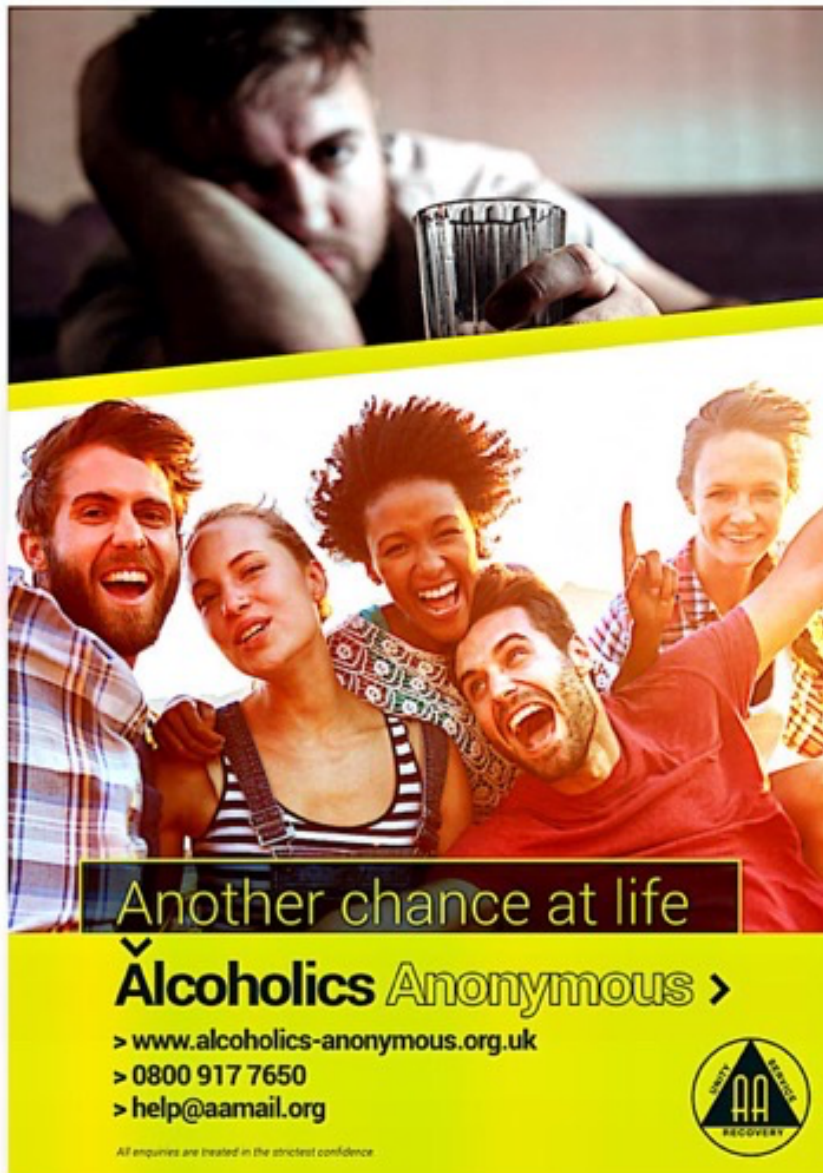


Suggested design, front cover:

Revised version of poster below. The Young Peoples Sub Committee is researching design revisions and costs with the designer.



Scanned with CamScanner

Back cover:

Responsibility Pledge

AA 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 with any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes.

Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

GRAPEVINE COPYRIGHT INFORMATION

AAGB COPYWRIGHT INFORMATION

AAGB GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE ADDRESS

NOTE: Use of 'men and women' wording in Preamble is currently required, as AAGB General Service Conference has not approved use of the 'people' version (new Grapevine / AAWS wording).

Younger People in AA

It is often thought that people do not become 'alcoholics' until they are in their thirties, forties, or beyond. Whilst this can certainly many have be the case, have found that their drinking became a problem almost as soon as they started These 'younger people' have found that alcoholism is something that can affect people of all ages, and, similarly, that age is no barrier to recovery from alcoholism.

