

June 2020

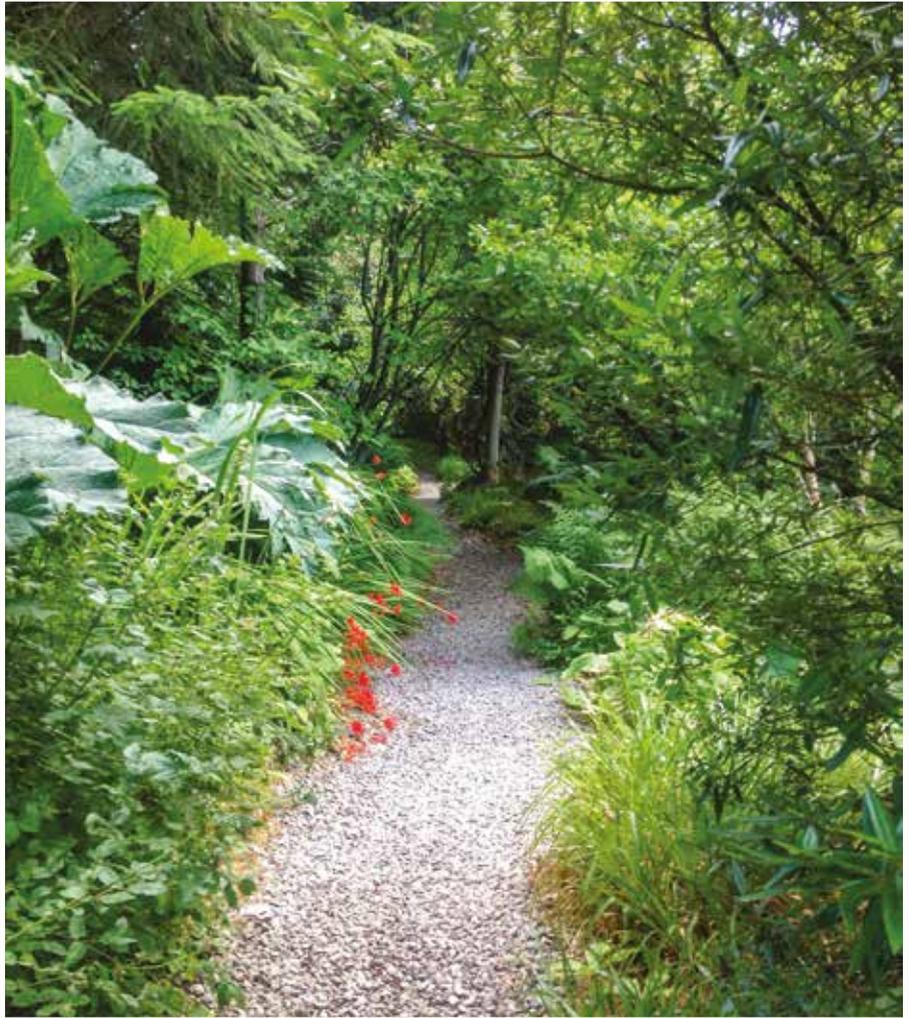
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The Fellowship's
RECOVERY MAGAZINE

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Produced for members
by members

Our Meeting Between Meetings



Entirely ready

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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in England & Wales

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our meeting in print

JUNE 2020

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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

ENTIRELY ready! Step Six is short on words but it packs a mighty punch. By the time I got to this a lot of work had been done but now came the challenge. Am I ready to change? To leave stuff behind me? Destructive stuff but stuff I perversely quite like at times. Our Twelve Step Programme is simple but no one ever said it was easy and they were right. But as the work continues so does my sobriety. Keep at it my Fellows!

My thoughts today are with the newcomers. People new to AA may have looked up details about us online or made a call to our National helpline. What has changed drastically is our meetings have now moved On-Line. As a Fellowship we are well set up to welcome the newcomer as they hesitatingly approached the door of our meeting. We choose a 'Greeter' whose service position is to look out for newcomers and to welcome you. The Greeter offers to take you into the meeting room, give you a cup of coffee and introduce you to the group's Secretary and other members. We all understand how you feel as we had all been in your position as a newbie. Someone explains about what happens during the meeting, we chat to you during the tea break and after the meeting, give you AA literature and our phone numbers as a support.

We can still do that but in a different way. A 'Newcomers Pack' can be downloaded online. We look out for new faces at our online meetings and make sure we say hello and welcome you. But it is all too easy for you to just click out and leave. Can we just encourage you to stay and have a chat with us after the meeting? We are here to help.

**** * * *

NEXT MONTH: STEP SEVEN

We invite articles on your experience, strength and hope. This month we are particularly looking for those on Steps and Traditions Eight and Nine for the August and September 2020 issues.



STEP SIX:

“Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.”

FOREVER GRATEFUL STEP SIX

THE Step that separates the men from the boys. I was willing and accepted the goal to remove my defects of character, I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that I had no willpower over alcohol. I was often referred to as someone who could drink like a man, I saw this a badge of honour, it made me feel good, never wanting to appear weak, this statement made me feel strong. I knew my willpower could not work against alcohol. I had tested this theory so many times, well I had tried to drink like a lady. But once I had the taste of alcohol in my mouth, it started a compulsion to drink to blackout. I couldn't stop drinking, not for myself, my family or anyone. I became willing to clean house, ask God to release me from my obsession to drink and for God to grant me freedom from alcoholism.

I could not understand why I always was a slave to alcohol; I felt this overwhelming desire

to drink as if it was the answer to all my problems. I knew that pouring alcohol into my system was destroying me. I often felt in pain from the drink, like my liver was trying to tell me something but that pain soon disappeared. I was bent upon self-destruction, had no value for my life, in some ways I felt like life was wasted on me.

Once I joined AA, I was able to see my life differently. Guided by a sponsor I allowed God to enter my life and end the longest relationship I've ever had. I always wanted to be a normal person, live like a normal person, but I only felt like a normal person with alcohol in my system. Whilst I don't blame my parents, there are always things, incidents that make you question your identity. Whether it be an actual incident or just comparing your life to others. I do believe that your childhood does play a part in shaping your views of yourself, it goes without saying that alcohol does not help to improve these thoughts or perceptions we have.

In Step Six, I had to be entirely ready for God to remove my defects of character to enable me to live a better life, guided by the Twelve Steps of the Programme. I understood it would take effort and willingness on my part on a daily basis. I no longer wanted to live my life in anger or lust for things that were not always good for me. I had self-righteous anger, I took satisfaction from the fact that if people annoyed me, it made me angry and I needed alcohol to fuel it. I knew I had to entirely accept all the implications of Step Six though they seemed a lot to ask of someone but in reality, it was no more difficult than the five Steps before. In Step One I admitted wholeheartedly that I am powerless over alcohol so Step Six should not seem that difficult and therefore not impossible. I know I must start and keep trying a day at a time to defeat my character defects. I wanted to gain the advantage and peacefulness that I felt Step Six would give me.

