fridge. It tells you that you are normal, entitled to drink - to relax you, to pep you up, because it's Monday, because it's 7pm. It never ever told me to stop.

"There is a direct linkage among self-examination, meditation, and prayer."

(12&12 p.100)

I started to realise my behaviour was different after about three months. I was anxious at work - did I smell of stale booze? Would the meeting finish on time so I could get home to drink? Would my performance slip enough for me to be sacked? I didn't want to be sacked so I quit. I dressed it up as me taking a sabbatical to do a Masters degree, it was seen as an empowered, lifestyle choice. It wasn't - it was born out of fear. Once I started my course my drinking escalated - students were supposed to drink and all I had to do now was read books in my bedroom. I swapped up from bottles of wine to boxes, it was so much easier having a little tap on hand.

The moment that saved me was being barred from the pub at the end of the road. Apparently, I fell off a barstool and was loud and aggressive. The visualization of this in my mind was just horrendous. Everything I had told myself to justify my drinking was in tatters. My behaviour WAS public, it was affecting others and I had to acknowledge that I thought about my next drink more than anything else.

My shame took me to my GP who was astute enough to realise that I was using alcohol as a crutch, as a means of escape.

From that point on I worked hard. To be honest about what was happening, to accept help and to fight the cravings as I went through withdrawal. This was a make or break situation and I applied the same

determination to stop drinking as I had to covering it up. I was supremely lucky and managed to stay sober with the support of AA. I was able to give my two-faced friend, alcohol, the push for real friends who helped me understand where I was coming from and believe in where I wanted to get to.

NICOLA M

OUT OF DESPAIR AND DESPERATION

HIYA, my name's Nicki and I'm a grateful, recovering alcoholic. I'm writing this on my twelfth AA birthday, a very poignant year – Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, Twelve Concepts of AA and my 50th birthday. My sobriety date is 23rd July 2008. ODAAT and with the Grace of God I haven't picked a drink up since. Today I should be travelling to the Birmingham Heart of England Convention which I have attended for some years, I absolutely love it but sadly it's not possible this year. I would like to share with you how far I've come in those twelve years.

I started drinking around 15 years of age. I loved what alcohol did for me, it gave me the courage and confidence to face anything and fit in, it suppressed

all my feelings and emotions. I lived on my own most of my adult life and used to hide the booze, went to different off-licences, wouldn't answer the phone or the door, just lived in utter fear and anxiety. I was a nasty drunk, a Jekyll and Hyde character and suffered from many blackouts. I did some awful things that I wouldn't have done had I been sober. I was drunk on my wedding day; I woke up in blackout and couldn't remember what happened until I watched my wedding video back in utter shame and embarrassment. The obsession and compulsion to drink progressed rapidly, I had to drink daily to settle my nerves and face the day. I became a functioning alcoholic although I didn't think I had a problem, I was in complete denial. I

would go into work and obsess about when my next drink was, how I was going to get it and dispose of it until eventually I didn't care and took drink into work with me. My life was utter chaos. I had a string of failed relationships, friends and family didn't want to know me, I had sold my house and was sofa surfing at the age of 36. Towards the end of my drinking I endured countless visits to A&E, a failed suicide attempt, a week in a mental hospital, two alcoholic seizures and three weeks in a rehab over Christmas.

My rock bottom came when I was physically carried out of work by my manager and team leader in front of around 100 staff, for drinking neat vodka at my desk which I thought was quite normal – the insanity of it all! The next day I woke up in blackout with no recollection of what happened, my manager informed me I was suspended on full pay until further notice. This was music to my ears, I thought I can have a good go at this drinking with no responsibilities and on full pay. It was only when my sister told me to go to the doctor about my drinking to try and get my job back, I thought yes, I need my job back but was still in denial. The doctor added to my medical record that I was alcohol dependent and put me in touch with a counsellor. I tried control drinking, completing a

“Our thought-life will be placed on a much higher plane...” (BB p.86)

drinking diary but just lied about everything – I couldn't stop drinking. Looking back now, I was out of control long before I finally admitted it. It took a lot of punishment to convince me that I was an alcoholic.