Alcoholics Anonymous now has more young people than ever, many joining in their twenties or their teens. Young people are now well represented within AA, for example, in literature, at events, and Young Peoples' AA meetings.

Here you will find the experiences of some of AA's younger members who found sobriety and who share their stories. Although their stories vary, some common themes underpin them all. If you find you relate to parts of these stories, you may be interested in finding out more about AA and how it may help you.

Many consider AA as the end of the road, but as these experiences confirm, it might be the end of much pain and suffering and the beginning of a new and meaningful life.

FIRST NEW STORY:

JAMES

When I arrived in AA, I was desperate to stop drinking and for the way it made me feel to be removed. I was at the point of almost no return, drinking when I didn't want to, yet I just had to drink. A young male with relatively short drinking experience, I had done all the drinking I could until it was uncontrollable and my life was unmanageable. Thinking I had years ahead of me, I wondered how I was to live and have fun without alcohol, but AA has shown me it is achievable.

Drinking was accepted in my family and from a young age I was allowed to drink alcohol. I loved the way it made me feel and something I later came to learn and understand in AA, I obsessed over it. Before I even understood alcoholism, I would go in with one aim and that was to get drunk and change the way I felt.

Whilst I was not an abusive drinker, the darker side of drinking was with me from the start. In my early teens, I would steal bottles of alcohol from my cousin's house. Once, when I was caught, feeling immense shame, I didn't apologise and made up a cover story as to why it was in my bag.

Another time I drank so much that I blacked out at my grandparents 50th wedding anniversary party. The following day I was told how funny I was when I was drunk and asked if my head was bruised after I fell backwards over a wall. I had no memory of what I had done.

I would always drink to the point of vomiting, yet the hangovers did not stop my excessive drinking. I just thought and accepted that it was part of it. I never had the off switch that normal drinkers have to prevent them from getting to that point.

As I grew older, my tolerance to alcohol grew and my consumption increased. I made it through school and further education until age twenty-one when I reached a point in my life that truly terrified me. Standing on the platform of a London tube station I seriously considered stepping onto the tracks when the next moving train came past. I felt lonely, isolated, and completely worthless. My mother had recently died unexpectedly and drinking took the pain away as I didn't know how to process extreme emotions.

I tried many ways to control my drinking or go for periods without alcohol with little or no success. I was promoted in my then current job and moved cities. Moving would be a fresh new start and I would not drink. On my own in that new city, not knowing anyone, I sought people that drank the same as me. There were other times I would sit in my flat, on my own, usually feeling dreadful from the night before and thinking that having a drink early in the day would make me feel better. Another thing I learned in AA that my way of thinking usually got me nowhere and to a worse place than I was already in.

Struggling to pay bills and feed myself, occasionally sitting in the darkness and cold because I had run out of electricity, I would make sure that I still had enough money to buy alcohol by pawning anything I had of value and even resorting to stealing cash from the company I worked for. The unacceptable had become acceptable.

Eventually I had to move back into the family home because I had significant debts and could no longer cope on my own. Whilst I was grateful for the kindness, love, and generosity of my father, my attitude and behaviour were complete selfishness. Manipulating him, I would allow him to bail me out financially and I continued to drink uncontrollably.

After a few more years of drinking, my morals slipped into obscurity. I was stealing, lying, drunk driving, meeting numerous people for sexual encounters, isolating myself from friends and family, and the insanity reached breaking point. One evening I had six police officers in my house trying to calm me down from a drunken hysterical episode which resulted in being seen by the local mental health department. Finally, I self-referred to an alcohol addiction service where I had my first encounter with AA. Not long after I found myself at an AA meeting.