I was ready with an open mind to change my life in the direction of peace, happiness and a serene life, a life where I accept my character defects and work on them on a daily basis in order for me to lead a better life. I was willing to let go of my obsession to lie, to manipulate situations to my advantage, to gain money or things through deception and dishonest practices. I was ready to be a better person, someone who could first look at myself in the mirror, be a reliable family member, good friend and

good employee. As an alcoholic I always aimed for perfection, and could rationalise why I never even came close. I know now, as I come to grips with some of my worst character defects and take the action towards their removal, that I will never be closed to God removing my character defects, one day at a time. I know to delay is dangerous and this could be fatal.

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. I am ready to lead a life where I do not do destructive things, I think, think, think before I act. I can succeed at life by accepting I am powerless over alcohol, that a Power greater than me restored me to sanity. I made a decision to turn my will over to the care of God, I made a searching and fearless moral inventory of myself, admitted to God and myself and my sponsor the exact nature of my alcoholic wrongs and that I was entirely ready to have God remove all my defects of character.

Step Six, halfway there, I get a sense of relief, I feel pleased, I can do this, my life is already shifting in the right direction, I feel a sense of love for myself, I know the Twelve Steps of AA are shaping my life for the better. I am starting to know me, who I am, that I am worth living. I choose to live a Sober Life, One Day at a Time.

FOREVER GRATEFUL,
Birmingham, St Georges,
Sunday meeting (Changes)

KEEP MY MOTOR RUNNING AND STEP SIX

THE first half of the First Step is about alcohol, the remaining eleven and a half Steps are about change. Steps Six and Seven are the engine room of the Programme and where my change began to really hit deep.

I've admitted my powerlessness, I now have a new Power in my life and I've cleared away the wreckage of my past by being honest, open and willing. Already a lot of change has occurred in my life and it was about this time that the obsession to drink was lifted, a miracle, and after about five months, I was learning how to live life sober, one day at a time. One of the personal stories at the back of the Big Book is 'A.A. TAUGHT HIM TO HANDLE SOBRIETY' (BB p.553), and that story made me realise just how much I needed to change. Starting out as my fun companion, becoming my coping mechanism and later being my daily medicine for my mental, physical and spiritual illness, alcohol had been a constant in my life and now I needed to learn how to live a life without a drink.

"If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing."

(BB p.76)

One day at a time, connecting with Fellows and building a relationship with my Higher Power was certainly helping me, but I was told that if I didn't change my behaviours, my attitudes and work on my shortcomings, I would drink again...

So I needed to work on my defects, impatience, criticism and intolerance, but I couldn't just pray about these, I needed to start acting the opposite. I had to practice being patient, being loving and being kind. I was told by fellow AAs that this is a Programme of action and I continue to put in the action and try to practice these principles in all my affairs. And amazingly, by being more loving and not being critical with my grown-up step-children, they in turn are more loving and kinder towards me.

Today, I am responsible and when I feel discontented or uncomfortable, I need to accept the things I cannot change and have the courage to change the things I can...usually ME.

MICHELLE, Plymouth

JUST FOR TODAY – STEP SIX

STEP Six, one of our beautiful alcohol freeing, lifesaving Steps, something I knew nothing about before coming in utter despair to the healing Rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1996. AA is a spiritual Programme of recovery and from my first day I was introduced to simple spiritual suggestions, or spiritual tools. What happened to me that day is basically outlined on page 25 of the Big Book, where it says, *“When, therefore, we were approached by those in whom the problem had been solved, there was nothing left for us but to pick up the simple kit of spiritual tools laid at our feet.”*

I went to lots of meetings, quickly got involved in service and got home groups. I started to read the literature, started to write gratitude lists, and quickly got myself a sponsor. He showed me how to do Step Four and then I did Step Five with him. After that he said I should go home and do Steps Six and Seven, as outlined in the Big Book, as soon as possible. Step Six only covers two paragraphs in the Big Book but what powerful paragraphs and powerful words they are. The full wording of Step Six is, *“Were entirely ready to have*

“We have emphasised willingness as being indispensable.”

(BB p.76)

God remove all these defects of character.”. When I arrived in AA I didn’t even know that the word God would be mentioned nor did I have any idea that I had any defects of character or that I had any resentments, it was only by

doing Steps Four and Five that I found out about resentments and defects of character. With the help and spiritual wisdom of the people I met in AA and AA’s very simple but very effective spiritual message of finding a Higher Power

of one’s own understanding, I was able through the Steps to re-establish a connection with a God of my own concept and to understand about my defects of character and resentments. What started as a flimsy reed has developed into a construction of joy, of love, of happiness, of complete and utter certainty, that a Power greater than myself exists. The world calls this power God, and in AA I’m able to have and develop my own personal connection with it. A connection that is very freeing, very invigorating, in fact a connection that is just sheer bliss. In AA we get to realise how loving God is, for not only does he allow us to be sober but also, He/She/It

“...wants us to be happy, joyous, and free.” (BB p.133). This is achieved by daily putting into practice certain very simple spiritual ideals, and by daily trying to put into practice the ideals that are in the ‘Just for Today’ card. God, I know loves me; in fact He/She/It loves and wants the best for all of us. How do I know this? Well as I said, I have been sober since my first day in AA and I know that something greater than myself has done this. I certainly could not have done it on my own for God has allowed me to find a new peace within myself, a new calmness, a new usefulness or to use the phrase from the Big Book, God has allowed me to be happy, joyous and free. AA has also taught me about resentments and defects of character. How could I ask for these to be removed in Step Six, if I did not know what they were? It was only by doing Steps Four and Five that I learnt about them and the control they had over

me. “Resentment is the “number one” offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else. From it stem all forms of spiritual disease, for we have been not only mentally and physically ill, we have been spiritually sick.” (BB p.64)

By doing the Steps I learnt about defects of character and about the control they had over me. Things are always going to happen in life. It is how we react to them that has been the problem and AA gives me the spiritual tools to deal with them. AA allows me to pick up the spiritual tools of life, enabling me to deal with resentments on spiritual lines, allowing me to remain sober, and to have a beautiful, happy, healthy, spiritual, God-loving, sober life. Thanks for reading this. God bless AA, and all in it, and may we pray that lovely AA does happily and healthily spiritually grow and glow, so we can help others.

DENNIS, Ealing

TRADITIONS CHECKLIST

Tradition Six



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.