Out of despair and desperation, I decided enough was enough

and eventually found the Rooms of AA. From my first meeting I got hope and felt at home, the type of feeling I get when I'm in church. I listened for all the similarities and was told there was a meeting the next night and try not to take a drink. I didn't drink that night which was an absolute miracle as I couldn't stop for even an hour, my Higher Power already looking after me. I learnt to accept I have an illness, I needed to change, have faith in a Higher Power and to let go absolutely. The compulsion and obsession was removed, my personality changed and I started to think more of others than myself. What I later discovered – I was having a spiritual experience.

I also had some tough times in sobriety. One of my best friends hung herself on New Year's Eve, just five months into my sobriety, she was only 29. One of my good friend's in the Fellowship died of this illness, she was just 39. I got made redundant and moved house, all within the first few years of sobriety, but I never

picked up a drink which still amazes me to this day, again my Higher Power in my life.

The months and years flew by. I didn't get a sponsor or do the Steps until later in my recovery but that's my journey. It's a marathon, not a race. I'm a slow learner, sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. Once I surrendered myself fully to the Programme and a Higher Power, my life improved immensely. I have grown so much, my family and friends came back in my life, I still have a job, a partner of 18 years who stood by me, I have a lovely home but more importantly I have peace of

mind which I never had in my whole adult life. I always say that I feel lucky to have lived two lives. I discarded the old life that never worked and replaced it with a new life that can and does work. I think of alcohol today as poison which I can never put in my bloodstream again. The Promises have all come true for me, I have a life beyond my wildest dreams and I truly believe that the best is yet to come. I am so grateful to the Founders of AA, my sponsor and this wonderful Programme which I have no doubt has saved my life.

NICKI, Barrow-in-Furness

CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19)

Alcoholics Anonymous UK is constantly updating information on our AA UK Website

www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/Members/Coronavirus-News

This includes:

General guidance about Covid19

Help and guidance about
On-Line meetings

Links to On-Line AA meetings

Link to update meeting details

Guidance about On-Line
Anonymity

Links to Share and Roundabout
On-Line

Help for Newcomers

Tradition Seven

Literature orders

Other websites claiming to be
connected to AA

GSO requests that we avoid calling the London, York or Glasgow office for general enquiries but rather email to: gso@alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

OUR THREE LEGACIES

Have we thrown too much of the baby out with the bathwater?

JOINING AA in the late '60s, I was part of the growth of the Fellowship in the early '70s. Groups mushroomed, requiring more and more intergroups. This latter change caused the change in the structure of AA GB, with the start of Regions. As a Conference Delegate for Merseyside and North Wales Intergroup, the Chairman of the General Service Board (GSB) invited me to help with a committee looking at the then present structure (1974) of the Fellowship. The committee recommended the Fellowship form 15 Regions covering England, Wales and Scotland. Each region was to elect Conference Delegates, as well as coordinating the work of the constituent intergroups and expansion of the Fellowship in areas that had previously been neglected. Each region was also to coordinate development with all external agencies not covered by the intergroups and hold regular workshops. Where appropriate, they were also required to service any of the National Conventions, previously covered by intergroups.

“We are careful never to pray for our own selfish ends.” (BB p.87)

Some intergroups were less cooperative in sharing information, some individuals saw AA as their responsibility and not the Fellowship's (several AA Prison Services and Telephone Services were being co-ordinated by a single member, preventing the local intergroup from taking them over – a one-man band).

Conference itself has changed over the decades. In its original format there were just four committees that replicated the structure of the GSB. In the early '90s Conference decided to pass some business onto small committees which would meet up to four times a year to further develop issues that could not be completed by Conference. There was already some business done this way, with a Finance Sub-Committee meeting to discuss the annual budget with Regional Treasurers and the Honorary Treasurer GSB, as well as a Literature Sub-Committee looking at matters arising from amendments etc. These Sub-Committees have now expanded to cover practically all the identifiable committees

that operate at Region and Intergroup within the Fellowship (the list isn't exhaustive).