I can't remember the details of the meeting, but what I do remember was the welcoming hand of AA. Members said hello, congratulated me for not drinking in a 24-hour period, and shook my hand. I was offered a hot drink and shown to a seat. I didn't notice the age difference between me and the other group members, but I did notice that these people were sober alcoholics with varying lengths of sobriety and they all had one desire: to stop drinking.

My time in AA has seen me repay debts, make new sober friends of all ages from the UK and other parts of the world, and repair relationships of those I love the most. This has all been achieved by following the suggestions of fellow members in AA and believing in a Higher Power of my own understanding. Whilst I am not and never have been religious, I have found a spiritual way of life using sponsorship, service, and the Twelve Steps of AA to keep me coming back and help me not pick up the first drink – that always got me drunk – one day at a time.

I have since changed my career and am taking responsibility for myself. The most significant changes in me are that I feel less afraid of people, places, and the things of my past and future. I have more respect for myself and others. I try to practise honesty, unselfishness, and loving kindness. And most importantly, I am a sober alcoholic who has transcended from suicidal thinking to serenity and peace of mind.

AFTER FIRST NEW STORY

(20 questions from pages 8 and 9 in original with original text below)

NEW HEADING:

Do you think you have a problem with alcohol?

AA does not diagnose anyone as an alcoholic. Only you can decide, but if you are concerned about your drinking, try answering the following questions as honestly as you can and score it yourself.

1. Does drinking make you careless of your friends and family?
2. Do you drink to overcome shyness or build your self-confidence?
3. Do you drink to 'escape'?
4. Is drinking making you unhappy?
5. Do you ever drink alone?
6. Have you missed work or school because of drink?
7. Has drinking made you less ambitious?
8. Is your reputation suffering because of drink?
9. Is drinking preventing you from achieving your full potential in life?
10. Are people around you concerned about how you are drinking?
11. Do you ever feel regret after drinking?
12. Are you having problems with money because of drink?
13. Do you find that drinking takes you places you normally wouldn't go to?
14. Does drinking ever make you do things you have felt ashamed of?
15. Do you ever crave alcohol?
16. Do you sometimes need drink to help you sleep?
17. Do you sometimes 'reward' yourself with a drink, perhaps at certain times of day?
18. Have you ever had a 'blackout' (complete failure to remember events) as a result of drinking?
19. If you have been honest with a doctor about your drinking, have they shown concern and advised treatment?
20. Have you ever been in a hospital or caused harm to yourself or others as a result of drinking?

These are just some of the things that thousands of recovering alcoholics have experienced at one time or another while they were drinking.

SECOND AND THIRD NEW STORIES:

ANNA

My name is Anna, and I am an alcoholic. By the grace of God and AA, I am eight years sober and my life is an absolute miracle. I got sober in England in a little town, after making a geographical from Poland. It was the first time in my life I surrendered and asked a friend for help and support. That was my rock bottom. Although I was not in the worst physical condition, emotionally I was done. I had lost my job, money, and the respect of my friends, family, and housemate. I did not know that something like 'peace of mind' could even exist. The last two weeks of my drinking robbed me of everything. I used to think that May was the worst month of my life. Now it is the best. It is a privilege to share my story. Perhaps it will inspire and motivate someone else.

I was born in a Polish, Catholic, and alcoholic family. My dad was an army officer and an alcoholic. As a result of his drinking, he had a cardiac arrest at the age of 41 and passed away. That happened in front of me. He fell asleep and never woke up again. I was fifteen at the time and had no idea how to cope. Sadly, and truthfully, I was relieved. There was a lot of abuse in our house. As far back as I remember, I was scared. I have never known how the day would look.

I think I was born an alcoholic, as I always felt that something was wrong with me. I never liked myself. I tried a variety of diets, hairstyles, exercises. I imagined myself going to places, on holidays etc. I was trying to fill this void inside with outside stuff, having no idea that inside I was crying – for love, acceptance, a good word, respect – to name a few. My mum, bless her, was trying to be the best mum she could be. However, her idea of happiness was different from mine. I was always compared to other people. I did not like it at the time, and I don't like it now. However, through the programme of recovery, my approach has changed, and boundaries have been set up. Slowly, but surely.