1. Is it good for a group to lease a small building?
2. Is my group aware that all money collected in the pot is AA money and should not be used for social activities, birthday cakes, etc?
3. Should members of my group sit on alcohol advisory committees or other committees concerned with alcohol problems/alcoholism?



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 purple lights. The arena's facade is a complex, geometric structure of hexagons and pentagons.

Email address: info@aa75.co.uk

SECOND TIME AROUND

MOST shares I've heard are from childhood but I'm going to start from where I'm at now. I am a 61-year-old male, my name is Mark and I'm a normal, happy-go-lucky, hard-working guy. I have come back to AA after 27 years of sobriety, with only the first four years in the Rooms. By not keeping up my housekeeping (following the 12&12), two years ago my ego, lack of willpower and my shadow said to me, "I don't think you have a problem, you have been so good all this time, I don't think there is a problem." Well, my wheels fell off!!!!!!

I binged and the compulsion to drink more was back, with no stopping. Like there was never enough to satisfy me. Drinking to be the last man standing in a group of men. On my own, I couldn't drink it quick enough till I passed out. Newly married, my wife had never seen me that way – shocked and worried, she said, "I won't stay around to see you kill yourself." I pledged an oath to stop for the tenth time.

My life was about to turn around. My best friend, who's in the Fellowship, gave me a new position

in his company, absolutely transforming my life for the better. After relapsing himself I prayed he would return to AA and gave him all the support and advice I could. But I was still hurting after two years of being a dry drunk,

the storm of anxiety and depression that lasted days but with no reason I could find.

I stepped back to a meeting. I had thought I could help others but quickly learnt my tools are rusty. I need to renew my Steps and knowledge of the ways of how to improve our life, not just

putting the drink down. The more we put in, the more we get out.

So, I'm looking for a sponsor and will soon be back on the path to helping myself get better first and then to help those that need it. That's what we have to do – help ourselves first as we can't help others if we are unwell. I owe my life to AA as I would not be here if not for them. The only proof there is, just look how full the Rooms are and many have years of great recovery. Many urgently need hope and life because of this killer illness.

The Doctor's Opinion in the Big Book is a great chapter to see what

"Sweeping changes in society as a whole are reflected in new customs and practices within the Fellowship."

(BB p.xxiv)

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**

happens when we put alcohol in our system, the allergy that racks up our craving. I know I can never drink like normal people; I know I can't have one or two drinks and stop. My mind and body won't let me say no to another drink after it's in my body. The meetings this week have helped me so much after a week of disappointment

and not knowing how to deal with it. I will and must keep with the Programme to get the peace of mind I want, and confidently know will continue – as the other option is being very ill and losing what I have now. Thank you for reading this and if it helps anyone, I would love that. Peace to you and be safe.

MARK

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.

A GOD INSTANCE

MY name is Pamela and I'm an alcoholic. Before I came into the Rooms of AA one of the worst things I did whilst drinking was to drive my car! As I got overwhelmed by the disease of alcoholism. I slowly but surely lost my morals. On the day in question, I had been drinking and driving and had a made-up whiskey and coke beside me in the car. I started my journey out of the small village where I live. As I looked down the road ahead, I saw a never-ending queue of traffic, nose-to-tail, not moving. As usual stress levels were high, so I decided to turn the car around in the lay-by on the right-hand side of the road and take the back road. I put my indicator on and began to turn the car when a big motorbike came alongside and we both ended up in a heap in the lay-by. My small hire car was smashed, the big burly guy and his motorbike were not even damaged – only his foot pedal – but I later found out he had actually badly injured his ankle. I had clearly been drinking – I immediately panicked. The guy didn't say much but he scared me, we exchanged details and he left. My car had to be towed away.

Moving on a few years, I walked through the doors of AA, I was made to feel welcome. After a few months of sobriety, I had begun to share. At one meeting drink-driving was mentioned and I shared the above story. At the end of the

meeting, a big burly guy who had made me feel welcome and gave me a hug week after week, told me he was the man on the motorbike! Now what were the chances of that? This is a classic case of a Higher Power at work before entering AA...

I was eventually able to make my amends (after freaking out and vowing not to come back to this meeting ever!) to this man who had become a real person after all these years. I could have lost my licence; I could have gone to prison! Instead the amends I made at his request was to always welcome the newcomer that came into AA. He told me, at least you are now in the right place.

Today I am now seven and a half years sober. Drink-driving can kill people, injure people – innocent people. It can cause untold misery, pain and upset to families. I never gave it a second thought, something I would never do sober or before I became an alcoholic. Each and every day I am grateful for my life. I work my Programme to the best of my ability and believe and trust in a Higher Power which I call God. He has brought me together with my new sponsee, a lady who has been in and out of AA for some 20 years. We have started to work together and the passion I have for AA has grown yet again; I am so blessed to share her new journey of recovery with her.

PAMELA

A MILITARY WAY OF LIFE

MY name is Jim and I'm an alcoholic. I was in the British Army from the age of 18. In order to join the Army, you have to go through a series of medicals, interviews, tests and selection processes. I passed my tests, selection and medicals, not a problem. However, the interviews were a different matter, I just did not have the confidence in an interview. Three times I had my final interview with the recruitment office Commanding Officer, and three times I was told I'm not confident enough. Really wanting to join the Army I was feeling disheartened.

But I booked my interview for a fourth time, this time I popped to the pub before the interview and had a bottle of beer (thankfully just the one). I walked into the office with confidence, I spoke freely and meaningfully. I finally got past that difficult process.

I completed my training, just. Nearly being removed from training in the last few weeks due to drinking at the wrong time and place. Thankfully I was allowed to pass out from training. I joined my battalion in May 2004, the week of an important football match. I

was looking forward to watching my beloved home team on TV. So, with a group of guys I did not know I started drinking and drinking and drinking. I passed out, cracking my head open on a sink and had to be put to bed by these people. The next morning was horrendous, the feeling of guilt and shame and not even remembering much about the football.

"...the difference between an electronic meeting and the home group round the corner is only one of format."

(BB p.xxiv)

Sadly, that was not the only time I behaved and felt like that during my time in the Army. Many times I felt like that.

Even at times being put on a drink-watch to ensure I didn't drink, that didn't work. I had also been having trouble

of a medical kind. And when I was told I was going to be medically discharged from the army the thought came to me that I could drink when and how I liked if I left the army. I didn't fight it and was discharged.

I came out with a nice pay-out and went back home to live with my Nan. That is when life became a mission, I struggled for a number of years not knowing how to cope with life. I had come from the military being told what to do, when to do it and how to do it, my life had been run for me I just had

to be there. But now I was on my own to manage my own life and I was in a mess getting worse day by day. I changed jobs almost on a weekly basis, changed relationships, moved around the country and generally changed everything in my life to try to change the way that I felt. Nothing worked.