Over the years quite a few myths have attached themselves to AA – it is questionable whether these provide additional benefit/support. The first notable being the additional non-AA Approved Literature and jewellery sales at Conventions. I'm reminded of the occasion at the Northern National Convention in 1985/6, when a member I knew was in the company of a new member with armfuls of literature. When asked which AA books he had bought, the answer was none, they were all from the private bookstall in the Convention. That year's AA literature sales amounted to something like £800. The committee were made aware of what happened and took the decision to exclude any business/individual from selling items within the AA Convention rooms. They would have to negotiate with the hotel separately in future. This was eventually incorporated into National Convention Guidelines. In earlier days, groups electing officers used to elect a Group Leader (later to be changed to Secretary, except in the Merseyside and North Wales area, where the term Group Leader remains).

Another old tradition that has almost disappeared was the 'moment's silence' that was to

clear our minds and remind ourselves why we are here. Now we have to include all the sick alcoholics both inside and outside the Fellowship – problem is we haven't a clue who these people are. What part of AA literature makes reference to 90 meetings in 90 days? None – because it came out of an American Rehabilitation Centre as a suggestion for keeping close contact with AA for those being released. Nothing whatsoever to do with AA, but just another bit of mythology taken in by AA members. Why have AA groups added the extra bit after the Serenity Prayer, "keep coming back, it works if you work it, it won't if you don't"? What was wrong with closing the meeting after the prayer, allowing members to chat and especially for the newcomer to be informed about literature and local AA activities? Some of these things are of little or no consequence, but we ought to be ever alert to those changes that do matter, such as those in contravention of our Traditions.

I hope today's Fellowship make sure they understand just what they are inheriting (our three legacies as depicted on our adopted triangle), and that 'no babies get thrown out with the bathwater'.

CYRIL H

THE THIRD OF THE 'THREE TWELVES'

CO-FOUNDER Bill W. composed Twelve essays in 1962 that described the Twelve Concepts for World Service, sometimes known as the third of the 'Three Twelves' (the first and second being the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions). Bill wrote, *"Well knowing our own propensities for power driving, it is natural and even imperative that our service concepts be based on a system of "checks and balances". We have had to face the fact that we usually try to enlarge our own authority and prestige when we are in the saddle. But when we are not, we strenuously resist a heavy-handed management wherein someone else holds the reins. I'm the more sure of this because I possess these traits myself."* (The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2018 p.19).

We have recently been attending an online Concepts workshop, run by an older member who has come to the UK from a different country. It surprised him to find that we had barely heard of the Concepts, and if we had, we regarded them as something akin to another language or to dark magic. We also had the attitude that the Steps are there to help me recover, the Traditions are for

the protection of the Fellowship and the Concepts are for...well, who knows, someone at Region with a notepad, probably. It surprised us to find out that he had something called a service sponsor. This was very uncertain territory for us, and, as we continued with the workshop, it became apparent that there is little awareness or understanding of the Concepts in our local area. Although we are only three Concepts into the workshop, we can already see how vital they are to the continued health of the Fellowship and – by extension – to all of our recoveries.

"We are no longer lost and frightened and purposeless."
(12&12 p.108)

In Concept I, we learned that it is our responsibility as individual members to take an active role in the group conscience, which connects us to the world-wide Fellowship through our GSRs; sponsoring newcomers into service, and ensuring that those who come after us have a working knowledge of the Traditions and the wider service structure of AA. We also recognised that Concept I, is, in essence, Tradition Two but at the level of the Fellowship as a whole. The Fellowship belongs to the members. *"Final responsibility and ultimate authority for A.A. world service should always reside*

in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.” (Concept I, The Twelve Concepts for World Service illustrated).