My drinking started at the age of thirteen. In the beginning it was very mild. One or two beers, on the weekend. After my dad passed, it progressed gradually. By the

age of sixteen, I was almost a daily drinker. I did not need to be drunk, but I needed to have alcohol on a daily basis to cope with emotions and stress. My first blackouts started after my A-levels. I decided to apply for a part-time university course, so I could drink during the week, and study on weekends. I have never had any desire for full-time work. I had scholarships and part-time jobs. I thought I was managing my life well, but that was not the case. I got into a relationship with a wonderful man. We had so many plans for the future. Unfortunately, because of our drinking, nothing changed in our lives. Our families pointed out that something was wrong, that we were drinking too much. I didn't listen to anyone. I was lying to my mum, my boyfriend, to everyone in my family. My alcoholism led me to cheat and steal, to dishonesty, and to disrespect everyone, including myself.

Overall, I had twelve years of active drinking. I didn't get married, finish university, or any higher education. I failed six driving exams. I suppose God knew what was He was doing. My fiancé passed away, because of drinking, at the age of thirty-three. I had two hospital visits, one in intensive care, and one in a psychiatric ward. On admission for detox, I was told I would die in few months if I did not stop drinking. Seven weeks later I was drinking again. Nothing and no one could stop me. I don't know what happened on that sunny May day. I wish to think that I had my spiritual experience. I went on my knees and prayed to God. I went to friends and asked for help. A few days later I flew to Poland for treatment. I attended eight weeks of day care and was introduced to AA. It was difficult, as my mum hasn't accepted my disease, and I am back home from treatment. She doesn't understand that alcoholism is a condition which is beyond willpower. Most of my family still think that is the case. Fortunately for me, I have accepted it, and I have stopped trying to explain anything.

Throughout my sober journey, I have done so many things. I came back to England and started attending meetings. When I was a year sober, I moved to Bristol, found a Polish meeting, and a sponsor. I started reading Polish literature, then progressed to English. We got through the 12 Steps, the Traditions, and the Concepts. I was introduced to service. I have been a Chair, Treasurer, GSR, greeter, tea person, etc. That one was my favourite as I have learnt how to talk to people. I have been Regional Representative for my intergroup. Currently, I am doing my best as a

Regional YPLO and a sub-committee member. I am also an Outreach Chairperson for EURYPAA, the young peoples' convention, and that has been a big part of my recovery. I have travelled to several European countries for this commitment and have met so many amazing along the way. Because of AA, I know that everything is possible in life. Soon, I am joining the second year of nursing degree course and I will do everything this time to finish it. Last year was tough, as Covid 19 started. However, because of online meetings I have maintained and preserved my sobriety. I love those meetings and the ability to share experiences with people all over the world. The biggest beauty of my sobriety is sponsoring others and seeing changes in their lives. For everyone who may read this, 'Please don't quit before a miracle happens'.

WILL

I found sobriety through the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous shortly after my 27th birthday. By my mid-twenties alcoholism had me in a bad place – I was living in the attic room at my parents' house, slowly losing the ability to function in the outside world, drinking consistently and wracked by feelings of guilt and shame about things that I'd done and the damage I felt I'd caused to people in my life. It is not a place I would wish anyone to find themselves – I despised the person I saw looking back at me in the mirror. I was completely unaware that alcoholism is an illness and was convinced I was morally weak, and while I sensed I was in a tight spot, I had absolutely no clue of how to get out of it.