In 2012 after losing my career and drifting for years, I moved to Plymouth – another attempt to change the way that I felt. After a short period, I was feeling the same as before, my mental and physical health were going down the pan. Starting to feel that maybe alcohol was not only my answer to life, the only thing that brought any colour to it, but maybe also part of the problem. It was suggested to me that I went to a few meetings of AA, see if I could identify. I did identify and got myself a sponsor and was given some suggestions to do on a daily basis. I could get it straight away as I felt I would be able to drink again after a period of leaving it alone.

After drinking again for around ten months, life was getting systematically and progressively worse. I was pulling my hair out, why can't I cope with life like everybody else does? Why had I been dealt such a bad hand? I came back into AA, got myself another sponsor. Something was different as I started doing the suggestions I was asked to do on a daily basis, like a dying man. My thinking was starting to tell me I was dying. On this basis the thought of alcohol was removed in a few days and life started getting better and

better daily. I was coming to the realisation that I was the problem and I couldn't manage my life on my terms. Step Three became such an important part of my life and recovery. I was seeing that all through my life I had times where I was running my life and times where I was handing my will and life over to something, God, Army etc. In this I could see every time I was running the show, life was very hard and a struggle. Alcohol was the only solution to life. When I turn my will and life over, life was working out, I was able to live life on life's terms. I was no longer a prey to misery and depression; I knew how to handle situations that used to baffle me. Life started taking on new meaning. Great things started happening, I got into employment, I got into a relationship that I've been in for five years and got married. I've had a son, run my own business and worked my way through the service structure.

I live a blessed and fantastic life today as a result of the Twelve Step Programme outlined in the basic text of Alcoholics Anonymous (Big Book), with the help of a sponsor, the only other person I need to be completely honest with. And to get into the middle of a great home group. Somewhere I can call home and feel safe. As long as I keep turning my will and life over to a Higher Power of my understanding in a daily basis, I do not need to fear picking up another alcoholic drink again.

JIM

SHARING AT MEETINGS

Is there anywhere we can find guidelines or a suggested format for sharing at normal AA meetings? One place to look is in the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, AA's principal text. Consider the first 164 pages of this book, frequently referred to as the Big Book (BB) which are divided into eleven

chapters. Only chapter one, "Bill's Story" is 16 pages long. Pages one to seven have as its primary focus Bill's early years and the havoc alcohol caused in his life. Having covered that phase, Bill then writes (pages 8-16) about the events leading up to his momentous experience in hospital, followed by what his life was like afterwards. So less than half of this chapter described 'what it was like'. When writing these important 16 pages in the BB, Bill chose to divide his own story into three parts. What it was like, what happened and what it was like afterwards. He reinforces this three-part approach in chapter five, page 58, at the beginning of the second paragraph where it reads: "Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened and what we are like now."

*"...we shall have to be content with patient improvement."
(12&12 p.67)*

Are these guidelines for our own shares?

Many shares focus almost solely on our escapades (what it was like), often in great and graphic detail believing that is what is required of a share. Often only treating in passing the other two parts recommended in chapter five, namely 'what happened' and 'what it's like now'. I appreciate newcomers when first in the Rooms, and others, need to hear some parts of a person's drinking story for identification. I certainly needed to, nearly 40 years ago although the details of many of the events in the lives of the people sharing were foreign to me. I had not been to jail, or hospital, wrecked cars, etc, etc, etc.

What I identified with was the feelings of hopelessness, desperation to drink, when it was crazy to do so, denying I had a problem, being dishonest, financially irresponsible and a bad parent etc. So, it was these types of situations in people's stories that I easily identified with. Despite my reservations while looking for the differences, they helped me to accept that maybe there was something for me in the Rooms. Then I was hungry to hear people

share on what happened to enable them to stop drinking and then how their lives had changed for the better. Especially how they managed when the urge to drink came back; In other words, the second and thirds parts suggested in chapter five became more important. In the early days I desperately needed people to share on how they handled everyday problems likely to arise in my life without resorting to alcohol. In others words, how did they do it; what's the key to staying sober! Not how they drank!

The third part is still vital for me today as I still wait to hear people share on how they handle the day-to-day problems life throws up. Problems with money, marriage/relationships, work, siblings/children, family members dying, illness etc. Yet I can go to share meeting after share meeting and listen to the person chosen to be the main speaker who thinks they are expected to recount in detail the drinking part of their life with emphasis on the damage caused themselves and others and little else. A one-part share? If further evidence is needed to reinforce

“...need to make a brand new venture into open-mindedness.”
(12&12 p.70)

where the focus of a share should be directed, consider that of the eleven chapters in the Big Book, chapter two is titled “There Is a Solution”. So straight into the solution.

The next five chapters focus on recovery, with the remaining ones on how we can live sober lives at home, at work and in the wider community. Fellowship is a vital part of making people feeling welcome and provides on-going support, but it's not the Twelve Step Programme. People sharing on their drinking

story and little else genuinely believe they are carrying the message by offering identification. There are however guidelines in the BB outlined above, the importance of which seems to be lost.

It saddens me when people come to AA for a while, in and out of rehabs etc and die, as they are not exposed to enough shares communicating how others have gotten through the dark days. I believe it's vital to communicate hope and optimism within the framework set out in chapter five.

MO, Dorset



SHARE is now available online on the AA Website.

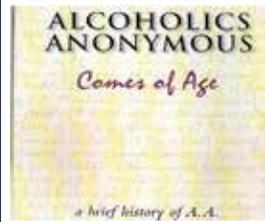
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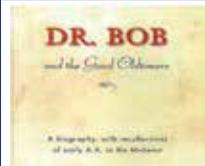
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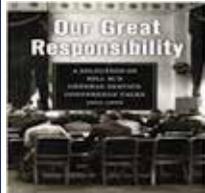
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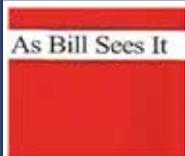
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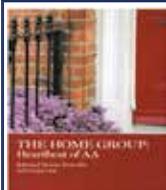
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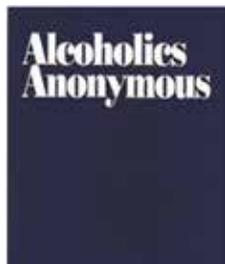
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Rumour has it that at Bill's suggestion the first edition was printed on very heavy paper to make it look bigger, thicker and therefore seem to be better value for money! Hence the 'Big Book' nickname.