For Concept II, since 1995 Alcoholics Anonymous Great Britain General Service Conference has become “... *the actual voice and the effective conscience of the Fellowship in Great Britain.*” (The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2018 p.20). The groups elect a trusted servant (GSR) to be their voice and conscience at intergroup. Bill refers to this as ‘delegated authority’ whereby the authority of the individual is delegated to a trusted servant (GSR) who then can delegate this authority through intergroup to Region. The Conference delegates express the voice and conscience of their Region. Thus, is each individual member represented.

Finally, Concept III, “...suggested we endow each of these elements of service with a traditional “Right of Decision” (The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2018 p.20). This means that we trust our representatives, we don’t instruct them. As in any healthy democracy, we delegate responsibility and we trust our delegates to make choices and come to conclusions on

our behalf. This means that our representatives have the freedom to make a decision that may go against the conscience of the group they represent, if new information comes to light. Without this “Right of Decision”, the Fellowship would be hamstrung.

It seems to us that trust is the golden thread that runs through the Steps, the Traditions and Concepts and binds our Fellowship in unity and service. We are extremely grateful to have been given the opportunity to learn about ‘the Third of the Three Twelves’ and would encourage every AA member to investigate these, often seemingly overlooked, principles which keep the benign anarchy that is our Fellowship functioning, that it may be there for the next generation and for the generations yet to come.

P&K, Bournemouth

We are using the following reference material (CAL) in the workshops:

- The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2018
- The Twelve Concepts for World Service illustrated
- Twelve Concepts Checklist

STOP PRESS!!!

GSO York have decided to make back copies of SHARE magazine freely available to prisons by applying to GSO via your Region.

THE MESSAGE IS STILL THE SAME

LIKE many members, the suddenness of the lockdown caused by Covid-19 and the closure of our physical meetings came as a shock to me. In my 18 years of sobriety it was a first – and of course all the old traits of fear, anxiety and uncertainty came back with a vengeance. Oh, me of little faith! Within days and weeks online meetings had sprung up all over the country and I know in our intergroup there were soon 18 online meetings a week from the previous 30 physical meetings. Groups and individual members embraced the technology available and suddenly we had the connection again with other members.

In the early weeks it seemed that members were ‘travelling’ all over the virtual world, exploring the meetings but over the coming weeks most settled down to the local meetings and groups became stronger. The technical teething problems were overcome, ‘zoom bombers’ were seen off, most people got the hang of muting and unmuting microphones, readings were screen-shared, order was restored to our upturned sober lives. Newcomers were beginning to be directed to online local meetings through our chat and email

services and through national and local helplines. What a joy it is now to attend a meeting which gives out ‘virtual chips’ and see newcomers raising their hands for weeks and months of sobriety achieved in the new ‘virtual’ AA world.

“Meditation is our step out into the sun.”
(12&12 p.100)

There are still many members though who can’t or won’t attend online meetings and to them I would only say please try it. We need members to carry the message to the newcomer and for now the online meetings are the lifeline that is here. I’m not a young man anymore and for me the online meetings are a true godsend. I now attend four or five meetings a week locally and sometimes venture out to others further afield. I couldn’t or didn’t do that prior to lockdown and what a lift it has given me in my own sobriety. It feels like a new beginning, going to more meetings, doing more service, reading more of our wonderful AA literature and most of all enjoying the fellowship of other AAs and seeing the lives of newcomers transformed before my eyes. I’ve reconnected with many members locally and further afield as well as meeting so many new people and what a joy that has been.

My Higher Power has always been there for me and never more so than now. All the old-timers words have come back to me – get to as many meetings as you can, don't pick up that first drink and say please and thank

you to a Higher Power you may not yet understand and you need never drink again. The message throughout AA's history has never changed, today the medium is different – that's all.

ANON, *Northants*

ONE SHORT QUESTION from the Big Book

THE first few pages of Chapter 5 'HOW IT WORKS', up to and including *"That God could and would if He were sought."* (BB ps. 58-60), are frequently heard at AA meetings. Indeed, I believe that the same groups have a policy of reading it out every time. What is less commonly heard is the text which follows immediately afterwards, which begins with *"Being convinced, we were at Step Three..."* (BB p.60). Now, if you are new (and paying attention!) a very likely reaction to hearing that last sentence would be, "Well, where did Steps One and Two go then?" The Twelve Steps have just been presented in their entirety on the previous page for the first time ever, and now the discussion launches into Step Three. Hasn't something been missed?