My drinking started in a familiar fashion to many – in the parks, graveyards and then rock clubs of London and I loved it from the word go. Alcohol brought me to life and gave me the confidence I felt I lacked – and it became far more interesting to me than other areas of my life. My late teenage years would often find me the 'life and soul' of parties for an hour or so before I'd black out from drinking too much and often end up passed out in a corner, by the bins etc. while the party or world carried on around me. Taking the first drink always felt like turning on the tap and I had no way of turning it off again.

I functioned relatively well through my early twenties – I graduated despite my drinking. My time at university had plenty of good memories but there were lots of periods where my drinking reached new levels. Friends and family had to break into my room or apartment where I'd walled myself in with alcohol. Post-graduation I secured a lifelong dream of a six-month contract to work building trails in the mountains that border California and Nevada but was dismissed after five weeks for

a series of alcohol-fuelled misdemeanours culminating in two days sobering up in a police station.

The consequences of my drinking were beginning to take their toll and the next three years saw a string of missed opportunities, failed relationships and the loss of friendships as I became someone who couldn't be relied upon to turn up or tell the truth. I would disappear for days on benders, lie constantly to everyone, steal money to keep drinking and gradually move further and further from the person I wanted to be.

I woke up the day after my 27th birthday in a hospital in North-West London – I had been drunk for about a week prior to this and was harbouring persistent suicidal thoughts. At some point I'd asked for help and been taken to a psychiatric ward where I spent two weeks slowly coming back to life before being transferred to a 12-Step rehab facility where I was first introduced to AA via the regular meetings held there. I was in rehab for the standard 28 days and it took me three months after I came out to find consistent sobriety – and when I drank in those three months it was as bad as it ever was, leading to another hospital stay to which I was taken in the back of a police car.

However, my experience of Alcoholics Anonymous is overwhelmingly positive – today I have been sober for over seven years and my life bears very little resemblance to before.

I was fortunate to find my way into Young People meetings and build wonderful friendships with the people I found there, as well as in wider AA meetings. I found a sponsor and worked the twelve steps that are the foundation of AA. They were completely transformative – I grew to understand my alcoholism, developed a belief in something bigger than myself and began to right past wrongs. I found the ability to spend time on my own and with others comfortably and develop a sense of belonging and self that I previously lacked.

Within AA I have travelled extensively and built friendships across the world – it ~~always~~ amazes me that I can connect with people from vastly different backgrounds purely through our shared problem and common solution. I have been privileged to help carry the message of AA in rehabs, the setting-up of meetings and conferences and working with other AA members to help find new ways of connecting with other young people who may find themselves in the situation I did. In my experience the hand of AA has always been there and I want to help ensure that it always is.

I enjoy my life today and have found my way into a career I enjoy immensely, friendship groups I love being a part of, and am happily married – at my wedding over half the people in attendance I'd met through AA. More important than any of this is the fact that I have developed the ability to simply be – and the peace that

comes with this and not endlessly fighting with myself is something I would wish for everyone suffering from alcoholism.

AFTER SECOND AND THIRD NEW STORIES

Alcoholics Anonymous – Questions and Answers

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS AS IS, EXCEPT FOR THE ANSWER TO THE FIFTH QUESTION / NEW:

Q. Is AA a religious organisation?

No. Although some members have a strong religious faith, others may not. We have spiritual values such as honesty, open mindedness and willingness.

REMAINING Qs & As THE SAME (pp. 17-18 in original)

REVISED TEXT FOLLOWING Qs & As:

In AA we find a way to stop on a daily basis. For many of us, the best way of achieving this is to get to as many meetings as we can. By listening to the experiences of other non-drinking alcoholics we came to believe AA can work for us as well.

We practise the 12 Step Programme and get identification from reading AA literature. We reinforce our own sobriety by helping other alcoholics in AA, carrying the message as it was carried to us: giving it away to keep it.

Gradually things start to fall into place. In AA we find what we were looking for when we drank. We develop a feeling of peace and serenity (most of the time) and the ability to lead a normal life.

We hope reading this will help you on your journey to lasting sobriety.