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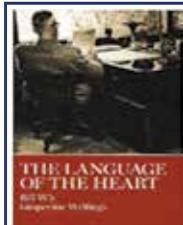


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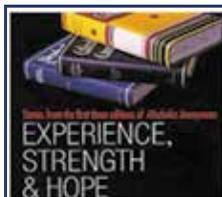
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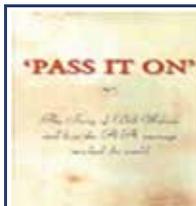
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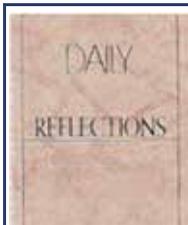
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RECOVERY IN ACTION

I SHOULD be sitting in my homegroup (Bakewell Friday) doing a birthday share and eating cake, instead I'm sat at home social isolating because of the Covid 19 pandemic. I live with elderly vulnerable people, and I can't risk it. Today, I am responsible.

After a long drawn out losing battle with alcohol, it finally beat me on 18th March 1999.

That was the day I checked onto a rehab programme for the last time. As well as the rehab I started to attend AA meetings, something I never wanted to do, I was never that

bad. As it turned out I was. I wish I could say life was wonderful since then, but I can't. There were two messages being said at the time.

One was, "Go to meetings, don't drink and you'll be all right." The other was, "Go to meetings, don't drink, get a sponsor, work the Steps, do service and change."

To my detriment I listened to the first one.

I went to meetings I didn't drink but I wasn't all right. I was getting sicker and sicker; I was a dry drunk. This lasted for over four years, at the end of that time I wanted to die, and I had my suicide all planned out. This frightens me as I would often set out to kill myself when I was drinking, but I would always have a whiskey for Dutch courage. After taking this, I would

just say, "---- it, I'll just get drunk and kill myself tomorrow." What frightened me was that I didn't want a drink and I knew I could go through with it and actually kill myself. I had to get a sponsor and a Programme of recovery. At one of the meetings was an old boy who had what I wanted. When

he shared, he spoke about AA, the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, doing service and helping others. He never spoke about his washing machine or boiler breaking down, he did that before and after the meeting. When the

meeting started it was all business. Another thing I liked about him was that when ever he came into a meeting, all the ladies gave him a kiss and a hug. People respected him; he was a nice man. I wanted that for myself.

I plucked up the courage and asked him to be my sponsor, He said he would, and we wouldn't hang around in working the Steps. We set about this right from the start, we had time for a cup of tea at that first meeting then it was down to business. He was right, we didn't hang around. He showed me how simple the Twelve Step Programme was, although as simple as it was, it wasn't always easy. The one Step I never wanted to do was Step Four, who would? I spoke to lots of people about this Step. Most

"What we must recognise now is that we exult in some of our defects." (12&12 p.68)

SHARE ALWAYS NEEDS A GOOD PHOTO



- Pictures need to be 2MB in size for printing.
- Share gets lots of pictures of flowers and trees.
- Share likes pictures which capture the alcoholic's attention.
- Quirky is good!

Please send to:
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said how hard it is and how you will end up drinking. I asked when did they do Step Four and none of them had actually done it. I was listening to the uneducated. What I found was that there was nothing to be frightened about Step Four, or any other Step for that matter. Every single one of our Steps are loving Steps, not one is there to hurt us. The whole of the Steps is just a process that take us from one place to another, just like the Steps in my house they take me from downstairs to upstairs.

The more I got involved in working the Steps, the more I wanted to see what would happen next. I could feel and see a change in me that I was looking for most of my life. The one Step I did struggle on was Step Twelve. I got a couple of sponsees and I was determined to get these fellas well. It didn't take long to work out I don't have the gift of being a sponsor. I struggled with this for a long time, but an old timer gave me the gem I needed. He said to me, "Not everybody is cut out to be a sponsor, and there are some people sponsoring who have no business in doing so." This made so much sense to me, and the best thing I did for those two lads was to help them find a new sponsor. I do believe that a newcomer deserves the best possible chance to recover, and I'm grateful today I know that is not me.

I wish I could say life was wonderful since working the Steps, but I can't. Life is hard and it brings up all sorts of challenges. I've always known I belong in

PHOTOGRAPHS WANTED 2021 Calendar

The format must be **A4 Landscape** and be free from any possible identification of persons, implied endorsement or affiliation with any specific organisation, political, cultural, ethnic or denominational identity. Photos should not include identifiable public buildings, properties, notices or similar content. Only photos taken in Great Britain or Central European Region can be considered for inclusion and must be taken by you, personally.

Set cameras or Smartphones to High Definition, Highest or Ultra Quality. **The MINIMUM picture file size is 2MB, but bigger is ok too!**

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DEADLINE: 14 June 2020



AA, but I've never felt like I fitted in. there was always something different with me. I thought I was shy with a social anxiety disorder maybe a bit of borderline personality disorder thrown in for good measure. Four years ago, it was pointed out to me from a good friend that I was none of that, I was just a common introvert and empath. After looking into these, my whole life made sense, I could see why I acted strange around certain people and situations. Why I often felt drained from some folk. Why I could tell if I was being lied too, even if you believed it yourself. Why I would be sad around sad people or happy around happy people, or angry around angry people. I've since learned how to deal with these

things and I now put barriers up to protect my inner peace and to keep away from people who drain me. I still don't feel like I fit into AA, I still don't like sharing. But that's OK today. I have a great life today, thanks to AA and a Higher Power.

DEAN



"I clung to everyone and everything."

WITH GRATEFUL THANKS

MY name is Adele and I am a very grateful recovering alcoholic. I am celebrating three years of sobriety in two days' time, and that is truly amazing for someone who couldn't leave the wine alone for three hours. These days, I do not need to drink, but definitely do need the hand of AA to help me to keep sober and to be grounded in what could happen if, for one moment, I tried to maintain my sobriety on my own.

I was a late starter to alcohol at the age of 32. In fact, in my earlier life, I actually detested alcohol and looked down on those I met who lost control when drinking. My Higher Power, who I choose to call God, certainly held a card hidden up His sleeve in order to teach me a lesson. My life became totally unmanageable, and no matter how hard I tried, I could not escape the horrible alcoholic prison that I had created for myself. I told myself all kinds of lies, "I am a heavy, but normal, drinker", "I can stop if people would just leave me alone and stop preaching". It was always everyone else's fault, and never mine. My days were held together by vain attempts to achieve control over my drinking, and then ending in shame and a sense of hopelessness. I couldn't

*"I was beaten,
absolutely licked."
(12&12 p.64)*

look anyone in the eye, and this included me looking at my own reflection in the mirror. My sister had died tragically, on her own, through chronic alcoholism, but still I continued for two more years. By the time that I walked into my first meeting, I knew that I was fighting for my life, and I very much wanted to live. I know now that I had accepted Step One, that my life had become unmanageable. The love and acceptance that I found at that

meeting was unconditional, and something clicked in my exhausted brain. I had totally thrown in the towel. I left the meeting in a daze, but with hope and an invitation to 'keep coming back'.