I think we work on Step One during our time prior to entering the Fellowship. The full implications of our problem

may need to be clarified, but surely our very seeking for help from AA is an admission of our powerlessness. But what about Step Two? *"We needed to ask ourselves but one short question.*

"...we pause... and ask for the right thought or action."

(BB p.87)

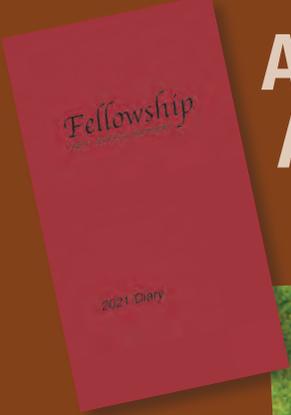
"Do I now believe, or am I even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than myself?" (BB p.47).

This, surely, is a yes-or-no proposition. Do I believe, yes or no? If not, am I willing to believe, yes or no?

I wonder sometimes whether we are prone to over-complicate matters in AA. Taking Step Two does not require any theology, any discussion about what the nature of God might be, or wrestling with the problems that religious dissention may have brought about. This is a simple, black and white, yes or no question, and if the answer is yes, then Step Two has been completed 100% and we can move on to Step Three.

Keep it simple.

STEVEN, *Buxton*



A year's worth of AA inspiration, one day at a time

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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.

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SHARE INTERVIEW

WITH JAMES, NORTHUMBERLAND



Five Years Sober – Interview by Ian

Q I know you came to the Fellowship before your five years of sobriety, may I ask you what brought you to AA then?

A That was in 1992 and I was living in London at the time. I'd split up from my wife. You see I never really thought that I had a drink problem. In the North East the street where I was born was a mile long and there were 21 pubs there. On the weekend people were falling about with the drink, so I always thought I came from a culture of drinking. I used to associate myself with that. But, you know, it became much worse. I don't think I realised or ever wanted to know that my drinking was out of hand... I managed to hold down a job but I'd moved 13 times. I was on my own living in these horrible bedsits. I used to

make spectacles for opticians and had my own business. I kept in work because I was speaking to clients on the phone – as long as I wasn't too drunk. I couldn't handle my emotions, and at this time I was living and working in Notting Hill. As soon as we closed shop I would drink. The business was in trouble because I was spending huge amounts of money on drink and drugs.

I eventually went to see a doctor and a psychologist. The psychologist helped me a great deal with the drug side of things, but I just couldn't stop drinking. At the end of three months – with each session costing £50, he suggested I tried Alcoholics Anonymous, he informed me it was free. I went and thought everyone was nuts. I would just add that a lovely Irish guy welcomed

me, I did get hope though. I'd read a book by CS Lewis called 'Surprised by Joy', after a few days not drinking that's how I felt. I began to realise then that maybe I was an alcoholic. Looking back at my chaotic life at the root of everything was my disposition to drink. It had become a way of life. I heard at my early meetings about people hiding their booze. I kept my booze in the bottom of the wardrobe and there was only me and the cat!

Q So you didn't get sober straightaway?

A I stopped for three months, then to celebrate the Notting Hill Carnival – and my three-month anniversary, I went to the pub and had a drink. I came back to AA and stayed sober for over three years. I got back with my wife and moved house from London to East Sussex. I went to a couple of meetings after moving, but was so busy with the new house and work that I started associating with a neighbour and ended up drinking. I didn't get back to AA for 18 years.

I came back again all those years later, I was bumping along the bottom of life. I ended up in jail in Scotland. I was then on probation. I was all day drinking. One day I woke up and was at my wits end. I picked up the phone and contacted AA.

Q You've been around a fair while now. What's your take on this virus that's going around?

