

WHO ME?

Not all drinkers are alcoholics. Many people can drink normally and have a normal life. Alcoholics Anonymous has nothing to offer these drinkers. For them, alcohol is not a problem.

This message is for those of us who do have a problem with alcohol and crave it even though it is hurting us badly..... and that's just the start.

No alcoholic starts as a down-and-out. It is our drinking and what it makes us do that in time may lose us our homes, families and jobs. Accidents, jail sentences, hospital admissions, suicides and murders are often linked to alcoholic drinking. We know because we are alcoholics.

WE KNOW what it is like to give up drink, and then wait in agony for the off-licence or the pub to open.

WE KNOW what it is like to spend money that we haven't got; to be driven to steal; to hide drink around the house; to wake up not knowing where we have been or what we have done, or knowing only too well.

WE TOO have felt those terrible feelings of loneliness, despair, depression, shame and self-hatred that this illness brings.

Those of us who have tried to control our drinking have found that we cannot. We behave much like other people while we stay away from drink, but if we take any alcohol at all it is difficult or impossible for us to stop.

We have lost control of our drinking.

Alcoholism means that when we drink we want more of the very thing that hurts us and makes us ill and lonely. By drinking more we make things worse and worse. We can lose everything; our family, friends, home and job, and we don't really know why we are doing it, just that we want alcohol. This is why an alcoholic can't be a social drinker and just have one or two.

Many of us found it hard to understand that for us it was the first drink that did the damage. We argued that we never got drunk on one drink; it was the fourth, or the eighth, or the sixteenth, which was the culprit that did the damage. If only we had just had one or two we would have been all right.

The fact was that we could not stop at one or two. Once we had taken the first drink, our power of choice had gone. Even if, occasionally, we managed to control our drinking, that very control made us think that - next day or next week or next month - we could handle alcohol. We can't. It is the first drink that destroys our power of choice. No matter how small, or how innocent or tempting the first drink seems we stay away from it - a day at a time.

One of the unhappiest people in the world is the chronic alcoholic who really wants to enjoy life as he or she once did, but who can't picture life without alcohol. He is obsessed by the idea that one day he will be able to control it and live a normal life. As members of AA, we believe that alcoholism is a deadly illness. Many men and women who suffer from it find it hard to believe this. Alcoholics have to deal with people who see them as just useless and bad.

THROUGH COMING TO THE FELLOWSHIP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS we found out how to stop drinking, and how to stay stopped. We have found that life without alcohol is not just OK, but that we can enjoy it. We were able to start to get better as soon as we stopped fighting the idea that we were alcoholics.

Here are a couple of questions to ask yourself -

When you drink, do you have little control over the amount you take?

When you honestly want to stop drinking, do you find you cannot?

If these are true for you, there's a good chance that you are alcoholic and have lost control over your drinking.

BUT if you can say that you are an alcoholic there is hope for you.

Today it may seem like the end of the world to you, but there are thousands of people in AA who can state that knowing and accepting that they were powerless over alcohol was not an end, but a beginning; the beginning of their recovery and the start of a new, useful and rewarding life.

AA has a simple programme that works. It is a down-to-earth programme designed BY and FOR alcoholics. If you honestly want to stop drinking above all else and are fully willing to follow this programme without qualification, you can have sobriety.

THE ONLY REQUIREMENT FOR AA MEMBERSHIP IS A DESIRE TO STOP DRINKING

This does not mean signing up, or paying money. You just come along to an AA meeting, where you will find people who have been through the same sort of things as you. Get to lots of AA meetings. That way you will hear different members telling their stories. Among them you will find people like you - people you feel understand you.

Our ability to stay away from that first drink depends on us taking care of mental and spiritual health. Staying sober goes on all the time. We have found our only sure - and enjoyable - course is to stay close to AA. That way we don't go back to our old destructive ways of thinking and behaviour and we share our experience with the newcomer.

At first some of us thought this was obsessive. Once we were sober we wanted to spend more time with our loved ones, to get ahead with careers, or hobbies.

Older, wiser members urged us to put our sobriety first. They pointed out that, in time, we would each find the balance that was right for us. Without sobriety, the future held nothing but destruction of ourselves and everything around us; with sobriety, the world could once more open up for us.

Maybe you are still not sure you are an alcoholic.

In which case, a few meetings may help you to decide. All we ask is that you bring with you an open mind.

Why not give the AA programme a try?

We did, and it has worked for us.

(2 appendices: The AA Programme of Recovery – the old page 7 of Who Me?

Only You Can Decide – the old page 4)

See 2 attachments for these.

See Prison Card

Preamble should go inside front cover.