That is exactly what I did, and my life began to change in so many positive ways. In this current situation with the corona virus affecting our lives in sad and cruel ways, my gratitude is tenfold. I know that I would have been taking huge risks in order to obtain the alcohol I required. I am privileged to carry out phone service for AA, and my heart goes out to the still suffering alcoholics who ring the Helpline. For all that I have received from this truly wonderful Fellowship, I am truly grateful. Thank you for keeping me sober.

ADELE, Sandhurst Newcomers

AA IN OUR TIMES

IN the last month we have seen the world turned upside down, in this alcoholic's case it has meant I am now home schooling my children and am unable to work. I have had to cancel a holiday with my mum (whom I was once estranged from due to alcohol) and a trained hard for marathon has been postponed. What I realised extremely quickly is also I could not attend meetings in person as I have vulnerable people at home. I am grateful for the grass roots within AA, the home groups which have sprung up in the space of days on line. I thought this would really upset my anonymity however I have been informed of meetings with trusted Fellows

“This is the step that separates the men from the boys...”

(12&12 p.64)

and I have set up a ‘Just for Today’ meeting also.

We have looked back at AA during World War II and gained strength from the stories of Fellowship and staying sober. We have gained strength from our Fellows in this time of need. We have reached out and spoken on the phone more often than we ever did before. We have video called our Fellows and set up meetings. We have taken to our Programme with more vigour than ever before. We have cried together and laughed together from our own homes, we have been more honest than before.

We have thought about others and we have not been alone.

Want to know more about the early days of our wonderful Fellowship?

THEN CHECK OUT

**‘Our Great Responsibility:
A Selection of Bill W.’s General
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LISTED ON GSO LITERATURE ORDER FORM

After years of painstaking research and transcription of recordings, this volume offers a timeless and timely insight into Bill W.’s innovative thinking, giving readers around the world a window into how Alcoholics Anonymous moves forward in unity.

We are a Fellowship of men and women who share their experience strength and hope, just for today we do this online, like the foreword in the 4th edition of the Big Book where they described, wrote, *“Modem-to-modem or face-to-face, A.A.’s speak the language of the heart in all its power and simplicity.”* (BB p. xxiv) When we reach the 5th edition the digital age will be mentioned, where anonymity will still be protected in times of need, our need to be sober and stay sober is greater than our own ego. This

will make our Fellowship stronger and more reachable than ever before, especially to the younger new comer who has embraced the digital world since they were born.

I feel like I did when I first became a member of AA, I have hope, a new reminder of how the Twelve Steps and Traditions help and how to reach out to the still struggling alcoholic both inside and outside the Rooms.

Stay safe.

HELEN R, Eastbourne

DON'T LOOK AT THE MOUNTAIN

STOPPING drinking seemed insurmountable. So, I had an easy answer, don't stop. If anyone dared to suggest I might have a drink problem, my immediate reaction would be, "I can stop if I want to, and I just don't want to." But I knew deep down, in my heart of hearts, that was a lie. I feared I might have a problem, but it was all too difficult to contemplate. Two years before the end, I had my first stay in a psychiatric unit. It was six months before my first AA meeting, and I had no comprehension of living life one day at a time. Neither did I have an understanding of insanity, although the clue might have been found in the title 'psychiatric unit'.

I thought it was a rest home for the tired, emotional and burnt-out.

I sat in the sun in the courtyard one day, reading a spiritual book a staff member had loaned to me. It contained a story that was my first insight into 'one step at a time'. It was the account of a train driver beginning a journey across the United States. It began with just one green light. There would be many red lights along the way, but they too would turn green when the track was clear. In other words, the train journey would not be taken in one huge chunk. It would be taken in separate stages, one section at a time. I had never thought nor looked at life that way before. I would have thought in

some bizarre way that everything had to be done at once.

Six months later saw me in my first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous.

I was struggling and in a very bad way. My marriage was over, because of my drinking. I was also in serious trouble at work for the same reason. I could see no future. I knew I had serious problems, but none of them related to drink, or so I thought. It took me 18 months in and out of AA, more out than in, for me to understand that I was powerless over alcohol. Every time I drank, I got drunk. And my life was unmanageable, every time I drank, I got drunk and found myself in an argument.

“...no human being could seem to do the job for me.”
(12&12 p.64)

One day, I heard someone in AA say, “How do you paint a brick wall? Answer – one brick at a time.” Suddenly, I was aware of the concept of ‘one step at a time’. The story of the American train driver came back to me, one green signal at a time. I could now visualise even the Great Wall of China covered in paint, one brick at a time. I had to start at the very beginning, one day at a time. Today, I’ve had some practice living that way, more than 6,900 days and still learning.

A neighbour and I were recently lopping overhanging branches from nearby trees. The result was a huge pile of branches on the ground. How were we to

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. You can write just a few lines or more, up to about a 1,000 words, but we do not 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 a.

Send your contribution to: The Editor, SHARE, General Service Office, PO Box 1,10 Toft Green, York YO1 7NJ Or e-mail your article to: AAShare@gsogb.org.uk

dispose of them? “Don’t look at the mountain...” the neighbour said, picking up his loppers and unlocking his secateurs. He set about clipping the branches, one by one, into manageable pieces. We ignored the enormity of the task in hand and reduced the mountain of timber into tiny fragments.

“Don’t look at the mountain...” he said, when he saw my gaze drifting back to the branches. Within a short time, the enormous pile of wood was inside three wheelie bins. Today, I don’t look at the mountain. I just try to do the next right thing.

ANON

NOW I CAN LAUGH

THE famous artist Pablo Picasso had his ‘blue period’, when his paintings predominantly used the colours blue and blue-green. I was a ‘drinks’ artist, and I had my Wine Box Period. That was when I crossed the line into secret drinking.

From a family holiday, I discovered that a line-up of wine boxes – red, white and rosé – was a perfect way to disguise how much I was drinking. A quick slurp, here and there when no-one was looking, was the perfect top-up. And there were no glass bottles to show the levels dropping. A quick lift and swirl of each box would show when it was getting empty. The trick was to replace it with precisely the same brand. That took enormous skill – knowing which outlets sold which brands. There was an added bonus – I could rip up the evidence of the empty wine box and carefully place it discreetly into the dustbin.

“...enough willingness and honesty to try repeatedly Step Six on all his faults – without any reservation whatever...”