FOURTH NEW STORY:

JESS

When I came into AA six years ago, at the age of 23, lots of people commented on how lucky I was that I didn't have to let it get too bad before I arrived, or that I still

had my whole life ahead of me. However, I didn't feel lucky and I certainly wasn't looking forward to having the rest of my life without alcohol.

What brought me to AA was pain, suffering, desperation, and despair- same as anyone of any age who arrives at their first meeting. I had been drinking since the age of 13 and things had progressed rapidly for me. I drank alcoholically from my first ever drink. Once I started drinking that night it set off a craving which I just couldn't satisfy. I had a blackout and tried to steal someone's cat from a house party and laughed about it with friends the next day. Because my only experience of drinking was alcoholic drinking, I just assumed that this was everyone's experience when they drank.

I didn't see that my drinking was much different to that of others through my teens. I constantly thought that next time I'd stop when my friends stopped; I would know my limits next time. I went to Uni and made friends with people who drank a lot. When people arranged to have 'pre-drinks' before a night out I would have 'pre-pre-drinks' getting ready alone in my room.

Sometimes I wouldn't make it out or make a fool of myself, but I always laughed off people's comments the next day and drank again to forget the embarrassment.

After uni, people seemed to settle down and get jobs, travel, or buy homes etc. I was still driven by this obsession to drink and it overshadowed any interest or motivation in anything else. Alcoholism progressed further for me and external things- job, relationship, driving license, flat were all lost in quick succession.

Feeling sorry for myself and blaming everyone for my misfortune, I moved back in with my parents and slowly sank further into chaos, now also bringing deceit, confusion and upset to my family. My mum slept with her purse tucked under her pillow, and I would hear her crying quietly when I stumbled to the bathroom in the middle of the night. I knew alcohol was causing me some trouble, but I would look at my friends going out clubbing at weekends having fun and think "I should be able to do that". I never understood that my body reacts differently to my friends and that I never will be able to drink the way they do.

People would say to me "why don't you just not drink!?" – a simple solution for someone who is not alcoholic, and I was so mad at myself that I could never seem to do that, no matter how much willpower I had to stop. The abnormal quickly became normal and I soon found waking up in police cells, hospitals, or secure wards to be standard occurrences. I had alienated any friends I had; my family were about to ask me to move out and I regularly went to stand by the train tracks thinking that everyone would be happier if I was no longer here.

I arrived in AA at this time because I had exhausted all other options.

I had tried controlled drinking, willpower, counselling, medication, acupuncture, exercise, relinquishing my bank cards and ID to my parents – the list goes on. Always I would end up drunk. I guess I left AA until last because I didn't understand what it was, and I thought I was too young to be an alcoholic.

At my first meeting, I was the youngest person there and that was all I could focus on. I believed that nobody would take me seriously because I hadn't had as many years of drinking as they had. The one thing I did right was to keep going to those meetings. I came to realise that I didn't have any more years of drinking in me... no matter my age, I'd be dead if I continued to drink. I began to understand that putting alcohol down was just the beginning and I needed a spiritual solution by working the 12 steps to recover. I got involved with service and realised that people took me very seriously indeed. I was treated with respect and love. I got a sponsor and we study the Big Book which has helped me to connect with a power greater than myself which I choose to call God.

I am now age 30 and live a life beyond my wildest dreams thanks to AA. When I meet an alcoholic, I carry the message which was freely given to me. I don't see people's age, and I don't worry about whether they see mine. I sponsor women twice my age without difficulty because we share a common problem and a common solution.

AFTER FOURTH NEW STORY

Where do I find AA?

REVISED TEXT (p. 19 in original)

You can find AA meetings in almost every city and town, and in many villages. Information about meetings (face-to-face and online) and a Chat Now service are available on our website:

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

You can also contact us by email: help@aamail.org

REMAINDER OF LEAFLET AS IS

NOTE:

Existing / 'original' leaflet is included as separate document for reference.