A I married again, live in a tiny village. I speak with other members by phone. I've been to my first online meeting. I could see everyone, but they couldn't see me and I couldn't speak! Another member's going to help me with that.

Q What would you say to a newcomer?

A Be humble. I realised how selfish I had been in my life. I acknowledged I needed help and that I couldn't do this on my own.

Thanks James. I think that's a powerful way to end.

shareback

If you have identified with anything in SHARE, or wish to express a personal opinion based on your experience, share it with us. Write a letter of not more than 300 words and enclosing a contact name and address (not for publication) to:

Share Back, PO Box 1, 10 Toft Green, York YO1 7NJ.
or **E Mail AAShare@gsogb.org.uk**

KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN

ONE of the greatest gifts the AA Programme has given me is the ability to keep my mouth shut. That might surprise people who know me – I have opinions and I am not afraid to express them. However, AA has taught me better to pick my moment.

There are thoughts that are better left unsaid, and kept where they are – as thoughts. I could have caused tremendous damage if I'd said some of the things I'd wanted to tell my former wife. Time has revealed that very often she was right, and I was wrong. Or, more often than not, what was troubling me didn't matter anyway.

My first big challenge at work came when a colleague didn't do what he was supposed to do. That left me in a vulnerable position. I felt threatened, and fear quickly took hold. Something told me – keep calm. Don't raise your voice and

whatever you do, do *not* lose your temper. I made my point as clearly and as calmly as I could, and stepped back. I raised the issue with my line manager. As I suspected, he appeared not to be bothered. It was *my* problem, not his.

It took me a while to realise that to get people to listen, I need to lower my voice – not to raise it.

ANON

MY GREATEST ASSET

I WAS very touched by Gary C writing from prison in the September issue of SHARE.

We are told that our past is our greatest asset and that can be hard sometimes as I still suffer great guilt from my drunken past. An AA friend once suggested that every time that wave of guilt came over me, I could see it as an opportunity to do something good and worthwhile for someone else that day. His article showed me that by wanting to get well and wanting what was on offer, we will get well.

He wrote to GSO and requested information and help finding a sponsor. Both arrived. It works if we work it and want it no matter where we are.

Today I want to be sober. I have had a quiet time first thing with my HP. I have read some literature, asked for a day of sobriety and prayed for two members of my family. I want sobriety today. I have "adjusted my sail" and set my mind on course for another useful and sober day.

Keep going Gary ODAAT and the last three years in prison will pass and you can share your experience, strength and hope in meetings and give people like me hope for another day of sobriety.

JUDY, Suffolk

FINDING MY HIGHER POWER

I CAME into recovery in December 2018. I had a period of flirting with meetings, going but not getting it. But I think I knew in the back of mind AA would be there for me when I truly wanted to surrender, which I did thankfully, when I was at a point of being mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually snapped. I had nothing left and wanted to quell the fear and anxiety in my mind that alcohol fuelled.

The beauty of AA is finding a Higher Power but it not necessarily having a religious connotation. It's anything that

can be used to help guide you through recovery and is one the of the main reasons I managed to find my Higher Power and begin my journey into sobriety. I always had a relationship with God but a very weak one. I would use 'him' as a bargaining chip, reminding 'him' of the pain he had put me through in my life and now 'he' had made me an alcoholic.

It's not like that today, my relationship with God is strong and he helps me daily in my life in recovery. I pray continuously through the day, grateful for his grace. I pray for him to help me with my character defects, they stop me being a channel of 'his' peace. When my defects are on the surface and I'm letting my will guide me, it blocks my view of God and all the blessings he has graced me with. All the beautiful things I have in my life, the small tiny things I appreciate are all due to this Programme, my sponsor, the people in the Rooms and God – and for that I will be forever grateful. I thank God for AA and I thank AA for God.

CATHERINE



THE TWELVE CONCEPTS

for 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 ensure 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 recognise 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 over-all 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 whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that its actions never be personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy; that it never performs acts of government and that, like the Society it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action.



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