(12&12 p.64)

Thankfully, cardboard didn’t chink. The only stunt I hadn’t tried was removing the full contents of each wine box to hide them between the linen in the airing cupboard. That was an extremely neat trick which I heard many years later from a sober friend in AA. Clearly, he had been

far more resourceful and inventive than I had been.

It took me nearly 20 years to find sobriety in the Rooms of AA. There, I learned that alcoholism was a progressive illness. That mirrored my experience precisely. I had progressed from my Wine Box Period, to my Company Expense Account

Drinking Period and on to my Vodka Drinking in Public Lavatories Period.

Thank God for AA, and for saving me from that hell. I can look back on it now and laugh. But it wasn’t funny at the time.

ANON

ODD – OR GOD?

MY belief in a Higher Power is rooted firmly in the knowledge that I was completely and utterly alone at the end of my drinking. I had not yet come to realise that my belief would be defined on page 60 of the Big Book. It says, “(a) *That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives. (b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism. (c) That God could and would if He were sought.*”

Well, I hadn't sought God – He was there all the time. As I write, it is the 20th anniversary of my arrest on a serious drink driving

charge. When I awoke in the police cell, I asked an officer through the door hatch what had happened. With contempt on his face, he said, “You won't be driving a motor vehicle again for a long time.” He was right – it was nearly three years before I would drive again. When I told a friend years later what had happened, she asked why I got behind the wheel of a car having drunk so much. I answered, “I always did.” Any sane, rational person would think that would have ended my drinking. But I continued for another twelve months. Insanity, or what? As I say



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to any newcomer who comes into the Rooms of AA, I had to prove to myself that if I continued drinking, everything got worse, significantly worse. I didn't read it in a book, or watch it on a DVD. I actually lived it.

When the compulsion to drink finally left, I was alone in my flat. No wife, no son, no friends, no work. I was completely and utterly alone. I awoke on a Tuesday morning, and slowly took some action. I'd been attending AA on and off for

"...he wishes to be reasonably safe and secure..."

(12&12 p.65)

nearly 18 months, and I knew it was the only hope. Something guided me to meetings, every single day. Eventually, I found a sponsor. We exchanged stories and I told him about my car crash, the three oncoming cars I'd missed, the traffic island I hit, the lamp post I brought down. He asked me the precise location, and I told him. He answered, "That's at the end of my street." Is it odd, or is it God? I know which answer I prefer.

ANON

I CANNOT CHANGE THE WIND

I'M writing this, three weeks into a national lockdown, with a further three weeks just having been announced. I'm surprised at how nonplussed I feel about it all. I feel as though I've more or less adapted. But I am lucky: I have a job, I have a home, none of my family or friends have been affected by Covid-19. I'm healthy and don't fall into the vulnerable category. I can get to online meetings.

This lockdown has been a time of reflection. My overriding feelings since it started are of relief and gratitude. Relief, because I now have a choice not to drink. Gratitude because, a day at a time,

supported by this Programme, I'm able to live a sober, productive and contented life. And I now have too many positive things going on in my life to risk a drink over. I simply have too much to lose. Remembering this on a daily basis keeps me out of the enticing pity pool I visit every so often. Although the big push this lockdown has been on physical measures like social distancing, I'm encouraged to see the spotlight on mental health. For me, that way is where true danger lies. Early on in recovery, I heard someone say, "My disease will tell me I haven't got it." and "My head's out to get me." As I've grown in sobriety, I have

found these things to be true. All it takes is for little anchors to be lost, or become dislodged and the voices of madness start becoming louder.

I've learned a few things during this lockdown about what I need to do to protect my sobriety. First, my routine matters. Even though I'm working from home, the nature of my work has changed, which has affected my routine. I'm working at different, longer hours, which initially, shook me out of kilter.

I have since put boundaries in place to avoid working crazily long weeks. I've built self-care into my routine. So that's taking physical exercise every day, trying to keep my meditation practice going daily (I don't always manage it), eating well and sticking to a regular sleep routine. I've been doing more in the garden, which has helped calm any creeping tension. And allowing time for chilling out (making a dent in those box sets) and being creative.

Second, keeping connected. Even though I was a bit sceptical about online meetings (and ok they're not as great as the real thing) I factor them into my routine. They are medicine and I need that regular reminder that sobriety is worth working for... and that my head will play tricks with me if I don't take my medicine. I'm in regular touch with my sponsor and sponsees. I speak more to family at the moment, some of whom are vulnerable. Before this pandemic, I had a strained relationship with some of them. While things will

“Alcoholics Anonymous began with sponsorship”



How about putting pen to paper (or finger to keyboard) and sending an article on how sponsorship has impacted

on your AA journey – for our “Sponsorship” feature in SHARE September 2020 issue.

“If you do what I did, you'll get what I got”, said my sponsor.

“Am I helping those I sponsor find what works best for them?”.

What has been your Experience?
What Strength have you found?
What Hope do you have?

Just a few lines, or more (up to a 1,000 words) on the trials and tribulations, the rewards and progress made, while working closely with another alcoholic, would be welcome.



Please read the “Terms” on the Title page and send your contribution to:

The Editor, SHARE,
General Service Office, PO Box 1,
10 Toft Green, York YO1 7NJ

Or email your article to:
AAShare@gsogb.org.uk

never be hunky dory between us, we have talked much more frequently during this crisis.

Third, continuing to do service. Even though I can't get to my home group, I've looked for ways to help others during this crisis. Donating to a foodbank, asking my elderly neighbours if they need help. Running errands for friends and family in need. Writing articles for SHARE magazine!

The last thing is being aware of that most brilliant of acronyms: HALT. When I'm ever hungry, angry, lonely or tired I stop and think, "What can I do about this?" Sometimes I just have to accept that's how I am at that moment, there might be nothing I can do. But I try to remember that even if I'm having a bad day I can reset at any time. Even if that doesn't work, tomorrow is another day

and chances are I'll feel differently about things then. The Daily Reflections says, "*I know today that if I cannot change the wind, I can adjust my sail.*" (1st November, p.314). In my experience, I have found this to be true.

*"Delay is dangerous, and rebellion may be fatal."
(12&12 p.70)*

A couple of weeks ago, someone who doesn't know I'm in recovery asked me, "Oh, don't you find you start drinking earlier in the day?". To which my reply was, "I don't drink.". It brought home to me how this lockdown would really have provided me with THE perfect excuse to drink. What an absolute disaster it would have been. Thanks to AA, even during this strange and scary time, I can find moments of serenity and peace. AA has taught me – and continues to teach me – how to adjust my sail.

ANONYMOUS

OUR MEETING BETWEEN MEETINGS

THE caption that appears on the front cover of SHARE magazine, 'Our Meeting Between Meetings' has probably just been glanced at for many years and editions, without any further thought. Compared with our founders and those early pioneers who struggled to pass the message

and give hope to the helpless alcoholic, we are blessed, we have the use of mobile phones, e-mail, texting etc. to give support and encouragement to those early in recovery.

Sitting in my garden on a sunny afternoon writing this contribution, it is hard to realise

that we are in a very dangerous and lethal pandemic. The country is locked down. All major gathering places – village halls, church halls and other sites used by members of Alcoholic Anonymous are all closed. There is nowhere to go. In a selfish way I am so glad that Alcoholics Anonymous found me when it did. All those meetings over the years invested in the Bank of Sobriety are now being withdrawn to help me withstand any attack from my adversary, King Alcohol, to try and get me back on that dreadful treadmill.

Daily awareness is paramount. Keeping in contact with others, making it known that I am available to listen and talk to those in early stages of sobriety or desperately wanting some personal contact with those who can give hope and help. By using our modern aids, we can keep in contact with our friends and we can also keep in contact with the wider Fellowship through the medium of SHARE – that ‘Meeting Between Meetings’.

PETER R, Colwyn Bay

ISOLATION

THE world the way it is at the minute. Due to the unfortunate happenings in the world today the whole nation is in lockdown. We have and are all experiencing this together. I know it is a hard time for many. However, on a lighter note and my side of this situation, how I am feeling at this moment of time is:

No matter how hard I try to make things around the world better and get rid of this beastly virus, I cannot – except follow the rule of isolation. As a member of AA and, as with many of us out there, I have experienced isolation – so what’s new? But heigh-ho it is totally different now when one is aware!!! Actually, with all the

“It was lifted right out of me.”
(12&12 p.65)

technology that we have today, I am enjoying the online meetings. I live alone in an apartment with an adequate lounge, however, this morning I had 48 people in it!!! Now isn’t that just brilliant.

What a wonderful Fellowship we have. How can we ever be lonely?

I was thinking when lockdown was announced for us all to obey, I thought I have never had a lockdown before, however, I had many lock-ins, alone in my lounge. I wonder how many more of us had the same thoughts. I am so grateful for the Fellowship and members from all over the world. From a ‘Sober for today Buddy’.

JUNE, Hexham

SHARE INTERVIEW

WITH MARGUERITE, TYNE & NORTHUMBRIA



Interview conducted by telephone

Q What brought you to A.A.?

A I was totally lost and couldn't stop drinking. I couldn't do it on my own and I was desperate to do something, I'd tried everywhere else.

Q Could you relate what your experience was like when first arriving in A.A.?

A I was very fearful. I didn't know what it would be like. I actually thought you'd tell me how to drink.

Q Has coming to the Fellowship has any benefits for your family relationships?

A I've seen a change in them. From first coming in, there were suggestions made, strong suggestions, looking back on it now, the amends I made really helped.

I can be there for them now. I don't get irritated when there's drink around. I listen and engage, it's wonderful.

Q Have you a sponsor?

A In the first 6 months I couldn't see how it would work. I went to

a meeting and talked about how I felt. Then a woman came over, who was very kind. She tapped me on the shoulder and said it was going to be alright. I later asked her to be my sponsor.

Q How has A.A. helped in everyday life?

A Not reacting. Not opening my mouth, stop and think. I also consider other people's feelings. What are the consequences if I do react? I would add that I don't use bad language, but I did when I was drunk.

Q Do you sponsor any members?

A Yes. I realise though that I can't get anyone sober. What I can do is share my sobriety. Be trusting and loving. Understand where they are coming from.

Q What would you say to a newcomer reading this?

A You may not understand at the moment, but I encourage you to come back and absorb it. When I first admitted I was an alcoholic in a meeting I was on the right path.

Thank you Marguerite, that was lovely.

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**

A BRIDGE TO NORMAL LIVING!

THIS was amongst many of the one liners and phrases that I heard very early on when I came into the AA Fellowship. It did not, however, actually resonate or have any real significance or meaning until after a few 24 hours of my sobriety journey of recovery.

These days I visualise the bridge as being a physical brick bridge – I’ve stood to the left, right and centre of it countless times, not knowing which way to go. I do know one thing for certain – that without AA and the fellowship of support through not only family, friends but acquaintances too, I would’ve fallen off the bridge back into the depths of active alcoholism again and for certain, an untimely death.

I can still be so very indecisive, much of this is fear based, something I battle with continually on so many levels. I deal however with fear, and in all aspects of my life strive to maintain progress not perfection. What is normal living?

I have no idea if there is a normal way to live but I do know for certain that when I was drinking that was not normal living. Do the ‘Normies’ have a normal way of life figured out? We think not!

Just for today I live with and by the AA Programme, suggestions and tools. It’s a fulfilled sober life that’ll do me. How fortunate am I that I can use that bridge to ponder, without taking a drink just for today!

GLYNIS

GIVING TIME – TIME

EVERYTHING changes with time. That is not just because time heals – nor because we forget, or change our minds. Time changes as time advances.

My son was a schoolboy when I stopped drinking. At that time, my sobriety then was just a small part of his lifetime. Those days became weeks, then months, then years. Each and every one of them a single day, stacking up one after the other, one day at a time. It’s like watching grass grow; you don’t notice until you look

away then look back again – after a period of time.

When I drive, the road ahead is clear. But the view in the rear-view mirror gives a different perspective.

It took me twelve months – 365 days – of sobriety to grasp the idea of, ‘give time, time.’ To me it meant: live life one day at a time. In time, one day becomes a life. That is not ‘life’ in terms of a prison sentence. My jail term was when I was drinking. I was imprisoned by a daily regime of drink – thinking about it, obtaining it, consuming it, getting rid of the empties, coming to, passing out. Ironically, at that time I was living life one day at a time. I couldn’t remember yesterday and didn’t give a flying flamingo about tomorrow.

With time, everything has changed. My son is now well into his 30s, and I have been sober – one day at a time – for half his lifetime.

JEFF B, Warwickshire

SELF-SUPPORTING

IN these uncertain times with meetings unable to take place, I can only speak for me, but I am putting aside my weekly contributions to ‘The Pot’. When this current crisis is over, I will put this money straight into ‘The Pot’.

I confess to being rather a computer dinosaur, but I’m in favour of the online meetings that are taking place. However, and obviously, a physical ‘Pot’ cannot be passed, but would urge all members, where possible, to at least put aside some money for when normality returns.

Finally, I want and need the hand of AA always to be there for me, and for that ‘I am responsible’. A grateful recovering alcoholic.

MARGARET

“The only urgent thing is that we make a beginning, and keep trying.”
(12&12 p.69)



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